**QUESTION:** Another goal of ERSP is to promote and support a diverse CICS community along many dimensions including (but not necessarily limited to) gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, ability, sexual orientation, etc. **Explain how your participation would help to build this community or how you would create a space where students from all groups feel included**

**RESPONSE:**

As someone who has faced challenges as an international student from a modest socioeconomic background, I add to the diversity of the CICS community and bring a unique perspective – that of humility and determination – to the Early Research Scholars Program. Growing up in a small hometown with limited resources and opportunities, I’ve learned to approach challenges with resilience. These experiences have shaped my way of thinking, allowing me to see problems through a different lens. I believe that sharing this perspective would enrich the diversity of thought within the group and inspire innovative approaches to research challenges.

I understand that diversity is not just about representation but about fostering an inclusive space where everyone’s identity, experiences, and contributions are respected. I would actively strive to be a good team player, respecting people’s identities and fostering an atmosphere where ideas can flow freely. For instance, I would make it a priority to ask for and use people’s desired pronouns, ensuring that non-binary peers feel valued. I believe that such simple acts of respect/inclusion can go a long way in creating a sense of belonging.

Additionally, I would work to amplify the voices of particularly students from historically disadvantaged communities, celebrating the unique perspectives they bring to the table. This, I believe, acknowledges the unique challenges they may have faced. By encouraging open dialogue and collaboration, I hope to build an environment where everyone feels comfortable sharing their ideas. Even if it is just a germ of an idea that isn’t well developed yet, I would encourage that teammates speak out their thoughts. This way, we could work together collaboratively to improvise on that idea.

For peers who may have experienced trauma, whether due to living in war-torn nations or other life circumstances, I would be just as considerate of their life experiences and be mindful of their comfort levels. The goal would be to foster a space free of judgment or undue pressure. I’d encourage a culture of support and understanding, ensuring that everyone feels safe and included in group interactions and research activities.

I also understand how important it can be to address accessibility concerns for people with disabilities. I would advocate for accessibility and inclusivity for those with disabilities, whether it means ensuring materials are usable by everyone or adapting group dynamics to accommodate their needs. Creating a collaborative environment that highlights everyone’s strengths, rather than their limitations, is a key step in building a truly inclusive community. Plus, I believe in encouragement and positive reinforcement. So, good ideas would be appreciated, and not-so-helpful contributions would still be appreciated for the effort!

Ultimately, I believe that the strength of ERSP lies in the diversity of its participants. By listening, learning, and standing alongside others in support of their identities and experiences, I hope to contribute to a community where everyone feels empowered to thrive. Whether it’s advocating for equitable practices, building strong team bonds, or simply leading with kindness, I’m committed to helping ERSP remain a space where students from all walks of life feel inspired and valued.

Addressing the red:

* Being considerate of different life experiences (**done)**
* Being culturally sensitive.
* Respect people’s identities and call them by their preferred pronouns. (**done**)
* Offering encouragement to those in need. **(done**)
* Being a good team player. I would help foster an atmosphere where ideas can flow freely. (**done**)
* ERSP students generally have less experience BEFORE COLLEGE.
* On top of that, because they’re a minority, they might be more hesitant to approach professors for such research opportunities.
* So, they’re kind of **‘doubly hindered’** in their ability to get research opp.
* **ERSP** can boost presentation skills and communication skills(team lingo, etc.) – invaluable soft skills.
* ERSP program gives me confidence in my skills.