

Six Sample Diversity Statement Responses

1. *I have a long work history of demonstrating how I have promoted a positive inclusionary environment, including my current position as a director a non-profit children's health services agency. The attributes that I have demonstrated towards being sensitive and promoting an inclusionary environment in the agency I work for is reflected in the success of the agency having a positive work environment for all that work there, and in meeting the needs of an un-served and under-served population that the agency serve. I have learned working with a diverse population that it is important personally and professionally to be sensitive, aware, and to promote diversity. My commitment in promoting diversity is essential in my understanding of others along with how I effectively communicate with others and how I effectively deal with others.*
2. *My own cultural competency is built on a lifetime of international experiences. I grew up on the Galapagos Islands, later attended high school in Nairobi, Kenya and I now visit my parents annually in Mexico. Growing up surrounded by cultures different from my own, I was encouraged to identify and value both the commonalities and differences of the human experience. As a student, exposure to diverse peoples was instrumental in shaping my worldview and values. To demonstrate how I employ my cultural competency in the classroom I will focus here on my work over the past two years with the UC ABC Biology Undergraduate Scholars Program (BUSP). Based on my experiences teaching college students, I expect the students in a biology classroom at XYZ Community College to be diverse in innumerable ways. My work with BUSP students exemplifies how I approach working with non-traditional students, and is also indicative of what I will accomplish as a professor at XYZ.*

The majority of BUSP students come from historically underserved backgrounds, whose educational and economic circumstances limit their academic opportunities. The purpose of BUSP is to help these students develop the skills necessary to succeed as life science majors. I developed and taught a “Bio Boot Camp,” designed to give BUSP students a head-start on content and study skills necessary for the year long introductory biology course they take as sophomores. I designed the course to be intense—we met daily for three weeks—and rigorous, but my priority was to help students enjoy the fundamentals of biology. The students who participate in the Bio Boot Camp come from Anglo, Latino/a, African, Asian and Afghani cultures, and the majority are female.

Growing up overseas, I know what it feels like to find oneself outside the dominant culture. In science the widespread image of a scientist is: an older, white male who works in a lab. This pervasive image may be discouraging for students who do not “fit in” based on their own identities. One of my goals as a biology instructor is to make sure that my students are exposed to the variety of ways that one may be a scientist. To accomplish this goal, my BUSP students met with several scientists from diverse backgrounds who did not fit the scientist stereotype. For example, we visited the UC ABC Botanical Conservatory and met with the Conservatory director, Mr. X. As a former BUSP graduate Mr. X exemplified a successful alternative career as a plant biologist (no lab coat required!). The field trip offered a memorable hands-on experience for students who had little previous practice with plants. On course evaluations many students indicated that this field trip was a highlight for them. Additionally, one student asked to volunteer with Mr. X at the Conservatory.

The BUSP students were of diverse ethnicities but also differed in numerous other ways. I wanted to make sure that during Bio Boot Camp each student had an opportunity to explore areas of science that were personally relevant to them. As I discussed in my Statement of Teaching

Philosophy, I gave my students a range of assignment choices to let them identify and explore their own interests. Some students chose to write children's books about photosynthesis and biodiversity. Others interviewed their parents, many of whom had immigrated to the United States, in order to learn more about the ecology of their ancestral homes. In class, the students explained and discussed their assignment choices, and they peer-reviewed rough drafts. The cross cultural exposure was subtle, but by working together my students learned about one another and also learned about different biological topics.

My awareness and appreciation of cross cultural understanding grows continually. I work to maintain my fluency in Spanish because practicing a second language helps me appreciate the challenge faced by students who are simultaneously learning English and biology. As a mentor and a teacher I try to carefully listen to my students. I strive to set aside my own perceptions of what biological concepts are "easy" or "hard" to understand because these assumptions are based on my cultural and educational background, not that of my students. Finally, I am inspired when my students learn about biology in ways that are meaningful to them. As such, I strive to introduce them to scientists from an array of backgrounds, and support students as they shape their own identities as scientists.

- 3. I have worked with diverse populations both as a Manager for a fast food restaurant and as an Administrative Assistant for a college that prides itself on having a diverse population of students. An example of promoting an inclusionary environment would be building a staff at the fast food restaurant that worked hard to understand each other as well as the customers, and open the lines of communication and cooperation among a diverse population. I also have a bachelors degree in Sociology, which has helped me to learn that there are many backgrounds and experiences that contribute to the personalities and perspectives of people. By being open to these unique perspectives I have learned to communicate better with a variety of people.*

- 4. (An example of a cover letter that incorporates diversity-related elements)*

Dear Head of Department,

I am applying for a position as an adjunct professor of mathematics at ABC College. I have been working as a tutor, teaching assistant, and instructor for 10 years, and am eager to continue the challenge of teaching my own courses. I am available to teach part-time starting in Summer 2010.

