

APSA Presidential Task Force on Systemic Inequalities in the Discipline

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There are many issues of concern for marginalized members of our discipline, such as racial and ethnic minority scholars, women of all races and ethnicities, and LGBTQ+ scholars. This task force addresses questions of how systemic systems of inequality that have manifested over time in the discipline affect the career trajectories and experiences within the broad contours of the profession of scholars pushed to the margins of the discipline.



Above: Paula D. McClain (left), Kimberly A. Mealy (right).

THIS TASK FORCE REPORT COVERS FOUR MAIN RESEARCH AREAS:

1. Tenure and promotion experiences of differently positioned and structurally marginalized faculty;
2. The climate and context in the discipline and in departments;
3. Citation practices and patterns;
4. Graduate training and graduate student experiences.

The four task force working groups used qualitative and quantitative methods to better understand how marginalized individuals experience their scholarly and professional lives in the political science discipline, at annual and regional meetings, and in their home departments. A second focus is an examination of the effect these experiences have on their career trajectory, including their tenure and promotion prospects. To address these goals, task force researchers and research assistants conducted multiple original research projects employing both survey methodology, interviews, and focus groups. The researchers also worked closely with APSA staff to leverage existing data from APSA surveys and demographic dashboards.

THE OVERARCHING GOALS FOR THE TASK FORCE ARE:

1. To examine the systemic inequalities that marginalized scholars within our community experience;
2. To propose recommendations for ameliorating them, particularly for APSA and for departments of political science across the country;
3. To develop a set of best practices that would bring about transformational change in those inequalities and thus move the discipline in a more open and accepting direction. Findings and recommendations from the task force report will inform the association's approach to addressing systemic inequalities and

racism and the creation and implementation of best practices for more equitable practices and policies for scholars. The task force's recommendations are shown below. McClain and the task force co-chairs presented the full report to the APSA Council during the council's Fall 2021 meeting. The full report, including an introduction by McClain, will be published in early 2022 and will be shared widely across the profession and externally on the task force websites: https://connect.apsanet.org/sidtask_force/ and <https://www.apsanet.org/ABOUT/Governance/APSA-Task-Force-on-Examining-Issues-and-Mechanisms-of-Systemic-Inequality-in-the-Discipline->.

Special acknowledgement and appreciation to the task force convening leader, Paula D. McClain, past APSA president, the working group co-chairs, the task force members, and the APSA and Duke University staff who contributed to the completion of this report. The Task Force is also grateful for support from APSA and the ASAE Foundation Innovation Grant. To learn more, visit the APSA Task Force on Systemic Inequality in the Discipline webpage.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon their review of the literature and research findings, the four task force working groups issue the following recommendations for departments, APSA, and the profession. APSA will work with the Task Force leaders and working groups to share these recommendations and to identify opportunities for implementation and engagement across the discipline.

Promotion and Tenure

CATHY COHEN | UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO, WORKING GROUP CHAIR

DATA PROJECT

APSA should develop and launch a major quantitative and qualitative longitudinal data project that will track the development of differently positioned and structurally marginalized faculty over at least a 10-year period to record who exits the discipline and academy, who is promoted with tenure or to full, whose promotion is denied, and the degree to which other factors enhance one's chances for promotion.

Any new longitudinal data project must adequately assess the complexity of important characteristics and identities such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, subject area of expertise, and institution type. Particular attention should be given to collecting data on scholars who identify as LGBTQ+, as well as how in-



stitution type affect promotion and career evaluation processes.

MENTORING

Because women and people of color tend to characterize their departments as more hostile than their male and white colleagues do (Claypool and Mershon 2016), departments and the discipline should provide resources to support alternative sites of mentoring, such as providing funds for attending identity-based conferences and working groups,

convening junior faculty to learn about the promotion process, and designating resources to engage with colleagues at other institutions who have common expertise.

Departments should provide clear, detailed communication to faculty and their mentors about mentoring best practices and expectations. Departments should also hold discussions with mentors and mentees about power dynamics of mentoring, and provide opportunity for mentees to share feedback, concerns, and suggestions about their experience.

PROMOTION METRICS, TRANSPARENCY AND COMMUNICATION

Departments should engage in an equity evaluation of the components of their tenure process and criteria, with a focus on identifying any explicit or imbedded biases that systemically disadvantage some faculty over others. The results of the equity evaluation should be posted on departmental websites so all in the department have access to the results.

