

# Graduate Career Services

The Graduate School and Division of Student Affairs

## Diversity Statements

Diversity Statements, sometimes called a “statement of commitment to diversity” or your “contributions to diversity statement,” are becoming an increasingly common requirement when applying for academic faculty positions, post-doc opportunities, and fellowships. The prompts can be quite open ended, leaving the applicant to decide what to write about and how to structure the statement. Keep in mind that yours can be multi-faceted, there is no one right topic to cover, and you should provide examples to reinforce your claims.

### Three common elements that could be included:

1. A past experience or event that helped shape or enhance your understanding of diversity and inclusion. Note: if you have not had exposure to different cultures or ideologies, describe how you have sought (or how you plan to seek) learning opportunities.
2. The specific ways in which you have incorporated elements of diversity and equity into your teaching, research, and service.
3. Plans for how you will incorporate them into your future work at that specific university.

### When should I include a diversity statement in my application?

A statement may be explicitly required, implicitly requested, or not requested but still important.

#### Explicit:

The job description requires a diversity statement as part of the application portfolio (either on its own or combined into a teaching or research statement). Follow the application instructions.

#### Implicit:

The job description does not require a separate diversity statement, but includes language that describes a commitment to inclusion or equity as an important feature of the successful candidate. Distribute elements of your diversity statement throughout the other application documents (cover letter, teaching statement, etc.).

#### Not requested but still important:

The University's stated mission and community involvement demonstrate that a commitment to diversity is valued by the institution. Distribute elements throughout your application documents to show you align with these institutional values.



### How do I begin writing a diversity statement?

These reflection questions and examples can help guide your writing:

#### On Awareness:

- Was there a moment when your perception of issues surrounding diversity changed or shifted?
  - Encounter with a new culture, family member expressed new identity, a book or research paper increased awareness of an issue.
- Was there an event where your values were challenged and changed?
  - Realization that presupposed common experiences are not universally shared by all people.

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## On Teaching:

- How do you handle diverse perspectives and abilities in the classroom?
  - Encouraging open dialogue, validating all opinions, developing techniques to sensitively draw out participation from students whose cultural backgrounds encourage passive deference.
- How are your teaching materials and methods influenced by concepts of diversity?
  - Incorporating a variety of teaching styles and activities, being mindful to use images and other media that show people from diverse backgrounds, offering multiple views on a subject to show how it can affect people from different socioeconomic or geographic locations.
- How do you relate to individual students from different backgrounds?
  - Educating yourself on cultural norms of international student countries of origin through \_\_\_\_\_, using inclusive language.

## On Administration/Service:

- How have you supported initiatives of equity and inclusion on your campus or in your community?
  - Involvement in \_\_\_\_\_, mentoring student leaders in organizing \_\_\_\_\_.
- How have you supported fellow faculty and staff in their own contributions to or struggles with diversity?
  - Volunteering for their events, offering a listening ear, validating their stories with your own.
- How have you encouraged students to engage with diversity outside of the classroom?
  - Promoting campus events to your classes, showing examples of external opportunities that reflect the learning topic.

## On Research:

- How do you address issues of diversity and equity in your research and writing?
  - Your topic inherently relates to social justice or improving access among underrepresented groups; you are developing a technology, system, or process that can be used to benefit such groups in the future; you are testing a pre-existing method or theory against modern understandings of diversity and inclusion.
- How do you create an environment of inclusion in your lab or among your colleagues?
  - Welcoming and mentoring incoming team members, fostering open dialogue and acceptance of cultural differences.

### **I have a unique background or identity. Should I write about that?**

Rather than focusing on your own diverse background, write about how it has shaped your actions in the classroom, the topic of your research, or the service commitments you have been involved in throughout grad school. How has it allowed you to mentor students who face challenges that may have resulted from their identity?