Writing Effective Diversity (DEIJ) Statements

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Introductions

- Name
- Department
- Where are you in the process of drafting your diversity statement?
Learning Objectives

1. Identify and avoid common DEIJ statement pitfalls.
2. Structure a diversity statement around goals, methods, and results.
3. Reflect on what they are currently doing to contribute to DEIJ in their teaching, research, and service.
What is a DEIJ Statement?

A document that explains your values in, experiences with, and commitments to diversity, equity, inclusion, and/or justice.

Variable Format:
- Included in cover letters, teaching statement/portfolio
- Or its own 1-2 page document

Key Features:
- First person narrative
- Experience/Action Oriented
- Related to other application materials
Diversity Statement Pitfalls

1. Creating False Parallels of Personal Identity
2. No Connection to Practice
3. Theoretical Approach
4. Acknowledgement Approach
5. Savior Approach
6. Diary Approach
7. Tokenization
Pitfall #1: Creating False Parallels of Personal Identity

- Do not equate your individual experiences with structural exclusion/positionality.
- Not all experiences of exclusion are the same.
- “You do not have to be African American to have insight into the challenges they face, but if you do not have experiential knowledge of racism, then do not claim it (Golash-Boza, 2016).”

Example:

“I am uniquely positioned to work with immigrant communities because of my experiences as a woman in a male-dominated field. My first-hand knowledge of discrimination allows me to relate to the immigrant experience.”
Pitfall #2: No Connection to Practice

• Limiting your contribution to diversity to your identity.
• Identity ≠ qualified
• Your identity and experiences are important, but how have they helped in committing yourself to DEIJ work?

Example:
“I grew up in a small town in the Volta region of Ghana where my parents were peasant farmers. I am the only one among eight siblings that made it past junior high school. I was able to graduate from senior high school (Senior High School, from 1997-1999) because of a government merit-based scholarship.”
Pitfall #3: Theoretical Approach

• Theory without Practice
• “Having knowledge of a troubling phenomenon does not necessarily mean you are prepared (or committed) to eradicating that phenomenon” (Whitaker, 2020).
• How will I know you can competently contribute to University DEIJ efforts?

Example:
“As diversity continues to grow in our world, it is our responsibility as educators to dismantle systems of oppression through education. An intersectional approach that accounts for all identities is necessary to combat racism, sexism, and...”
Pitfall #4: Acknowledgement Approach

• Simply stating and/or explaining that racism is a problem is not enough.
• Can be read as a passing interest – not a commitment to enact social change.
• Acknowledgement does not account for complicity or provide space for self-reflection.

Example:
“Diversity has always been important to me. With the recent uprise of the Black Lives Matter movement, it is important to think about racism in our classrooms because our students deserve representation and equality.”
Pitfall #5: Savior Approach

- Everyone else is sexist/racist/classist, but not me!
- If you hire me, I'll teach everyone to be better.
- May take credit for others' work, and/or avoid taking personal responsibility for bias.
- May not be realistic/specific about how to make a difference.

Example:
“I have an undergraduate degree in Women's Studies, which has made me more aware of oppression than most other academics in STEM. I am proud to be in a position to help our department eliminate stereotype threat and implicit bias, and help women succeed in STEM.”
Pitfall #6: Diary Approach

• Shares anecdotes about being discriminated against (or discriminating against someone).
• Can come across as an appeal for sympathy, feel empty or insincere.
• Experiences shouldn't be the focus, should always be shared with an explicit purpose connected to action.

Example:
“In many ways, my experiences in academia have taught me how systems of authority marginalize women and non-white people. I have been the only person like me at a conference, had others take credit for my ideas, and been accused of being more emotional or less rational than my peers. These experiences motivated me to join a women's group on campus.”
Pitfall #7: Tokenization

- Identifying or describing experiences with one marginalized person to show the effectiveness of their DEIJ strategies.
- Does not demonstrate your preparedness to tackle social inequalities.

