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## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Students typically thrive when they feel safe, heard, and comfortable sharing their ideas. While universities are becoming increasingly diverse, with people from various backgrounds coming together to learn, it is essential to recognize that having a diverse environment does not automatically imply it is inclusive. Achieving inclusivity requires deliberate and intentional strategies to eliminate bias and prejudice. The incorporation of inclusive strategies leads to increased motivation for class participation, reduces disparities in the academic success of students from underrepresented populations, and improves student retention. For these reasons, I have been taking action to make my classroom, my department, and the broader community more inclusive for everyone.

My initial step involved joining the newly established Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee within the Department of Entomology at Cornell University. We hosted a listening session and distributed a survey to assess the department's overall climate among students, staff, and faculty. Based on the survey results, we developed a strategic action plan with goals to achieve in the following years. Departmental changes included recruiting faculty members from diverse backgrounds, installing gender-neutral restroom facilities, and creating new educational opportunities through seminars and workshops. These initiatives help foster inclusivity by increasing the representation of underrepresented populations and bringing in a diverse range of perspectives. This also creates an environment where everyone feels respected and welcomed while raising awareness among students, staff, and faculty about the challenges faced by underrepresented groups and providing spaces for discussions on promoting greater inclusivity.

To expand my impact beyond my department and reach a wider population, I became a Center for Teaching Innovation (CTI) graduate teaching fellow at Cornell University. For two years, I developed and presented workshops that covered the importance of adopting active learning, the core components of effective teaching, and inclusive classroom strategies to engage diverse learners. Currently, I am leading the group of approximately 20 fellows, as they guide attendants through reflections on their identities and values as educators, developing active learning activities, and writing original course syllabi. At the end of the academic year, we will host a conference where attendants will translate their past experiences into teaching and diversity statements and organize their materials into a teaching portfolio. My goal is to contribute to the development of future educators who can integrate evidence-based teaching strategies and create a welcoming environment to enhance student learning.

The CTI training, participation in the "Teaching and Learning in the Diverse Classroom" course, and discussions with other fellows significantly influenced my growth as an educator. I now begin each course by introducing myself and taking the time to get to know my students, including their preferred names and pronouns. I then establish community guidelines to provide students with a framework for open and respectful interactions, especially during collaborative activities and sensitive discussions. Additionally, I consistently collect student feedback, which helps me reflect on the efficacy of my teaching strategies throughout my career. These practices have fostered a much warmer climate in the classroom, where students felt comfortable sharing their ideas, were eager to participate, and contributed to some of my most rewarding teaching experiences.

Fostering an environment where all students feel welcomed and supported while pursuing their academic goals is a priority for me. Witnessing the achievements of diverse international professors instilled a sense that I, too, belong in academia. I am enthusiastic about serving as an ally to students from underrepresented backgrounds, helping them experience the same feeling of belonging that I did. Moreover, I am deeply committed to further developing communities of belonging where students feel valued, heard, and empowered to achieve their goals successfully.