

2024 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

November 15, 2024

From: Committee on Professional Climate (T. Renee Bowen (Chair), Kasey Buckles, Kitt Carpenter, Kerwin Charles, Donna Ginther)

To: American Economic Association Executive Committee

Executive Summary

In April 2018, the AEA Executive Committee voted to establish a new standing Committee on Equity, Diversity, and Professional Conduct (CEDPC). As of 2025, this standing committee has been renamed the Committee on Professional Climate (CPC). The goal of CPC is to improve the climate in the economics profession, particularly for women and minorities, and to consider additional ideas to improve the climate for all those in the profession. CPC achieves this primarily by implementing and overseeing the initiatives recommended by the [report of an earlier Ad Hoc Committee](#).

In 2024 the Committee's primary responsibilities included producing the report on the 2023 Professional Climate Survey, the implementation of the \$995,000 Co-Impact grant, and adjudication of the Distinguished Service award. To complement these efforts, the committee has also expanded its online presence and formed subcommittees (including non-CPC members) to handle the growing demands. We will continue to serve the needs of the AEA and fulfill our mission in 2025, assisted by the addition of three new members—Ethan Gatewood Lewis, Professor, Dartmouth College, Michael Mueller-Smith, Associate Professor, University of Michigan, and Pinka Chatterji, Professor, University at Albany.

The sections below summarize CPC activities for the 2024 year.

2023 Professional Climate Survey Report

The Committee on Professional Climate (CPC) is charged with carrying out and preparing a report on a survey on the Professional Climate in the Economics Profession every five years. The first survey was fielded in 2018, and the report was disseminated in September 2019. The second survey was fielded in 2023 and repeated most of the questions fielded in 2018. However, a new module was included in the 2023 survey to measure awareness of, and satisfaction with, the various new AEA initiatives to improve the climate. A draft report is near completion and expected to be available in February 2025. The longer timeline is owing to the dramatic expansion of CPC activities in 2024, in particular Co-Impact grant meetings, reporting, and programming, that required substantially more time commitment from members. Below are some highlights from the draft

Response Rates and Overall Climate

While about 10,000 individuals participated in 2018, the response rate was much lower in 2023, with less than 5,000 responses recorded (either complete or incomplete). To the extent that the AEA wants to continue conducting such surveys on a regular basis, it will be important to find ways to engage a broader section of the membership to share their views and experiences. The findings, even more so than in 2018, need to be interpreted with extreme caution given the self-selected sample.

Despite the substantially lower response rate, respondents' observable characteristics are overall quite similar to those in 2018. However, 2023 respondents are noticeably older (about 3 years older on average), and a greater share report some disability (which could be due to a change in how the disability question was asked in 2023). Also, only 3% of 2023 respondents are students compared to 6% in 2018. Hence, neither this survey nor the 2018 survey can tell us much, if anything at all, about the climate experienced by Ph.D. students.

The responses on the general climate showed that there is substantial improvement still to be made in the economics profession. In general, respondents are much happier with the climate at their employer than with the climate in the economics profession. Over half of the survey respondents (56%) are satisfied with the climate at their employer compared to only 32% in the economics profession. There are significant differences across demographic groups. Males are more satisfied (39%) compared with females (17%). Whites, non-whites, non-disabled, and non-LGBT are more satisfied (31%-34%) compared to people with a disability and those who identify as LGBT (~23%).

Change in the climate from five years ago

Respondents were asked whether they agreed with the statement: "I am more satisfied with the climate in the economics profession than I was five years ago," 41% of respondents agreed with the statement, while 32% expressed no change and the remainder indicated that the climate was worse. Notably, respondents from groups who were the least likely to be satisfied with the general climate in 2023, at the same time indicated that the climate had improved compared to five years ago. Female respondents (45%) and those who identified as LGBT (44%) were more likely to agree that the climate had improved compared to five years ago than the remainder of the sample.

