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ABSTRACT

The Long-Run Impacts of Mentoring Underrepresented Minority Groups in Economics*

We conduct a long-run evaluation of one of the oldest professional mentoring programs for underrepresented groups in economics, the American Economic Association Mentoring Program (AEAMP). The AEAMP was established to address the underrepresentation of racial/ethnic minority groups by mentoring doctoral students and new Ph.D.s in economics. We compare professional outcomes of mentees with similar individuals from the same Ph.D. cohort who did not participate in the program. While there are no differences for many outcomes, mentees are more likely to hold a tenure-track or tenured position. Our results point to the potential for mentoring programs to address persistent racial/ethnic disparities.

JEL Classification: J15, I23
Keywords: mentoring, underrepresented minority groups

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I. Introduction

African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans continue to be underrepresented in STEM fields, including economics. Recent data show that while these groups make up more than one-third of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau 2023), they were collectively awarded around 10% of the Ph.D.s in economics earned by U.S. citizens / permanent residents (Hoover and Washington 2023). Recently, organizations have attempted to address these disparities and increase access and opportunity using mentoring programs. Despite the recent attention touting the potential benefits of mentoring programs, there is little information on their long-run effects.

This paper conducts a long-run evaluation of one of the longest running professional mentoring programs for underrepresented groups in economics, the American Economic Association Mentoring Program (AEAMP). The AEAMP was established in the mid-1990s by the American Economic Association Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession (CSMGEP) to address the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority groups in the profession by supporting graduate students and new Ph.D.s in the economics "pipeline."[1] The AEAMP matches economics Ph.D. students and new doctorates from historically underrepresented minority groups with professional mentors in the field, facilitates networking between more senior economists and students, and provides limited funding to support research and travel of mentees. The AEAMP also hosts the AEA Summer Mentoring Pipeline Conference (SMPC), which brings together graduate students and professional economists within and outside of academia to facilitate networking and to provide feedback on research and professional development. More recently, the AEAMP added a job market bootcamp and tenure-track mentoring workshop.

We explore the long-run impacts of the program by comparing the professional outcomes of AEAMP mentees with individuals from the same cohort of underrepresented minority groups who did not participate in the program. Since the program is aimed at greater access for underrepresented groups, all eligible individuals have generally been accepted into the program, thus precluding evaluations based on randomized treatment status and oversubscription (Becker, Rouse, and Chen 2016; Blau et al. 2010; Ginther and Na 2021). Instead, we use the EconLit (2024)

[1] The program was funded by the National Science Foundation for many years (most recently under NSF Award Number 2021600), but the American Economic Association has recently funded it with additional support from the private sector and foundations.

dissertation database to identify a comparison group of individuals from similar demographic groups who graduated with an economics Ph.D. in the same cohort. We address possible selection bias by controlling for factors such as undergraduate and Ph.D. program rank. As the first study to document long-run impacts of the program, our results shed light on the potential for mentoring programs to address persistent racial and ethnic disparities.

While much of the research evaluating mentoring programs focuses on the period shortly after the mentoring relationship has concluded using surveys to assess the qualities of the mentor and mentoring relationship from the mentee's perspective (NASEM 2019), this paper evaluates long-run career and professional outcomes of mentees, including those who participated in the program decades ago. As such, its objective is closely related to other long-run evaluations of programs aimed at diversifying the economics profession (Becker, Rouse, and Chen 2016; Blau et al. 2010; Ginther and Na 2021). This long trajectory and focus on career and professional outcomes for mentees constitutes a major contribution to the literature on the impacts of professional mentoring programs for members of underrepresented minority groups.

II. Data

Our treatment group begins with the population of 150 AEAMP mentees who graduated with a Ph.D. between 2005 and 2022.[2] Because this population is almost entirely comprised of non-Hispanic Black and Hispanic individuals, to develop a comparison sample, we identified 2,452 individuals who graduated in the same time period in the EconLit (2024) database and who were identified as non-Hispanic Black or Hispanic based on name of dissertation author.[3] To measure long-run publication outcomes, our analysis samples are restricted to people with Google Scholar profiles. AEAMP mentees were significantly more likely to have Google Scholar profiles, and thus enter the analysis sample (Appendix Table A.1). This difference could be due to selection – AEAMP mentees must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents to enter the program, and Google Scholar profiles may be more common for U.S.-based economists. On the other hand, having a

[2] Note that this sample is conditional on earning a Ph.D. We leave an evaluation of the impact of the AEAMP on more immediate outcomes, including Ph.D. completion, for future research.

