

Statement of Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence

Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence

My commitment to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence stems from a background that has exposed me to the intricacies of human experiences and societal challenges. Coming from a developing middle-income country, I experienced inequality, uneven opportunities, and a range of social and economic challenges that have fueled my determination to contribute to positive change and make a meaningful impact on the world. As an individual, my journey weaved through the worlds of sports, community service, and academia. I bring a unique perspective shaped by personal encounters with adversity, social inequality, and the revolutionary power of education.

Before my academic journey, I witnessed the struggles of the less privileged, especially my friends who had to choose between transportation to soccer practice and a modest breakfast, often playing on an empty stomach. These experiences exposed the harsh reality of people contending with the daily struggle for material well-being and physical existence. My family's longstanding involvement in aiding the homeless further highlighted the nuanced interplay of factors leading to homelessness, including complex heartbreaks and disappointments in people's personal lives, economic inequality, and societal prejudices and challenges related to gender identities. Originating from Brazil, I became acutely aware of enduring structures of inequality hindering equal opportunities. This awareness drove me to study economics, where I explored systemic mechanisms contributing to the creation and perpetuation of inequality, rooted in exploitation and exacerbated by factors like social position, gender identity, race, and ethnicity.

My teaching approach centers on cultivating a classroom environment that nurtures diversity, democracy, and individual growth. I highlight education's transformative potential, creating a safe space for student expression. My lectures incorporate seminar-style teaching, class debates, and diverse learning resources such as videos, documentaries, and data analysis tools. Assignments encourage students to apply concepts and reflect on their learning journey. I emphasize that I'm a facilitator, not the sole holder of knowledge, aligning with modern pedagogical principles that prioritize student empowerment. I'm readily available to students, whether during office hours or via email, for questions or recommendation letters.

Recognizing the power of technology, particularly generative AI, I integrate it into my teaching to equip students with essential skills. Nevertheless, it's crucial to acknowledge its limitations. While traditional tools like encyclopedias and the internet have expanded our understanding of human knowledge, I stress the significance of critical thinking. Just as these resources empowered us in the past, students should welcome, rather than fear, new technologies, recognizing that knowledge is indeed power. I bridge the gap between theory and reality by incorporating real data to show students real-world problems and applications of theoretical models and abstractions to concrete problems. When discussing themes such as hunger and food waste, mortality rates and climate change, inequality and accumulation of wealth I use websites showing data that gets live updates, so they can see the problems and challenges we will face as society in present and future building up in front of their eyes.

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Drawing from personal experience, I prioritize the equal consideration of mental and physical health in my teaching approach, demonstrating genuine care through attitude, clear expectations, and behavior. In a statistics and probability course, I responded to students' feedback after a challenging test by incorporating more applied exercises based on their suggestions. We collaboratively decided on an optional second midterm to provide a second chance for improvement, ensuring students felt heard and considered. Throughout my courses, I offer study guides and explanatory videos for fundamental exercises, fostering a learning environment that accommodates individual pacing and growth. My aim is to make the learning experience not burdensome but rather a pleasant opportunity for personal development.

As a political economist, my perspective is deeply shaped by the imperative to contextualize economic theories. I firmly assert that theories are not universal truths but intricately linked to specific socio-economic environments. This principle guides my teaching approach, recognizing that economic principles manifest uniquely in diverse settings. My pedagogy goes beyond a standardized framework, acknowledging the richness individual students bring to the classroom. I strive to create an inclusive learning environment enriched by diverse viewpoints, fosters the exploration of economic concepts. By imparting an awareness of the intricate interplay between theory and reality, my goal is to nurture in students not only a nuanced understanding of economics but also the critical analytical skills necessary to effectively address global challenges.

Within the framework of my educational philosophy, equity encapsulates the ideals of fairness and impartiality. It extends to fostering an environment where each student is afforded an equal opportunity to thrive. In my classroom, I strive to empower students to become advocates for their own interests, recognizing that their voices are integral to the collective effort of creating knowledge via diverse perspectives. In the realm of fostering diversity, my approach is to create an intellectual space that transcends the confines of a singular narrative. I consciously embrace a broad spectrum of perspectives, theories, and voices, thereby challenging students to critically engage with a myriad of perspectives. Diversity is not just an acknowledgment of differences but an active celebration of the rich fabric that emerges when varied viewpoints converge. By encouraging students to navigate through the complexities of diverse theories, my aim is to equip them with the cognitive flexibility and open-mindedness necessary for thriving in an interconnected and ever-evolving global landscape.

In summary, my life's journey has not only forged my personal convictions but has instilled in me a fervent passion for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence within the realm of academia. I view my courses not merely as traditional educational settings, but as vibrant spaces where students can flourish not only as economists but as global citizens. It is in these spaces that they are encouraged to explore age-old questions from fresh angles, harnessing the unrestrained freedom of scientific inquiry to suggest innovative answers. My aspiration is to foster in students a sense of intellectual curiosity that transcends boundaries and conventions, unlocking the potential for critical independent thinking. By anchoring my teaching philosophy in principles that celebrate diversity, inclusion, and equity, I endeavor to contribute to the creation of an academic space where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive. This endeavor goes beyond acknowledging differences; it is a proactive commitment to ensuring that all students, regardless of their unique perspectives or experiences, find a welcoming and intellectually stimulating environment.

As I progress in my career, my commitment to these enduring principles will remain unwavering. The journey has not been one of static revelation but of continuous evolution, marked by an unshakeable dedication to advancing diversity, equity, and inclusive excellence. In this ever-changing world, my aim is to remain loyal to my principles and ideals, helping to train not only economists but also empathetic global citizens who will shape a more equitable and inclusive future for us all.

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