

# DIVERSITY STATEMENT

MAURICIO SOUSA

As a teacher, researcher, and member of the academic community, I am committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment where everyone can find their place and fulfill their potential.

I am from a small island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean (in the Azorian Archipelago) that endured centuries of isolation and ostracism. The secluded nature of my island was responsible for the homogeneity of culture and way of thinking that impaired progress and pushed generations of people to immigrate. I moved out and followed my academic studies in mainland Portugal. But in the last ten years, the consequences of globalization and the rise of tourism caused an influx of visitors and newcomers from around the world, bringing their differences, experiences, and cultures to my island. Each time I return, I find a more open-minded and flourishing community that is less insular. My island is a small sample-sized experiment that fortifies my belief and commitment to diversity and inclusion. Yet, I acknowledge that I am in a position of privilege regarding my experiences and identity. I intend to ally and advocate for the members of underrepresented groups in our community. I understand that minorities face barriers to living in society. Women are still an underrepresented group in STEM. Socioeconomic factors and health conditions significantly affect how well students perform in their studies and achieve their objectives. And despite all the mighty efforts from the accessibility community, technology still sets impediments on people with special needs. Ultimately, because of my position of privilege, I recognize that I am on a mission to understand how to contribute to inclusion and diversity. And I position myself as a learner because every particular context, motivation, and background requires different actions and guidance.

As a teacher, I intend to welcome everyone's voices and opinions and create the means to promote students' talents to thrive. One approach is being open to students' needs and connecting the teaching materials to the issues that matter to them. I believe that giving application examples and contextualizing the benefit to society of the teaching materials, can foster the desire in students to acquire the technical knowledge they pursue. As a mentor, I want to create an environment that empowers students to share their motivations and interests, to allow me to guide them to grow their talents and be proud of their achievements.

As a researcher, I aim to build a research group focused on collaboration between members from different backgrounds, experiences, and skill sets. I believe environments that allow open communication and mutual support can contribute to impactful research and the success of all group members. In my academic career, I have been fortunate to work in two research groups that embraced the culture of having diverse people collaborate in each other's research. This approach can allow people with different experiences and skills to share ideas, contribute with unique perspectives, overcome challenges, and share pride in each other's victories. As a postdoc, I have been actively responsible for mentoring, seeking, and welcoming new students to a team of diverse members. And I am proud of the results and the team efforts my students and mentees achieved with my support, especially with the encouragement of each other. I look forward to leading a research group with members from different cultures, backgrounds, motivations, talents, and skill sets. I plan to actively engage in outreach activities in the in the department to communicate the group's values and seek new members to share and enhance these values.

As a community member, I intend to participate in current department initiatives and existing courses, or help develop initiatives if they are lacking. Despite all the educative efforts by the academic community, our society still has to overcome the ramifications of systemic oppression and inequality. Bringing people with diverse backgrounds alone is not enough to foster an inclusive environment. Therefore, I am committed to being a mentor guided by collaboration, understanding, empathy, altruism and kindness, and building a welcoming culture in all my teaching, research, and outreach efforts.

I want to continue learning how to improve and expand my efforts to promote positive, diverse, and inclusive environments.