Department chairs should hold individual and cohort meetings with junior faculty—possibly in the first, third, and penultimate year before the tenure decision—to ensure that everyone is receiving the same general information about the evaluation process and information specific to their individual case. Chairs should present all those facing a promotion evaluation with a written statement describing the process.

DEPARTMENTAL PRACTICES, CULTURE AND OVERALL EXPERIENCE

Faculty who take on disproportionate amounts of departmental service roles should receive course load reductions that offset the time spent serving on committees, advising additional students, and taking on additional informal service roles.

Institutions should develop clear and concrete guidelines that address how to make expectations regarding joint appointments more transparent and equitable in terms of workload since these positions are more likely to be held by women and people of color (Hesli, Lee, and Mitchell 2012, 479; Disch and O'Brien 2007). Joint appointments should be accompanied by clear written guidelines about the expected service load, ways to ensure joint input in the assessment of work related to promotion, and shared supports for the appointed faculty's research agenda.

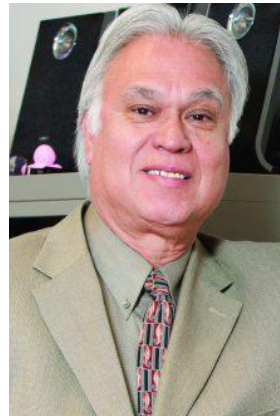
Departments should regularly conduct a climate evalua-

tion to monitor and track resource allocation, perceived hostility and collegiality, and who is being invited for lectures and workshops through the department and subfields. Departments should establish an equity and inclusion committee, including representatives of all subfields and ranks in the department, to review and make public recommendations based on the data from the climate evaluation.

Citations and Inequities

JOHN A. GARCIA | ICPSR, WORKING GROUP CHAIR

ADDRESSING CITATION BIASES



Journal editors can ask peer reviewers to explicitly consider whether article bibliographies are representative, including the distribution of author genders.

APSA sections that sponsor journals need to evaluate whether the publications provide ample descriptive representation of section members.

Individuals who select journal editorial teams should pay attention not only to their diversity, but also to their plans for addressing potential citation biases.

While women researchers have received the majority of attention with regard to examining citation biases, such examinations should also dedicate more attention to other researchers such as people of color and LGBTQ scholars, and conduct more detailed examination as to the extent and nature of biases.

Faculty and their students, especially women and people of color, should be made aware of the value of self-citation, co-authoring, and networking.

STEPS THAT JOURNALS CAN TAKE

Journals should take the simple step of being upfront about the citation gaps in the discipline and asking authors to consider these gaps as they submit manuscripts for review.

APSA should create a database of reviewers that editors can access, by research area and with demographic information that APSA already collects. This would allow editors to look beyond their own networks and the networks of authors for reviewers.

Journals should ask reviewers who decline an invitation to review instead to suggest additional names of experts to invite as reviewers.

Journals should continue to bring in field editors or use the editorial teams models to guarantee that editors are reading and making decisions about manuscripts in their area of expertise.

APSA should conduct an empirical study of citation gaps for historically excluded scholars.

Climate and Context

CAROL A. MERSHON | UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, WORKING GROUP CHAIR

ADDRESSING EXCLUSION AND DISPROPORTIONATE SERVICE BURDENS



Institutions must better support faculty who are facing additional service burdens related to diversity, equity, inclusion, and anti-racism in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder and the resultant protests. Means of support include:

Hiring additional faculty members of color so that the few existing faculty members of color are not relied on so heavily to do all the diversity-related work.

Hiring a chief diversity officer (if they do not already have one)

with a staff and financial resources within each school or college on campus.

More equitably distributing the service roles related to diversity and inclusion, including among new hires and those white faculty members who aspire to become allies and advance equity goals.

Providing additional resources or incentives that would support faculty who wish to revise their course syllabi or offer programs that address topics related to anti-Black racism.

Institutions need to enact policies that alleviate the burdens that women academics and faculty of color are facing amid the pandemic, such as accommodating childcare and elder care responsibilities, providing flexible work arrangements, offering additional teaching support and lower course loads, making adjustments to tenure clock and standards, and offering telehealth resources.

