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Statement of Contributions to Diversity

I approach diversity and equity in education through multiple lenses. As a cis-male, bilingual, and able-bodied educator in a progressive space like Santa Cruz, I recognize the privilege and influence I carry. At the same time, as an immigrant person of color navigating financial strain and political uncertainty in the most expensive rental market in the country, I also understand how these challenges shape my daily life. These experiences help me empathize with how identity influences both life and learning environments.

The current political climate makes the pursuit of equity in education both urgent and complex. We need solutions that not only garner broad support but are also precise and evidence-based. As an applied social scientist, I recognize that equity-oriented policymaking is rarely straightforward. Initiatives often require balancing feasibility and effectiveness, can often have unintended consequences, and require a nuanced understanding of institutional constraints and the needs of those directly affected by equity-centered initiatives. My work is driven by the need to navigate these complexities and design policies and teaching strategies that meaningfully advance equity.

As an educator, I have come to accept that my teaching will impact students differently, even when I teach all my students with the same intent. This realization has deeply shaped both my teaching and research. Understanding the differences that students bring into the classroom is the first step toward bridging equity gaps. In my courses, I use data-informed strategies—such as structured formative assessments and student self-reflection exercises—to ensure that these differentiated impacts work toward a common goal of student success. I also recognize that the impacts of my teaching will not only differ across students, but also across institutional contexts.

My Role as a Researcher

My research examines how teachers influence student outcomes, with a focus on the heterogeneity of these effects. My job market paper explores how gender differences in reading achievement and non-cognitive skills emerge early and persist through school. While much attention has focused on mathematics, where girls typically lag behind boys, reading presents a different concern: boys not only score lower on reading assessments but also receive lower teacher-assigned grades, have poorer attendance, and display more behavioral challenges. Even when comparing boys and girls who perform similarly on standardized reading tests, substantial differences in their classroom performance persist. These patterns are concerning because both reading proficiency and teacher-assigned grades are strong predictors of college access and career opportunities. My research seeks to understand how teachers contribute to these differences, and whether their impacts on students' outcomes vary by student gender, and whether these gender-differentiated impacts persist over time.

Beyond K-12 education, my work also examines diversity in higher education. In one study, my co-authors and I explore how affirmative action in Indian engineering colleges affects faculty effectiveness. We find that faculty members hired through these policies perform as well as—if not better than—their peers, challenging common misconceptions about affirmative action. This research highlights the broader implications of representation in education: when institutions make space for underrepresented groups, student outcomes can improve in unexpected ways. In another project, we analyze how female faculty representation influences student performance and experiences in engineering programs, finding that female students perform better and report lower levels of anxiety when taught by female instructors, while male students develop more balanced perspectives on gender roles. Across these studies, my goal is to provide empirical evidence that can inform policies and practices that foster equitable learning environments.

My Role as a Teacher

At UC Santa Cruz, I teach students from diverse backgrounds. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, UCSC enrolls many first-generation and transfer students, some of whom have varying levels of bilingual proficiency. Understanding these intersectional identities is crucial for effective teaching. For instance, when examining equity gaps between Hispanic and White students, I try to ask whether these differences stem from racial disparities, language barriers, or other factors like economic advantage or disadvantage. This distinction is critical because interventions for language-related challenges differ from those addressing broader racial disparities. My teaching philosophy is guided by the principle that supporting students requires both institutional-level strategies and individualized approaches.

To better understand my students, I try to use both institutional data and direct student input. My work with UCSC's Institutional Research and Assessment unit has provided me with two valuable perspectives: as a researcher analyzing program learning outcomes and equity gaps across multiple disciplines, and as an instructor using classroom demographic data to inform my teaching strategies. This dual experience helps me better understand and address the needs of our diverse student population. When institutional data indicates specific challenges—whether related to language proficiency, academic preparation, or other factors—I try to adjust my teaching accordingly. To complement this data-driven approach, I try to assign a "letter to me" in the first week of class whenever possible to get a better sense of who my students are, and understand their situational factors that are often not easily quantified. Throughout the course, I incorporate frequent, low-stakes assessments designed with evidence-based learning strategies. These assessments reinforce key concepts, encourage productive study habits, and provide multiple pathways for students to demonstrate their understanding.

My Role as a Mentor

Beyond my own teaching, I am committed to fostering inclusive pedagogy at the institutional level. As a Graduate Pedagogy Fellow, I have designed and led workshops for teaching assistants, equipping them with strategies for active learning and inclusive classroom practices. Feedback from these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive, with participants highlighting the practical insights they gained. These experiences have reinforced my belief that inclusive teaching is not just about adopting best practices, but also about fostering an ongoing dialogue among educators about the challenges and opportunities of equity-centered pedagogy.

Additionally, as a peer mentor for the Teaching and Learning Center's Summer GSI Support Team, I have worked with graduate instructors across disciplines to design equitable courses. This role has allowed me to engage in meaningful discussions about universal design, culturally responsive pedagogy, and strategies to ensure that assessments are fair and supportive of all students. Through these initiatives, I have seen firsthand how even small adjustments in teaching practices—such as scaffolding assignments or providing varied formats for student engagement—can have a meaningful impact on student learning experiences.

Across my research, teaching, and institutional service, I am committed to creating equitable learning environments. I recognize that diversity in education is not just about representation—it is about ensuring that all students have the support they need to reach their potential and succeed. My experiences as an immigrant, an educator, and a researcher have shaped my perspective, and I look forward to continuing this work in collaboration with students, colleagues, and policymakers.