

Creating a Diversity Statement for Your Course Syllabus

Below are guidelines for writing a solid diversity statement for your course syllabus. Some of the ideas are directly from the College of Engineering's DEI website and CoE strategic plan penultimate draft, *Engineering for the Public Good*, to facilitate consistent messaging throughout the College, helping to build a shared, college-wide culture around diversity, equity, and inclusion. Strong diversity statements include the elements outlined below, but you are encouraged to make it your own, customizing your statement to your course.

Ultimately, the best diversity statement is one that you can commit to and enforce.

Common Elements of a Diversity Statement

Here are some questions you will need to reflect on and answer as you write your statement:

Note: Examples given in this document are representative of each element but not all-inclusive.

1. *How do you recognize and value diversity in your classroom?*

For example, The College of Engineering is committed to building an inclusive and equitable environment for learning, research, service, and outreach.¹ In this classroom, you will be treated with respect. Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, races, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, religious affiliations, abilities, and other visible and invisible differences are welcome and valued.

2. *How can diversity in your discipline/course content/classroom be an asset for learning?*

For example, The College of Engineering believes that “groups and organizations are most innovative when their members represent and draw upon a variety of backgrounds—lived experience, culture, age, identities, abilities, disciplines and working and thinking styles—and respect the varied perspectives that arise from these differences. We have a moral obligation to fully embrace DEI in all that the College does and to be a leader in transforming our institutions, communities, and society into truly equitable and just places where everyone can thrive. DEI is central to the College’s mission of producing outstanding engineers who are capable drivers of scientific innovation, but also responsible, engaged global citizens and thoughtful agents of societal change.”²

¹ UW College of Engineering. (2021). *Diversity, equity & inclusion*. The University of Washington. <https://www.engr.washington.edu/about/diversity>

² UW College of Engineering Strategic Planning Committee. (2021). *Engineering for the public good; Executive summary of the strategic plan 2021-2026*. Unpublished manuscript. The University of Washington.

3. *What do you want your students to know about your expectations regarding creating and maintaining a classroom space where differences are respected and valued?*

For example, All members of this classroom community are expected to contribute to making this a welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member by treating each other with respect. Each student is encouraged to share their unique perspectives to broaden our collective exposure to a diversity of thought, background, and experience, which will ultimately enrich our knowledge and skills as engineers.

Examples of topics to address

Samples from [Clemson University \(2019\)](#)

- i. **Accessibility and Accommodations:** Please let me know as soon as possible if you need accommodations for any disabilities, visible or invisible, that may otherwise impede your full participation in classroom activities.
- ii. **Preferred Names/Pronouns:** I will gladly address you by the name and pronouns you use. Please advise me of your preferences early in the quarter to make appropriate updates to my records. I expect that peers and classmates also refer to you by the name and pronouns you prefer.
- iii. **Religious and Cultural Observances:** Let me know if class meetings conflict with your religious or cultural events so that we can support you.

4. *How will you handle DEI issues when they arise in your classroom?*

For example, We may not always share the same views on topics discussed in class, and speaking up respectfully about different perspectives while assuming good intent can promote learning. However, if you experience bias or observe unfair treatment based on identity, be it intentional or unconscious, you are encouraged to bias-interrupt or speak with me privately. You can also report bias incidents via the [CoE Bias Reporting](#) Tool. A trained advocate will review all reports submitted to determine the appropriate course of action. Regardless of the type of incident, all shared experiences will be used to transform our classroom-CoE-campus climate into more equitable and inclusive.

5. *Do you seek input from your students on classroom climate?*

For example, I welcome your feedback on fostering a more inclusive environment in this class. Your constructive suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please contact me (**HOW? WHEN?**) if you have recommendations or wish to talk about your experience.

6. *What relevant resources exist on campus that could be useful to your students?*

For example, Other UW campus DEI resources:

- [Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity \(OMA&D\)](#)
- [Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program \(GO-MAP\)](#)
- [Disability Resources for Students](#)
- [Alene Moris Women's Center](#)
- [Q Center](#)

Three Examples of Diversity Statements for Syllabi

Additional samples are available at [Clemson University \(2019\)](#)

Sample 1: [Brown University \(Monica Linden, Neuroscience\)](#)

In an ideal world, science would be objective. However, much of science is subjective and is historically built on a small subset of privileged voices. I acknowledge that the readings for this course, including the course reader and BCP, were authored by white men. Furthermore, the course often focuses on historically important neuroscience experiments which white men mostly conducted. Recent edits to the course reader were undertaken by both me and some students who do not identify as white men. However, I acknowledge that there may be both overt and covert biases in the material due to its written lens, even though the material is primarily scientific. Integrating a diverse set of experiences is essential for a more comprehensive understanding of science. Please contact me (in person or electronically) or submit anonymous feedback if you have any suggestions to improve the quality of the course materials.

