

Structuring Inclusion into Political Science Recruiting, Progression, and Engagement

Introduction: Diversity and Inclusion in Political Science as a Profession

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Does this conversation sound familiar to you?

A: Our profession really needs help in terms of diversifying, particularly when it comes to progression—our full professors are overwhelmingly white and male and middle/upper class, and overwhelmingly from the Global North.

B: Sure, but what can we do? We would promote more people from underrepresented populations if there were any more applicants.

A: Well, that makes it sound like the problem comes earlier, and we need a more inclusive profession while people are progressing and when we are hiring.

B: Sure, but what can we do? We would have more people from underrepresented populations in the discipline if there were any more applicants.

A: So, then we need to have a better pipeline for underrepresented populations to move from undergrad into research careers.

B: Sure, but what can we do? We would admit more grad students from underrepresented populations if we had

This is a conversation many of us in the profession have had in one form or another. It is easy to make Position A's argument: *We are not racist or sexist or ethnocentric. We are committed to making our departments, colleges, and universities more diverse. The profession simply does not have many people from underrepresented populations.* Moreover, let's face it, who has time to figure out why?

This symposium challenges Position A on two main points. First, if we are waiting for people from underrepresented

populations to join graduate schools, go on the job market, and apply for progression, then we are displaying *openness* to diversity and inclusion but not *commitment*. Second, if the system is producing a homogeneous profession despite the people in it being committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), then it is the system that must be changed. These are changes that must originate in the undergraduate experience, which is where our future colleagues begin their career.

To finish Position B's last proposition, we would admit more graduate students from underrepresented populations (who would matriculate and become the next generation of professors) if we partnered with and connected to institutions and programs where historically excluded groups are located. In a profession in which half of job placements go to scholars from the top 10 programs, we have an obligation to divest our perspectives and priorities from preferencing elite institutions and narrowly defined prestige. As a discipline, we have much to learn from Minority Serving Institutions, including Historically Black Colleges and Universities and Hispanic Serving Institutions, about scholarship, mentorship, and collaboration. There is no shortage of students from underrepresented populations in the world. It is our obligation to determine why these students are not progressing at equal rates into careers in research and higher education as well as to change the structures that hinder their progress.

Attempts to make these structural changes abound in the United States and abroad. For example, cluster hires support diversity and inclusivity because they create an "idea incubator" with built-in support across disciplinary boundaries. Cluster hires challenge the traditional disciplinary siloes in which scholars are expected to show mastery, and they provide the context for innovative teaching and research on themes of critical importance.

Each article in this symposium presents an example written by colleagues who represent Position A in some way. In their own commitment to make political science as a profession more diverse, equitable, and inclusive, the contributors investigated and piloted various structural changes in their own systems of recruiting, progression, promotion, and hiring. At least three themes can be drawn from this symposium.

First, the authors view our profession—specifically in terms of academic recruiting, progression, publishing, and civic engagement—as an arena in which *people face fundamentally unequal circumstances and opportunities based on their personal identity characteristics*. Second, the contributors

view *deliberate inclusion as a pathway to achieving greater diversity* and thereby greater equity, and they place the onus on the employer (i.e., the university, college, or department) to become a place that is inclusive of diverse identities, groups, and perspectives rather than on a colleague to “fit in.” Third, the authors clarify the benefits of *valuing DEI as more than only boxes to check* when running a department or university.

Each of the following strategies is the result of a commitment to piloting and testing techniques that can be evaluated

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and refined as DEI is pursued over time. We offer these strategies for consideration with the hope that when we challenge the structure of our own institutional constraints, we can collectively build on what the symposium contributors have learned and modify their ideas to suit various situations and needs.

THE POLITICS OF INEQUALITY IN THE PROFESSION OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

In “The Politics of Inequality in America,” Jacobs and Soss (2010) suggested an irreconcilable tension between democracy and capitalism. In the “politics of inequality in the academy,” there is a similar tension between the ideal of the “best” candidate and what is perceived as a viable and profitable return on the investment for the department. A democratic view of future colleague selection, as well as of performance evaluation and progression, would assume that each candidate has had equal opportunity and approximately equivalent qualifications and potential. The capitalist view would suggest that some candidates may generate better returns for the committee and department in terms of prestige, publications, the securing of external funding, and progression to tenure and promotion.

