

# Diversity Statement

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My experience growing up in Chile, coming to the USA to pursue a Ph.D., and then staying in the country for a postdoctoral position taught me the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging.

After living in the north of Chile during high school, I moved to the capital city to attend college at Universidad de Chile. I joined the Engineering School where I did my undergrad and master studies and where I was exposed to significant socioeconomic and gender differences. There were people from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and I noticed that students from low-income families experienced many more obstacles than the rest. Their primary and secondary education was not the same quality as their peers from higher socioeconomic backgrounds received, which translated, in addition to many difficulties that they faced, into more significant challenges to succeed in class. At that moment, I participated in a student union focused on the first years of undergrad, and I participated in the organization of a grad students union. The main focus was generating a sense of community, so everyone felt welcomed and included. However, I later learned that it is also crucial to acknowledge those differences and provide opportunities to level the students who need the most, including guidance, mentorship, and consideration of their backgrounds in classes.

Additionally, my experience regarding gender differences was significant. When I started my studies, the average distribution was roughly 15% female and 85% male. By 2019 the percentage of female students was about 30%. In between, the Engineering School implemented the policy of admitting a fixed number of female students after the regular admission was made, which was a great success. I learned the relevance of policies focusing on fixing structural problems.

A new experience with diversity was presented to me when I moved to Massachusetts to start my doctoral studies at Boston University. I had the privilege of meeting people from different countries. My friends, roommates, and study partners are from backgrounds very different from mine, but we all can integrate into a respectful and inclusive environment.

I had the opportunity of being a teaching assistant and instructor, an experience that deepened my understanding of equity, inclusion, and belonging. My goal was to make every

student feel comfortable, included, and in a safe environment in which the differences among them are not an impediment to the learning process. I have taught in English, my second language, to native and non-native English speakers, and it has never been a problem. I have had students with learning disabilities and have made sure to adjust my teaching not to leave them behind. I have taught people from different cultures whose approach to the instructor and class participation differs from the US classroom culture. I have emphasized both in the classroom and during office hours that each person can participate in how they feel most comfortable and in the way they learn best. I will continue to ensure that everyone is included in the learning process. Although I am a Latino immigrant, I never felt that I did not belong to the Boston University community, and I aim to ensure that everyone feels they belong to their institution.

Then I moved to Utah to start a position as a postdoctoral researcher at Utah State University. Although Massachusetts and Utah are in the same country, they are culturally different. Although my time in Utah has been enriching, I have experienced being in the minority of people who do not follow the dominant religion, which has made me feel culturally excluded from some places and groups. This experience strengthened my understanding of how important it is to make everyone integrated into the community and make my students and workplace feel as integrated as possible.

I am strongly committed to contributing to the advancement of equality and inclusion. I am very interested and motivated to contribute to increasing the participation in the academic life of underrepresented students. As a faculty member, I plan to mentor underrepresented students and support organizations that serve underrepresented groups. I also plan to participate in activities and committees related to inclusion.

As an instructor, I will continue to ensure that everyone is included in the learning process. As a researcher, I am profoundly committed to encouraging an inclusive environment while discussing ideas, attending workshops, and providing and receiving feedback from other researchers. Differences between researchers add much value to the process of building knowledge because it requires different points of view and ideas, and everyone should be encouraged to contribute. As a colleague, I will contribute to making the workplace a place that stimulates respect and inclusion for everyone - academics, students, and staff.