



NEWS

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Interview with Bell Award Winner Cecilia E. Rouse



Lisa Barrow

Cecilia Elena Rouse, Dean of the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Lawrence and Shirley Katzman and Lewis and Anna Ernst Professor in the Economics of Education, and Professor of Economics and Public Affairs at Princeton University is the recipient of the 2016 Carolyn Shaw Bell Award. Given annually since 1998 by the American Economic Association's (AEA) Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP), the Bell Award recognizes and honors an individual who has furthered the status of women in the economics profession through example, achievements, increasing our understanding of how women can advance in the economics profession, or mentoring others.

Rouse is a labor economist with research interests focused on the economics of education. She has published numerous papers in top general interest and field journals including the *American Economic Review*, the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, the *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, the *Review of Economics and Statistics*, and the *Journal of Labor Economics*, among others. Rouse is also known for her "generous spirit" and willingness to share

her time to offer feedback and support to others and provide frank and sage advice.

In addition to her outstanding scholarship and mentorship, Rouse has an extensive record of professional and public service at the highest levels. She is a senior editor for the *Future of Children*, currently serves on the editorial board for the *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy*, was a co-editor for the *Journal of Labor Economics*, and has served on the editorial boards for several economics of education journals. She is also past Vice-President for the American Economic Association (AEA). Perhaps even more importantly for shaping the future of the profession, Rouse has spent several years as Co-chair of the AEA Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economic Profession (CSMGEP). CSMGEP engages in mentoring, educational programs, and support to increase the representation and advancement of minorities in the economics profession. In service to the public, Rouse has most notably taken on top policy positions in Washington, D.C., for two Presidents: in 1998–1999 she served a year in the White House at the National Economic Council and

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We've Built the Pipeline: What's the Problem and What's Next?

Rhonda Vonshay Sharpe

I borrowed this title from a panel I recently moderated on workforce development because it summed up my frustration with diversity and inclusion in general, and specifically in the economics profession.

The Pipeline

The American Economic Association Summer Program has existed since 1974. AEASP has nearly 1,000 alumni. This summer, Michigan State University (MSU), the 12th university to host the program, will train the 43rd cohort of the AEA Summer Program. In 1998, the American Economic Association added another diversity initiative, the **Pipeline Mentoring Program**. The mentoring program, with support from the National Science Foundation, matches graduate students with a mentor and supports professional development through research and travel grants. The Pipeline Conference held at the end of the Summer Program affords graduate students the opportunity to meet multiple generations of economists—undergraduates, other graduate students, and various levels of experienced economists. The conference is also an opportunity to present dissertation research.

The economics pipeline also includes two initiatives focused on the professional development of junior scholars: **CeMENT Workshop** and the

Diversity Initiative for Tenure in Economics (DITE). CeMENT focuses on female economists, and DITE focuses on Black, Hispanic and Native American economists. Both offer professional development and mentoring to junior scholars. CeMENT has existed for nearly 15 years, and DITE will host its 10th cohort this summer. Combined, DITE and CeMENT have mentored over 300 junior scholars.

The Problem

Given the investments by the AEA and NSF, host institutions, and mentors, why has progress been so slow? The answer to this question depends on who you ask. Marybeth Gasman, Professor of Higher Education at the University of Pennsylvania, has said “The reason we don’t have more faculty of color among college faculty is that we don’t want them. We simply don’t want them.”¹ Based on her research and experience as a diversity consultant, Gasman has identified four “excuses” typically provided as rationales for not hiring faculty of color: there aren’t enough people of color in the faculty pipeline;

quality; “play by the rules;” and search committees.²

I will address the pipeline first. The economics profession has been investing in the pipeline for over 40 years. The dearth of people of color in the pipeline is not likely the problem. For those who think math keeps students of color and women from entering the pipeline, Asians, Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans and White women earn more doctorates in mathematics and statistics than in economics (See Figure 1). I believe the problem is the undergraduate economics curriculum, which requires majoring in another subject—math—to increase the likelihood of admission to and completion of the doctorate in economics. Unfortunately, this requirement is not common knowledge for undergraduate economics majors.

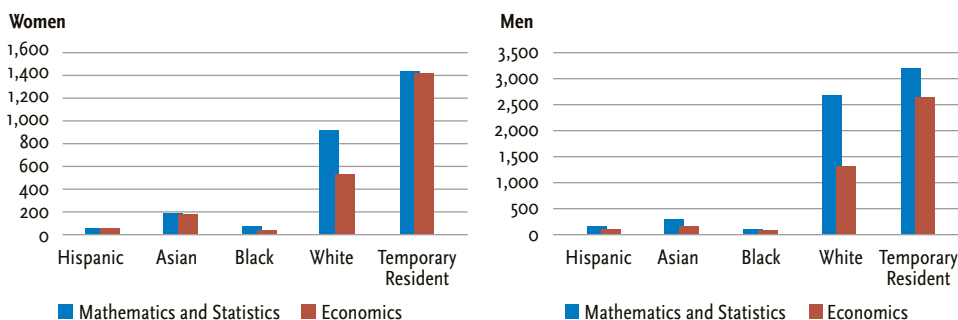
So how does an undergraduate know to double major in mathematics and economics? For many students, it is learned from the faculty. Faculty are likely to encourage students who remind them of themselves when they were undergraduates to pursue the doctorate in economics. Faculty are also likely to hire candidates that remind them of themselves. Replication of oneself is the antithesis of diversity.

