BROADENING THE PATHWAY FOR GRADUATE STUDIES IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

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Between 1995 and 2005, Latinxs comprised 8.6% of political science undergraduate students in the United States. Yet, during this period, Latinxs comprised only 4.1% of PhD recipients. Since then, the share of Latinx PhD recipients has plateaued at 5% of political science and government doctoral-degree recipients; although more Latina women receive bachelor's degrees in political science, the share of women decreased considerably at the PhD level (Monforti and Michelson 2008, 161). The slow pace of progress in this arena should come as no surprise because undergraduates from underrepresented groups seeking to pursue graduate studies in political science continue to face significant hurdles. This article briefly discusses the challenges that students from underrepresented groups face as they transition into graduate studies. We develop a series of recommendations for addressing these challenges.

The challenges that students from historically underrepresented groups face in gaining admission and finishing their doctoral degrees in political science are numerous. They include lack of funding, mentorship, opportunities for collaboration and coauthorship, and social support. First, lack of funding not only shapes students' decisions to pursue graduate studies and attend a graduate program, it also hinders their ability to complete a doctoral degree (Bair and Haworth 1999; Cusworth 2001; Monforti and Michelson 2008). Second, students also cite lack of effective mentorship as one of the constraints to their academic success (Monforti and Michelson 2008)—specifically, the opportunity to benefit from apprenticeship experiences, including research and teaching assistantships, coauthorship, and networking opportunities (Monforti and Michelson 2008; Turner and Thompson 1993). Third, an important determinant of underrepresented student academic success is social support. Students who have positive interactions and relationships with other students, faculty, and staff within their departments are more likely to graduate (Bair and Haworth 1999).

Undergraduates in Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) also must contend with the decline of state funding for their institutions of higher education and the impacts that these budget cuts have on counseling services, hiring of faculty, and creation of a climate conducive to academic excellence. For instance, in a survey administered to current and recently graduated political science students from the University of Puerto Rico (N=78), we found that 78% of survey participants reported that they like doing research. However, only 23% had the opportunity to present their research at a conference or a symposium, and only two students had their research published. Students also reported that two of the greatest limitations they faced were the lack of mentorship opportunities and the time to work on or improve their research project. Furthermore, students reported their desire for more advanced methodological training in preparation for their graduate studies.

Motivated by our findings and with the aim of upending these tendencies in political science, we developed the Minority Graduate Placement Program (MIGAP). During the next two years, we will pilot this program in Puerto Rico and support undergraduate political science students at the University of Puerto Rico as they navigate the graduate-school application process. On completion of the pilot program, MIGAP will be scaled up to serve underrepresented minority students at MSIs in the continental United States. With the generous support of the APSA Second Century Fund, and in partnership with doctoral-degree–conferring political science departments in the United States, MIGAP will (1) arrange campus visits for prospective applicants; (2) provide small faculty–undergraduate collaborative-research incentive grants; (3) host a research-methods training camp during the summer before their application; (4) provide graduate-school and funding-application workshops; (5) add program participants to the APSA Minority Student Recruitment Program database; and (6) match students with potential mentors.

MIGAP is aligned with previous research that identifies the positive impact that undergraduate research experiences have on a student's graduate experience (Hathaway, Nagda, and Gregerman 2002; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Undergraduate research experiences also allow students to develop strong mentor–mentee relationships and improve their self-efficacy and self-confidence (Hu, Kuh, and Li 2008).

This program also supports women faculty and faculty of color, who often are overburdened with supporting women and minority students who do not see themselves represented in anyone else in their departments and in the discipline more generally. This type of programming is particularly needed in institutions facing financial hardships, such as the University of Puerto Rico, where there is comparatively little institutional investment in student counseling. Alongside the burdens of tenure-track and family responsibilities, "inhospitable" institutional climates, and research norms that discount collaborative work that could nurture women's careers, a leaky pipeline further exacerbates the issues that political scientists from underrepresented groups face as they navigate the profession (APSA Task Force 2011; Sinclair-Chapman 2015).

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Ultimately, MIGAP will contribute to developing what Sinclair-Chapman (2015) called a "diversity infrastructure." Along with APSA's Diversity and Inclusion Programs, this project broadens APSA's diversity infrastructure by developing a pilot campus-visitation program; fostering informal mentorship relationships; preparing students for summer research opportunities (e.g., the Summer Research Opportunity Programs, Leadership Alliance, and Institute for Recruitment of Teachers); helping them navigate graduate-school applications; and fostering their participation in the APSA Minority Fellowship Program and Ralph Bunche Summer Institute. Furthermore, we seek to improve retention and graduation rates by fostering collaborative relationships across institutions of higher education and by mobilizing support for students and faculty in MSIs. These relationships are key components of a strategy for diversifying political science (Beckwith 2015; Mealy 2015; Sinclair-Chapman 2015). Collectively, these coalitions will allow us to seize a particularly opportune moment for developing a holistic approach to diversifying political science. It comes at a time in which APSA status committees have sought to increase their collaborative work around pipeline, recruitment, and retention efforts (Mealy 2018).

Although recruitment and retention of Latinx students has proven to be challenging, we argue that this is far from being an intractable problem. Rather, we can leverage what we already know about supporting students and faculty from underrepresented groups to design and implement programming that enables their success. ■

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CONFERENCING IS NOT A LUXURY AND NEITHER IS THE SCHOLARLY LIFE OF OUR FUTURE COLLEAGUES

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> As we learn to bear the intimacy of scrutiny and to flourish within it, as we learn to use the products of that scrutiny for power within our living, those fears which rule our lives and form our silences begin to lose their control over us…
>
> The white fathers told us: I think, therefore I am. The Black mother within each of us—the poet—whispers in our dreams: I feel, therefore I can be free. Poetry coins the language to express and charter this revolutionary demand, the implementation of that freedom.
>
> —Audre Lorde, *Poetry Is Not a Luxury* (1984, 36, 38)

This spotlight article uses Audre Lorde's groundbreaking essay, *Poetry Is Not a Luxury* (1984), to consider a set of conditions not of my own making but that I survived. Therefore, the argument—funding first-generation, underrepresented minority, undocumented, refugee, Middle Eastern and/or Islamic, Native/ First Nations, and African/Black & African Diaspora/ Caribbean students to attend academic conferences as soon and as often as possible—is better described as a testimony—with a poem in the middle—and not as an endorsement of best practices. The genre of best practices suggests somehow a problem solved and not an ongoing, deeply violent dialectic of power. It is the latter with which I am concerned so I leave best practices to readers whose good faith compels them to stand outside of their own individual interests. Moreover, I am concerned with offering testimonial evidence and spurring a forthright conversation about ethical practices and principled necessities. As a testimony that insists on refusing silencing, it is worth exploring this set of conditions *of ongoing, deeply violent dialectics of power.* These particular groups of students are being enthusiastically recruited to campuses that are not willing to commit to their success in higher education. Departments must prioritize the funding of these particular groups of students with recruitment that supports them and their faculty mentors attending regional and national conferences each year during their graduate training. Period.

This article analyzes the types of commitments that faculty must make to guarantee that there are wraparound supports for these particular groups of students to flourish and to name the dialectic of power and violence that constitutes how research is conducted and how knowledge is produced in our discipline. Not all faculty are willing to commit to this type of anticapitalist politics of economic redistribution; however, those faculty who know that hiring and wage discrimination contributes to destabilizing forms of social inequality that constitute economic violence and cross-generational genocide may recognize these acts as important to endorse and address. As LGBTQ+, transgender, gender non-binary, first-generation and underrepresented minority,

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