

## Report of the Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession

The issue of paramount concern to the Committee continues to be the gross underrepresentation of black, Hispanic (with Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban Americans being the primary groups of concern), and native Americans in the ranks of faculty in economics departments in the United States. Susan Collins's careful study, "Minority Groups in the Economics Profession" indicates that during the 1997–1998 academic year only 2.1 percent of full-time tenured and tenure-track faculty in American colleges and universities were black, and only 1.7 percent were Hispanic. In Ph.D.-granting institutions, black tenured and tenure-track faculty constitute less than 1 percent of the total, and Hispanic faculty constitute 2.1 percent of the total. Note also that these estimates do not distinguish between U.S. citizens and noncitizens who are black or Hispanic. The native American faculty presence in economics is close to zero.

The proportionate flow of new Ph.D.'s from underrepresented minorities does not promise a dramatic immediate change in the situation. The Collins study finds that, in 1977, blacks were 3.5 percent of all economics Ph.D. recipients in the United States; by 1996, blacks remained only 4 percent of the total. In 1977, Hispanics were recipients of less than 1 percent of all conferred economics doctorates; by 1996, their proportion had risen to 3 percent. In both 1977 and 1996, there were no native American recipients of economics Ph.D.'s in the United States.

When focus is narrowed to U.S. citizens, the flow of new Ph.D.'s from underrepresented minorities looks even worse. There were only 12 (2 percent) black American economics Ph.D. recipients out of 579 in 1977; by 1996, there were 16 (3 percent) out of 527. For Hispanics there were 3 (less than 1 percent) in 1977; by 1996, there were 12 (2.3 percent).

The major instrument that the American Economic Association has employed over the past 25 years to address this condition is a Summer Fellowship Program, currently funded by the National Science Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Association itself. The fellowship program, an intensive training program

in early graduate-level economics primarily for students from underrepresented minorities, is intended to encourage enrollment in and to improve preparation for doctoral programs in economics. It is currently located at the University of Texas at Austin under the direction of Donald Fullerton.

The University of Texas at Austin is now in the second round of two three-year stints of hosting the program and will host the program for the final time during the summer of the year 2000. Our Committee's major responsibility at this time is to identify a new host institution. An advertisement to solicit proposals from potential hosts was placed in the September and December issues of the *American Economic Review* and *Journal of Economic Literature* and the Summer and Fall issues of the *Journal of Economic Perspectives* with a January 2, 2000 deadline for submission of proposals. We will immediately begin deliberations over the proposals received.

The goals of the summer program are to increase the flow of undergraduates into economics Ph.D. programs and to increase their odds of success after entry into Ph.D. programs. A new AEA initiative, also funded by the MacArthur Foundation, is the Pipeline Project under the direction of Cecilia Conrad at Pomona College. It consists of an Outreach and a Mentor program. The Outreach program seeks to reach minority undergraduates during their early years of college to encourage them to give serious consideration to economics as a profession. The Mentor program seeks to provide support for minority students already enrolled in doctoral programs.

Since the presence of blacks, Hispanics, and native Americans in the economics profession remains so low relative to their presence in the general population, the efficacy of the summer program as a remedy for underrepresentation can be called into question. A potential response is that the numbers would be even lower if not for the summer program. Informal testimony from some of the alumni of the summer program attests to that claim.

The effectiveness of the summer program may have varied across the different institutions that have served as hosts and may have varied across the span of time when a single host bore responsibility for the program. Unfortunately, there has been no formal evaluation mechanism to assess the effectiveness of the program.

In contrast, the Pipeline Project has had an assessment component built in from the outset. One of our Committee's tasks will be development of a formal, systematic assessment mechanism for the AEA Summer Fellowship program to identify ways in which it can be improved in meeting its two goals.

What is promising is the degree to which the Pipeline Project and the AEA Summer Fellowship Program already have been integrated and collaborative. This is, in part, due to the cooperative spirit of each of the directors. For example, this past summer a conference was held at the University of Texas at Austin that brought together the participants in the Mentor component of the Pipeline Project, both graduate students and their mentors, with the students and faculty in the summer program.

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