Yet, these processes are likely to be characterized by Schattschneider’s (1960) famous quote that the “[f]law in the pluralist heaven is that the choir sings with a strong upper-class accent.” In academia, the “pluralist heaven” is an academic department with diversity, representation, productivity, and harmony. However, the “choir” (i.e., the hiring committee or promotion and tenure committee) likely has strong incentives—absent DEI training put into practice—to maintain the status quo and therefore to interview and hire candidates who look like the traditional picture of the academy. The “upper-class accent” is the committee’s (and the department’s) implicit bias and assumptions about the pedigree and promise that each candidate holds. These traits have the potential to lead to global or college- and university-wide

nonrepresentative and homogeneous publishing, hires, and progression that do not reflect the institution’s or the discipline’s desire for substantive inclusion. Moreover, some of the most common mechanisms whereby the choir “sings” these assumptions into practice involve seeking letters of reference and hiring based on “fit.”

Letters of Reference

In the first article in this symposium, “Structuring Inclusion into Faculty Recruitment and Retention,” Magda Hinojosa

and Cameron Thies present step-by-step guidelines for how to structure recruiting and retention processes to be as inclusive as possible. They argue that diversifying a faculty must begin long before the recruitment of any particular position, with time spent devoted to a strategic hiring plan. With that plan in hand, recruitment of diverse candidates then depends on being as inclusive as possible throughout the other steps of the process, including the position description, advertising, setting of application requirements, training and experience of the search committee, interview processes, and negotiation of offers.

In particular, the authors note the pitfalls of soliciting reference letters with applications at the initial shortlisting stage. They claim that “[t]he problem with including letters in the initial application is that faculty may be tempted to not adequately review files and instead gravitate to candidates who have letters from people whose opinion they value.” The ability to make it onto a shortlist then becomes dependent on having particular individuals write letters in a particular way, all of which is idiosyncratic to the proclivities of the search committee members. Using these letters to influence shortlisting then reinforces institutional and personal biases, including the biases of the letter writers, with implications for both gender and racial diversity.

Hiring Based on “Fit”

In 1992, En Vogue released “Free Your Mind,” a “searing rock number that challenged racism, sexism, and other social phobias head on [and] was all at once, smart, sexy, and provocative” (Harrison 2022). A central message of the song was that individuals do not live according to the stereotypes that their characteristics may carry. The song urges listeners to “be color-blind,” promising that once the mind is freed of bias, “the rest will follow.” For many listeners of the time, being color-blind was an admirable goal. “Not seeing color” meant that people would not be judged based on their race, just like “not seeing sex” meant that women would be treated as equal to men.

Although it was unlikely the intent of the writers or performers of the song, color-blindness became an argument against considering race and sex as factors in admission, hiring, and promotion. Prominent figures such as US Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas argued that the Constitution is color-blind (CBS News 2007), and he used this argument to justify opposition to affirmative action, integration, and other policies designed to reduce economic, social, and political disparities (Carr 1997). By the end of the 1990s, it was becoming clear that blindness to diverse colors, races, sexes, and genders was limited in what it could achieve in terms of equity in society. Identity-blindness was not freeing our minds from the rigid, identity-based constraints whereby we expect individuals to behave according to the expectations associated with a particular gender, race, or class. Instead, it was freeing our minds from the responsibility of correcting identity-based inequities.

In fact, although seemingly a practice that should avoid discrimination, to be blind to diversity is to deny consequential,

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foundational differences that could not only be valued but also considered substantively and thoughtfully when making decisions about admission, hiring, and promotion. In some cases, blindness to diversity becomes a justification for avoiding the discussion of racism and discrimination altogether (Bonilla-Silva 2014). As Athena King states in her article, “Let’s Retire the Term ‘Fit’: Strategies to Improve Faculty Heterogeneity,” espousing and proclaiming identity-blindness is at the very least a way to communicate to colleagues that their cultural and professional attributes are not valued or appreciated.

At its worst, however, identity-blindness joins subjective assessments of reference letters as a justification for using another amorphous and subjective criteria for hiring—that is, whether a candidate is “a good fit.” “Fit” is essentially a euphemism for the intangible, nonquantifiable, and thinly veiled biased ways of signaling that some candidates are preferable because they represent the familiar, historically precedented visage of academia. King notes that, typically, an argument levied against a candidate during or after an interview that focuses on the extent to which a job candidate is “a good fit” for a position is a way to exclude people with diverse perspectives and approaches to working.