[3] We use the Python packages ethnicolr and gender-guesser to impute race/ethnicity and gender of individuals in the comparison group. Hofstra et al. (2020) use a similar method to impute race/ethnicity.) These algorithms tend to have reasonably high precision but low recall in terms of imputing race/ethnicity of Hispanics and non-Hispanic Blacks. We collected a random set of sample individuals' photos posted on the internet to compare predicted and perceived race. This process proved challenging, especially for the Hispanic subsample, for which we were unable to verify race in many cases. Moreover, because perceived race can differ from self-identified race, we ultimately discontinued the photo verification method.

Google Scholar profile may be an indicator of professionalism enhanced by participation in the AEAMP.

To further increase comparability of the treatment and comparison groups in the analysis sample, we attempted to restrict the comparison group to U.S. citizens and permanent residents at the time of Ph.D. graduation. Unfortunately, this information is not in our data sources. As a proxy, we collected CVs online and restricted our analysis sample to individuals who have a U.S. undergraduate degree. To further address possible selection into treatment, we restrict attention to people for whom we can identify a domestic graduate and undergraduate institution with a ranking in U.S. News and World Report (2024a, 2024b, 2024c)[4]. Our final analysis sample comprises 51 AEAMP participants (treatment group) and 87 individuals in the comparison group.[5]

We evaluated several outcomes for both groups: the total number of citations, the total number of papers authored/coauthored by an individual, whether the individual has published in any top journal,[6] whether the individual works in academia, whether they hold a tenured or tenure-track position, and whether they have tenure. We also study the rank of the employing institution listed on CVs, using the IDEAS (2024) ranking of the top 10% of economic institutions. The bibliometric outcomes were extracted from Google Scholar profiles using the Google Scholar API. Career outcomes were manually collected from CVs.[7]

[4] We use two separate rankings to determine the undergraduate ranking: one for liberal arts colleges (National Liberal Arts Colleges Rankings) and another for national universities (Best National University Rankings). Both rankings are applied consistently; for example, a #50 ranking in either list is assigned a value of 50 for the undergraduate rank variable. National universities are defined as institutions offering a wide range of undergraduate majors, as well as master's and doctoral programs, while liberal arts colleges are defined as institutions primarily focused on undergraduate education.

[5] Eleven AEAMP participants were excluded due to attending international graduate/undergraduate institutions or lacking undergraduate information. Fifteen individuals were excluded for attending unranked U.S. undergraduate institutions, including 14 from the comparison group and 1 from the treatment group. Results on the impact of AEAMP participation are similar if we use the larger sample of individuals with degrees from U.S. institutions and assign those individuals from unranked institutions to the largest numerical value observed in the series.

[6] We use the top 4 journal outlets (*Quarterly Journal of Economics, Econometrica, Review of Economic Studies, Journal of Political Economy*) but exclude the *American Economic Review* because of difficulties distinguishing publications in the *Papers and Proceedings*.

[7] We manually verified each profile to increase accuracy. If a CV was not available, we used an individual's LinkedIn profile or personal website to collect career outcomes. Because the number of papers includes publications as well as working papers, we deduplicated the number of papers in Google Scholar using a fuzzy match on titles so that papers that appeared multiple times (e.g. as a publication and as a working paper) would only be counted once. "In academia" indicates whether the individual is employed at a college or university or other academic research setting (e.g., the Federal Reserve system or U.S. Census). "Tenured or tenure-track" is defined as holding an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor position at a college/university, provided that the title does not indicate a teaching or clinical role. "Tenured" is defined as holding an associate professor or professor position at a college/university, provided that the title does not indicate a teaching or clinical role.

