

1st June 2020

The Health Foundation announces funding support for campaign to promote diversity among economics students

The Health Foundation has joined the Royal Economic Society to support the **Discover Economics campaign** which aims to attract more diverse students (aged 15-17) to study economics. The funding from the Health Foundation and RES will develop the campaign website (www.discovereconomics.ac.uk), support events for school and college students and pilot the student ambassador programme - sending university students into schools to deliver taster economics sessions.

Prof Sarah Smith, Co-Chair of the campaign said “We are very excited to work with the Health Foundation to change students’ perceptions of economics. There has never been a time when economics – and health economics – has been more relevant.”

Elaine Kelly, Head of Economics Research at the Health Foundation, commented, “The Health Foundation’s mission is to promote better health and healthcare in the UK, and economics is crucial to this. It is vital that economics attracts a diverse and representative range of students who will shape the future of the discipline, bringing with them fresh perspectives and ideas. We are delighted to be supporting this important campaign.’

The Royal Economic Society’s focus is on improving the public understanding of economics through engagement with schools and the wider public. Prof Carol Propper, President of the Royal Economic Society, said “I am delighted that the Health Foundation will be supporting our Discover Economics campaign. It demonstrates the importance of economics to key issues of the day.”

Notes to Editors:

Discover Economics is a three-year campaign launched in October 2019 to change perceptions of economics among young people and to provide 15-17 year old students with information and engagement opportunities about economics to inform their choices on further study. Discover Economics aims to broaden its appeal to potential students, to attract currently under-represented groups to study (women, LBQT+ and students from the state sector) and to create successful partnerships to bring about change.

The campaign works with partners to:

- Reach and recruit more diverse students with the skills for the future world of work



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- Engage their staff in rewarding opportunities for outreach, sharing their personal stories
- Work with academics and students in UK universities
- Shape the discipline that helps to shape the world

Economics students are currently disproportionately male and privately educated. Fewer than one-third of university undergraduate economics students are women lagging behind chemistry, biology and maths. One in six boys studying for A-levels takes economics compared with one in 17 girls; one in five students at private schools takes A-level economics compared with one in 12 in the state sector. The overall share of BAME students studying economics is higher than the national average but this hides the fact that many groups are under-represented.

The Discover Economics campaign has enjoyed support from founding partners, including the Bank of England, the Government Economic Service, the Society of Professional Economists, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research and the Centre for Economic Policy Research. The Health Foundation is its first funding partner.

Discover Economics launched a new economics of COVID-19 blog targeted at school and college students, the blog explains how economic models and data can be used to understand different aspects of the current crisis – covering everything from panic-buying, movements in share prices, the closure of schools, inequality, the role of government, social care to death rates. The blog on the economics of COVID-19 will show how economics can help to make sense of many aspects of the current crisis. New posts will appear twice a week on Tuesdays and Thursdays. If you are interested in writing a post, please contact sarah.smith@bristol.ac.uk.