A feeling of “poor fit” can be perceived by candidates as well as the department recruiting them, sometimes due to the recruiters believing that the way to increase diversity is to make it clear that they “do not see color” or “care about gender.” Whereas they believe that they are being openly nondiscriminatory, recruiting faculty in fact are communicating to prospective colleagues the idea that they do not appreciate cultural or professional diversity. A candidate’s reaction to these ideas then is perceived as a micro-

aggression that does not “fit” with the department. Subsequently, historically excluded scholars are denied tenure and/or promotion because their work does not “fit” traditional expectations.

DELIBERATE INCLUSION AS A PATH TO SUBSTANTIVE DIVERSITY

For those who have believed that “not seeing color” was an admirable goal, it is helpful to think about *inclusion as a pathway to diversity and equity*. Increasing inclusiveness means expanding the ability and opportunity of traditionally excluded groups to participate. Doing so, therefore, is an affirmative action that can encourage people with diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences to join and stay in any organization, including the profession of political science. A first step to becoming a more inclusive workplace is to conceptualize hiring and promotion not as processes whereby candidates come to a department in pursuit of their own career goals but rather as opportunities for that department to

attract, retain, and assist the professional progress of people with diverse perspectives and backgrounds.

In the competition for excellent colleagues, it is the responsibility of the employer to be an inclusive place to work and thrive rather than the responsibility of the employee to survive in a rigid and non-inclusive environment. From this standpoint, it becomes the onus of the recruiting program, department, or university to acknowledge and reward activities that increase inclusiveness and achieve greater diversity and equity. This symposium highlights at least two strategies for demonstrating the value of inclusion and diversity to prospective and current members of a department: (1) incorporating diversity and inclusion efforts into performance and merit review, and (2) using a publication inclusion index.

Incorporating Diversity and Inclusion Efforts into Performance and Merit Review

If “the devil is in the details,” it is certainly in the administration of bureaucratic reporting systems meant to quantify progress and reward achievement. In their article, “Normalizing Diversity in Merit Review Forms,” Amy Liu, Michael Findley, David Leal, Raúl Madrid, Eric McDaniel, God’swill Osa, Tasha Philpot, Brooke Shannon, Zeynep Somer-Topcu, Carolina Villanueva, and Chris Wlezien identify how merit review forms largely reflect the vestiges of academic benchmarks, which are rooted in assumptions that the faculty is composed of white, male, tenured professors. This research team and their rigorous evaluation of 100+ merit review forms from all R1 institutions demonstrates how perfunctory annual evaluations have not kept pace with departmental

and university initiatives to increase DEI. Often viewed by faculty as formulaic annual nuisances that divert time from activities that actually matter (i.e., teaching and research), merit review forms provide insight into the structure and priorities of the systems that quantify and reward faculty productivity.

Liu et al. identify three major differences in merit review forms: who administers them, when they are deployed, and content required. More interesting, however, is the similarity across the forms, which focus on the broader disciplinary values and standards of teaching, research, and service. The merit review forms reflect an anachronistic method of evaluating faculty, bound by temporal and identity biases that fail to reflect institutions' revised DEI priorities. One example is the rapidly changing set of expectations surrounding pursuing (and securing) external funding through grants and contracts. The authors note that externally funded projects often are included under research and that about one third have a standalone category for grants. As Windsor and Kronsted (2022) find, grants are increasingly rated as important for tenure and promotion; however, there are few opportunities for scholars to learn the tradecraft of writing grants or to be rewarded explicitly for acquiring them.

The failure to revise and update these forms is consequential for the types of labor and output that faculty are responsible for delivering. For example, whereas decades of STEM initiatives have increased the numbers of women+ in undergraduate, graduate, and eventually faculty roles, many departments and fields remain male dominated. This fact means that when a first-generation Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) woman is solicited for service roles, she may be serving in multiple capacities, even when she occupies only one seat at the table. She receives service credit of $N=1$ for membership on the committee, even when she is participating as $N=3$ (i.e., woman+, BIPOC, and first-generation scholar). She is bringing triple the perspective but receiving only one third of the credit she is due.