A. Summary Statistics

Figure 1 shows the graduate school rankings of treatment and comparison groups. AEAMP mentees are more likely to be drawn from the middle of the distribution of graduate school rankings, i.e., schools in the 50-100 range, from which it can be more difficult to get an academic job, relative to the highest ranked institutions. Figure 2 shows a similar pattern for undergraduate institution rankings where AEAMP mentees are less likely to be drawn from the highest ranked colleges and universities.

Treatment and comparison groups are similar in terms of Ph.D. graduation date, around 2015 for both groups. Gender is well balanced at 67% male in the AEAMP and 69% in the comparison group, however, more people in the AEAMP group are non-Hispanic Black (53% versus 41% for the comparison group) and fewer are Hispanic (47% in the AEAMP group and 59% in the comparison group). The average outcomes across the two groups are not statistically significant except that the AEAMP group is significantly (at the 10% level) more likely to hold a tenure-track or tenured position (69% for the AEAMP group versus 54% for the comparison group).

III. Results

Our analysis takes the form of a simple OLS regression relating the outcome variables listed above to an indicator for AEAMP participation (treatment), and controlling for gender, race, graduate school ranking, undergraduate school ranking, and Ph.D. year fixed effects.

A. Publication Outcomes

Table 1 reports publication and citation outcomes. Columns 1 and 2 show that AEAMP participants do not differ statistically from the comparison sample in terms of number of papers authored. The AEAMP coefficient estimate is negative, but not statistically significant, when the dependent variable is number of papers and when we top code the top 5% of observations to equal the 95th percentile value. If we drop the top 5% of observations, the magnitude of the AEAMP coefficient is slightly positive in the papers regression, but still statistically insignificant (column 3). There are no statistically significant differences between the AEAMP and control group for whether individuals have at least 20 papers or whether they have any top publications (columns 4 and 5). AEAMP coefficient estimates in the total (lifetime) citations regressions are similar to the

analogous estimates in the papers regressions in that they are negative and imprecise (whether we top-code or not) but become positive and imprecise when we drop the top 5% of the citation distribution (columns 6 through 8). Qualitatively, the results are similar, and display relatively small magnitudes, if we use a log specification (Appendix Table A.2). Taken together, the estimates are noisy, and do not indicate that the AEAMP participants performed better (or worse) than the comparison group on bibliometric outcomes.

Given the sample size, many of the coefficient estimates on the control variables in Table 1 are also imprecise, except for the rank of the graduate and undergraduate institutions, which are statistically significant in some models, indicating that graduates of higher ranked programs are more likely to publish in top journals and have more total lifetime citations.

B. Career Outcomes

Table 2 reports estimates for a range of career outcomes, including whether individuals are employed in academia, employer institution rank, and whether individuals have tenure or are tenure-track. The coefficient estimates associated with having participated in the AEAMP are again quite noisy. AEAMP participants are slightly (and insignificantly) more likely to be in academia and to be employed at an institution that is ranked in the top 10% of economics institutions (columns 1 and 2). They are less likely to be employed by an institution in the top 5% of the rankings (column 3), but that estimate is quite imprecise. On the other hand, AEAMP participants are more likely to hold either a tenured/tenure-track or a tenured position (columns 4 and 5), and these estimates are statistically significant at the 10% and 5% levels, respectively, and both are large in magnitude. The tenured or tenure-track estimate is 19.7 percentage points (pp) and the tenured estimate is 13.6 pp - equivalent to about 36% and 45% of the comparison group means. If we limit the sample to those graduating in 2016 or earlier, to allow for a standard tenure clock, the magnitude of the estimate on AEAMP participation in the tenured regression is larger and statistically significant at the 5% level, equivalent to about 25.4 pp, or 53% relative to the mean of the comparison group (column 6). Among the other covariates, the graduate and undergraduate institution ranks are again the strongest variables – people who graduate from higher quality institutions are more likely to be employed at higher ranked institutions, but the magnitudes are relatively small.

