

## Diversity Statement

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My experience as an international student who has lived in the United States for nearly a decade enables me to understand the importance of inclusiveness in both classrooms and research labs. For example, I noticed that some international, underrepresented, or minority students are less likely to ask for help even when they need it, and I was definitely one of these students when I first started school in a foreign country. Once I asked a question after class, and the instructor said, “If you don’t know the answer to this simple question, I can’t help you.” I still remember how frustrated I felt, and I was more reluctant to ask questions during and after lectures. However, I learned from this experience that the impact a teacher could make on students could be so pivotal to students’ success. As an instructor, it is important to make students feel respected and let them know that I care. I will create a safe space in my classroom where students are always inspired to learn and not afraid of making mistakes.

Throughout my academic journey, I have been fortunate that most of the professors and instructors are encouraging and kind. One of the most inclusive classroom activities I participated in was when the instructor provided two optional exercises in class: students could choose to discuss in a small group or work alone. I thought this strategy was very effective, because students may be at different stages of learning, and they have different learning styles, where some prefer to discuss what they already have within small groups, while others still want more time to process the information. Having various options can increase students’ willingness to participate so that everyone could gain something from this activity.

In my field of bioinformatics, I will most likely work with students with diverse academic backgrounds. They might be biology majors with little programming experience, or students with programming training but not enough biology knowledge. Thus, when I design a required class for bioinformatics majors, I will also implement multiple layers of classroom activities so that everyone could learn something new and useful. For example, if I want the class to complete a coding exercise, I will use an assessment at the beginning of the course to find out the coding level of students. During the lecture, I will provide guided coding exercises to set foundation, and then lead real-world case study exercises to encourage critical thinking and improve students’ problem solving skills. I spend more time with the students who need extra help, but I also will provide bonus questions or extra challenges for students who finished the required exercise early.

I think it is also important to increase cultural awareness in the community on campus. For example, a seminar focused on different cultural etiquette could be organized once a year. Some of the unfortunate events, such as a culturally inappropriate joke in the workplace, could be avoided if we raise cultural awareness in both students and faculty. Using my own experience as an example, I can help other international, underrepresented, and minority students by striving to bring inclusiveness and awareness to more people on campus so that we can embrace our differences and then focus on conducting fruitful collaborative research.