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Diversity Statement

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A popular trope in the discussion of diversity in academics relates to the benefits engaging in the presentation, debate, and celebration of a diverse set of ideas. Diversity is a close cousin of creativity when it comes to generating and developing new ideas and viewpoints. All of this is to say that as researchers, we are some of the primary beneficiaries of being able to interact and learn from colleagues and students from different backgrounds and cultures.

Of course, as academics, we also have a responsibility to the institution and the students which we serve. Not only must we welcome diverse opinions for our own benefit, we must also ensure that all students, regardless of race, sex, or religion, feel comfortable being able to share these opinions. In addition, as educators, we must be sensitive to how students' backgrounds and experiences translate to way in which they process and learn the material we present. One element of this dynamic that I have only recently been able to fully appreciate is the concept of representation. It is important for students, especially those from groups traditionally underrepresented in academia, to see members of their groups working and thriving in academics. Of course, I am unable to alter my demographics to provide this representation for all students. However, I can make a concerted effort to seek out educational material that fosters this type of environment. This effort can take the form of highlighting work from scholars of diverse backgrounds, having guest lecturers present in class, or simply including a diverse set of people in things like slides and class handouts.

As a white male I certainly can't claim that my appointment would constitute a diverse hiring decision. However, as an immigrant and someone who sat through his first class in third grade not understanding a word of English, and then learning to integrate myself into daily life in America through recess, ESL classes, and long nights working on my English homework, I'd like to think that I at least have an understanding of the challenges that students and faculty from underrepresented backgrounds face. This knowledge, along with my understanding of the benefits of diversity and of my responsibility to uphold its principles, gives me ample incentive to actively seek out and promote diversity in the classroom and in my research. I hope to do so by collaborating with

researchers from different backgrounds, by encouraging students to express their views openly and respectfully, and by working to recruit a diverse set of faculty.