Institutions should prioritize collecting regular and systematic data on the effects of COVID-19, the anti-racism protests, service, and exclusion on faculty members, specifically women academics and faculty of color.

DIVERSIFYING POLITICAL SCIENCE

When interviewing a job candidate, hiring committees should be mindful of implicit biases and stereotypes that others may have about a candidate.

Interviewers must ensure that they speak up if a colleague is inappropriate or commits a microaggression (or is blatantly sexist/racist/etc.) in front of the candidate or during the hiring process.

Departments should commit to 10-year plans with multiple markers of progress along the way.

When writing job advertisements, departments should be attentive to how it might be phrased to be more attractive to candidates from historically marginalized groups.

Departments should cultivate a diverse pool of applicants by reaching out directly to advisors with students who are women or people of color, or to individual potential candidates, encouraging them to apply.

Job descriptions and candidate-evaluation templates should include various measures of what a "quality" candidate looks like that go beyond elite institutional pedigrees and that take into consideration the way in which a candidate will contribute to and potentially improve the campus climate.

STEPS THAT APSA CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE CLIMATE AND CONTEXT

APSA should:

1. Update bylaws of organized sections to include diversity, equity, and inclusion policies.
2. Adopt an "inclusive management" approach (Moon 2008) to express to the membership APSA's commitment to inclusion and equity.
3. Adopt LACE proposal with the expansion of protocols for faculty and graduate students who are family/informal caregivers.
4. Update grievance procedures in section and affiliate associations to implement front-end protocols.
5. Develop a targeted recruitment plan for HBCUs, Hispanic/Latinx Universities and Colleges, and Tribal Colleges and Universities and other institutions serving first-generation and underrepresented or marginalized groups.
6. Institute mechanisms for examining and evaluating issues of sexual and gender harassment, adding staff as necessary to fill this role.
7. Hire more full-time staff in the APSA Diversity and Inclusion Office.
8. Hire a recruitment coordinator for Minority Serving Institutions.
9. Include in job descriptions new responsibilities that are added to the staff of the APSA Diversity and Inclusion Office, particularly in response to new initiatives.
10. Revisit staffing in the APSA Diversity and Inclusion Office as responsibilities are added.
11. Visit and revisit methods of circulating, utilizing, and, where appropriate, institutionalizing insights from reports.
12. Include recommendations for follow-up, clear lines of accountability, and accountability mechanisms for initiatives such as ADVANCE and the APSA Hackathon.

Graduate Training and Graduate Student Experiences

NIAMBI CARTER | HOWARD UNIVERSITY, WORKING GROUP CHAIR

INTRODUCING UNDERGRADUATES TO POLITICAL SCIENCE

Universities and departments should prioritize introducing and exposing students to political science at the undergraduate level by focusing on the following efforts:

Build institutions that provide direct opportunities for under-



graduate learning and research, such as the Political Science Research Lab at Jackson State University and the Ruth J. Simmons Center for Race and Justice at Prairie View A&M University.

Develop recruitment programs to enable undergraduates to present research and receive feedback and learn more about graduate school, like the Emerging Scholars Conference at the University of Michigan, the Graduate Diversity Visitation Program at Purdue University, and the

HBCU MSI Research Summit at Virginia Tech University.

Offer summer research programs where undergraduate students receive graduate-level training, complete graduate school application materials, and learn GRE test taking strategies, like the UC San Diego-Spelman Morehouse Summer Research Program.

Consider gender identity, citizenship status, ability, and other sites of inclusion in institutional efforts, such as allowing students to identify their chosen names, creating institutional mechanisms to address immigration concerns, and developing steps for registering for disability accommodations at both the university and departmental levels.

CHANGING GRADUATE SCHOOL NORMS

Institutions should change existing graduate school norms that tend to disadvantage graduate students from historically underrepresented groups in higher education by:

Establishing codes of conduct and build institutional mechanisms to address complaints. Departments should outline anti-discrimination policies in graduate student handbooks and ensure that students are aware of them at the start of their graduate program.

Adopting inclusive language in department announcements, caucus names, etc., and engage in deliberate conversations to update language used to refer to diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

Considering students with disabilities, including those who have invisible disabilities, when building DEI institutional mechanisms.

Conducting departmental curricular audits to identify weaknesses and substantively back DEI efforts through the development of coursework that will be attractive to students from historically underrepresented groups.

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