I feel strongly that science should be accessible to everyone. However, this is not currently the case. Science is veiled behind a curtain of education, allowing only those with the means and desire to access it. Underrepresented and economically disadvantaged communities are less likely to have access to scientific and research experiences. For many students, STEM opportunities and internships are difficult to manage financially due to low or credit-only reimbursement. One of my goals is to provide paid research opportunities for both undergraduates and high school students so they can experience and contribute to research without financial concerns. By collaborating with other graduate students and professors, we can create mentorship circles for students that they can maintain throughout their undergraduate years and beyond.

As a female LGBTQ+ scientist, I understand the importance of representation and outreach in creating positive and productive environments in our scientific and local communities. I plan to join and contribute to Graduate Women in Science and the Science Policy Society. The Graduate Women in Science society holds meetings, conferences, and workshops that all aim to empower women in science, from middle school students to graduate students. By becoming an active member, I hope to continue to create representation for women in STEM fields and inspire future scientists.

In addition to actively engaging all students, I believe that without learning about and acknowledging the history of our field, we remain uneducated about the marginalization and exclusion that has existed within it. As a member of the Taylor Lab, I have participated in discussions on the history of population genetics, how to best increase justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion within biology, and how unconscious bias impacts research. I hope to continue these discussions with undergraduate and graduate students alike while I am a student at Penn State.

In order to make science accessible to everyone, we must create outreach to the community. The field of science communication allows us to disseminate otherwise hard-to-understand scientific information into digestible bites by combining it with writing and art. This makes it possible to engage the broader community in research that is happening both locally and more widely. As an artist, I believe that by combining art with science we are able to transcend the bubble in which science so often lives. This allows us to include everyone in science and gives everyone the opportunity to see and experience the natural world. As a grad student at Penn State, I aim to teach others about the importance of science communication through art and writing workshops, as well as by leading birding and nature trips into the surrounding forests and mountains.

Diversity is the reason I study evolutionary biology. Creating environments that are both diverse and inclusive is crucial to maintaining a biodiverse natural world. By prioritizing representation and outreach, we are better able to engage with both our peers and the next generation of future scientists. By actively diversifying our department and college, we can gain new perspectives, ideas, and solutions to problems both in our field of science and within our broader community.