Let’s say that I clear the undergraduate and graduate hurdles and am now a candidate for a faculty position. I have published as a graduate student, have excellent teaching evaluations, and strong recommendations. Despite meeting the “written” qualifications, the search committee has a strong preference for “quality,” defined as an applicant from an elite program. The committee could choose to put more weight on my potential as a scholar and how I

¹ Gasman, Marybeth. “An Ivy League Professor on why colleges don’t hire more faculty of color: ‘We don’t want them.’” Washington Post Online, 26 September 2016. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/09/26/an-ivy-league-professor-on-why-colleges-dont-hire-more-faculty-of-color-we-dont-want-them/?utm_term=.ca83116b8284

² https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2016/09/26/an-ivy-league-professor-on-why-colleges-dont-hire-more-faculty-of-color-we-dont-want-them/?utm_term=.ca83116b8284

Figure 1. 2005–2014 Doctorates: Economics vs. Mathematics



SOURCE: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, Completions Survey by Race. National Science Foundation, National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Integrated Science and Engineering Resources Data System (WebCASPAR), <https://webcaspar.nsf.gov>

We've Built the Pipeline . . . ↑

diversify the faculty and curriculum, but the taste for “replication” outweighs any value I’d add to the department.

If, on the other hand, I don’t check all the boxes—CV, three letters of recommendation, etc.—I am eliminated because the department must “play by the rules.” The same department that requires all the boxes to be checked will circumvent the job market to hire the desired candidate, especially at the senior level.

In 1975, Marcus Alexis wrote about the dearth of minority economists. Since then, research by Mason, Myers, and Darity (2005), Price (2009), Darity (2010), Darity, Price, and Sharpe (2010), and Price and Sharpe (2016) reports evidence of racial bias in hiring, citation, and funding of Black economists. Sue Stockly presented preliminary research at the 2017 ASSA meeting that finds a bias against Hispanic economists.³ Donna Ginther has several publications documenting the challenges of female economists.⁴ The problem isn’t that the search committees don’t know they are biased and the consequences of their bias—they do. The problem is that there is no penalty for the biased behavior. Without consequences for biased behavior, investments made by the AEA or NSF will have no consequential return in the form of increased representation of underrepresented minorities as faculty and scholars. I am not confident that educating search committees about recruitment best practices and implicit bias will alter their behavior.

What’s Next?

Given the problems I have outlined, “What’s next?” I anticipate implicit bias will become the new “scapegoat” for why faculties are not diverse. Knowledge of your bias or the bias of others does not equal the fortitude to arrest the behavior. Therefore, I recommend the following:

1. The profession needs to have an honest conversation about the definition of diversity. Does diversity mean the inclusion of more people from racial and ethnic groups who have historically been marginalized in the U.S., or the inclusion of people who are not white males of European descent?
2. Departments should define diversity and use that definition as the core and conscience for their curriculum, and faculty and student composition.
3. Provide information about the requirements for the doctorate in economics to **ALL** students as part of undergraduate advising.

³ Stockly, Sue K. “Stratification and color lines: the pipeline for and career trajectory of Black and Hispanic economists.” Paper presented at the 2017 Allied Social Science Association Annual Meetings, January 6-8, 2017, Chicago, IL. https://www.aeaweb.org/conference/2017/preliminary?sessionType%5Bsession%5D=1&organization_name=&search_terms=stockly&day=&time=

⁴ For a list of relevant papers, see <http://www.people.ku.edu/~dginther/wpapers.htm>.

4. Expand the diversity conversation to include the representation of minorities and women employed at think tanks, Federal Reserve System, and government agencies.
5. Create a penalty system for departments that fail to diversify or broaden participation.
6. Create a partnership with AEASP and the Mentoring program to identify young scholars to mentor for upcoming faculty positions.
7. Don’t diversity your faculty by “poaching” from another department.
8. Volunteer to serve as a mentor for CeMent, DITE or the Mentoring Program.
9. Show young scholars how to do what they need to be successful. Don’t tell them and wait to see if they will figure it out.
10. Be a good mentor—provide the advice and opportunities you wish someone had provided for you. ■

Best Practices: References for Further Reading

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