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DIVERSITY STATEMENT

I started in academia with something of an outsider view. Like I mention in my teaching statement, dyslexia has been an important part of my experience in school. I've always known I was broadly able to succeed.

But even in college I typically needed to put in a bit of extra work to develop something of a translation layer between myself and a course's content. And as I've developed as a teacher I've begun to realize there is always a translation layer, and how it's chosen impacts whether students are both motivated to learn and have the resources to do so.

This dual, knowing I was a capable student but that I needed to develop my own translation layer, has infused my own teaching with a level of empathy for students' differences. I firmly believe that many students who may have traditionally struggled can succeed with the right translation layer. There's no silver bullet here since this often involves tradeoffs (everything relates to economics after all). But in addition to delivering quality material I view my teaching as providing an adaptable translation layer.

From this vantage point, during my undergraduate I publicly advocated for a move toward a more inclusive educational environment. At the time I didn't have experience on the delivering side and only had general requests of the institution. As I've developed as a teacher I've started finding specific ways to expand these access points more broadly. Some of this is highlighted in my teaching statement, but I'll highlight two areas here.

First, on a very basic level students need to know they, individually, are welcome. Feeling like one doesn't belong has a profound impact on both whether the ideas feel relevant and whether a student's views are valued. This plays out pretty broadly enough as to be difficult to describe concisely. But as a specific example, a few female students mentioned they appreciated highlighting women in economics during discussion of Elinor Ostrom's work during a module on common resources. And explicitly mentioning the use of preferred pronouns and correct pronunciation of names are part of the culture I develop on day one of a class.

And second, let me point to a more specific course-level change. Many students experience anxiety and/or panic that makes it hard to perform on evaluations. Over the years I've had numerous excellent students tell me they got nervous and didn't perform well on an exam, despite knowing the material well. This isn't ideal

as an evaluation tool, but more importantly this mismatch between evaluation and knowledge can create a vicious cycle over a semester. To respond to this, I've built on two exam structures, one from both Neal Becker and Kevin Shaver, to lower the temperature on exams. One student mentioned how this impacted their learning in my Honors Introduction to Microeconomics, Fall 2021.

[The class's evaluations] "made the testing environment relaxed which caused me, personally, to focus and thoroughly enjoy the material."

- Anonymous student 1, Fall, 2021

Students seem to respond positively to many of the ways I've included these values in my courses. Here are some examples of how three students have responded to this classroom environment during the Fall 2021 semester, taken from anonymous teaching evaluations.

"The classroom's atmosphere was not competitive in nature but rather collaborative because of all of the support and resources Taylor gave us. Taylor Weidman demonstrated what education should really be about."


- Anonymous Student 1

"I felt that he genuinely cared about the class material, but us as humans as well."

- Anonymous Student 2

"How the class was structured It set the students up to focus on learning the content, and not just to get to a certain grade."

- Anonymous Student 3

I'm committed to openness, inclusively, and broadening the accessibility of scientific and economic communication.  I'm excited to continue to work toward and improve my approach in collaboration with other educators.