I understand, value, and support how important it is to maintain core academic values that support the success of groups that face unique challenges. At a minimum, diversity embodies the inclusion of undocumented and first generation students, communities of color that are historically underserved, and LGBTQ students. Besides respecting, supporting, and fostering diversity, I expect this mindset to strengthen a community through a cohesive atmosphere.

In my work as a biostatistician, I worked with visiting international scholars from Mexico, Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Ethiopia at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, Department of Psychiatry. My role was to collaborate with them in manuscript development to structure analyses that matched their hypotheses, analyze their data, and present results in peer-reviewed journals. As a researcher working in this environment, I learned from these researchers about the different cultural aspects of their work with eating disorder research that were not clear to me prior to joining the Center of Excellence for Eating Disorders.

In my doctoral studies I spent several years working with data derived from a Chilean infancy cohort recruited from low- to middle-income neighborhoods. In collaborating with the international investigators of this study, I developed a better understanding of economic development in Chile affecting public health during the time of participant recruitment in the 1990s, which included a shift to Western dietary and lifestyle characteristics. This shift shaped the health of the population I studied and informed the first aim of my dissertation: “Sociodemographic predictors of early postnatal growth: Evidence from a Chilean infancy cohort.” Similar to my work as a biostatistician, my work with diverse groups enriched my research and understanding of burdens faced by underserved groups.

In these roles as a biostatistician and epidemiology doctoral student, I developed a better understanding of perspectives and cultural aspects outside of my range of understanding. These experiences also reinforced the value of broadening my perspectives, in this case strengthening my development as a researcher by expanding my understanding of problems and burdens faced by diverse groups. I was mentored more by the people I mentioned above than the opposite, and I would be thrilled to be able to function in a role helping the professional development of diverse groups of students as they strengthen their advanced methodological skills and further their research careers.

As a professor starting at the University of Florida, I expect to work in several capacities. Efforts within the classroom can span syllabus wording that includes a diversity statement to a focus on health disparities within the curriculum, signaling an inclusive atmosphere. I plan to build a diverse group of students within my research group by implementing fair and inclusive policies, set norms for acceptable workplace conduct, and provide opportunities for mentorship and networking. Activities can include holding regular lab meetings discussing inclusive practices, mentoring students through manuscript writing and grant development activities, and outreach activities in underserved populations promoting public health research. To bolster these activities, I would seek the support of federal funding sources to build my lab while utilizing resources from Office of Graduate Diversity Initiatives at the University of Florida.