

Statement of Diversity & Inclusion

Personal definition of diversity & inclusion:

Having worked in the College of Education for over a decade, my definitions of diversity and inclusion are rooted in Social Justice with respect to the idea that, as individuals, our experiences in the world are deeply connected to our social and cultural identities. In addition, our experiences are impacted by the ways others perceive our social and cultural identities. I believe that diversity is the recognition that each of us possesses a unique combination of experiences, beliefs, and values and no one set of experiences, beliefs, or value system is superior to another. When individuals of differing backgrounds collaborate, instead of seeing differences as deficits I view them as a strength and the driving force behind progression and innovation. Inclusion is the result of proactive measures taken to ensure that all individuals have equal opportunity to engage in this collaboration. An inclusive environment is one where all voices are heard and valued. No one individual or groups of individuals are excluded, explicitly or unintentionally and those who occupy a position of privilege work as allies and advocates to ensure the inclusion of those in less privileged positions. Inclusion is working together to learn from one another so that we can all benefit from the diversity inherent in the academy and the larger human race.

Experience with diversity & inclusion in teaching:

As stated in my teaching philosophy, my commitment to diversity and inclusion in teaching began with my experience teaching in the elementary schools. It was then that I learned about culturally responsive pedagogy and began to make that a part of my daily teaching practices. I have continued to utilize culturally responsive pedagogical practices in my teaching at the University of Arizona through fostering connections between course content and individual student experiences. In teaching I have sought to expand traditional psychology curriculum to include diverse perspectives. For example, when teaching about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs I include a reading and discussion about how Maslow's time with the Siksika Nation influenced the development of his motivational theory. It is important to introduce students to different historical perspectives and to provide a greater context around foundational theories to foster critical thought and deeper connections. One of the ways that I have worked to make my courses more accessible to students is through designing and offering them online. The *Child and Adolescent Development* course was redesigned as part of a University wide initiative to make advanced undergraduate courses accessible for students who had not completed their degree programs. The demand for this course has been consistent across the regular academic year and summer. Given the success of this course I decided to redesign another course within the Educational Psychology Undergraduate Minor, *Psychological Measurements of Assessment*, for online delivery as a way to increase inclusivity and accessibility. In designing this course I have been working with Adobe Captivate eLearning software to create interactive, engaging ways of delivering course content. I also completed certification training to apply the Quality Matters Rubric, designed to elicit best practices in teaching and ensure academic rigor for online courses. In addition I have also worked to ensure that all of my courses, whether they are delivered in-person or online, are developed using the principles of Universal Design. It is of the utmost importance to me that *all* students are provided the opportunity to engage in learning that is meaningful and relevant to their own lives.

In 2020 I took on the additional responsibility of supervising our 14 graduate teaching assistants. During the Fall semester I will be supporting them in crafting draft statements of teaching philosophies. In the Spring, once the TAs have had a chance to reflect on their beliefs and practices in teaching, we will engage in readings and discussions around anti-racist teaching practices to broaden their perspectives on the roles and responsibilities of teachers in university classrooms. It is my hope that these discussions

will lead to the adoption of critical reflection of their own teaching practices resulting in the development and adoption of inclusive teaching practices and values.

Experience with diversity & inclusion in research:

One of the primary goals for my involvement with research has been to inform teaching practices. I am a Co-PI on an NSF RAPID grant funded research project examining how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted students and faculty at designated HSI's across Arizona. The pandemic magnified many of the systemic inequities that previously existed in our campus communities. Our goal was to gather data about the impact of these inequities and present them to senior leadership to inform decisions. One example of this was informing the distribution of CARES Act funding to support the campus food pantry and increase availability and access to laptops and hotspots. We also provided data on student experiences from Spring 2020-Spring 2021 to inform instructional and administrative decisions. I look forward to continued data analyses in the coming years to be able to make further recommendations that will allow instructors and institutions identify and ameliorate inequities that make higher education unnecessarily challenging for BIPOC students.

Experience with diversity & inclusion in service:

I have worked extensively with several initiatives in the College of Education related to diversity and inclusion. As a member of the College Council I conducted a diversity audit with undergraduate and graduate students as well as faculty and staff in the Department of Educational Psychology. Using information gathered during the audit I crafted our departmental Diversity Statement. During my tenure as a College Council representative we decided to form a separate Diversity Committee for the College as a way to ensure actionable steps would be taken in support of the College wide efforts to improve diversity and inclusion.

I was the departmental representative on the College Diversity Committee from 2018-2020 and was elected co-chair of the committee during my final year of appointment in 2020-2021. During the 2019-2020 year we organized and secured funding for a mini-grant program that was to be used to support faculty, staff, and students engaging in work that contributes to the overall goal of proactively affecting systemic change with relation to diversity and inclusion. For example, the mini-grant program could be used as a stipend for faculty who wanted to redesign their course to be offered online so that students who are unable to come to campus during traditional campus hours have access to the course. This project was unfortunately postponed due to the interruption of the COVID-19 pandemic, but I am hopeful that the current committee will continue this work.

While I was co-chair we constructed a mission statement to help unify the varying perspectives as they related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. Following the insurrection at the Capitol in January 2021, the committee felt it necessary to reflect upon the health of our own College climate. It became evident that there was an incredible need for change if we as a college community wanted to live our expressed values of diversity, equity, and inclusion. We generated a list of specific recommended actions for the College Council and Dean's Office to address issues of White supremacy and anti-Blackness in our College.

Another initiative the Diversity Committee successfully accomplished during the 2020-2021 academic year was launching the inaugural Diversity Speaker Series to help educate faculty, staff, and students on important issues of diversity and inclusion and engage in scholarly discussions about relevant topics such as the experiences of Indigenous students in higher education and how to support undocumented students in higher education.

In addition to my work within the Diversity Committee I was also asked to serve as co-leader of the Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee for the College's Strategic Plan. As a group we worked to define what a diverse and inclusive college would look like and what specific actions could be taken to create this vision of diversity and inclusion in the College. In the spring I served as one of two Diversity and Inclusion Subcommittee member representatives at a Strategic Plan Workshop where we worked to ensure issues of diversity of inclusion were at the forefront of the Plan and that action items, such as allocating funding to diversity and inclusion initiatives, were explicitly stated to show the College's commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive environment.

Outside of my committee work I also elected to join a faculty learning group dedicated to issues in transgender education. Through reading and discussion we have explored topics such as the role of gender in everyday experiences and ways to approach social change in relation to transgender politics.

My involvement in each of these groups and committees has furthered my understanding of the importance of issues of diversity and inclusion and solidified my commitment to working as a catalyst for systemic change both within my own classroom and in the College.