Demographic groups

The largest gaps in satisfaction with the climate in the profession are between men and women. In 2023, 39% of male respondents said they were satisfied with the climate, compared to just 17% of women. Women were less likely to report feeling valued (28% vs. 48% for men) and more likely to report discrimination (31% vs. 16%). These raw gaps are similar to those observed in 2018.

The climate results for white versus non-white economists presented a mixed picture. As in 2018, the fraction of non-white respondents was relatively small—4% Black, 10% Latinx, and 14% Asian in 2023. The ratios suggest that the profession has not changed substantially in racial or ethnic mix over the past five years. Similarly, satisfaction with the overall climate in the field of economics has changed little for non-white respondents (34% in 2018 and 31% in 2023), and for white respondents (34% in 2018 and 32% in 2023). However, in the 2023 survey, a high fraction of non-white economists (41%) reported feeling more satisfied with the climate than they did five years ago, and black economists reported improvements at the highest rate, 51%. While these paint a neutral to positive picture, the 2023 survey shows that the rate at which discrimination has been experienced among non-white economists in the last five years (29%), has increased relative to the previous five years (17%).

Conclusion

The report concludes with suggestions for continued improvement in the Professional Climate, with a particular emphasis on PhD students, and raising awareness of AEA initiatives. The implementation of many of the suggestions has been enabled by the Co-Impact Grant that was awarded to CPC and CSWEP in December 2023. The Grant and activities are described in the next section.

Co-Impact Grant

In collaboration with CSWEP, CPC submitted and received a multi-year grant from the Co-Impact Foundation for \$995,000 in December 2023. The grant will be spread over 4 years—December 1, 2023 to December 31, 2027. December 1, 2023 to February 28, 2025 is considered Year 0 and is allocated \$290,000 out of the 4-year budget. We are required to spend at least 65% of funds in Year 0 in order to receive future funding. A report on Year 0 activities will be due to Co-Impact on April 30, 2025.

The Co-Impact proposal and submission were spearheaded by Marianne Bertrand, Anusha Chari, Misty Heggenes, Yana Rogers, Kasey Buckles, and Donna Ginther. After approval, Misty Heggenes and Yana Rogers participated in a required one-week workshop in Mexico in January 2024 to receive feedback from the Co-Impact team and further develop ideas for the grant. After this workshop, a Co-Impact Sub-Committee was formed to oversee the grant implementation and required reporting. The current Co-Impact Sub-Committee includes Renee Bowen (Co-Chair and CPC Chair), Linda Tesar (Co-Chair and CSWEP Chair), Kasey Buckles, Donna Ginther, and Yana Rodgers. Gwyn Loftis has been providing administrative support. The Co-Impact subcommittee has met five times since its formation.

Below is a summary of the approved total and Year 0 budget, followed by more details about Year 0 programming.

| | Total 4-year Budget | Year 0 Budget |
|---|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Focus Groups for 60-100 graduate students | \$15,000 | \$15,000 |
| 6 best practices videos | \$60,000 | - |
| Chair conferences x 2 | \$400,000 | \$200,000 |
| Chair's survey design and implementation | - | \$7,500 |
| CPC led development of Chair's 2025 conference | - | \$5,000 |
| Best Practices conference for Economics Associations | \$20,000 | - |
| Graduate Student conferences x 2 | \$150,000 | - |
| Mid-Career P2P programming | \$75,000 | \$10,000 |
| Female Leadership Conference | \$50,000 | \$2,500 |
| Bystander Training | \$25,000 | - |
| Graduate Student Research Expenses | \$40,000 | \$5,000 |
| Funds to cover AEA staff costs | \$70,000 | \$10,000 |
| CPC/CSWEP Committee members time to develop programming/work on initiatives/write reports | \$90,000 | \$35,000 |
| TOTAL | \$995,000 | \$290,000 |

Co-Impact Year 0 Programming

1. **2025 Chairs' Conference**

A significant component of the Co-Impact Grant is to implement two Chairs' conferences at the ASSA meetings in 2025 and 2026. A Sub-Committee was formed with CPC, CSWEP, and other members of the AEA to plan the inaugural conference. The Chairs' Conference Sub-Committee consists of Renee Bowen (Chair), Linda Tesar, Donna Ginther, Joshua Rosenbloom, Amanda Baye,r and Orgul Ozturk. Administrative support was provided by Gwyn Loftis. The committee

met monthly from July to December to plan the conference, and design the associated Chairs' survey (to be discussed below).

