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Diversity Statement

As a white male from upstate New York, my early years shielded me from the degree of the discriminatory challenges faced by minorities. While I acknowledge their struggles, my understanding is limited, as I have not experienced these difficulties personally. Growing up surrounded by friends from diverse cultural backgrounds and a family that valued travel, I developed a passion for supporting underrepresented groups. However, it was during my college years that I recognized the implicit biases I had absorbed, prompting me to confront the extent of minorities' ongoing struggles in America.

My education at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Potsdam and the University of Connecticut (UConn) exposed me to diverse environments, challenging my preconceptions. Acknowledging my subconscious bias, I actively engaged in projects that revealed and dismantled these biases through collaboration with people from various backgrounds. Taking steps beyond exchanging knowledge, I sought work experiences associated with inclusion and diversity. This included tutoring minority students at SUNY Potsdam and teaching introductory statistics courses for underrepresented and financially burdened students at UConn. Attending cultural events such as Diwali and Brazilian Carnival put on by organizations on campus further enriched my perspective.

Beyond being comfortable and confident in diverse environments, I learned to appreciate the unique perspectives individuals bring. Yet, I recognize there is always room for improvement, and I remain aware of the daily struggles faced by minorities. During my master's mathematics program at SUNY Potsdam, the emphasis on diversity and inclusion in mathematical sciences shaped my commitment to these principles. The diverse faculty, including women and international professors, provided invaluable academic collaborations and cultural insights. Moving forward, I was accepted into the UConn statistics PhD program with the prospect of diversifying the department and I eagerly embraced the opportunity. I had never been told I would diversify something before. Surrounded by a global community, my implicit bias became apparent, leading to a heightened awareness and continuous growth in diverse situations. Initially, I falsely assumed people to be English-speaking. Now, I don't have a preconceived notion of what someone will sound like purely based on their appearance. Further, language barriers enhanced my listening and comprehension skills, fostering effective communication.

Despite being in the minority within the department, I never truly felt like a minority, which I found to be powerful. This emphasized the pervasive nature of the burdens minorities face and heightened my awareness of privilege. To provide an example of this, I want to reflect on a conversation I had with my advisor regarding the amount of teaching assignments I have had in previous semesters. He asked me whether I feel discriminated against because of being an English-speaking American. Although I was frustrated teaching assignments consistently taking time away from research, I mentioned that I never felt discriminated against. I realized in that moment that it is impossible for me to be discriminated against since I am not actually a

minority. These interactions and experiences have made not only made me a better researcher and collaborator, but also a better educator. Again, it is not that I understand the obstacles minority students face, it is that I am more capable of recognizing them and acting accordingly.

Most importantly, the encounters have improved my ability to form positive relationships with collaborators, colleagues, and students beyond academia. Intellectual conversations, cultural understanding, and positive relationships contribute to our collaborative and academic success. I am fortunate for the opportunities I have been given to make friends and work with talented collaborators from diverse backgrounds. I look forward to continued growth in diverse environments, collaborating with colleagues and teaching students from various backgrounds, and promoting the importance of diversity and inclusion.