Writing Diversity Statements

With growing awareness of diversity and accessibility issues, more and more educational institutions ask for explicit statements by their instructors about their diversity-responsive beliefs and practices. In the light of the AACU inclusive excellence initiative, this brownbag will focus on promoting and expressing inclusive and diversity-responsive teaching, research, and service. The conversation will evolve around prompts and strategies to approach writing diversity statements.

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Questions and Notes from the Discussion:

What is “Diversity?”

- Gender, age, race, ethnicity, “non-traditional” student, physical ability, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, religion, underrepresented student, Indigenous student, international student, etc., etc. > acknowledgement of difference and unique biographies
- Thesis: Diversity in the workplace requires diversity in higher education
- American Council on Education: Diversity in higher education enhances the educational experience, promotes personal growth and a healthy society, strengthens community and the workplace, and enhances economic competitiveness

What is the Purpose of Diversity Statements?

- AACU Inclusive Excellence Initiative -> Journal: Diversity & Democracy
- Institution-specific commitment to diversity and inclusion (see local resources)
  - Example: UC Davis makes its agenda apparent to applicants
- Diversity statements may play a role in the initial application, in promotion and tenure, in gaining funding for projects, and in earning awards

What Topics could Diversity Statements Address?

- If appropriate, explain personal background and growth
- Example: UC San Diego: Past and future experiences and activities in alignment with UC San Diego’s mission ... and to meet the educational needs and interests of its diverse population
- Carnegie Mellon: The diversity statement can reveal a qualification that is not apparent in the other application materials
Suggestions by Karen Kelsky (The Professor Is In): Teaching diverse students; mentoring and advising; diversity in curriculum and course materials; personal background and training; diversity support in service; diversity in research and writing.

- Reminder: Focus on professional outcomes (a diverse identity alone is not enough), remain factual and evidence-based

Some Aspects of Diversity in Teaching: Diversity in the curriculum; communication in culturally diverse classrooms and managing hot moments (classroom climate); differentiated and multimodal instruction; inclusion and accessibility in course design and course sites; Universal Design

What are some format and style conventions?
- Often no more than one page unless integrated in other documents
- Thoughtful choice of terminology, e.g., using terms or combinations thereof that encompass multiple identities (e.g., “racial/ethnic”) and putting the person first (e.g., “students with disabilities” instead of “disabled students”)
- Clearly address demands of desired job/position and align with the institution’s mission and goals
  - Language reflects that of the institution where appropriate
- Stefanie Arr/The Advanced Edit: Don’t be antagonistic, pity yourself, blame others, or talk about missed opportunities. Do talk about how you have matured, share positive aspects of experiences, and draw upon your other materials (personal statement, letters of recommendation, etc.).

Selected Resources on Diversity Statements:
- Carnegie Mellon: Writing Your Diversity Statement
- UC Davis: Diversity Statements
  - Materials from a workshop on diversity statements, incl. worksheet and statement examples
- UC San Diego: Contributions to Diversity
- Karen Kelsky/The Professor Is In: Making Sense of the Diversity Statement
- Stefanie Arr/The Advanced Edit: How to Write a Diversity Statement

Selected Resources on Diversity and Inclusion:
- AACU: Inclusive Excellence
- Diversity & Inclusive Excellence at the UA
- Vanderbilt: Diversity & Inclusive Teaching