The inaugural conference took the form of a brunch and workshop at the 2025 ASSA Annual Meeting in San Francisco, on Saturday, Jan. 4, 10:15 AM - 12:15 PM. The event was titled ["Best and Worst Practices in Econ Departments: A Working Session for Chairs"](#).

The event gathers chairs of economics departments across the country to engage with relevant AEA resources for improving the professional climate in the economics profession. Amanda Bayer, Franklin E., and Betty Barr Chair in Economics and Chair of the Economics Department at Swarthmore College and author of the [AEA's Best Practices for Economists](#), led the workshop portion of the event. The session included opening remarks from Janet Currie, President of the American Economic Association, a fireside chat with Kerwin Charles, Dean of the Yale School of Management, and a presentation by the AEA Ombuds team. As of December 12, 2024 there are 110 attendees registered for the conference, and the anticipated budget is \$199,571.79. Notes will be taken and a brief report will be prepared for dissemination after the conference.

2. 2024 Chairs' Conference Survey

The Co-Impact Foundation requires the development of metrics to help assess the effectiveness of grant programming. The Year 0 budget includes funding for a survey to be designed and implemented in conjunction with the Chairs' Conference to help track its impact. The survey was designed by the Chairs' Conference Sub-Committee during its monthly meetings, and the University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research was contracted to field the survey in 2024. The cost of the KU Contract for the Chairs' Survey is \$23,500. This exceeds the Co-Impact proposed budget, but it was agreed that additional funds were necessary as incentives are provided for survey participants to encourage completion. It was agreed that funds would be reallocated from other activities that were expected to have a surplus. In particular, we expect staff and RA costs to be under budget.

The data from the 2024 survey will be used to assess how far departments currently are from following the AEA Best Practices. The results of this survey will be shared at the Chairs' Conference to increase awareness about the Best Practices and raise the value of participating in many of the efforts the AEA has developed to improve the climate in the profession. The survey will gather information about the challenges chairs face in promoting a positive climate for their faculty and students as well as information on the job market from the perspective of chairs who have been recruited recently. A report on the chairs' survey will be led by Donna Ginther, at the 2025 Chairs' Conference.

3. 2024 Graduate Student Focus Groups

The CPC 2023 Professional Climate Survey had a relatively low response rate from graduate students, and as a result, more information was required to provide mentoring and professional development to graduate students as outlined in the Co-Impact proposal. The Co-Impact Year 0 Budget thus allows for graduate student focus groups. The University of Kansas Institute for Policy & Social Research, led by Donna Ginther, was contracted to conduct the focus groups to better understand the challenges facing students as they study for their PhD. The KU team will conduct a series of five online focus groups (with approximately 60–100 students). This information will be used to inform the programming for the Co-Impact funded graduate student conferences that will take place starting in 2026. The cost of the KU contract for the graduate student focus groups is \$15,000.

4. Mid-Career P2P

In 2023, CSWEP established the Mid-Career P2P (peer-to-peer) program under the leadership of Kasey Buckles, which aims to help mid-career economists find community, support, and mentoring. Participants form small groups of economists at a similar career stage or with similar concerns. The groups are self-directing, but CSWEP developed a suggested “curriculum” and supplemental materials, covering topics like goal setting, time management, planning for promotion, and managing service. The curriculum consists of five modules, with several alternative modules that can be substituted to meet the group's needs (view the curriculum [here](#)). It has associate professors or equivalent non-academic or non-tenure-track positions in mind but is easily adaptable for full professors, administrators, managers, and others.

