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Statement on diversity, equity, and inclusion

I believe that a supportive environment that respects the dignity and rights of all individuals in the campus community is required for academic excellence. I take responsibility to learn about and combat inequality and prejudice, whether it is intentional or unintentional. My dedication to fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion means that I take an active role in providing support and removing barriers to the recruitment and advancement of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds and identities. I draw from my own experiences, and seek out ways to learn from those with different perspectives and experiences so that I can provide support that is sensitive to the hurdles that others face. I know the differential impact of feeling excluded versus supported in academia, and I want to embody that welcoming, supportive value as a mentor, teacher, and colleague for all members of my university. I demonstrate commitment to these principles through my prior experiences and future plans in mentoring, teaching, and outreach.

Commitment through mentoring

I seek out opportunities to mentor students from diverse backgrounds and identities. I am proud that many of my mentees to date have been from historically underrepresented groups or are first-generation students (or both). My mentees have continued on to professional or graduate education, all at top-tier universities. One way I promote equity via mentoring is by adjusting my mentoring style to meet the needs of each student. For example, when one of my mentees disclosed a learning disability, I connected with the accessible education office to learn how to better support her research. Equipped with new strategies, I helped my mentee undertake and complete a senior thesis project. This experience was tremendously rewarding, and I grew in my ability to provide inclusive mentoring. I also recognize there is privilege in understanding the academic system and how to use it to meet your needs as a student. My own experiences in college with friends who were first generation college students helped me realize the extent of this privilege. Therefore, another way I promote equity is by making sure each of my students understands the opportunities for academic and health support on campus and how to use them, as needed.

As a professor, I would continue to actively recruit and promote students from underrepresented groups through my teaching and involvement with outreach organizations. Moreover, my mentees have already obtained fellowships from organizations seeking to diversify academia. I would continue to help my students identify and apply for such funding and professional development opportunities. For example, I would help my students prepare applications for fellowships from Ford Foundation, Paul & Daisy Soros, American Indian Graduate Center, and/or the national GEM consortium. I would also seek out opportunities to continue my own education in inclusive mentoring. For example, I would be excited to complete Diversity Education Courses through the DDCE at UT Austin (e.g. recognizing and interrupting implicit bias in the workplace, inclusive classrooms seminar).

Commitment through teaching

I have been fortunate to engage with diverse student bodies, and these experiences have impacted my teaching practices. For example, Columbia University offers a program for returning and nontraditional students. When I saw that many of these students could not attend evening course reviews (the norm at Columbia), I rescheduled them so that all students could access these resources. I now account for students' outside obligations (e.g. work, caregiving) when setting reviews and office hours. I further demonstrate my commitment to equity in my teaching practices by trying not to assume knowledge of the academic system. For example, I am careful to explain the concept of office hours rather than just providing times, and I explain how to access course materials on reserve at the library if textbook expenses are prohibitive, as they once were for me. I will do everything I can as a

professor to mitigate the cost of course materials for students. I also actively look out for opportunities to educate my classes about current topics in development related to equity and diversity in my course materials. For example, when one of my students presented on racial and socioeconomic disparities in Autism intervention care and how this related to child outcomes, I realized that these important issues had been omitted in my own education. I have since generated materials to address such disparities in the context of development and clinical care in my future classes.

I have already planned several steps to promote an inclusive teaching environment as a professor. I have drafted a diversity and inclusion statement that I will discuss with each class. Additionally, individuals from a variety of backgrounds and identities have contributed to science, and I am committed to reflecting this diversity in my course materials. I recognize the importance of visible representation in fostering critical feelings of inclusion and belonging, and I will ensure that my students see diverse individuals like themselves represented throughout my presentations. I would also seek out faculty education opportunities to further my efforts in creating welcoming, inclusive learning environments. I will also incorporate questions in student evaluations about classroom inclusivity to monitor my progress and identify ways to improve with each course iteration.

Commitment through service

I have been actively involved in outreach groups at each stage of my education to encourage underrepresented groups' participation in science fields. At Columbia, I participated every year in the program Girls Science Day. As a leader for the psychology/neuroscience areas, I designed and led 1-hour stations to provide elementary and middle school girls with hands-on experience in the approaches we use and the questions we ask in neuroscience. I also participated as a mentor and panelist for organizations promoting underrepresented minority participation in science (e.g. Students of Color Alliance, Women in Science). I know how helpful guidance can be in navigating the academic system and preparing for graduate school, and I want everyone to have that support. I have also been involved as a regular speaker in Harvard University's MEDscience program, which brings underrepresented high-school students to the medical school to explore STEM career paths. I am a regular speaker, sharing my own path through academia and answering questions about science careers. Across these groups, I work so that everyone can access the resources and support to envision their own participation in science and academia.

I will continue my outreach efforts as a professor. For example, I would apply for the Shadow a Scientist program pairing middle and high school students with a scientist for a day so they can observe what it is like to be in a science profession. I would also offer to coordinate discussions about academic careers and how to prepare for graduate school for student groups serving historically underrepresented groups.

In these ways, I look forward to upholding and promoting UT Austin's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.