IV. Conclusion

We have conducted the first systematic evaluation of the AEAMP, and one of only a few long-run evaluations of professional mentoring programs. We explore two broad sets of outcomes – bibliometric (i.e., publication and citation measures) and career outcomes. While it may be partially due to selection into the program, mentees seem to be more professional and professionally successful. They are more likely to have Google Scholar profiles, more likely to hold tenure-track positions, and more likely to receive tenure. The latter results are especially remarkable given that the AEAMP mentees are more likely to be drawn from Ph.D. institutions outside of the top 50-ranked graduate programs, a population from which it is more difficult to find an academic job. Results for the bibliometric outcomes are noisy. This is due, in part, to the sample size and in part to the right skew in outcomes. Overall, the results are consistent with a positive and sizable impact of the networking and job market preparation activities offered in the AEA Mentoring Program.

The fact that the AEAMP positively impacts tenure-level outcomes is also noteworthy, as it points to the potential for mentoring programs to impact long-term racial/ethnic disparities among tenured faculty. Given that the latter are more likely to stay in the profession and have outsize impacts on future generations through their roles as teachers and advisors, this suggests that mentoring programs like the AEAMP could also reduce racial/ethnic disparities over the longer-term.

Our analysis shows the challenges of this sort of evaluation in terms of *ex post* tracking, lack of randomization, sample size, and skew. Going forward, it would be ideal to include some form of randomization to evaluate treatment impacts but, given the small number of eligible individuals and the goal of assisting as many people as possible, this may not be feasible. At a minimum, there should be an effort to identify reasonable "controls" at the outset and to track both groups of people, so that better inferences can be drawn in the future, without relying on online profiles which may induce selection biases. It would also be valuable to conduct analyses or meta-analyses of programs in multiple fields. Differences in the characteristics of programs across fields might be taken as a source of variation to estimate the effects of program design if not the benefits of individual programs.

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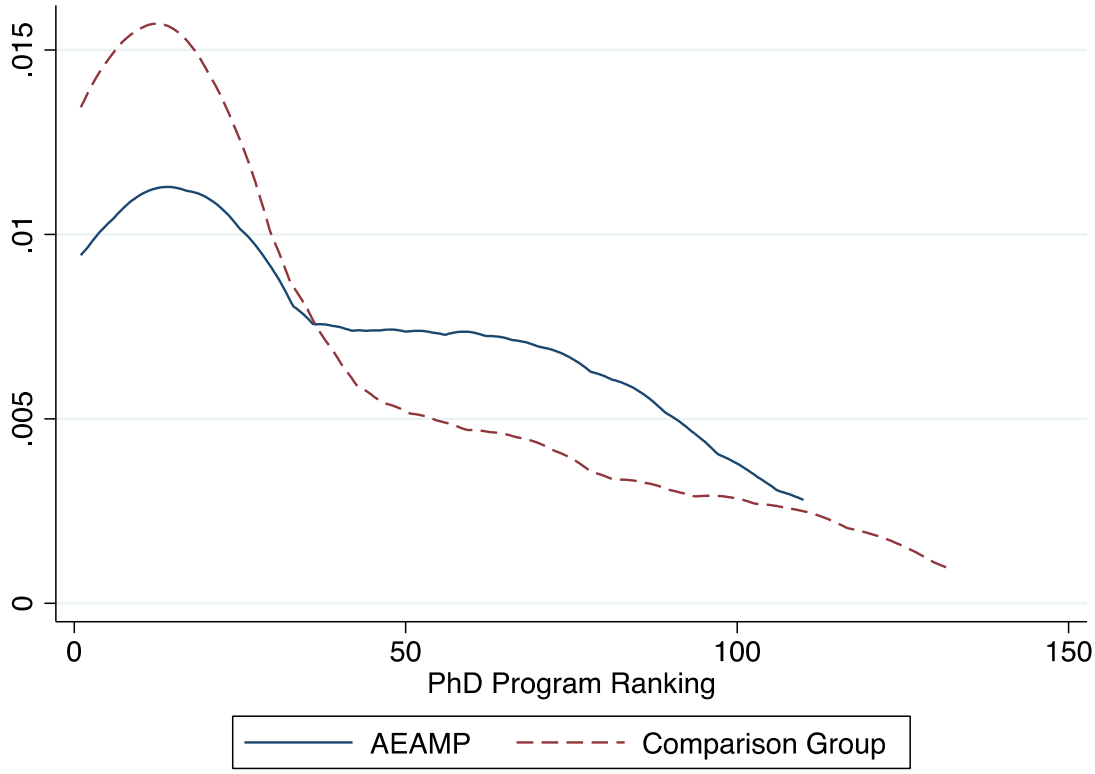

