Justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion statement

My contributions to advancing justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion (JDEI) have shaped the way I approach institutional service, research, and mentorship.

At an institutional level, I believe it is important to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion in lockstep; diversity is meaningless without equity or inclusion. During my PhD, I co-founded my department's JDEI committee, mobilizing dozens of students, postdocs, and faculty. During my two-year tenure leading our JDEI committee, I worked on multiple successful initiatives, including diversifying graduate admissions; implementing a mentorship program for incoming graduate students; establishing relocation stipends; and organizing monthly department seminars pertaining to JDEI. Throughout this work, I collaborated extensively with faculty and institutional leadership to align our initiatives with broader departmental goals. Our efforts ultimately became a resilient organization that enabled long-lasting institutional change.

To promote JDEI within my research field, I co-developed a course on genetics, ethics, and society. Despite the widespread impacts of human genetics research, few scientists receive the training needed to dissect the broader impacts of their work. Our course sought to equip students with the tools to conduct equitable science by covering two main topics: how genetic research impacts society, and how societal norms and structures influence genetic research. I designed the curriculum and taught the course for two consecutive years. I have also ensured our curriculum is open-source, enabling several institutions (including the Broad Institute, Columbia, and Johns Hopkins) to adapt our content.

Within my own research, I also work to center an anti-racist lens. When studying complex trait architecture across populations, there are two important considerations: first, the existing Eurocentric bias in genomic datasets has been detrimental to scientific equity, and second, human genetic variation is not accurately described by discrete groupings. Thus, while diversifying genomic datasets is important, over-emphasizing genetic differences between populations can also risk tokenizing individuals and furthering racial essentialism. To navigate this nuance in my work, I have critically engaged with the work of bioethicists and sociologists. Because of this interdisciplinary approach, I am frequently invited to give guest lectures, provide commentary in news articles, and share my perspective on race, ancestry, and genetics.

Finally, I have formally and informally mentored several graduate students over the course of my career. I have advised them in developing research projects, preparing for qualifying exams, applying for fellowships, and navigating personal and professional difficulties. Oftentimes the students who seek my help share one or more of my identities – being a woman, or queer, or a person of color. The impact of this sort of work is often difficult to quantify, but I have found that it is one of the most important elements in enabling graduate students to thrive as scientists.

As a research professor, I will bring to bear the skills I have learned from my previous work—inclusive mentorship, empathy-centered advocacy, and consensus-building across disparate stakeholders—to continue advancing JDEI within and outside of my institution.