

Economics Department  
Service and Leadership Award Remarks

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As a final award this morning, I would like to take a moment amidst the celebration of how far our students have come to acknowledge an area in which the field of Economics has been a laggard. Our discipline has had to reconcile, first in the era of #MeToo and more recently in the wake of the Movement for Black Lives, that Economics has not been perceived as – and in many cases has in fact not been – welcoming and inclusive to a diversity of backgrounds. Two years ago, the Department took a first step of drafting a Statement on Racial Justice. That statement articulated both our outrage over the murder of George Floyd and several initiatives to promote a more inclusive Economics community here at Dartmouth.

There are several steps we have taken, including additional resources for teaching assistants in our courses; a new lecture series in inequality, discrimination, and opportunity; a new question on course evaluations to collect feedback on inclusivity in our classes; a new pathway to the mathematics prerequisite to the major; more opportunities for mentored research; and a virtual summer open house for traditionally underrepresented minority students in the first-year class. But no step has been quite so important as the founding of the Sadie Alexander Association, a new student group dedicated to making the Economics Department a more welcoming place to minority, first-generation-low-income, and other underrepresented students. We are proud that the

group has taken its name from the first African American to be awarded a Ph.D. in Economics, a century ago.

On behalf of the Department, and in particular on behalf of Professors Andrew Levin and Claudia Olivetti who have served as the group's faculty advisors, I would like to invite two of the founding members of the Sadie Alexander Association to join me for the presentation of the Economics Department's Service and Leadership Award. Now in its second year, the award honors students who "contribute to and foster a sense of community among students in the department." Please join me in welcoming **Jenique Richards** and **Mothibi Penn-Kekana** to the podium.

Jenique Richards played a crucial role in establishing the Sadie Alexander Association. Using the words of some of her colleagues: "Jenique has been **the** backbone of SAA." Her leadership and organizational skills were essential in establishing the many activities that, in the course of one year, made SAA the vital organization that it is today. Her passion and commitment were key to attracting many new members.

In addition to his role in establishing the Sadie Alexander Association, Mothibi Penn-Kekana has served as an outstanding teaching assistant in a number of courses in Economics and this year helped lay the groundwork for the Economics department to establish the new position of Teaching Assistant Coordinator. Mothibi has done pathbreaking work in that role, providing advice to various Economics instructors as well as recruiting and mentoring teaching assistants.

The Economics Department is grateful for their dedication and thoughtfulness, and for the generous and honest feedback to make

Economics more attractive and welcoming to underrepresented minority and first generation students.

It gives me great pride to confer this award to you both, and great pleasure to know that your legacy at Dartmouth will enhance the experience of students in the Economics Department for decades to come.