**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 an international student from a modest socioeconomic background, I have faced several challenges – notably, that of growing up in a small hometown with limited resources and opportunities. However, it has taught me to make the most out of every opportunity and approach challenges with resilience, and I believe that is an invaluable perspective I can bring to the Early Research Scholars Program. By voicing my ideas and actively contributing to the group, I hope to encourage others from similarly modest or disadvantaged backgrounds to do the same. As the film Coach Carter aptly puts it, ‘As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same.’ This sentiment reflects my belief in how inspiring it can be to embrace our unique perspectives and voice them out.

I understand that diversity is not just about representation but about fostering an inclusive space where everyone and their contributions are acknowledged and valued. 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 members feel validated. Such simple acts of respect can go a long way in creating a sense of belonging.

Additionally, I would work to amplify the voices of any students from historically disadvantaged communities, acknowledging their challenges and celebrating the unique perspectives they bring to the table. Even if it’s just a germ of an idea that’s not fully developed, I would encourage them to share it. There’s always a possibility that the idea holds potential, and together, we could work to improvise and refine it. Encouraging open dialogue and making everyone feel comfortable sharing their ideas would be my priority.

For those who may have experienced challenges tied to their nationality, such as coming from regions affected by conflict or instability, I would approach their experiences with empathy. Plus, I believe in positive reinforcement. So, good ideas would be appreciated, and even ideas that miss the mark would be acknowledged! The effort is what matters. The goal would be to foster a space free of judgement, where everyone feels safe and included – whether it is in group interactions or research activities.

I also understand how important it can be to address accessibility concerns for people with disabilities. I would attempt to ensure materials are usable by everyone, and adjust my communication and other aspects of group interactions to accommodate their needs. Creating a collaborative environment that highlights everyone’s strengths, rather than their limitations, is an important step in building a truly inclusive community.

Ultimately, I believe that the strength of ERSP lies in the diversity of its participants. By listening to and learning from their inputs, and supporting their identities, I hope to participate in a community where everyone feels empowered to achieve and contribute. 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.