Literature tells us there are some common characteristics writers make when crafting these statements. See seven common pitfalls we have identified below.

1. **Creating False Parallels of Personal Identity**
   
   “By that I mean do not equate the exclusion you faced due to being a Kansan in Missouri with the exclusion an African-American faces at a primarily white institution. You do not have to be an 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).

2. **No Connection to Practice**
   
   “Statements where applicants stated an identity characteristic alone (e.g., their race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic or first-generation status) as their “contribution” to diversity. Instead, if identity characteristics were mentioned, they were tied to the impact of that identity on their approaches, actions, or interests in relation to the faculty role they were seeking” (Sylvester et al., 2020).

3. **Theoretical Approach**
   
   “The difference is subtle but important because having knowledge of a troubling phenomenon does not necessarily mean you are prepared (or committed) to eradicating that phenomenon. Taking this approach to a DEI statement is saying, ‘I understand these issues theoretically but don’t confidently know how to translate theory to practice’” (Whitaker, 2020).

4. **Acknowledgment Approach**
   
   “Statements that merely acknowledge the existence of oppression do not go far enough to explain how a job candidate may be complicit in it. This approach is akin to saying, ‘I have a lot of Black friends.’ Such commentary suggests that you are a keen observer of how other people are disenfranchised but have yet to understand how their being marginalized affects you. The natural conclusion, therefore, is that you have no personal investment in ending oppression — just a passing interest in how it plays out for others” (Whitaker, 2020).

5. ** Savior Approach**
   
   “Applicants who take this approach to DEI are basically telling the committee that everyone else is racist/classist/sexist, and, if hired, they already know how to teach all of those problematic people how not to be” (Whitaker, 2020).

6. **Diary Approach**
   
   “Here, applicants center themselves by sharing anecdotes about when they “realized” how bad it was to be discriminated against — or the alternative: when they realized that they had “unknowingly” been discriminating against someone” (Whitaker, 2020).

7. **Tokenization**
   
   Identifying or describing one person, often with an underrepresented or marginalized identity, to justify choices and/or show effectiveness in relation to their own DEI activities (Authors, 2021).

This is a developing framework and may include more characteristics of pitfalls and be modified with additional research and input from others.