**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement**                    **Sky Kunkel**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are vital in academia because they promote intellectual and cultural enrichment, advance social justice and equity, and prepare students to be engaged and influential members of a diverse and interconnected world. By fostering an environment that is welcoming and supportive of diverse perspectives and identities, academic institutions can create an inclusive, equitable, and enriching community for all. Given the history of systematic exclusion of marginalized communities, members of academia must make intentional efforts to rectify these wrongdoings.

As a transgender, queer, first-generation college student who grew up in poverty and lived on food stamps, my experiences inform my advocacy surrounding challenges faced by minorities within academia. My lived experiences have motivated me to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in all aspects of my academic work and community engagement. In my academic career so far, I have attempted to uplift underrepresented voices in professional and personal capacities. I have made intentional efforts to coauthor with and mentor graduate students hailing from underrepresented backgrounds. This is a reflection of my passion for creating and promoting both emotional and intellectual safe spaces. I also actively tutor at Purdue's LGBTQ center, providing valuable knowledge, insights, and engagement to LGBTQ+ undergraduates.

I also bring my lived experiences into my research agenda and use that agenda to bring issues to the forefront of political science. In my research with another graduate student, we discuss the dangers of using the phrase "sub-Saharan Africa" and its racist origins. This paper is an important contribution to the field of political science and to the broader efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia. Our paper sheds light on how scholars perpetuate stereotypes and misunderstandings about a complex and diverse continent by examining how top political science journals often use "sub-Saharan Africa" as a catch-all term to generalize their findings. This paper originates from my own use of the phrase in prior research; after my coauthor contextualized the arbitrary nature of the name, we began learning about its origins in European conceptions of race. My goal is to encourage a deeper understanding of the complexities faced by marginalized groups and promote DEI efforts in political science and beyond.

Together with another graduate student, I am organizing a workshop for Peace Science that will provide queer early career scholars with a network and the context to learn from experienced academics. The workshop for Peace Science that I am organizing with another graduate student has the potential to provide numerous benefits for early career scholars in academia who identify as LGBTQ+. By bringing together queer scholars, the workshop can foster a sense of belonging and connection, provide mentorship and guidance tailored to their specific needs, and raise awareness of issues and challenges facing queer scholars in academia. This can ultimately lead to a more inclusive and supportive academic environment for queer scholars.

In addition, the workshop will help fill gaps in knowledge or experience that may be unique to queer scholars and can provide opportunities for learning from experienced aca-

demics who share similar identities and experiences. By providing a safe and supportive space for networking and learning, the workshop can help queer early-career scholars succeed in academia and contribute to a more diverse and equitable academic community.

As an advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia, I recognize the importance of reaching out to underrepresented and marginalized communities, especially in the context of recruiting. It is critical to actively seek out and engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds and identities, as this increases the representation of underrepresented groups in academic spaces and fosters a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all. By intentionally recruiting from underrepresented communities, we can improve the diversity and experience in our academic departments and programs, ultimately strengthening our research and educational efforts. Additionally, we can work towards promoting equity by providing support and resources to ensure that underrepresented students, staff, and faculty have equal opportunities for success. Ultimately, I aim to build a diverse, equitable, and inclusive academic community that fosters excellence in scholarship, teaching, and service.

I also serve as the inaugural president and co-founder of the first campus-wide organization for queer graduate students in Indiana; I am committed to creating a voice for LGBTQ+ graduate students and advocating for their needs. In this role, I have direct access to funds to better the lives of LGBTQ+ graduate students at Purdue University and have worked to create a more inclusive environment for all. As an organization, we are currently focused on raising funds from external donors interested in promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. With that money and institutional support, we will set up graduate student grants for travel and research.

As an educator, I am committed to promoting DEI in the classroom. One way in which I demonstrate this commitment is by taking an inclusive approach to designing and delivering course materials. For example, in my online, asynchronous course, I make a point to provide my lectures in multiple formats, such as video or audio, to accommodate a range of learning styles and needs. I also write a script for every video lecture I make to help students with hearing disabilities. By creating a classroom environment that is accessible and welcoming to all students, I strive to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to engage fully with the course material and succeed academically. My commitment to DEI in the classroom is an essential part of my teaching philosophy, and I look forward to continuing to promote these values in all of my courses.

In my commitment to free and open inquiry in the classroom, I strive to create an environment that fosters critical thinking and promotes diverse perspectives. Creating an inclusive classroom where all voices are heard is essential to achieving this goal. To that end, I encourage students to engage in respectful and constructive dialogue and create opportunities for them to share their experiences and opinions. I also make sure to present multiple sides of an issue and provide a range of resources to allow students to explore topics in depth. By promoting a classroom environment that values diverse perspectives and open inquiry, I hope to empower my students to think critically and become engaged members of society.

I am committed to fostering an environment that welcomes and supports diverse perspectives and identities and working towards a more equitable and inclusive academic community.