For the past three years, female Economics Ph.D. students have been bonding over informal dinners as a way to bring women students from different cohorts together. Unofficially calling the events, “Econ Ladies Dinners,” the group meets once every semester to dine and socialize with each other at various venues.

Historically the dinners have been organized by third-year students who this year include Yen Tran, Katherine Wagner, Paula Calvo and Marianne Bernatzky Köhli. “This event helps to gather and talk about research interests, data sources, experiences lived throughout the Ph.D., etc.,” said Bernatzky Köhli.

With a population of about 30 percent female students in the department, organizers thought it would be a good idea to hold gatherings for women, and requested funding from the Department Chair, Dirk Bergemann. “Since there are not many women at the department, we see these social gatherings as an opportunity to meet and get to know the other students, and their interests,” said co-organizer Paula Calvo.

Both Calvo and Bernatzky Köhli agree that the time together is beneficial for students to discuss common interests and share knowledge among their peers. “There are many fields in economics, so during the semester it’s easier to talk to people in your own field,” said Bernatzky Köhli, whose area of concentration is also labor economics.

“I think this a good opportunity to learn what the other students are doing, and which are our potential common interests,” added Calvo whose area of concentration is labor economics. “Also, it is a good opportunity to share useful information between students from different cohorts.”

Initially dining out at restaurants, and even having a picnic at Shakespeare in the Park in Edgerton Park, the group decided to host at one of the student’s houses this year. “It becomes much more flexible and it was easier to talk to a larger number of people,” said Calvo.

Calvo hopes the group can perhaps include women faculty members in the future. “We thought it might be a possibility to extend the invitation to female faculty in future semesters, and probably have two dinners; one with only students and one with students and faculty,” she said.

Economics Graduate Registrar, Pam O’Donnell, has encouraged and supported the group since its inception. “Our
Department is so fortunate to have such engaging young women who not only add so much intellectually but also add such balance socially everyday,” said O’Donnell. “Nice job ladies!!,” she added enthusiastically.

Any female Ph.D. student in the department is welcome and encouraged to attend.

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