Diversity Statements: Why and How?

Diversity statements are a declaration of values that signal your beliefs, practices, and commitment to diversity, inclusion, and equity. A diversity statement may be part of your syllabus, an application for a job, a website, or something you might share on a slide on the first day of class. Depending on your goals, its characteristics (e.g., length, tone, and content) may vary with your audience.

Why include a diversity statement in your syllabus or on the first day of class?

A diversity statement for your syllabus is an opportunity to articulate to students your vision and process for establishing and maintaining an inclusive learning environment. Including a diversity statement on your syllabus, or making a statement on the first day of class, is one way to show students that you are committed to their success and sensitive to social identities, cultural differences and classroom dynamics.

Consider:

- Sharing your teaching philosophy, including valuing diversity in the classroom
- Outlining what students can expect from you, as well as what you expect from students, to create and maintain an environment of respectful exchange and challenge
- Making expected behaviors and feedback methods transparent and clear
- Making transparent learning outcomes and performance evaluation metrics
- Modeling inclusivity by acknowledging different types of diversity in your statement, including race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, socio-economic status, religion, disability, etc., and how different or unpopular viewpoints will be considered
- Welcoming student feedback about their experience of the classroom climate and the course
- Mentioning campus resources or support services related to diversity
- Asking students to contribute to or provide feedback on a shared course diversity statement

Writing a diversity statement

Writing a diversity statement that expresses your beliefs and practices is an effective way to reflect on your experiences and beliefs and align them with course practices.

1. As a way to get started, freewrite answers to these questions:
   - In what ways is engaging and celebrating diversity important to you, personally? Within your school/college? Within your discipline?
- What attributes do you think promote fairness and equity in a learning environment? What steps do you take to make sure your learning environment is fair?
- What behaviors (actions, words, nonverbal cues) have you observed that you think promote inclusion? Which have you adopted? What behaviors do you expect from others?
- In what ways, formal and informal, do you hope to contribute to diversity, inclusion, and equity at the university? Elsewhere?
- How do you continue to learn about systems that disadvantage or advantage groups based on social identity?

2. Review your freewrite, and underline the concepts and phrases that you like most.
3. Using these key phrases, take a few minutes to draft a diversity statement.
4. Polish your draft, and share it with a couple of trusted colleagues or your teaching center to solicit their questions and suggestions. In revising, strive for clarity.

Sample Diversity Statements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Sample Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science and Technology Studies</td>
<td>Cornell University (as an institution) and I (as a human being and instructor of this course) are committed to full inclusion in education for all persons. Services and reasonable accommodations are available to persons with temporary and permanent disabilities, to participants with DACA or undocumented status, to participants facing mental health or other personal challenges, and to participants with other kinds of learning challenges. Please feel free to let anyone from the teaching team know if there are circumstances affecting your ability to participate. Some resources that might be of use include: (support resources for students).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Classics                           | **Diversity**: We value the voice of every student in the course. Our diversity as a class—in race, gender, sex, religion, language, ability, veteran status, place of origin—is an asset to our learning experience. As a result, we will design inclusive lessons and assignments that provide you with the opportunity to speak and be heard, explore your own understanding, and encounter each other.  
**Difficult Content**: Greek mythology is complex and wondrous. It can also be violent, misogynist, racist, and disturbing. In this course, we will confront difficult content together with sensitivity, both to the figures represented and to each other.  
**Accommodations**: We all learn differently, and we want every student to succeed in the course. If you have a learning need or disability, please register as soon as possible with Cornell Student Disability Services (sds.cornell.edu) so that they can provide us with the appropriate documentation for accommodations.  
Credit: Todd Clary and Stephen Sansom |