

# Kimberly A. Hochstedler Webb

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## DIVERSITY STATEMENT

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In higher education, I believe the practice of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is characterized by the **empowerment of students, faculty, and staff from all identities to achieve their professional goals**. As a scholar, my goal is to help my community flourish through my research, teaching, and service. I view DEI work as a continuous process. Thus, my efforts in DEI center on creating **far-reaching and self-sustaining programming** that can positively impact my colleagues and students through and beyond my career.

### DEI in Research

My goal of empowering others through DEI work steers my research contributions. Much of my methodological research is focused on misclassified binary outcomes and mediators in association studies. There are many social application areas where **misclassification not only occurs, but is more frequent for historically marginalized groups**. For example, my collaborators and I study pretrial detention decisions, with a focus on risk assessment tools and models. While these tools are often developed with the noble goal of reducing racial disparities in pretrial detention, there is concern that rather than reducing bias, the models may be reflecting systemic inequities back out into their predictions. In a recent preprint, we show that misclassification rates from these risk prediction tools did, in fact, differ by defendant race [1]. However, the bias of the risk prediction tools was generally lower than that of judges. Through findings like these, **I can impact DEI efforts outside of the university, and pursue justice in areas of broad public importance**.

### DEI in Teaching

My goal as an instructor is to **enable my students to achieve their highest potential** in their chosen field. Students, however, cannot focus on their learning and growth if they do not feel safe and respected in class. I will cultivate a respectful climate by incorporating clear course policies and actively dismantling the hidden curriculum. In my syllabus, for instance, I list the full course schedule so that students can plan for commitments in their lives. Even aspects of a college class that are often considered “standard” are given special attention in my opening remarks. For example, when scheduling my office hours as a TA, I made a point to briefly mention the purpose and norms of attending office hours, so that students know when and how to utilize them. By removing undue stress from misunderstandings with course policies, I find that students are able to focus their energy on learning. Moreover, these practices serve to level the playing field in the classroom so that **students from every background have the information they need to succeed in my courses, and in all other courses** that they take in their academic career.

As an educator, I am also passionate about **training fellow teachers to reach their goals** in the classroom. In 2022, a colleague and I were awarded a *Belonging at Cornell* grant to create an *Advanced Graduate Teaching Cohort* (AGTC) of early-career graduate TAs from diverse backgrounds, with an interest in learning more about inclusive teaching. For AGTC sessions, we developed collaborative activities where participants generated inclusive teaching strategies and used the principles of transparency and structure to turn their ideas into actionable classroom practices. I also created an Individual Development Plan program that allowed AGTC members to map out their professional development goals and make a plan for reaching those goals through available university programs. Particularly for participants with less exposure to pedagogy in higher edu-

cation, I was proud that the AGTC gave members an opportunity to **shape their own ideas and goals for inclusive teaching and professional development** into achievable steps.

The AGTC program has since been adopted by the Center for Teaching Innovation at Cornell, and will continue running on an annual basis – bringing together a new cohort of participants each year, with former AGTC members leading the program for new members. The **continuity of this program** demonstrates that my commitment to DEI in teaching is not limited to a single cohort, program, or department. Rather, **I am able to create self-sustaining communities that continue to positively impact the university** throughout and beyond my career.

### DEI in Service

Beyond the classroom, I find that regular, positive interaction between community members helps all members of a department – faculty, staff, and students – **work toward common and individual disciplinary goals**. To this end, I co-founded the Statistics Graduate Society (SGS) to facilitate an improved graduate student experience within the Department of Statistics and Data Science at Cornell University. As the President of SGS, I led the development of a Faculty-Student Committee, aimed at establishing ongoing dialogue between PhD students, faculty, and staff in the department. I also facilitated biweekly seminars with exclusively student speakers, providing SGS members with an opportunity to practice upcoming talks and teaching demonstrations in front of their peers. These initiatives led to greater collaboration within the department and an overall more positive student experience. Importantly, after establishing SGS, I stepped out of leadership positions to let the organization flourish on its own. The continuation of student involvement in SGS **demonstrates my ability to create sustainable inclusive communities** within a department. My efforts in establishing this organization were recognized with a Graduate Diversity & Inclusion Recognition Award for Advanced Career Service.

In addition to developing positive communities within an entire department, I have also worked to **foster individual success through mentorship programs** at both the University of Michigan and at Cornell University. At Cornell, I co-developed a peer mentoring program for first-year PhD students in the Department of Statistics and Data Science. As part of this initiative, I created and facilitated a training program on inclusive and effective mentorship practices for student mentors. As a peer mentor myself, I found that effective mentoring requires deliberate efforts. By creating organized events and promoting consistent check-ins between mentor-mentee pairs, **the peer mentorship program that I established has been able to independently continue for 3 years now**. In recognition for my service to graduate students at Cornell, a faculty member nominated me for the Graduate Diversity & Inclusion Distinguished Award for Exemplary Service, which I was awarded in 2023.

### Future Plans

As a researcher, educator, and community member, I put diversity, equity, and inclusion at the forefront of my practice. As a professor, I plan to bring a culture of respect into the classroom, and contribute to an inclusive and equitable community through my service and my research. My courses will be developed thoughtfully, with eye toward transparency, structure, and continuous improvement. As a member of organizations, I will champion community and collaboration. As a researcher, I will tackle challenging problems in social justice and health care decision-making that will positively impact DEI efforts well beyond academia. Through these initiatives, I hope that I can continue to have a positive impact on scholars and community members through my career.

### References

- [1] **Webb, K.A.H.**, Riley, SA, and Wells, Martin T. "An assessment of racial disparities in pretrial decision-making using misclassification models". In: *In preparation* (2023).