The first set of groups launched in September of 2023, with over 130 people participating in 28 groups. Groups met (typically virtually) 4-6 times for 60-90 minutes over a six-month period. In a survey at the conclusion of the program in the spring of 2024, 87% of respondents said they valued the peer mentorship they received from their group, and the same number said they would recommend the program to a friend.

The Co-Impact grant that CSWEP and CPC received includes funds to expand the P2P program. Kasey Buckles is leading the development of a web platform to host activities and resources and to add new modules to the suggested curriculum. Enrollment for a new cohort of P2P participants will open in late 2024/early 2025, and the new cohort will launch in 2025. The cost of developing the expansion program is estimated to be \$10,000 in Year 0.

5. Female Leadership Conference Development

Yana Rodgers is leading the development of a female leadership conference. In October 2024 she met with Shannon Lundeen, Vice President of Programs & Operations of the HERS Leadership Institute. HERS is an organization that provides leadership training for women aspiring to take on university leadership positions. Rodgers and Lundeen discussed the possibility of having HERS run several training modules on women's leadership in academia directly after the 2025 ASSA conference in San Francisco. These modules would be part of the women's leadership workshop that was proposed in the Co-Impact grant proposal. Rodgers and Lundeen tentatively agreed to run modules on negotiation skills, budgeting, and crisis management. In subsequent joint CPC-CSWEP meetings and correspondence about the Co-Impact grant, we decided that January 2025 was too soon to hold a women's leadership workshop and that we would spend the coming months brainstorming about how to organize such a workshop.

6. Reporting

The initial grant required a one-year Design Development Phase (Year 0), however, this was revised in September 2024, so that we were able to begin planned programming in Year 0. In particular, this facilitated the 2025 AEA Chairs' Conference. The report for Year 0 is due April 30, 2025. Under the revised agreement, the required reporting and associated payments are as follows:

| Payment Amount | Anticipated Payment Date | Deliverable | Due Date |
|-----------------------|--|--|-----------------|
| \$290,000 (paid) | Within 30 days after execution of Contribution Agreement | Execution of Agreement | N/A |
| \$275,000 | 31 May 2025 | Annual Report covering 01 December 2023 to 28 February 2025 | 30 April 2025 |
| \$430,000 | 30 November 2026 | Annual Report covering 01 March 2025 to 31 August 2026 | 31 October 2026 |
| N/A | N/A | End of Initiative Report covering 01 December 2023 to 31 December 2027 | 31 March 2028 |

To increase the awareness of the Best Practices, Code of Conduct, Climate Survey, and other activities, CPC members agreed to increase its online presence. The [CPC webpage](#) was expanded to include information about events, the Co-Impact Grant, the Best Practices, the Code of Conduct, the Ombuds team, and other useful resources to improve the professional climate.

In conjunction with the website, X and Bluesky accounts have been created to highlight CPC information and events.

AEA Distinguished Service Award

CPC oversees the selection of the AEA Distinguished Service Award. Prior eligible nominations included six candidates and one new nomination was received this year. The committee met to discuss and then voted. Rachel Croson was selected as the 2024 recipient of the AEA's Distinguished Service Award.

Rachel Croson is currently the Executive Vice President and Provost and a McKnight Endowed Professor of Economics at the University of Minnesota. Prior to this, she served as Dean of the College of Social Science and MSU Foundation Professor of Economics; Dean of the School of Business at the University of Texas at Arlington, and division director for Social and Economic Sciences at the National Science Foundation. She also held faculty positions at UT Dallas and the Wharton School. She earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania and her PhD in economics from Harvard University. Her research is in behavioral and experimental economics.

