



## MONDAY MORNING MEMO from Dean Avi Mukherjee



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### Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiatives at the Lewis College of Business

#### Herd Insights Webinar with Dr. George Wright

The poster for the Herd Insights Small Business Webinar Series, supported by John Rulli. It features a background of the American flag with the words "BLACK HISTORY MONTH" overlaid. The title of the webinar is "The Economic Status of African Americans in the 21st Century". It features a portrait of Dr. George Wright and Dr. Nabaneeta Biswas. The event took place on Monday, February 22, 2021, from 10 - 11 am, with a live panel Q & A.

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HERD *Insights*  
Small Business Webinar Series  
Supported by John Rulli

BLA  
HISTORY  
MONTH

The Economic Status of  
African Americans in the  
21st Century

Featuring  
Dr. George Wright  
Distinguished Research Professor, Senior Advisor to the President, and Interim VP for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, University of Kentucky; President Emeritus, Texas A&M Prairie View

in Conversation with  
Dr. Nabaneeta Biswas  
Assistant Professor of Economics  
Lewis College of Business  
Brad D. Smith Schools of Business

Monday, February 22, 2021  
10 - 11 am  
Live Panel Q & A

MARSHALL

The Herd Insights Small Business Webinar Series on February 22, 2021 featured Dr. George Wright, a noted African American Scholar and one of the foremost thinkers in the realm of social justice, equity, and inclusion. Dr. Wright is a Distinguished Research Professor, Senior Advisory to the President, and Interim VP for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at the University of Kentucky; and President Emeritus of Texas A&M Prairie View. The presentation was titled, "The Economic Status of African Americans in the 21st Century" and was moderated by Dr. Nabaneeta Biswas, Assistant Professor of Economics here in the Lewis College of Business.



## MONDAY MORNING MEMO from Dean Avi Mukherjee



Both Dean Avi Mukherjee and Dr. Maurice Cooley, VP of the Office of Intercultural Affairs provided opening remarks. Dr. Biswas began the discussion by noting there have been economic differences among races throughout history. Dr. Wright discussed the key factors that led to the displacement of African Americans and how this created differences in economic outcomes. He walked the audience through the history of slave trade in the Americas. He explained how England and the new colonies benefited economically from slave trade and its ability to produce rice and sugar, and how this benefit extended beyond the end of the civil war as industries were built around the ex-slave. He said, "The south loses a great economic asset with slavery coming to an end, but they immediately shift." Black communities developed in 1885 with churches and schools that eventually led to an increase in black farm ownership. An example of the economic foothold blacks gained was their petition to the US Congress for monies to host the first black exhibit in the 1900 World Fair. Dr. Wright gave other insightful examples of the economic impact of black history in the US.

Dr. Biswas also queried Dr. Wright on the differential opportunities for black women and men that arose in the 20th century. Dr. Wright explained how, "The push initially was to make sure that black men have the same rights or be put on equal status with other men, and this often meant that women were relegated." Dr. Wright concluded his presentation by talking about the unique opportunities he has received that inspired and motivated him to pursue a quality education and his success as an academic leader. Dr. Wright answered some questions from the audience at the end, including one in which he explained the relationship and impact of black schools. He said, "Black schools instill a certain quality in their students that I think is invaluable for them to take to the larger society."

It was a pleasure for the Lewis College of Business to host Dr. Wright. The video for the webinar is available at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UMIDoSOGIkY&feature=youtu.be>

### Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force

The Lewis College of Business created a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force in the summer of 2020. The Task Force's purpose is to develop, promote, and implement strategies and best practices to create a welcoming environment for multicultural and minority students, faculty, and staff in the Lewis College of Business. It provides expertise, advice, and insights on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the college and ensures these efforts are integrated with those of the university. The ultimate goal of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force is to improve and enhance the college's culture so that all stakeholders are provided with a holistic educational, professional and inclusive experience.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Task Force is appointed by and reports to the Dean and the Associate Dean for Accreditation and Strategic Initiatives. The Task Force is expected to periodically report its recommendations and actions to the Dean and Associate Dean for discussion and implementation.



Dean Avi Mukherjee appointed the Task Force and members consist of:

- Dr. Boniface Yemba (Chair), Assistant Professor of International Business
- Dr. Nabaneeta Biswas, Assistant Professor of Economics
- Guodong Huang, Director of International Programs
- Dr. Susan Lanham, Associate Professor of Accounting
- Dr. Uyi Lawani, Associate Professor of Management
- Dr. Uday Tate, Professor of Marketing
- Dr. Jingran Zhang, Assistant Professor of Management
- Dr. Maurice Cooley, VP of Intercultural Affairs & Student Affairs, is an invited member of the Task Force.

The Dean office proposed to the Task Force the following action items to fulfill its purpose:

(1) Conduct a survey of students, faculty, and staff about the college's culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion using design thinking and focus groups; (2) Recruit and retain multicultural and minority students, faculty, and staff; (3) Activate the college's Global and Multicultural student organization, working with its faculty advisor, Dr. Boniface Yemba; (4) Hold a Multicultural and Global Student Day each semester; (5) Hold other multicultural and minority events and activities; (6) Provide opportunities for more students, faculty, and staff to engage in structured, well-facilitated, open dialogues about cultural differences on an ongoing basis; (7) Hold a faculty training day each semester; (8) Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in physical surroundings of current and new buildings; (9) Develop mentoring programs for students, faculty, and staff that foster belonging and connection; and (10) Host a multicultural or minority high school student intern each semester.

To date, the Task Force has realized the following accomplishments:

- Adopted a questionnaire to conduct focus group discussions with three groups of interest (undergraduate students, graduate students, and faculty/staff). Conducted a focus group discussion for graduate students and a focus group discussion for undergraduate students. The results are being analyzed.
- Adopted a questionnaire to conduct interviews with the directors of HR and admission as well as Dean's office in order to collect their inclusivity policy as it applies to students, staffs, and faculty.
- Organized two global connection series in October 2020 and February 2021. In Oct 2020, Dr Faustin Luanga, a senior economist from the World Trade Organization (WTO), presented the role of the WTO in Global Business with focus in Asia and Pacific.



- Thomas Hawighorst, a leading practitioner and trusted advisor to senior executives on the topics of transformative change, leadership, and human resources, spoke on "Global Human Resource Management: Practices and Processes" in February 2021.
- Reached out to the new building committee to consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in physical surroundings in the future new building.

### Minority Student Intern Program

The Lewis College of Business hosted its first minority student intern during Spring 2020. The student's name was Akot Aguer, nickname John, from St. Joseph's high school in Huntington.

During a one-week period, John visited various economics, finance, and accounting classes. He also attended the college's introduction to business class that helps students get a feel for how the functional areas in businesses operate and integrate. John had many one-on-one visits with faculty members, students, and advisors. He visited the University's welcome center, had a tour of campus, and participated in the sustainability scavenger hunt. He also discussed career options with the college's Director of Stakeholder Engagement. John's major project for the week was to document what he learned about business and how he felt about the college experience. At the end of the week, he presented his work to a group of faculty and students. It was a pleasure to host John. He asked a lot of questions and seemed interested and excited about the different activities and meetings he attended. While the college was unable to have another intern because of COVID-19, it hopes to have another one as soon as face-to-face classes resume.

