

CBO TESTIMONY

**Statement of
Stephanie M. Ruiz
Director of Human Resources and
Equal Employment Opportunity Officer**

Diversity of Executive-Level Employees at the Congressional Budget Office

**before the
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service,
and the District of Columbia
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives**

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**CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE
SECOND AND D STREETS, S.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515**

Mr. Chairman, Congressman Marchant, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the invitation to discuss issues related to the diversity of executive-level employees at the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).

CBO's leadership shares your interest in workforce diversity in executive-level positions and is strongly committed to a representative workforce at all levels. My testimony this morning will address the following key issues:

- The benefits of and the need for CBO's recruitment of a diverse workforce at all levels;
- The challenge of recruiting staff skilled in the fields necessary to carry out the analyses that CBO prepares for the Congress;
- The aggressive diversity recruiting efforts that CBO undertakes annually; and
- CBO's recent progress toward greater workforce diversity.

Recruitment of a Diverse Workforce at All Levels of the Agency

Diversity at CBO produces many important benefits, including an expansion of the perspectives that are brought to bear on its analytical products. For several reasons, CBO must recruit a diverse workforce at all levels—junior, midcareer, and senior:

- CBO produces analyses on a broad range of issues that benefit from the diverse experiences and viewpoints of its analysts.
- The specialized nature of CBO's work and of the analyses it provides to the Congress requires a high level of expertise among all of its employees, from those in the most junior-level position to those at the management level.
- CBO's managers must have substantive knowledge of the various policy areas in which their analysts work and experience with the methodologies used to produce the agency's analyses. That expertise is crucial to CBO's ability to produce work with the timeliness required for it to be of use to the Congress.
- The need for substantive experience coupled with CBO's small size and flat organizational structure results in the majority of CBO's managers being promoted from within the agency. Consequently, the agency must recruit a diverse workforce at all levels, so that more junior staff members gain the requisite expertise to take on broader roles. Internal promotion also increases staff retention.

The Challenge of Recruiting Skilled Staff to Produce CBO Analyses for the Congress

CBO employs individuals who have the specialized skills necessary to perform the complex economic and budgetary analyses that the Congress requires. Roughly 80 percent of its professional staff members hold Ph.D.s or master's degrees (see Figure 1); about 40 percent hold Ph.D.s, mostly in economics, and an additional 40 percent hold master's degrees, generally in public policy or administration. The other 20 percent have bachelor's degrees. (Those staff fill roles principally in administrative fields, such as information technology and editing.)

Because of the specialized skills needed at CBO, the organization faces a substantial challenge in achieving a diverse workforce, given the demographics of individuals who complete the necessary educational requirements. According to the most recent Survey of Earned Doctorates (SED), there were approximately 1,000 recipients of doctorates in economics in 2005.¹ Only 30 percent of those newly minted Ph.D. economists were women (see Table 1). An additional recruiting difficulty for CBO is that foreign nationals make up the majority—more than two-thirds in 2005—of recipients of doctorates in economics. Although the agency hires some non-U.S. citizens, the small proportion of U.S. citizens among new Ph.D.s in economics nonetheless limits the pool from which CBO can attract candidates. What is perhaps even more striking is that among the U.S. citizens who came into the labor market from that pool, only 4.3 percent (44 people in the entire nation) were identified as members of a minority group. Those numbers are even more disheartening in light of the small share of the overall number of new Ph.D. economists who enter government service—only 16 percent in 2005.

The characteristics of graduates are somewhat less of a problem in recruiting master's-level employees. For example, data from the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration suggest that 57 percent of those completing master's degrees in 2005 were female, and 28 percent were identified as members of minority groups.²

CBO's Diversity Recruiting Efforts

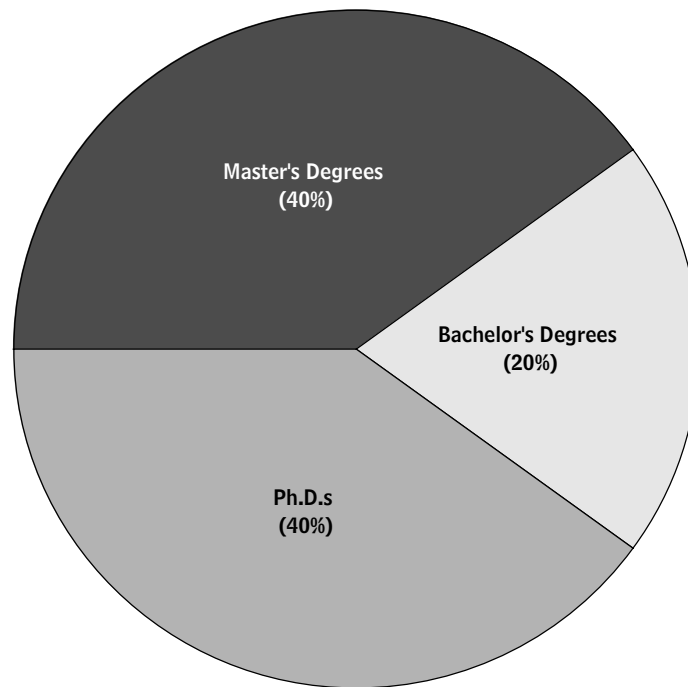
Not surprisingly, given the above statistics, CBO must be both aggressive and creative in its recruiting efforts to achieve diversity among its staff. In addition to such traditional activities as advertising and college recruiting, CBO makes special

1. The SED is a survey conducted by NORC Academic Research Center at the University of Chicago for the National Science Foundation and five other federal agencies—the Departments of Agriculture and Education, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Institutes of Health.

