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What is a Diversity Statement?

It is a statement addressing past and/or potential contributions to diversity through teaching, research, and/or service. It is also a reflection of the values that you hold in relationship to principles of diversity.

Increasingly, institutions of higher learning have requested such statements for applications to PhD programs, Postdoctoral positions and Faculty appointments.

Considerations Before Writing

- Your understanding of diversity and inclusion (not stated literally)
- Your experiences that have shaped your understanding and values
- How you will create an inclusive community and/or classroom
- Consider the number of words/pages you are allowed
- Research the institutional commitment and values around diversity and equity
- Do they have an institutional diversity statement?
- What programs and resources have they committed to diversity and equity?
- Do their values align with yours?
- How could you contribute to the current initiatives or perhaps serve to enhance their resources?



Worksheet: Statement on Diversity

What is your own philosophy and experience regarding diversity in higher education? You should be able to articulate this clearly and concisely, but you do not need to write it out explicitly in your statement. Instead, tell a compelling story about your experience with diversity and the ways in which you might draw on that experience in your work as a scholar and educator.

Where to Begin? Know Yourself

Our identities can derive from the traits, characteristics, social categories, and life roles that make up who we are, through our own as well as others' perspectives. Importantly, our identities influence what we see in the world around us and how we interact with it. Take a moment to consider what identities you carry and how they come to bear on your work. Similarly, consider the identities that are held by the people with whom you interact in your work.

- List your core identities, or those that are typically salient across most areas of your life.
- Consider your interactions with others at the University of Chicago. Consider your interactions with others in this context whose identities *are different from your own*. Describe a moment when an interaction with a person with a different identity led to a reconsideration of inferences you may have made previously.
- Consider your interactions with others at the University of Chicago. Describe a specific time you participated in an activity that was intended to increase the success of students from underrepresented groups. If you have not had a chance to do this, describe a program you know and why it is considered effective.
- Consider how your identity may help you empathize or connect with others whose identities do not match your own.

Unpack your experiences and your ideas

We may or may not see how our identities influence our work or potential ideas of how to engage diversity. Consider the questions below to understand some of the work you may have already done or want to do in the future. Questions are from:

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/developing-and-writing-a-diversity-statement>

Research & Scholarship

- Does your research/scholarship directly address issues of diversity, inclusion, or equity? If so, how?
- Does your research/scholarship address issues specific to marginalized groups? If so, describe the connection.
- Has your research/scholarship been shared with the community or public in a way that promotes access to scholarship?

Mentorship

- Have you worked with any students in a mentorship or advisory capacity who are from marginalized groups? If so, how did you help them identify and overcome barriers to success? Think about your experience with research mentorship, teaching or tutoring, academic advising, and community mentorship.
- If you plan to train undergraduates and/or graduate students in your future role, what efforts will you make to recruit and retain students from marginalized and underrepresented groups?

Teaching

- How do you plan to serve a student body that is diverse in a multitude of ways? Think not just race, ethnicity, and SES, but about age, religion, academic preparedness, disability, gender expression, or other differences.
- How does your approach to course design take into account considerations of diversity? You may wish to reflect on using a range of assessments, preventing bias in grading, diversifying course content, using inclusive language in the syllabus and classroom, or utilizing student feedback to improve classroom culture or tone. Try to generate at least one specific example of how your decision affects student's learning in your course.
- What do you do as a teacher that creates a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere? How do you ensure that students in your class feel a sense of belonging?
- Does your discipline lend itself to dialogue about diversity? If so, how do you incorporate this dialogue into your courses? Describe the impact of doing so on student learning and engagement.
- How do you ensure that your course readings and sources reflect diverse perspectives?

Service

- Have you participated in any service activities (e.g. university committees, symposiums, workshops, volunteer work in the community) whose goals relate to diversity, inclusion, and equity? If so, describe your experience. What did you accomplish? What did you learn? What skills did you build in the process?

Drafting Your Statement

1. Start by telling the reader *something about who you are*. You might name an important identity or identities, or your role within your family, or something that makes you personally unique. Connect this to how you described your above.
2. Next, find a way to explain your strengths and experiences as they relate to diversity. Perhaps tell a story about how difference or inequity manifests itself in your field and the ways you may have helped struggling students succeed, participated in diversity related programs or leadership opportunities, or shaped your research to include social diversity.
3. Note something about the institution, the people with whom you will interact and how. What contributions do you plan to make?
4. Finally, connect the ways you are willing to enhance diversity or achieve equity at the institution to which you are applying, using very specific, concrete examples related to your learning, teaching, research, or service and leadership.

Refining your Draft

- What is the utility of your story? Did you learn something that will be reflected in your classroom? Is this just a story about being around marginalized people?
- Should I disclose elements of my personal identity?
- Limit use of census information unless it is truly relevant to what you learned as a part of the experience.
 - Ex. I worked in a school that was predominantly Black and low-income.
 - Was Black and/or low-income relevant? Is so, retain the descriptors. If not, remove the descriptors.
- Do not to create a narrative of self-congratulations for being around people that are different from you.
- What initiatives and values of the institution align with your values and experiences?
- Have you answered all of the questions in the prompt?
- Is there duplication in your teaching statement (faculty)?



Diversity Statement Resources

UChicago Resources

Statement Advising and Review:

UChicagoGRAD Diversity and Inclusion, Dana Bozeman

Inclusive Pedagogy Education:

Chicago Center for Teaching (CCT), Cheryl Richardson

Writing Resources:

Little Red School House

The Writing Center

Service Opportunity and Education:

Civic Engagement, University Community Service Center (UCSC)

Online Resources Resources

How to write a diversity statement:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/01/25/how-write-effective-diversity-statement-job-candidate-opinion>

<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/developing-and-writing-a-diversity-statement/>

Diversity Statement Examples:

<https://physicalsciences.ucsd.edu/files/examples-submitted-diversity-statements.pdf>

