

Diversity Statement

of Dante Buhl (Applied Math PhD applicant for Fall—2024)

Diversity is an important part of academic communities in the modern age. As part of my life, I've always been cognizant of it. I grew up in a very white part of California. So white, in fact, that only 1% of students at my school were black. I'm half-Peruvian and half-white first generation student myself, and my family was considered a low-income family. While there are a lot of details which describe my own experiences as a minority, I prefer to think about how I use my diversity to influence other people's experiences.

One of my favorite ways of giving back as a diverse student was by working as a tutor and now as a teaching assistant. Growing up with busy parents who never finished college, there was only so much help I could get from them, and generally I didn't have the resources to get other help if I needed it. Later in life, I realized that I was very lucky to have learned math and science as well as I did. Pedagogy studies have shown that underrepresented minority students have a much higher chance of failing STEM courses when they don't have access to resources that allow them to engage in active learning environments. As a learning facilitator, I practice equity-minded pedagogy which is focused on providing equally effective active learning experiences to a large group of students. This is a resource that I can now provide to students who may not have had equal experiences in their previous education. I find it very fitting, mostly because I do love helping students understand Calculus. Calculus is easily my favorite subject, but also a subject that many people turn away from after their first interaction with it. Ideally, by being mindful of the way I help students engage with mathematics, I will make the field of mathematics more welcoming for diverse students.

This is my goal as an educator, and perhaps the most potent lens which I engage with diversity. Not simply by being a minority or a first generation student myself, but by helping mathematics become more diverse in the minds it can reach. Too many students have a negative mental image of math in their heads. I think the best way to change the general lack of diversity in the field of mathematics is to diversify the mental images in peoples' minds. Mathematics doesn't have to be just a barrier to a STEM field, it can also be an art, or a tool.