I believe that the understanding of math is not beyond anyone's grasp. The basics of mathematical logic and reasoning are ubiquitous in everyday experiences, and my goal in teaching is to emphasize the interrelationships of these with formal mathematics. Above all, math is problem solving. I have a natural aptitude for teaching, and for explaining concepts at an accessible level. I have been told by my students that they appreciate my illumination of topics with which they previously had difficulty, as well as my patience and enthusiasm.

It is my hope to inspire some students to pursue more higher-level math courses, but in general to have as many as possible walk away with the confidence that they can succeed, instead of the feeling that they somehow are inherently unable to think through problems logically. I have experience working with students from a variety of backgrounds, and with a range of goals and needs. I find that each student brings his/her own perspective to the class, and that the group as a whole benefits from the diversity. I also strive to connect what often seem to be abstract and isolated concepts to problems

that students have encountered before in more concrete situations. I see myself as more of a facilitator of learning, than a lecturer.

My experience as a Teaching Assistant and a tutor at UC-ZZZ and at [a small women's liberal arts college], as well as my role as an instructor at YYY Community College and [R1 University], has taught me that the understanding of mathematical concepts is not beyond anyone. Math should not be taught as a class where students simply take notes, solve repetitive problems, and memorize material for an exam. Rather, math should be a discussion, a dialogue about concepts and ideas. I prefer to use the term "solution," as the thought process and logical progression of steps is as, if not more, important than the "answer." All paths, efficient or not, must be encouraged in order for students to build their confidence and intuition.

Looking at your course catalog, I am qualified to teach all of the courses listed in your catalog. I am particularly interested in Introduction to Mathematical Ideas (300) and Math Discovery (310), as these are foundational courses for an understanding of mathematics that extends beyond the rote memorization that many students experience in lower level courses. At YYY College, I tried to incorporate these ideas into my Discrete Math class and to give my students an idea of what mathematics is and what mathematicians actually do.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you have any further questions, I would be happy to answer them.

5. (Excerpts from cover letter)

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As an adjunct instructor in the English Division at JKL City College for the past three years, I have taught transfer level composition classes (English 1A). Additionally, I have substituted for faculty in English 400 and 100 classes to learn more about teaching basic skills at the college level. As an instructor and an active member on several committees in the English Division, I have come to understand how important it is to bring our basic skills students to the academic levels they need in order to transfer successfully to four-year universities. In alignment with the Project 90 Educational Master Plan, I realize how as a city college it is important for us to service the immediate community of JKL. I understand JKL has developed new school pathway programs that facilitate cooperation between our school and feeder high schools, particularly within the JKL district. Personally, as an individual and a professional, a Romanian first-generation immigrant who learned multiple languages and chose to become a journalist earlier in my career just to keep English language skills fresh and functional, I identify with the challenges that our diverse student population faces. I am pleased and equally amazed at the number of first-generation college students, immigrant or foreign exchange students who come into my Freshman composition classes with so varied a writing level only to complete a course in which they have grown by leaps and bounds. I never hide my own status of being an instructor with international background and experience as a second language learner; many students are inspired by my story and realize they can also succeed in the academic goals they set for themselves. Thus, in the past three years, through my committee work with the Borders of Diversity Conference, the English Division Distance Education Committee, and general attendance at the Composition committee meetings, I have grown to feel a true part of the community at JKL and in the English Division.

It is with this experience-both as an instructor and a member of different committees- that I am confident I can contribute to JKL. First, I am a basic skills instructor who understands the challenges

that second-language learners face when attending community college. For example, when teaching basic writing at Cal State and basic and developmental English at EFG University, I supplemented instruction with numerous practice exercises in grammar, which were assigned either for individual or group work. I created handouts and Power Point presentations that addressed specific writing issues my students needed to focus on. While in class, they wrote every day and received plenty of feedback, which built the confidence and the skills needed to write unified paragraphs. The students also read in class every day, which gave them numerous opportunities to learn and practice active reading skills. Second, I am a Distance Education trainee who sees the importance of offering more educational opportunities for working students who need flexible schedules.