2. National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, *Fall 2005 Enrollment and Academic Year 2004–2005 Degrees Awarded Survey* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration, 2005).

Figure 1.

Academic Degrees of CBO Professional Staff



Source: Congressional Budget Office.

efforts to reach out to women and minorities in seeking candidates for open positions.

CBO provides information on relevant employment opportunities to groups such as Women in International Security and the Committee on the Status of Women in the Economics Profession. It also carries out targeted mailings to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) that have programs from which CBO may draw candidates.

The agency hosts a substantive summer internship program that is focused on graduate students, particularly Ph.D. candidates, and that is administered with an eye toward diversity. While at CBO, the interns not only perform analyses but are introduced to the challenge and reward of positions in public service. One of the goals of the program is to encourage the students to consider full-time employment at CBO on completion of their academic preparation. And the results suggest that this approach has been an effective recruitment tool—about 8 percent of CBO’s current staff members are former interns.

To further address the demographic challenges of the specialized workforce needed to prepare CBO’s products, the agency engages in grassroots efforts to “grow the pool.” Data indicate that most students who pursue a doctoral degree in

Table 1.

Diversity Information About Recipients of Ph.D. Degrees in Economics Awarded in the United States in 2005

	Number	As a Percentage of the Total
Recipients		
Males	720	69.8
Females	<u>309</u>	<u>30.0</u>
Total, recipients	1,031	100.0
Citizenship		
United States	284	27.6
Non-U.S. Citizen	698	67.7
Race of U.S. Citizens		
White	231	81.3
Minority		
Black	6	2.1
Hispanic	13	4.6
Asian	24	8.5
American Indian	<u>1</u>	<u>0.4</u>
Subtotal, minority	44	15.5
Other and unknown	<u>9</u>	<u>3.2</u>
Total, U.S. citizens	284	100.0

Source: Congressional Budget Office based on data from the Survey of Earned Doctorates, conducted by NORC Academic Research Center, University of Chicago.

Note: Numbers may not add up to totals because of rounding or missing data.

economics studied economics as undergraduate students. Although CBO hires very few staff who hold only bachelor's degrees, we nevertheless visit a number of campuses and participate in various programs to encourage candidates from underrepresented groups to pursue advanced degrees that would prepare them for positions such as those at CBO. Specifically, the agency makes special efforts to present information to such undergraduate student groups as Morehouse/Spelman's Joint Economic Club, and to conduct group meetings with Howard University economics majors. Those kinds of activities provide an opportunity to introduce students at HBCUs, HSIs, and other large flagship campuses with diverse student populations to the idea of pursuing a Ph.D. in economics or a master's degree in public policy and to discuss the careers to which such paths may lead. The agency also participates annually in the following:

- The Public Policy and International Affairs (PPIA) program, a national effort that focuses on preparing students from underrepresented groups to pursue advanced degrees leading to careers in public service. CBO has contributed to that program in a variety of ways, including presenting campus seminars on the agency's work, organizing and participating in a multiagency panel (which included the Government Accountability Office), and attending and serving on panels related to government service at the career expos for PPIA alumni in various cities.
- The American Economics Association Summer Program and Minority Scholarship Program, which seeks to prepare talented undergraduates for doctoral programs in economics and related disciplines. In two of the past five years, CBO hosted the students at lunches and seminars at our facilities; in three other years, CBO staff presented seminars at the host campuses. On three occasions, including this past summer, CBO's Director personally addressed this group.

In the end, if few students from underrepresented groups enter advanced degree programs in economics and public policy, we have little hope of recruiting staff and grooming future managers who are representative of the rich diversity of the national population.

Beyond those annual recruitment activities, CBO has made special efforts to increase the diversity of its candidate pool. Examples include the following:

- Noting that CBO's National Security Division has a need for scientific as well as economic expertise, the division director participated in a student conference sponsored by the Society of Hispanic Engineers to discuss employment opportunities at CBO and nontraditional public policy careers that engineers might consider.
- Although the agency does not recruit attorneys as analysts, CBO sought candidates who had skills and interests in line with the agency's responsibilities at the Kennedy School of Government's Latino Law and Public Policy Conference.
- CBO staff annually contact the American Indian Graduate Center, the only national nonprofit organization dedicated to aiding Indian graduate students in all fields of study, to ascertain whether they have students in economics and public policy whom the agency might contact about employment opportunities.

Recent Progress

Like his predecessors, CBO's current Director, Peter Orszag, is committed to staff diversity. During his short tenure, 48 percent of CBO staff members hired have been women, including one female Senior Executive Service-equivalent, and 9 percent have been members of underrepresented minority groups. As the Human Resources Director and Equal Employment Opportunity Officer at CBO, I know

that Dr. Orszag and CBO's new Deputy Director, Robert Sunshine, have personally reached out to female candidates for additional leadership positions.

Conclusion

Despite the small size of CBO's staff—the agency has only 235 authorized full-time equivalents under the current budget—and our limited travel funds, our interest in a diverse workforce and the expertise required for our positions drives us to recruit very broadly. CBO's most valuable resource is a strong staff, and in pursuit of that end, we dedicate a great deal of time and effort to our recruitment program—including, during each of the past four years, conducting seminars and information sessions for students from more than 60 campuses; hosting student groups at CBO; and participating in consortium visits in the District of Columbia. An important focus of that effort has been, and must continue to be, the recruitment of a diverse workforce at all levels of our organization.