

Statement of Diversity and Inclusion

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I come from a family with very different educational backgrounds. My mother went to college as a commuter on a full scholarship, earning her accounting degree from my alma mater, Stonehill College, while simultaneously working in her father's machine shop. Years later, my mother returned to school to complete a master's degree in computer science while raising me. My father graduated high school and started working for a startup dental and surgical supply company where he still works today. My father will soon retire after 50 years with the company. It is fair to say that neither of my parents took the conventional path after graduating high school, so when it came time for me to attend college and graduate school, I was forging a new path for myself in many ways, one that my parents worked tirelessly to make possible, and one for which I am eternally grateful.

While my ethnic and socio-economic background has not caused me to experience life as a minority, I have ended up in social situations where the term minority would certainly apply to me. When I entered high school, my parents sent me to a private all-girls school where I did not know any other students. Most other girls came in with a predetermined friend group and found the transition easy. I, however, did not know anyone, and was seen as the outsider. This experience made me see things in a very different light. I was socially ostracized because I wasn't from the same town or the same private middle school. I can only imagine how much more intensely the feeling of ostracization can impact someone who is a minority in the typical sense after my early high school experience.

I know that my worldview may be narrow, in that I have grown up as a child of upper middle-class parents and gone to institutions of higher education where many of my peers have a similar background to mine. However, I deeply believe that widening one's worldview by hearing, understanding, and respecting the perspectives and beliefs of others is the only way to move forward in a civilized society.

In my teaching, I encourage students to tell me about their backgrounds and interests, and to bring their own experiences into the classroom so that we may learn from them. It is critical to have a multitude of viewpoints on an issue, and to recognize that no single approach to a situation is perfect. Learning about my student's backgrounds makes me more able to incorporate their unique perspectives into our class. This serves two purposes: to make the class more applicable to them, and to enlighten myself and their classmates regarding something with which we may not be familiar.

I enjoy a good debate, as hearing perspectives that are different from my own allow me to understand and learn from those with whom I coexist both personally and professionally. I try to live by the advice that my grandfather was famous for giving -- "You may disagree, but you may not be disagreeable."