

## **Department of Economics, Carleton College: Application for the AEA Award for Outstanding Achievement in Diversity and Inclusion**

Dear Committee Members:

The Department of Economics at Carleton College believes deeply in the importance of diversity and inclusivity toward providing meaningful educational experiences for our students and empowering women, traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic minorities, first generation, and LGBTQ students. To promote diversity and inclusion and to provide a more welcoming environment for women and traditionally underrepresented students, we have pursued a multi-pronged approach in virtually all aspects of our program: curriculum, co-curricular events, extra-curricular reading groups, faculty diversity, alumni networking and mentoring events, and classroom environment. We believe that our efforts have resulted in more meaningful experiences for all students in our classes by providing more richness of diversity in viewpoints, perspectives, and values.

Evidence suggests that our recent initiatives, described below, are resonating with women and students from racial and ethnic minority groups. Black and Latino students for the combined class years of 2022 through 2024, all of whom have been majors since we started our new initiatives in earnest, comprise over 21% of our total majors, including 10% Latinos and 11% Blacks. These percentages are significantly above our historical experience. Over the same class years, women and female-identifying students have comprised 26% of our total majors, which is also above our historical experience. In what follows we describe our main initiatives to date.

### **Action 1: Expanded the diversity of our curriculum.**

We have been actively working to expand course offerings that deal with issues of race, gender, and economic inequality, in both domestic and international settings. This expansion has occurred at all levels of our curriculum. These include: (a) post-principles electives – *Economics of Gender* and *Economy of Latin America*; (b) senior-level seminars – *Advanced Seminar in Economics of Inequality*; and (c) courses for both majors and non-majors – *Race and Inequality* and *Gender, Race and Ethnicity in Latin American Economic Development*. These courses are typically cross-listed with other programs, including *Women's and Gender Studies* and *Latin American Studies*, to attract a more diverse set of students.

We have now taught *Race and Inequality* twice, experimenting with format, length, and different prerequisites. It was first offered as a three-course sequence, where the different courses covered the economics of inequality, inequality and race, and inequality and gender. This course carried prerequisites of principles of microeconomics and macroeconomics so that students could take a deeper dive into the economics of these issues. The second time, we offered it as a five-week course without prerequisites to accommodate a broader range of student backgrounds and interests and to promote cross-disciplinary conversation. This time, the course was tied to discussion of a particular book – *From Here to Equality* – to focus on an issue of current interest:

reparations for black Americans. We arranged for the author, economist Sandy Darity (Duke University), to visit campus during which he attended a class meeting. This allowed students to ask questions about the subtler aspects of the argument (see Action 4 below). We will continue to fine-tune this course as we experiment with different ways for students to engage with diverse viewpoints.

The course *Gender, Race and Ethnicity in Latin American Economic Development* course was taught by an alum, Andrew Morrison, who is a Ph.D. economist and the former chief of the Gender and Diversity Division, Inter-American Development Bank. In this capacity, he spearheaded various initiatives to promote gender equality and to provide economic opportunities for women in Latin America. He thus brought a valuable real-world practitioner's perspective to this course. Dr. Morrison has already agreed to offer this course in the future, and there is an excellent chance that it will become a semi-regular offering.

### **Action 2: Reading groups on race and inequality issues.**

In addition to reading *From Here to Equality*, we have also offered a book reading group on *The New Jim Crow*, by Michelle Alexander. Roughly 35 students participated in these two book-focused experiences combined, including many non-majors. These reading groups allowed students to apply economics in an intense engagement with issues of race and inequality in direct conversation with their peers, with faculty serving a facilitating role. We intend to continue to provide students the opportunity to engage with issues of ethnicity, race, and inequality using this format.

### **Action 3: Expanded faculty diversity: recruiting and retention.**

With the support of the Carleton administration, we have actively attempted to increase the gender and ethnic diversity of the department faculty. In addition to recruiting through the AEA website, we have advertised in other venues, including the *American Society of Hispanic Economists* and the *National Economic Association*. Our recruiting efforts were successful two years ago when we hired two young, promising macroeconomists who have increased both ethnic and gender diversity among the department faculty. Of a total of 10.5 full-time tenure-track faculty slots, we now count three women, five faculty of color, and one first-generation faculty member.

Toward giving our young faculty every chance of achieving professional success at Carleton, our department has established a mentoring system that pairs junior faculty with a senior colleague in the department. Senior mentors make sure to check in with their junior mentees regularly and provide professional advice on scholarship, teaching, and service. This internal mentoring system complements a college-wide system that provides new junior faculty with faculty mentors from outside the department.