Ex: “Sometimes, my students from diverse backgrounds keep in touch long past the end of my class, which shows I am reaching them on an academic and personal level. Here is an excerpt from an email from an African American female student I had the good fortune to teach in three classes [excerpt from email follows].”
Activity: Identifying Pitfalls

1. Open the Google Doc linked in the chat.
2. Choose a sample statement to work on.
3. Highlight any pitfalls you see.
4. Fill out the remainder of the table:
   What is good about this statement?
   What would you change?
Diversity Statement Pitfalls

1. Creating False Parallels of Personal Identity
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Diversity as Action

- Many of the pitfalls are pitfalls because they distract from action, avoid action, or apologize for lack of action.
- Highlight experiences
- Concrete examples
- Substantive vs Representative
- Show, don’t tell your values
Do these statements demonstrate diversity as action?

**Teaching:**

“I ask everyone how they’re doing.”

“I learn everyone’s names/how to pronounce them.”

**Research:**

"I think about underrepresented populations when conducting my research."

"I ask women to join my lab."

**Service:**

"I participated in a workshop on Allyship."

"I attended a Women in Science panel."
At OSU, I've had the opportunity to teach a diverse student body.

I acknowledge ways in which my discipline has historically excluded some voices.

"I make an effort to include all voices and all perspectives in classroom discussions."

"I make sure to cite Black scholars in my research."

"I teach my students strategies for succeeding in my discipline and in college." (1st gen)

"I provide extra mentoring and support for my students of color."

"I am exploring the use of alternative grading systems to empower my students and reduce my authority over them."

"I advocate for non-white epistemologies to be prioritized in my dept’s curriculum."

Acknowledging difference

Including across difference

Making up for lack of resources due to difference

Challenging the systems which manufacture difference

(Adapted from Siliman, 2021)
Big Picture Structure: The DEIJ BUCKETS

Teaching
Research
Service & Community
Future (Conclusion?)
Don't Limit Yourself

- **Teaching**: Many inclusive teaching strategies benefit all students, but benefit minoritized students *more*.

- **Research**: Not just what you research, but how you do it and who you do it with.

- **Service and Community**: Doesn't have to be outside of the university or your department.
Don't Limit Yourself

• Research or attend workshops on inclusive teaching and research practices.

• In addition to talking about what you are doing, you can talk about what you plan to do (e.g., at the institution you are applying to).

• If you are not sending out your statement soon, think about what actions you can take this semester/year.
What are some things you are already doing to advance equity, inclusion, and justice...

In your teaching?
In your research?
In your community?
Little Picture Structure: Goal, Method, So What?

**Goal**
What do you want to accomplish?

**Method**
How do you make it happen?

**So What?**
What is the impact of this practice? What does it mean for your future practice?
I aim to expand my students' perceptions of who scientists are, including better representation across genders, racial identities and LGBTQ+ identities.

In every unit, I introduce students to an underacknowledged scientist from a marginalized background.

Students are reminded of/learn that any person can be a scientist, and that some identities are privileged in scientific discourse.
Choose one statement and elaborate to include:

- **Goal**
- **Method**
- **So What?**

**Teaching:**

“I ask everyone how they’re doing.”

“I learn everyone’s names/how to pronounce them.”

**Research:**

"I think about underrepresented populations when conducting my research."

"I ask women to join my lab."

**Service:**

"I participated in a workshop on Allyship."

"I attended a Women in Science panel."
Fitting Your Statement to the Job Description

• Analyzing the job description can give you a sense of institutional fit, as well as where to focus your statement.

• For example, whether to focus on...
  • Teaching, research, or service
  • Strategies aimed at including or achieving justice for certain populations
  • Strategies addressing equity/inclusion vs. inclusion/justice
Institutional DIEJ Spectrum

diversity

“There are many different [people, perspectives, identities] at OSU”

inclusion

“We invite valid, rational, non-dominant [people, perspectives, identities] at OSU”

equity

“We address biases that lead to the dominance or invisibility of different [people, perspectives, identities] at OSU”

justice

“We challenge policies that reinforce the dominance of invisibility of [people, perspectives, identities] at OSU”

Acknowledging difference

Including across difference

Making up for lack of resources due to difference

Challenging the systems which manufacture difference

(Siliman, 2021)
Now, Let’s Examine a Job Description!

