

My research interests straddle two fields: industrial engineering and public health. As an industrial engineering student, I sometimes stick out because of my deep interest in healthcare applications. Conversely, in public health settings I am often seen as different because of my engineering training and quantitative perspective. But in either setting, any discomfort I may experience is limited thanks to my race, gender, income level, physical abilities, and other characteristics granting me the privilege to feel generally well-respected and supported. This privilege simultaneously motivates me to advocate for and work to develop a diverse academic environment in which all can excel, especially those granted fewer privileges than me.

As an instructor, I have worked, and will continue to work, toward creating an equitable classroom in which all students can access the course content, physical space, and presentation of material. This includes using in-class examples that do not make students feel left out, adjusting the style and speed of my instruction to meet students' learning styles, and establishing class policies that encourage content-focused discussion but prohibit demeaning others. I work to ensure this universal access extends beyond the classroom as well, so all students can utilize me as a mentor and resource to help them understand how they fit into the academic community and how I can help them achieve professional goals.

As a member of a university community, I have also tried to foster an inclusive environment. While the power of a graduate student is limited within my academic department, I have leveraged what power I do have to work towards this goal. This includes both generating a more diverse student body and ensuring all students have the resources to succeed. My peers and I have advocated to our faculty administration for more Black and other under-represented minority student representation in our graduate program and have pushed for more transparency in the funding and practices of recruiting. Further, as president of our student chapter of the Institute for Operations Research and Management Sciences (INFORMS), I oversaw a global movie night series, to foster community between domestic and international students.

One challenge I have experienced during my doctoral program was at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. Our graduate student union voted to strike from our teaching work as we pushed for a more comprehensive handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and major changes to campus policing. While my academic situation and personal identity were not at great risk from either COVID-19 or policing, I struck in solidarity with peers who are not granted the same security. Missing several course sessions was difficult, but the experience striking helped me better understand how a small action I can take to ensure those without my privileges are heard.

While I am granted several privileges because of a majority of my characteristics, my sexuality does minoritize me. As a closeted gay undergraduate, I did not see openly LGBTQ faculty members or academic leaders and presumed that if I were to join this community, I would need to keep my sexuality hidden. Luckily, throughout my graduate studies, I encountered several LGBTQ peers and mentors who showed me that it is possible to both be open about my identity and also be successful in research and teaching. I aim to serve as such a model for students and others throughout my career.