

Sample DEI Statements

Statement 1

My commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion manifests in two primary ways. First, I serve on the Department's Diversity Committee. My role thus far has been to assist in a faculty search by providing feedback on the diversity of the applicant pool, including advocating for applicants that augment the diversity of the applicants. Second, as a First Year Group leader, I am in charge of mentoring first year BBSP students and my students often include members of typically underrepresented groups in the sciences. As such, I do my best to provide these students with a nurturing environment during their first year, and routinely liaise with the IMSD program to foster their development. I also currently mentor one graduate student in my laboratory who comes from an under-represented group, and I have sought to provide them with a rich training environment. Through these experiences, I have become aware of how gender, race, and socioeconomic status influence training opportunities and outcomes, and how this hinders the diversification of the faculty body.

Statement 2

Supporting diversity in the laboratory. I support diversity in my own laboratory by providing research experiences to both graduate and undergraduate students. I have a strong record of supporting and training female scientists including two female PhD students (one an underrepresented minority) and 3 female postdoctoral associates. In addition, I have hosted 9 female undergraduates in my lab as summer interns, for class credit or as volunteers. I have also supported diversity in my laboratory through my involvement with two summer internship programs. I have hosted 3 students from the UNC Summer of Learning and Research (SOLAR) program. SOLAR prepares minority students for graduate research and careers in science. My three SOLAR students have gone on to continue their education in the sciences - one is currently a graduate student at UNC, another has a research fellowship at the University of Maryland and the third recently matriculated to UNC from a 2-year institution. I have also hosted three interns from the NIDA Summer Research program. This program supports undergraduate students with a focus on increasing underrepresented populations in drug abuse and addiction research. I also hosted a female graduate student from Iran who was in the United States while her husband completed a fellowship at a neighboring institution. The time she spent in the laboratory opened my eyes to the hardships and barriers to success in other countries that lack access to research resources we take for granted every day.

Supporting diversity at the University level. My main contribution to promoting diversity at the University level comes from my service on departmental chair, faculty and staff search committees and, most prominently in my role as a committee member for BBSP graduate student admissions. For the last two years I have served on the BBSP admissions committee for neuroscience. One of the main goals of the BBSP admissions committee is to recruit candidates with different interests, background and perspectives. I find it gratifying to be involved in graduate student recruitment at this level because I believe a diverse pool of graduate students adds considerably to the UNC research community.

Supporting diversity in the community. The time I have available for community service is limited due to family and work obligations but I make every effort to be involved in efforts to help members of our community in need. I have been involved with the PORCH organization since it began in 2010. PORCH is an organization started to help adults and children in our community who are "food insecure" by collecting monthly donations. The organization supports a diverse group of people in Chapel Hill/Carrboro including African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic and refugees from Burma, Syria and Congo. The work at PORCH to provide food to those in need is especially important for school aged children that need regular access to food in order to focus in the classroom and get the most of out the education opportunities that are available. My involvement with PORCH at this time is limited to making regular food and monetary donations but I intend to become more involved with PORCH and organizations like it as time allows.

Statement 3

I am a firm believer that all higher educational institutions, particularly universities should strive to build community of individuals with diverse backgrounds and life experiences, free of discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, social economic status or religious belief. Unfortunately, academic environments often fall severely behind these goals, failing to address systemic inequalities in education, bias in hiring and mentoring relationships, and underrepresentation of women and under-represented minorities in prominent academic positions. For example, the underrepresentation of women and minorities on panels at scientific conferences, a subject of much recent debate, has been rather well documented¹. Research projects involving human subjects are also subject to inequalities in terms of inclusion of women and minorities^{2,3}, with additional bias towards including participants with higher socioeconomic status⁴. Genetics, my research field, has also been susceptible to disparities in terms of study subject recruitment. I have been and will continue to be committed to working to build a more diverse and inclusive scientific environment, through teaching, mentoring, and research.

I have been trying to contribute to building a diverse environment, particularly in the following two aspects. First, I have been making efforts to mentor students and postdoctoral fellows from diverse background with mentees in my group from diverse background. Second, one area of my research has been focusing on studying the under-represented minority populations, particularly the recently admixed African American and Hispanic/Latino individuals. My group has developed many methods for the analysis of data from these populations⁵⁻¹⁰. Focusing on these populations, we have also made serious efforts to advance genetic studies in these individuals¹¹⁻¹⁷. Creating and maintaining a sustainable diverse and inclusive research environment at academic institutions is a non-trivial task. I am committed to working to seek for solutions throughout my career.

Statement 4

I am committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in my clinical work, research and training programs. I have completed Bias 101 and Safe Zone training, and proudly display an equity sign on my laptop. On two occasions while using my laptop at a coffee shop, I have been approached by a complete stranger who said 'thank you for your support'. In addition, 3 years ago I was asked to serve as a mentor to students enrolled in the UNC Science Enrichment Preparation (SEP) Program. SEP is an 8-week, honors-level academic enrichment program that targets first-generation, underrepresented minority, rural, and/or socioeconomically disadvantaged undergraduates seeking admission into graduate health professional programs. Students shadow a UNC faculty member in an area of their interest. Over the last 3 years I have mentored 4 students and remain a mentor to one of them. This activity is one of the most rewarding mentoring experiences for me because the students are eager, genuine and respond positively to any advice and guidance on their quest for a career in medicine. As I move forward in my career, I intend to continue to include issues of equity and inclusion in my bedside teaching. I commit to annually attending a seminar offered by the University Office of Diversity and Inclusion to learn more about the intersectionality of race, gender, and sexual orientation in clinical care and medical education, and to confront my own biases and the biases of our medical culture to improve inclusivity in my environment.