Figure 1: Distribution of Ph.D. Program Rank (Lower numbers represent higher quality)

Note: Ph.D. program rankings are from U.S. News and World Report (2024a).

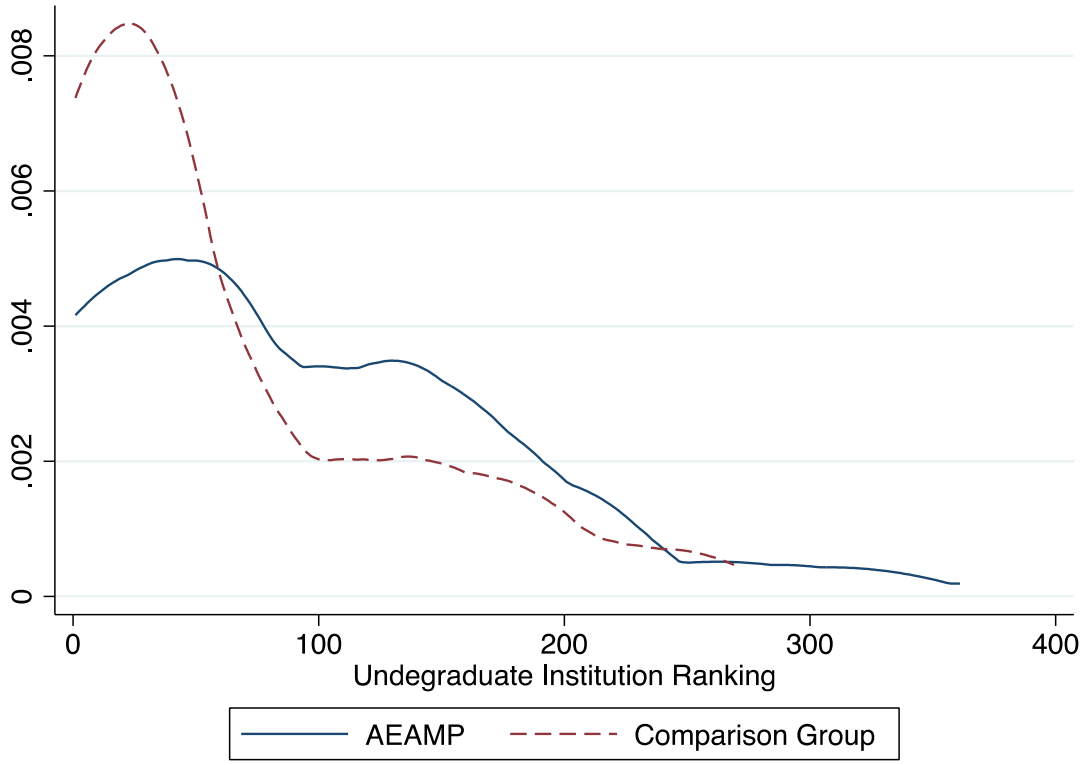

Figure 2: Distribution of Undergraduate Institution Rank

(Lower numbers represent higher quality)

Note: Undergraduate Institution rankings are from U.S. News and World Report (2024b, 2024c)

Table 1: Long-run Impacts of Participation in the AEA Mentoring Program on Publication Outcomes