- **Guiding Questions:**
  - Where does this department/university seem to fall on the DEIJ spectrum? Does the job seem more focused on teaching or research?
  - What else stands out to you that could be relevant for writing your diversity statement?
Assistant Professor

Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts (VCUarts)
Art Foundation Program

This full-time, 9-month position is at the rank of Assistant Professor, is non-tenure-eligible, and begins in August 2022.
Application Deadline: For best consideration, applications are due April 15, 2022.

Instructional duties comprise teaching of undergraduate courses in the faculty member’s area(s) of expertise. Course assignments will change based on demand and will be at the discretion of the Art Foundation Program Lead.

The faculty member is expected to mentor students; integrate innovative pedagogical and technological approaches and multicultural perspectives into instructional and mentorship methods; and foster collaborative teaching partnerships across the program and VCUarts. In support of the school’s strong commitment to inclusion, diversity, and accessibility, the faculty member is expected to foster a welcoming and equitable learning environment for all students.

Creative research is not an expectation for this 9-month, non-tenure eligible position. It is expected that the faculty member will demonstrate excellence through teaching, mentoring, and service and will maintain a body of knowledge within the faculty member’s area(s) of specialization. The program will support the faculty member’s professional development, as appropriate and within available resources, to ensure ongoing mastery of technical skills. Professional development activities will be consistent with and support the mission and initiatives of the program, school and university.

As a member of a community-oriented, tight-knit program and School, the faculty member will provide service such as being a part of student recruitment events, contributing to admissions and recruitment activities at all levels, including recruitment related travel, and serving on program/school/university committees. Other responsibilities may be assigned by the Art Foundation Program Lead.

In addition, this position will have responsibilities related to managing, maintaining, and developing a safe resource lab for the several hundred students that utilize the facility each semester. This position will perform service to the school and program as designated by the Program Lead, and will work collaboratively with other AFO and VCUarts faculty, students and guest artists. The faculty member will be committed to working in and fostering a diverse faculty, staff, and student environment as a faculty member at VCU.
Assistant Professor of Vertebrate Zoology

POSITION:

Assistant Professor of Vertebrate Zoology: The Department of Biological Sciences at California State University, Stanislaus invites applications for a full-time, tenure-track appointment at the rank of Assistant Professor in vertebrate zoology, with expertise in ornithology or mammalogy. This position is part of a cluster hire of four tenure-track positions in the Department of Biological Sciences that aims to enhance the Department's core strengths in the biological sciences, expand our emphasis in computational and quantitative methods, and further develop our commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in our teaching, scholarship, and service to the University and local community. Stanislaus State is a Hispanic-Serving Institution with a high proportion of first-generation college students, renowned for fostering student social mobility in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Effective teaching, scholarly productivity, and service to the University are required for retention, promotion, and tenure, and the department strongly encourages contributions in all these areas that promote equity, diversity, inclusion, and social justice as integral and valued parts of professional activity. As a University and Department that highly value student success, commitment to effective teaching is considered the most important criterion for hiring, retention, and promotion. The Department also requires evidence of productive research activity, and defines research to include all activities that contribute to advancing scientific knowledge and the scientific process within the life sciences, as well as the scholarship of teaching and learning. Candidates must show evidence of growth and improvement as an educator through development of practices that directly meet the needs and challenges facing the diverse study body of the university through culturally responsive and inclusive practices.
QUESTIONS
Diversity Statement Consultations

• If you would like feedback on a draft diversity statement (or teaching statement, teaching portfolio, etc.), the Drake Institute offers individual consultations. For more information, visit:
  • https://drakeinstitute.osu.edu/gtas/consultation-services


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