

Diversity and Inclusion Report

Department of Economics

Analysis of issues of race and social justice, especially economic justice, is an integral part of the discipline of economics. Economists have made important contributions to our understanding of issues related to the generation of racial discrimination in economic opportunities and in the consequent disparities in income, wealth, intergenerational economic mobility and other aspects of economic status. The primary professional association for economists in the United States, the American Economic Association, has been active in promoting diversity in the profession and recently published “Best Practices for Economists: Building a More Diverse, Inclusive, and Productive Profession,” which our department is using to guide and improve our own practices.

This academic year, the Department of Economics has several activities and initiatives related to race and social justice. We provide a brief overview of these initiatives here.

The Economic Policy Forum

Our department’s Economic Policy Forum, under the direction of Professors William Dickens and John Kwoka, sponsors presentations by leading scholars and policy makers on important economic policy issues. The theme of the Forum this year is “Economic Policy, (In)equality, and Economic Justice.” Presentations during the fall 2020 semester were:

- William A. Darity, Jr., “The ARC of Justice,” on reparations for black American descendants of U.S. slavery. Professor Darity is the Samuel DuBois Cook Professor of Public Policy, African and African American Studies, and Economics and the director of the Samuel DuBois Cook Center on Social Equity at Duke University. He is the coauthor, with A. Kirsten Mullen, of *From Here to Equality: Reparations for Black Americans in the Twenty-First Century* (2020).
- Heather Boushey, the President and CEO of the Washington Center for Equitable Growth, presented “Unbound: How Inequality Constricts our Economy and What We Can Do about it,” based on her recent (2020) book of the same title.
- Joseph Stiglitz, “Markets, Governments, and the Response to Race, Recession, and the Pandemic.” Joseph Stiglitz, University Professor at Columbia University, is the co-winner of the 2001 Nobel Memorial Prize, former chair of the President’s Council of Economic Advisers, and former Chief Economist of the World Bank.
- Mehrsa Baradaran, the Associate Dean for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Professor at University of California, Irvine School of Law, was scheduled to speak on “The Color of Money: The History and Creation of the Racial Wealth Gap” in mid-November, but needed to postpone her presentation after she was appointed to the Biden-Harris transition team. We hope to reschedule her presentation for the spring.
- Already confirmed for our spring 2021 series is Mary C. Daly, President of the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, speaking on “Equitable Growth, Opportunity, and Federal Reserve Policy.”

Enhancing Incorporation of Race and Social Justice into our Curriculum

A major departmental initiative is focused on enhancing the incorporation of issues of race and social justice into our curriculum. The department has commissioned committees to examine and revise the learning goals of our undergraduate and graduate curriculums to more explicitly reflect issues of race and social justice.

Undergraduate

Teaching of issues related to race and social justice is an essential part of elective courses such as The Economics of Race and Labor Economics, and has long been incorporated into our core courses on an ad hoc basis. A key goal of our undergraduate curriculum review and reform is to institutionalize the teaching of race and social justice in our core courses.

Our undergraduate curriculum includes core courses in Principles of Microeconomics and Principles of Macroeconomics that are required of our undergraduate majors and also students in some other programs at Northeastern. Race and social justice are natural fits with these courses and many of our instructors already incorporate topics related to race and social justice into their course designs. Our overhaul of learning goals and course descriptions will ensure that this coverage will be incorporated into the course design of all offerings of these core courses in our department. The other core courses required of our majors are being similarly evaluated for incorporation of topics related to race and social justice.

Graduate

The curriculum for our M.S. and Ph.D. programs is undergoing a similar review. Our graduate courses are more mathematical and abstract than our undergraduate courses, and so the ways in which discussion of race and social justice is included in our graduate courses differs from that of our undergraduate courses. We are currently engaged in revising the learning goals of our graduate programs and will then proceed to review of how our courses can be revised to support the learning goals.

Faculty Recruitment

Our department is participating in the current cross-disciplinary cluster search for new faculty specializing in themes related to race and social justice. This hiring initiative will be critical in enabling us to provide guidance and mentorship to students interested in research in this area, as well as increasing our capacity for teaching related to race and social justice.

DIVERSEcon

This student-led group aims to increase awareness and diversity within the field of economics among both faculty and students at the undergraduate and graduate levels.