	Number of Papers	Number of Papers (Top-coded)	Number of Papers (Drop top 5%)	At least 20 Papers	Any Top Publications	Total Citations	Total Citations (Top-coded)	Total Citations (Drop top 5%)
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
AEAMP	-1.2730	-1.1198	0.9775	0.0031	-0.0010	-115.0751	-16.7519	158.0162
	(3.0286)	(2.9144)	(2.7805)	(0.0912)	(0.0656)	(230.5304)	(140.5418)	(116.6183)
Male	1.4443	0.7323	1.6001	-0.0540	0.0997	331.6852	165.8408	200.8296**
	(2.8673)	(2.6901)	(2.5313)	(0.0770)	(0.0661)	(275.7534)	(179.9575)	(100.8300)
Graduate Rank (Reversed)	-0.0288	-0.0207	-0.0178	0.0008	0.0022***	4.6182*	4.1849*	1.5499
	(0.0553)	(0.0526)	(0.0503)	(0.0013)	(0.0007)	(2.5474)	(2.1291)	(1.5717)
Undergrad Rank (Reversed)	0.0009	0.0002	0.0157	-0.0005	0.0007**	2.5854	1.3692	1.7919**
	(0.0302)	(0.0288)	(0.0262)	(0.0008)	(0.0003)	(1.8790)	(1.2213)	(0.7339)
Non-Hispanic Black	-2.2573	-1.7948	0.5283	-0.0553	0.0523	270.0696	29.5202	42.3162
	(3.1784)	(3.0281)	(2.7479)	(0.0792)	(0.0741)	(360.5732)	(159.3848)	(100.9777)
Mean of dep var (comp gp)	20.47	19.95	17.45	0.333	0.138	756.2	628.9	432.1
Observations	138	138	131	138	138	138	138	131
R-squared	0.4998	0.4656	0.3537	0.3600	0.1929	0.2681	0.3479	0.3425

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All estimates include degree year fixed effects. The top-coded results cap the top 5% of observations at the 95th percentile value. The 'drop top 5%' results exclude the top 5% of values. Number of papers includes working papers and publications. Any Top Publications indicates a publication in the top 4 economics journals, excluding the *American Economic Review*. Papers have been deduplicated so that multiple versions of a paper are counted as a single paper. To ease interpretation, Graduate and Undergraduate Ranks are "reversed" so that a larger numerical value indicates a higher quality institution. *** Significant at the 1 percent level. ** Significant at the 5 percent level.* Significant at the 10 percent level.

Table 2: Long-run Impacts of Participation in the AEA Mentoring Program on Career Outcomes

	In Academia (1)	Employer Rank in Top 10% (2)	Employer Rank in Top 5% (3)	Tenured or Tenure-Track (4)	Tenured (5)	Tenured (Sample ltd to 2016 or earlier) (6)
AEAMP	0.1089	0.0414	-0.0032	0.1971**	0.1359*	0.2541**
	(0.0684)	(0.0960)	(0.0932)	(0.0946)	(0.0687)	(0.1241)
Male	-0.0686	0.0397	0.0820	0.0450	0.0571	0.0481
	(0.0681)	(0.1029)	(0.0960)	(0.0943)	(0.0668)	(0.1084)
Graduate Rank (Reversed)	0.0007	0.0005	0.0034**	0.0026	0.0005	0.0005
	(0.0012)	(0.0015)	(0.0016)	(0.0017)	(0.0012)	(0.0021)
Undergrad Rank (Reversed)	0.0001	0.0015**	0.0004	-0.0001	0.0004	0.0004
	(0.0005)	(0.0007)	(0.0007)	(0.0008)	(0.0006)	(0.0009)
Non-Hispanic Black	-0.0301	-0.0486	0.1118	0.0970	0.0254	-0.0143
	(0.0684)	(0.0937)	(0.0891)	(0.0955)	(0.0715)	(0.1280)
Mean of dep var (comp group)	0.828	0.540	0.402	0.540	0.299	0.481
Observations	138	138	138	138	138	79
R-squared	0.1404	0.1847	0.2243	0.1923	0.5258	0.3411

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All estimates include degree year fixed effects. In academia indicates employment at a college, university, or similar research institution. Employer rank in the top 10% (5%) indicates having an employer ranked within the top 10% (5%) of economic research institutions, according to the IDEAS (2024) rankings. "Tenured or tenure-track" is defined as holding an assistant professor, associate professor, or professor position at a college/university, provided that the title does not indicate a teaching or clinical role. "Tenured" is defined as holding an associate professor or professor position at a college/university, provided that the title does not indicate a teaching or clinical role. To ease interpretation, Graduate and Undergraduate Ranks are "reversed" so that a larger numerical value indicates a higher quality institution. ***Significant at the 1 percent level. **Significant at the 5 percent level. *Significant at the 10 percent level.

