

## **Diversity Statement**

### **Dario Tortarolo<sup>1</sup>**

I am a Latino male doing academic research in Economics. I am acutely aware of both how underrepresented minorities are in our field ([Bayer and Rouse, 2016](#); [Advani et al., 2020](#)), as well as how fortunate I am to be where I am, writing this letter today. I am convinced of the importance of promoting diversity at all levels. As a researcher and professor, I strive to promote diversity and inclusiveness in my day-to-day life. In this essay I talk about my life-time exposure to (lack of) diversity and ways in which I support it in the classroom today.

It is interesting how my experience, view, and exposure to diversity evolved during my life. I was born in Argentina in a small southern town with a population of 50,000 and very little diversity. Although I went to a public and tuition-free elementary and high school, the educational environment was not diverse at all. In particular, almost none of my peers came from a socioeconomic disadvantaged context or underrepresented group. That made me wonder for the first time why it was so difficult for underrepresented students to access high-quality public schools and improve their standard of living. This first-hand exposure to low diversity and across-school socioeconomic inequality were one of the factors that inspired me to pursue a career in Economics to delve more rigorously into these issues.

After finishing high school, I chose to move to a bigger city to attend a good tuition-free public university. My experience there was mixed. On the one hand, I became more exposed to the usual troubles afflicting bigger cities; in particular, insecurity, inequality, and the lack of integration between different ethnic groups. On the other hand, I had the opposite feeling during my time at a public university. I was lucky to be surrounded by a much more diverse class than in high school. Students would come from different parts of the country (both poor and rich areas) and even from less developed Latin American countries like Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela who migrate to Argentina to pursue better opportunities (e.g., to attend tuition-free and higher-quality public universities). The mix of men and women was pretty balanced too. This exposure made me realize how important is to understand and promote inclusiveness. Upon my arrival at Berkeley for my graduate studies, I was really shocked to find such a diverse community but at the same time a low representation of minorities among the students I taught as a teaching assistant.

I believe the shortage of diversity in the Economics profession is unfortunate. It points to inefficiencies in the allocation of talent within the labor market (e.g., see [Advani et al., 2020](#)). It also represents a missed opportunity for better research, since it has been shown that diversity in researcher background leads to diversity in participation and research topics ([Porter and Serra, 2020](#); [Gershenson et al., 2022](#)).

I was not aware of this until recently, but as instructors and researchers we have sizable power, responsibility, and space to promote diversity among students with different economic status,

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religion, race, sexual orientation, medical conditions, and cultural backgrounds. The globalized world is moving fast in the direction of a 'melting pot' and it's our role to adapt the classroom and our teaching practices to it.

To the best of my abilities, these are some of the ways in which I embrace diversity in the courses that I have taught at Nottingham and the department:

- Before each semester begins, I familiarize myself with the support plans of incoming students with declared disabilities and I put accommodations in place where appropriate. In doing so, I have had the pleasure to interact with a student with a hearing impairment who relied on lip reading and with a student with a bipolar disorder whose dissertation I am currently supervising.
- When I introduce myself in the first teaching day, I take a moment to express that I welcome students from different nationalities, religions, color, ideology, gender and sexuality;
- I also stress that we should look out for each other and be respectful, and I highlight that some disabilities are not visible. This provides a sense of belonging for students with different backgrounds and conditions and creates an inclusive culture where all talent can thrive;
- I respect and demonstrate genuine interest in the situation of each student;
- I try to get everyone involved through interactive lessons (e.g., with live polls in which everyone can participate anonymously);
- I try to balance the contents of the empirical papers as much as possible to cover different countries around the world and topics (e.g., in my public finance class we discuss gender tax issues like the 'tampon tax', the first problem set asks students to measure and plot changes in inequality over time using a country of their choice);
- I also pay attention to gender and race in the bibliography to have enough female and black authors, who are underrepresented in the field. I'm convinced that exposing students to authors that better represent them can help them feel welcome and worthwhile in the field (in fact, this is something that a female student pointed out to me in my first year);
- I am committed to improving the seminar culture within Economics. I am one of the organizers of the applied seminar in which we usually select a gender-balanced list of speakers. In addition, we moderate the seminars to prevent women from being treated unfairly when presenting.
- I also try to give out praise and positive feedback regardless of the quality of the question/comment to create an inclusive and participative environment;
- Lastly, I include an open-ended question in the teaching evaluation form to get anonymous feedback on ways to further improve diversity in the classroom. Oftentimes, the best strategy is to listen and then adapt our practices in response.

For these reasons, I am confident that, in being part of your thriving community, I will not only bring a diverse perspective, but I will also successfully contribute to the integration of underrepresented minorities in your institution. I would like to close this statement with the following dictum: "*There is no one, anywhere, who should be excluded from the hope, the joy, the wonder of learning*". We all have a moral, ethical, and legal obligation to ensure that our university is inclusive and welcoming to those in our community.