#### **Action 4: Started a new visiting speaker series on *Race, Privilege, and Inequality***

Using seed money generously granted us by the Carleton administration, we have instituted a new endowed visiting speaker series that brings to campus economists from underrepresented backgrounds to speak on issues of race, privilege, and inequality. We kicked off this new series in the fall of 2021, after the subsiding of the pandemic made it safe to hold in-person events again. Our inaugural speaker was Trevon Logan from Ohio State, who spoke on his research on race issues in public accommodations in the South. Last spring, Sandy Darity and his co-author Kirsten Mullen spoke on reparations for black Americans based on their recent book *From Here to Equality*. This fall, we brought to campus Samuel Myers from the University of Minnesota, who spoke on his forthcoming book *The Minnesota Paradox*, referring to the seeming disconnect between Minnesota's progressive traditions and reputation and the lagging economic condition of black Americans in the state. These talks were heavily publicized and well-attended, with probably over 100 attendees in all.

In addition to their public lecture, we expect visiting speakers to interact with students and faculty in various other capacities while on campus. A typical visit will include meals with students, an informal discussion with traditionally underrepresented students on careers in economics, and a brown-bag research seminar for faculty. These ancillary events are designed to complement the public event, to promote the speaker's ideas to students, department faculty, and the larger college community.

These speaker events have permitted us to establish closer ties with various other departments, who are invited to attend, to co-sponsor events, and to publicize the events among their majors. Faculty and students from a variety of departments have attended our events. So far, co-sponsoring programs include *Africana Studies* and *Latin American Studies*. We will be working with our *Women and Gender Studies* program on a visit to campus by economist Betsey Stevenson this coming spring.

#### **Action 5: Annual alumni panels for traditionally underrepresented students.**

One premise of our diversity initiatives is that current traditionally underrepresented majors can benefit from hearing the perspectives of their counterparts from previous generations of majors who have gone on to successful careers in economics. Two winters ago, we began holding career events where a panel of racially and gender-diverse alumni share their post-Carleton experiences. Our panels have consisted of alums with a wide range of careers, including in academia, government, banking, finance, and other private sector industries.

To accommodate busy work schedules and to make it more convenient for alums to participate, we have held these panels on Zoom, which accommodates our chosen format well. Alums take turns speaking for 5-or-so minutes on their respective career paths and experiences, and then each one is assigned to a breakout room, with students allowed to wander among the breakout rooms. All students enjoy the opportunity to interact with every alum in a small, intimate setting. The events have gone roughly two hours, with total participation so far by eight different

alums and some 35-40 students. We have received much positive feedback from both alums and students. Students enjoy hearing about the alums' career experiences, and alumni appreciate the opportunity to meet current students and do some informal mentoring.

#### **Action 6: Providing support to student groups.**

Another premise of our diversity efforts is that students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds can learn from and support each other. Our current majors play an important role in supporting, advising, and mentoring prospective majors. We provide active support to *Women and Nonbinary Individuals in Economics* (WE+), a longstanding student group of female-identifying and non-binary majors that meets weekly and organizes speaker and career events for female majors and students interested in economics. WE+ also has a mentoring program that pairs up current female-identifying majors with prospective majors, which we support logistically and financially, including advertising on our department webpage. We are working to establish a similar mentoring program for traditionally underrepresented male-identifying students.

#### **Action 7: Working actively to create a comfortable, welcoming, and inclusive classroom environment.**

It is important that we fully understand the actual concerns of women and students from racial and ethnic minorities. So two years ago we conducted an anonymous survey of our majors to get a better sense of our strengths in creating a welcoming and inclusive environment, and where we might be falling short. The responses were instructive. Students from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds generally expressed satisfaction with faculty efforts to create inclusive and welcoming environments in the classroom, but we also heard that we can do better. This includes adding more diverse course materials, treating topics that speak more directly to the lives and experiences of women and ethnic and racial minorities, and handling classroom dynamics better to ensure that students from all backgrounds have a chance to be heard. We are actively working on modifying course content and structure to address these real concerns, including adding recent scholarship by black scholars such as Trevon Logan and Lisa Cook. We now pay closer attention to setting the right tone in classes from the start, by including statements on the value of diversion and inclusion in our course syllabi and speaking to these issues directly and openly on the first day of class. We share resources and materials with each other that speak to issues of diversity and inclusion. We will continue to work on promoting a welcoming and inclusive classroom environment that works to help all students achieve their potential.

Looking to the future, we plan to continue our multi-pronged approach to promoting diversity and inclusion, including the following:

- Continuing to refine our curricular offerings, both adding new courses and refining the content of existing ones. We hope that Professor Morrison's course on race and gender issues in Latin America will become a semi-regular staple of our curriculum. Other

possible new courses include electives and freshman seminars on the economics of race and inequality. Our *Argument and Inquiry* seminars are taken by all first-year students and would provide an opportunity to expose students to these issues and viewpoints earlier in their Carleton career.

- Continuing our visiting speaker series and possibly expanding it to include multi-speaker events, perhaps symposia or panels on various economic issues of gender, race, and ethnicity, which can probably be adequately supported by our endowment budget.
- Continuing to offer book reading groups, a logical next one being to read Samuel Myers' *Minnesota Paradox* once it is published.
- Adding a peer mentoring program for traditionally underrepresented male students.
- Continuing to offer alumni panels, and also considering other productive ways to connect current students with alums, including on-campus events and brokering mentoring relationships between students and alums.