Another example is mentorship. As Crawford and Windsor (2021) noted, women+ have undertaken more informal mentorship during the COVID-19 pandemic. These activities are time consuming, rewarding, and difficult to quantify. Formal mentorship activities can appear as items on a CV; informal mentorship often does not. If merit review forms included specific fields for DEI, then historically excluded and underrepresented scholars could receive credit for their multilayered levels and types of service, thus making those service engagements more likely.

Using a Publication Inclusion Index

In her article, "The Publication Gender Gap, Collaboration and an Index of Inclusion for Scholars Publishing Peer-Reviewed Research," Unislaw Williams suggests a metric that can evaluate research output and productivity based on its level of inclusiveness. She presents a new measure for evaluating scholarship and contributions to the discipline: the inclusion index. Computed as a ratio of the number of a scholar's unique coauthors to their total number of coauthors in publications, the inclusion index captures

inclusiveness in a scholar's publication practices. Scholars with higher scores publish with more unique coauthors, as a total percentage of all their coauthored work, than scholars with lower scores.

Williams's inclusion index is an objective and potentially useful measure of the inclusivity of a prospective colleague's publication practices—and those of a prospective department. Rather than using an amorphous or abstract feeling regarding "fit" to assess whether a candidate and a department can work well together, an objective measure like the inclusion index can be calculated for any candidate or department. It also can be easily defended and explained when justifying shortlisting, hiring, and progression decisions.

Williams finds that scholars who repeatedly use the same group of coauthors tend to publish in higher-ranked outlets, which explains more than we previously knew about how coauthorship factors into publication success. Although it is less inclusive, the repeated interaction between regular coauthors may capitalize on efficiencies and reduce the transaction costs of working with new people. Being more inclusive in scholarship appears to serve a purpose for the discipline as a pathway for more scholars to publish—but at the expense of a scholar's individual record according to a measure such as a citation index or an H-index.

Departments and universities that are trying to prioritize diversity and inclusion currently rely almost solely on diversity statements in job applications to assess candidates. They then struggle to find objective metrics to assess diversity and inclusion activities among faculty members who are seeking promotion. Williams's inclusion index fills an important gap, enabling departments to evaluate performance in terms of a commitment to diversity and inclusion.

VALUING DIVERSITY FOR DIVERSITY'S SAKE

Naturally flowing from the idea that inclusion is an attribute to value among colleagues' professional practices is the idea that DEI is more than simply activities that departments and universities should check off a list. Activities designed to enhance DEI are important not only in that they demonstrate a university's or a department's conforming to recent norms. They also are important because when they do achieve and enhance DEI, they improve the quality of the workplace for those from underrepresented groups, and they attract more people from diverse backgrounds to join the profession and progress to senior positions in it.

What is known about the world largely comes from what white, Western, English-speaking scholars have observed or tested about non-Western places. Diversifying the profession thus becomes an opportunity to diversify our knowledge. This symposium offers insights into the value of diversity for diversity's sake in terms of improving workloads and increasing the profession's impact outside of academia. It suggests an online dashboard to ensure that systems are in place to make it happen.

Engagement and Impact Outside of Academia

Murdie (2017) noted that women+ faculty tend to "take care of the academic family" in their service roles, especially roles that

do not raise their profile on campus or in their field more broadly. Historically excluded scholars, including women+, BIPOC, and LGBTQIA+ faculty members (who may claim multiple identities from across these designations) tend to be solicited for service roles because they fill institutional gaps in diversity. Scholars of these identity groups then become overburdened with service because they are requested to represent the desired characteristics missing from existing committee members.

One undervalued service assignment that recently has arisen is civic engagement outside of academia. In their article, “Avoiding ‘Checkbox Inclusion’: Structuring Meaningful Inclusion of Underrepresented Groups in Policy Engagement,” Rupal Mehta and Brigitte Seim identify how the pandemic and racial reckoning in 2020 and beyond has created a substantial gap in the inclusion of underrepresented groups in the policy-making sphere. This gap stands alongside other significant obstacles that academics face in bridging the ivory tower versus real-world divide. Although policy innovations such as Bridging the Gap and Compass Science Communication have sought to lower the barriers to entry for academics into the policy sphere, challenges remain that even these forward-thinking programs do not fully address.