Finally, with my British Literature specialty I can contribute to the teaching of British and World Literature courses in the Division. In fact, at EFG University I had the opportunity to teach a contemporary literature class which included the study of Shakespeare's Hamlet. Unlike JKL, the student population at EFG consists of individuals who are pursuing technical or business careers, and whose interests usually lie less with the English language or literature than with technical courses. Nevertheless, in teaching these students, I learned how important it is not only to be well prepared as an instructor, but also to adapt the curriculum to their individual needs. In this course, students must learn to distinguish between different literary genres, such as poetry, short story, or drama, and also analyze the texts and write literary essays. While teaching this course, I employed Power Point presentations which made the course material more accessible to my visual learners. I also used YouTube videos that referred to different aspects of literature; for example, a video on poetic devices was extremely useful. My own students not only related to the young presenters in the video, but also understood the demonstrations of poetic techniques.

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Currently, as an adjunct instructor at JKL City College, I am teaching two English 1A classes in which I use various technological resources. My course shell has been on Blackboard since 2010 and has helped me create a learning community in my classes. Many of the shy students who barely speak in class find their voice online. Thus, everyone contributes to discussion forums and blogs, which in turn boosts self-confidence. Students realize that others hold similar opinions or that it is entirely acceptable to have differing viewpoints. Last semester I conducted an anonymous survey, and most of my students mentioned how the online segment helped them develop their opinions and relate well to others; they saw the commonalities rather than the differences. My constant interest in building a learning community in classrooms or online leads me to use YouTube videos and Power Point Presentations to enhance understanding for my visual learners. Additionally, this semester I intend to use Voicethread, a tool I became familiar with in one of the @One classes I took last year, Building Online Communities with Social Media. Students view an online Voicethread Power Point Presentation and leave their reactions in three forms: typed, voice, and video. The presentation relates to women's role in society. Students discuss how the role evolved in time here in America and what stereotypes about women are still lingering in today's society. I am confident they will enjoy not only the tool itself, but also the presentation.

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My global education, international teaching experience, English qualifications, and diverse background uniquely equip me to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population at JKL. This diversity is not just cultural or ethnic; it also concerns different ages, backgrounds, learning styles, and intelligence levels, all of which are addressed in my classes. My teaching style is

based on my students' needs, and my diverse background allows me the sensitivity I need to relate to them. I believe I can contribute to my students' personal growth and motivate them to obtain their educational goals.

- 6. Of all the motivational or inspirational posters that I read throughout my primary and secondary education, I remember one: differences make us special. While this may seem overly simplistic outside of elementary school, this idea continues to resonate within me. I believe higher education gives us the opportunity to step away from what we've always known to be true, in order to see the world through someone else's eyes. It is so rare to have direct access to such a wide-range of people, from a variety of different backgrounds, that we must relish the opportunity to see the world in a new way. I understand this can be overwhelming, even frightening at times; however, the benefits of this type of education can be life changing.*

I believe that diversity in the classroom should be openly discussed and celebrated, and I strive to create an open, safe space in which students feel free to express different ideas, opinions, and worldviews. However, given this open environment, I tolerate only the highest level of respect for one another. When exchanging ideas it is vital to remember that:

Respect is not a passive act. It involves a sense of honoring or deferring to someone. Where once we saw one aspect of a person, we look again and realize how much of them we had missed. This second look can let us take in more fully the fact that here before me is a living, breathing being. (Issacs, 1999, pp. 110-111).

It is important to note that diversity in the classroom involves much more than where you were born or your political viewpoint. It involves how you think, learn, and communicate. I am aware that what may work for some may not work for all, and I am open to hearing what engages your interests. Ultimately, we work together to create a learning environment and in the words of Paulo Freire (1970): Authentic education is not carried on by 'A' for 'B' or by 'A' about 'B,' but rather by 'A' with 'B,' mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. (p. 82).

In order to create an open and safe environment, I will facilitate dialogue in the classroom. Dialogue is a powerful tool, which, according to Issacs (1999) "...is a way of taking the energy of our differences and channeling it toward something that has never been created before. It lifts us out of polarization and into a greater common sense..." (p.19). Rather than trying to win a debate or have the last say, we will leave space for new ideas and perspectives, thus creating an inclusive environment in which to speak.

If we all strive to respect one another and focus on what we can learn from each other, we will walk away from the experience with an increased knowledge of the world and its people

References

- Freire, P. (1970). Pedagogy of the Oppressed. New York: Herder and Herder.*
Issacs, W. (1999). Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together. New York: Doubleday.