

Program Description

Women in Economics: Making Connections and Forging Ahead

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In 2009, the economics department at Kansas State University began one of the first department-level Women in Economics groups for female graduate students in the United States. This is particularly important because of the general under-representation of women in the economics profession and especially in the academy. The main goals of this group are as follows:

1. **Mentorship and Role Models:** Women are exposed to a variety of perspectives from female economists and other female leaders, on and off campus, on topics such as dual-career job decisions, being a woman in the field of economics, formal female mentorship possibilities, and managing one's time while raising a family. Women students are provided support and advice as well as chances to gain valuable insight through female mentors who are at various stages in their careers.
2. **Network Building:** Women are encouraged to meet and discuss their ideas and goals with one another as well as with mentors. Outside events to support networking are also initiated.
3. **Forum for Discussion and Mutual Support:** Women are encouraged to discuss their concerns and the positive points that draw them to the field of economics. This includes, among other topics, women discussing female role models and how these role models have impacted their lives.

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Mentorship has largely consisted of bringing female professors and researchers in the economics profession in to share their trials, successes, and advice. A few examples of women leaders who participated as presenters are: Joni Hersch, Professor of Law and Economics at Vanderbilt University Law School; Ellen McGratten, Monetary Advisor for the Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank; Donna K. Ginther, Professor of Economics and Director for the Center for Economic and Business Analysis at the University of Kansas; Hikaru Peterson, Associate Professor of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University; and Kristine Brown, Assistant Professor at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Non-economists who have spoken to the women include Myra Gordon, Associate Provost of Diversity at Kansas State University, and Gabriela Vega, Attorney and female entrepreneur. Funding to support these speakers has come from National Science Foundation (NSF) ADVANCE through Kansas State and the Joan Haworth Committee for the Status of Women in the Economics Profession (CSWEP) fellowship. In 2010, the Office of the Provost at Kansas State recognized the activities of the Women in Economics group as a targeted area for Academic Excellence fund grants that provide additional support.

Network building has consisted of meetings and social gatherings where women have the opportunity to discuss possible collaborations among themselves and with mentors. An additional outside event included a trip to the “NSF day” at the University of Kansas, where students learned about the process of writing grant applications, were introduced to the “merit review” philosophy, and had the unique opportunity to meet with other potential applicants in various fields at both the graduate student and faculty levels. This past year, there were 239 participants at this event and about 8% were graduate students. As a result of this event, members of the Kansas State Women in Economics group stated that they felt more prepared to take the initiative and write grant proposals for their own projects.

Author Biography

Florence Neymotin is an Assistant Professor of Economics at Kansas State University and is also the initiator, founder, and advisor for the Women in Economics group. Florence collaborates with an executive board of female graduate students at Kansas State in order to maintain the continued functionality of the group.