First, there is a disciplinary disincentive to translate journal articles for outward-facing venues, such as *The Conversation*, the *Duck of Minerva*, and the *Monkey Cage*. The writing style for these outlets differs from the erudite, jargon-laden language used to demonstrate mastery of concepts and in-group membership in fields and subfields. Scholars are not trained to translate their ideas for these outlets; furthermore, they are scarcely rewarded for these efforts. Although alt-metrics such as social media engagement and authoring non-peer-reviewed articles can raise individual and departmental profiles, they often do not count toward tenure and promotion. Indeed, in some departments, trade publications with major presses that gain international acclaim fail to meet departmental requirements for academic advancement.

Historically excluded scholars may be even more hesitant to assume work that is not traditionally valued or counted in academia, even though their perspective and program of study likely speak to important, contemporary, and consequential policy debates. Scholars from outside of the English-speaking world could amplify their impact in policy debates because of

A Dashboard That Counts

A key point in *The PhD Parenthood Trap* (Crawford and Windsor 2021) is that policies should be transparent, clearly communicated, and equitably applied. The Faculty Workload Intervention Program proposed by Heather Stoll, Michele McLaughlin-Zamora, and Sarah Anderson in “Concrete Diversity Initiatives in Political Science: A Faculty Workload Intervention Program” aims to do just that. The authors describe an online platform that provides a clear rubric for departments to more equitably and transparently allocate and track service assignments.

Whereas historically excluded scholars may be encouraged to “just say no” to service assignments and focus on research, taking this advice can put them at odds with their colleagues and administrators. Research has disabused us of the notion that “women just don’t ask” or negotiate for improved working conditions, including salary and service assignments (Bowles, Thomason, and Bear 2019; Mitchell and Hesli 2013). In fact, women do ask, but not only are their negotiations likely to be dismissed, they also are likely to suffer reputational costs and be labeled as bossy, bitchy, or uncooperative. Women and other historically excluded scholars, therefore, are in a much less favorable position to bargain for better working conditions. They can benefit from the accountability and transparency of a dashboard that tracks their contributions to the department, university, and/or greater academic field.

Stoll, McLaughlin-Zamora, and Anderson suggest that technological solutions such as the dashboard can improve outcomes for underrepresented scholars in terms of persistence and success in the academy. Although they use the familiar “leaky pipeline” terminology common in discussions about progression, Windsor, Crawford, and Breuning (2021) suggested that the experience is better described as a game of “chutes and ladders.” Overburdening scholars with service assignments or indiscriminately weighting service roles without systematic rigor—equitably applied, clearly communicated, and transparent—can send scholars down the chutes.

The dashboard is a ladder that clarifies the rules of the game and improves the perception (and actual application) of a fair distribution of labor. In some cases, tenured faculty are steered away—and protected—from service, teaching, or mentoring because of their poor track record in these roles. They essentially are rewarded for doing an unsatisfactory job. The

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their multilingual, multicultural competencies. Rather than perceiving policy-oriented work as a career liability, the academy should embrace and validate these efforts—and count them toward professional promotion and service.

disparity, inequity, and capriciousness in assigning service roles can force scholars to forego research time, which harms their chances of earning tenure and promotion. The dashboard suggested by Stoll, McLaughlin-Zamora, and Anderson aligns

departmental priorities and accountability for delivering high-quality service and job performance.

TAKEAWAYS AND LESSONS

The strategies presented in this symposium have varying degrees of success in increasing DEI in the profession, yet they have been fundamentally successful in challenging the institutional structure that surrounds recruiting and progression. In most institutions, a gap remains between informal conversations about commitments to DEI initiatives or passing online trainings, on the one hand, and enacting the behaviors that embrace the values of representation on the other. We challenge readers to take advice and ideas from the articles in this symposium to develop a deliberate DEI strategy that can be read at the outset of meetings where deliberations about recruiting and progression take place. A departmental DEI statement, with tangible action items and a self-grading checklist, can help bridge the gap between intentions and actions, and it can serve as the foundation for a meaningful commitment to increasing diversity and representation in the academy.


CONFLICTS OF INTEREST


The authors declare that there are no ethical issues or conflicts of interest in this research. ■


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
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