APPENDIX

Appendix Table A.1: Relationship between AEAMP Participation and Having a Google Scholar Profile

	Has GS (1)	Has GS (2)	Has GS (3)	Has GS (4)	Has GS (5)	Has GS (6)
AEAMP	0.0759*	0.2803***	0.2351***	0.3257***	0.3563***	0.1848**
	(0.0423)	(0.0513)	(0.0729)	(0.0726)	(0.0650)	(0.0796)
Male		0.0089	0.0013	0.0064		
		(0.0222)	(0.0472)	(0.0251)		
Grad of top 10 dept.	0.0529**	0.0408*	0.1923***	0.0100	0.0298	0.0828*
	(0.0221)	(0.0229)	(0.0602)	(0.0246)	(0.0260)	(0.0488)
Non-Hispanic Black		0.0372			0.0427	0.0519
		(0.0252)			(0.0304)	(0.0448)
Sample	All	All	Non-Hispanic Black	Hispanic	Male	Female
Mean of dep var (comp group)	0.345	0.349	0.383	0.341	0.348	0.351
Observations	2,602	2,316	476	1,840	1,666	650
R-squared	0.0310	0.0460	0.1125	0.0445	0.0585	0.0493

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. Dependent variable indicates having a Google Scholar (GS) profile. All estimates include degree year fixed effects. Sample includes individuals in EconLit (2024) dissertation database, before conditioning on graduating from a U.S. undergraduate institution. ***Significant at the 1 percent level. **Significant at the 5 percent level.*Significant at the 10 percent level.

Appendix Table A.2: Long-run Impacts of Participation in the AEA Mentoring Program on Log Publication Outcomes

	Log (Number of Papers) (1)	Log (Number of Papers) (Top-coded) (2)	Log (Number of Papers) (Drop top 5%) (3)	Log (Total Citations) (4)	Log (Total Citations) (Top-coded) (5)	Log (Total Citations) (Drop top 5%) (6)
AEAMP	0.0250	0.0271	0.0894	-0.0155	-0.0039	0.1163
	(0.1502)	(0.1497)	(0.1515)	(0.2778)	(0.2757)	(0.2880)
Male	0.0792	0.0709	0.0999	0.3739	0.3502	0.4372
	(0.1319)	(0.1310)	(0.1374)	(0.2830)	(0.2779)	(0.2639)
Graduate Rank (Reversed)	-0.0006	-0.0005	-0.0004	0.0132**	0.0132**	0.0110**
	(0.0026)	(0.0026)	(0.0027)	(0.0053)	(0.0053)	(0.0053)
Undergrad Rank (Reversed)	0.0004	0.0003	0.0008	0.0022	0.0020	0.0025
	(0.0013)	(0.0013)	(0.0014)	(0.0023)	(0.0023)	(0.0023)
Non-Hispanic Black	-0.1554	-0.1497	-0.0843	-0.0489	-0.0799	-0.0183
	(0.1537)	(0.1527)	(0.1507)	(0.2957)	(0.2878)	(0.2790)
Observations	138	138	131	138	138	131
R-squared	0.4394	0.4291	0.3718	0.4109	0.4070	0.3809

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses. All estimates include degree year fixed effects. Dependent variable is log-transformed. The top-coded results cap the top 5% of observations at the 95th percentile value. The 'drop top 5%' results exclude the top 5% of values. Number of papers includes working papers and publications. Papers have been deduplicated so that multiple versions of a paper are counted as a single paper. To ease interpretation, Graduate and Undergraduate Ranks are "reversed" so that a larger numerical value indicates a higher quality institution. ***Significant at the 1 percent level. **Significant at the 5 percent level. *Significant at the 10 percent level.