The selection committee recognizes Dr. Croson's significant contributions to the discipline of economics through her varied and numerous administrative leadership roles. The committee was also especially impressed with Dr. Croson's pivotal role in advancing the status of women in the economics profession. For example, she was one of the principal investigators on the National Science Foundation grant to the American Economic Association that led to the creation of CeMENT workshops for junior women faculty in economics with Francine Blau, Janet Currie, KimMarie McGoldrick, and John Siegfried. Dr. Croson served as the organizer for these workshops and helped to design and implement the evaluation of these workshops. Dr. Croson's publications with the evaluation team of Francine Blau, Janet Currie, and Donna Ginther showed that the CeMENT program increased mentored women's publications, their publications in the top five journals, and the likelihood that they received tenure in the top 50 economics departments.

CPC Membership

As the committee's responsibilities have grown, the demands on CPC volunteer members have also grown. In December 2023, CPC requested the expansion of the committee and the President of the AEA authorized the addition of three new members. We are fortunate to have the following notable economists agree to serve on this important committee.

- Ethan Gatewood Lewis, Professor, Dartmouth College
- Michael Mueller-Smith, Associate Professor, University of Michigan

- Pinka Chatterji, Professor, University at Albany

In 2025 KimMarie McGoldrick decided to step down from the committee due to personal commitments.

Items for Discussion

Waiving Membership Fees for Graduate Students

In our April 2023 report, we encouraged the AEA to consider lifting membership fees for graduate students to increase their representation in the AEA membership. This would allow better coverage of this important constituency in our survey efforts, access to the AEA Ombuds team, access to the complaint process, and ease of targeting with training efforts, such as on Best Practices.

The need for greater inclusion of this group was underscored by the low participation rate of PhD students in the 2023 climate report where only 3% of respondents reported being students. While this small sample does not allow general statements about the profession, of those who did respond, the number of female and non-white students who said they personally experienced discrimination in access to research assistantships, advisors, and quality advising was more than twice the number of male and non-white students (respectively) who also reported discrimination. This data from the 2023 climate survey is provided below.

| Sample: | | | | | |
|--|------|------|--------|-------|-----------|
| During your time as a student studying economics, have you personally experienced discrimination or unfair treatment with regard to: | All | Male | Female | White | Non-White |
| Access to research assistantships | 0.12 | 0.08 | 0.19 | 0.10 | 0.21 |
| Access to advisors | 0.11 | 0.07 | 0.19 | 0.09 | 0.20 |
| Access to quality advising | 0.13 | 0.08 | 0.24 | 0.11 | 0.24 |
| Job market | 0.24 | 0.17 | 0.38 | 0.21 | 0.34 |

The proposed waiving of graduate student fees was not immediately possible partly because of budgetary implications for the AEA. However we continue to advocate for this, and, in the interim, the Co-Impact grant funding is being used for graduate student workshops.

CEDPC name change to Committee on Professional Climate (CPC)

A memo was sent to the AEA Executive Committee in December requesting that the committee's name be changed to the Committee on Professional Climate (CPC). We think this more accurately reflects the charge of the committee for several reasons. First, 'professional conduct' suggests that the Committee has the ability to penalize or censure individual AEA members for bad behavior. This is not part of its mandate, but several AEA members have contacted the committee with this in mind. Second, while other AEA committees—CSMGEP, CSQIEP, and CSWEP—address the status of particular groups of economists, our committee's focus is the professional climate, which is a result of the actions and attitudes of everyone in the profession. Removing the words "equity" and "diversity" would highlight the distinction and encourage broader participation from the profession. Finally, the Committee on Professional Climate is shorter (and thus easier to remember) and succinctly describes the Committee's main purpose and mission.

Closing Remarks

The urgent need for work of the committee is underscored by the results of the 2023 Professional Climate. In partnership with the Co-Impact grant foundation, we are able to do many of the items suggested by the initial ad hoc committee and expand on these. However, the funding from the grant is for a limited period. The AEA executive will need to continually assess how funding for important initiatives can continue beyond the Co-Impact grant phase.