Furthermore, I would like to create a learning environment for my students that supports a diversity of thoughts, perspectives, and experiences and honors your identities (including race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, ability, etc.) To help accomplish this:

- If you have a name and/or set of pronouns that differ from those that appear in your official Brown records, please let me know!
- If you feel like your performance in the class is being impacted by your experiences outside of class, please don't hesitate to come and talk with me. I want to be a resource for you. Remember that you can also submit anonymous feedback (which will lead to me making a general announcement to the class, if necessary, to address your concerns). If you prefer to speak with someone outside of the course, Dean Bhattacharyya, Associate Dean of the College for Diversity Programs, is an excellent resource.
- I (like many people) am still in the process of learning about diverse perspectives and identities. If something was said in class (by anyone) that made you feel uncomfortable, please talk to me about it. (Again, anonymous feedback is always an option).

Sample 2: [Carnegie Mellon University](#) - Sample recommended from Faculty Senate

We must treat every individual with respect. We are diverse in many ways, and this diversity is fundamental to building and maintaining an equitable and inclusive campus community. Diversity can refer to multiple ways that we identify ourselves, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, language, sex, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, creed, ancestry, belief, veteran status, or genetic information. These diverse identities, along with many others not mentioned here, shape the perspectives our students, faculty, and staff bring to our campus. We at CMU will work to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion not only because diversity fuels excellence and innovation but because we want to pursue justice. We acknowledge our imperfections while fully commit to the work inside and outside of our classrooms to build and sustain a campus community that increasingly embraces these core values.

Each of us is responsible for creating a safer, more inclusive environment.

Unfortunately, incidents of bias or discrimination do occur, whether intentional or unintentional, and they contribute to creating an unwelcoming environment for individuals and groups at the university. Therefore, the university encourages anyone who experiences or observes unfair or hostile treatment based on identity to speak out for justice and support, within the moment of the incident or after the incident has passed. Anyone can share these experiences using the following resources:

- **Center for Student Diversity and Inclusion:** csdi@andrew.cmu.edu, (412) 268-2150
- **Report-It online anonymous reporting platform:** reportit.net username: *tartans*
password: *plaid*

All reports will be documented and deliberated to determine if there should be any following actions. Regardless of incident type, the university will use all shared experiences to transform our campus climate into more equitable and just.

Sample 3: [University of Iowa College of Education](#)

"Respect for Diversity: I intend that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. I intend to present materials and activities respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Would you please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups? In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that we can make arrangements for you."

Mentor text to support you as you write your diversity statement

You may pull from this statement from the above samples and the [Clemson University \(2019\)](#) exemplars

*The College of Engineering (CoE) is committed to building an inclusive and equitable environment for learning, research, service, and outreach. We believe that "we have a moral obligation to fully embrace DEI in all that the College does and to be a leader in transforming our institutions, communities, and society into truly equitable and just places where everyone can thrive. DEI is central to the College's mission of producing outstanding engineers who are capable drivers of scientific innovation, but also responsible, engaged global citizens and thoughtful agents of societal change."*³

In this classroom, you will be treated with respect. Each student is encouraged to share their unique perspectives to broaden our collective exposure to a diversity of thought, background, and experience, which will ultimately enrich our knowledge and skills as learners and as engineers. Individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, races, ethnicities, genders, gender

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identities, religious affiliations, abilities, and other visible and invisible differences are welcome and valued.

All members of this classroom community are expected to contribute to its welcoming and inclusive environment by treating each other with respect. As the instructor, you can expect that I will:

- *Honor disability accommodations specified to ensure your full participation in classroom activities. Would you please advise me of what is needed?*
- *Address you by the name and pronouns you use. Please advise me of your preferences early in the quarter so that I may make appropriate updates to my records. I expect that peers and classmates also refer to you by the name and pronouns you prefer.*
- *Work with you to make reasonable accommodations for any class meetings that conflict with your religious or cultural events or practices.*

We may not always share the same views on topics discussed in class, and speaking up respectfully about different perspectives while assuming good intent can promote learning and is welcome. However, if you experience bias or observe unfair treatment based on identity, be it intentional or unconscious, you are encouraged to bias-interrupt or speak with me privately. You can also report bias incidents via the [CoE Bias Reporting Tool](#). A trained advocate will review all reports submitted to determine the appropriate course of action. Regardless of the type of incident, all shared experiences will be used to transform our classroom-CoE-campus climate into more equitable and inclusive.

*I welcome your feedback on how I can foster a more inclusive environment in this class. Your constructive suggestions are appreciated. Please contact me (**HOW? WHEN?**) if you have recommendations or wish to talk about your experience.*

Other UW campus DEI resources:

- [Office of Minority Affairs and Diversity \(OMA&D\)](#)
- [Graduate Opportunities and Minority Achievement Program \(GO-MAP\)](#)
- [Disability Resources for Students](#)
- [Alene Moris Women's Center](#)
- [Q Center](#)

References

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