

# Diversity Statement

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Understanding diversity, equity, and inclusion and their importance is integral for any collegiate institution and my experiences inform my beliefs which line up closely with the university's values. My commitment to these ideals is demonstrated by my long history of working with organizations to increase diversity and inclusion at the institutions to which I have belonged. As an out and proud Hispanic bisexual male, I know the benefits of a community intent on accepting different perspectives and experiences, as well as the struggles of minority status in an academic field dominated by those less open to identities which differ from their own. One of the core tenants of my philosophy is built upon the belief that I can make a difference to make sure individuals of any race, gender, sexuality, religion or any other identity can all have equitable opportunities to learn the topic they love.

My commitment to this began in my undergraduate studies at Rowan University. As a resident assistant, I had to oversee 36 first-year students who were living in dormitories on campus, many of whom had never lived with other individuals and in some cases had not met their roommate until moving into their room. As a result of being a resident assistant I was able to attend free seminars with the office of Social Justice, Inclusion, and Conflict Resolution on a variety of topics. These seminars focused on the diverse identities of these individuals and how to work on solutions to de-escalate situations for individuals who may not feel included in their own living spaces. My work as a resident assistant reinforced in me the benefits of diversity. In fact, during my tenure as a resident assistant, my residents actually ended up being the first group of people I publicly came out to as bisexual. This occurred when a hate group came to campus and I wrote a message for my residents that they should not fear peoples' individual differences and instead respect their differences.

In the past five years as a teaching assistant at the University of Delaware, I have made significant efforts to create a more inclusive classroom environment. One of the key steps I have taken is the removal of gendered language in my teaching, ensuring that all students feel respected and included regardless of their gender identity. By fostering a more neutral and open space, I aim to make every student feel comfortable participating in discussions and

engaging with the material. This approach reflects my broader commitment to inclusivity and creating a learning environment where all voices are heard.

My third year of my Ph.D., I joined my first queer organization at the University of Delaware: the Queer and Trans Graduate Student Union. The purpose of QTGSU is to provide a safe and supportive social space for graduate students at the University of Delaware (UD) who identify as part of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, and other queer identities). QTGSU seeks to center and support the needs of underserved graduate students on campus, including Trans and Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color (BIPOC), in the queer community. After a year of membership, I decided to become an E-Board member and was elected to be the treasurer of the organization. Through this organization, I have worked with other diversity-based organizations on campus, including Lavender Programming Board, Women in Engineering, and Women in STEM, to promote diversity and inclusion at the university.

The culmination of these experiences has significantly impacted my research. My interest in equity and inclusion is evidenced my research, which intends to understand the effects of policies and events on members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community. I believe this research is important, as we should strive to quantify the positive impacts of policies that promote diversity so that we can improve the standings of all individuals in an equitable manner.

My personal and professional journeys through the years has heavily influenced who I am and how I conduct my work today. I hope to make further strides in the future to understand and work with people of diverse backgrounds in the interest of diversity, equity and inclusion.