



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, 0521  
TELEPHONE: (858) 534-5082  
FAX: (858) 534-7130

9500 GILMAN DRIVE # 0521  
LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA 92093-0521

## **Contributions to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Statement**

### **Evidence of EDI while teaching at UCSD.**

UCSD does not provide quantitative indicators of diversity that I can report. However, the graduate students that engage me as a faculty mentor provide some systematic evidence that my approach to diversity returns inclusivity (bear in mind I have only taught at UCSD for 3 years, and 1.5 years were taught remotely). Two students have asked me to serve as their faculty mentor. Both are foreign born, one identifies as a person of color, and the other identifies as female. I have co-author relationships with two additional graduate students. Both are female, one is foreign born, and both identify as a person of color. Two recent incoming graduate students have approached me preliminarily as their faculty mentor. One is a military officer and first-generation college student, the other is foreign born.

The text responses in my student evaluations make clear that students “feel welcome,” and “safe to learn” in my class, and that I go “above and beyond” to provide an inclusive learning environment. My approach to diversity equity and inclusion are best demonstrated in how I encourage inclusivity in politically sensitive courses. My course, “Spies” which covers the US intelligence community, is increasingly sensitive because my students include US citizens, military personnel and their families, and Chinese, Ukrainian, and Russian citizens. Several classes cover growing tensions between these states. I have developed several class policies to ensure all students can focus on learning in a respectful way. During the first lecture, I set clear standards for appropriate classroom behavior when discussing national security competition. For example, I discuss differences between government choices, and citizenship, and prohibit students from conflating these actors when discussing geopolitical rivalries in class. I provide several examples of appropriate and inappropriate discussion and give students strategies for discussing sensitive topics. I also provide reporting venues for students who want to raise issues of inclusivity in class. This includes an anonymous survey form so students can raise issues with the course material, myself or one of the TAs regarding these sensitive topics.

### **Supporting diversity in my community:**

I served three terms as an elected (by committee) member of the Advisory Neighborhood Committee for Zoning, and economic development for Ward 1 in Washington DC City Council. Ward 1 is a majority African American Ward. It also has the second most public housing of any Ward in DC. The committee that elected me to this board repeatedly, entrusts me to represent these underrepresented communities. In this role, I champion diversity in two ways. First, I negotiate with property developers to increase their contributions to community development funds as part of their property development applications. These funds have been used on programs for first time business owners, after school education programs, playgrounds and poverty alleviation for low-income African Americans in my Ward. Second, I help small business owners navigate the Council permit process when they want to expand their businesses. There are several small business owners who have no formal education but work hard as hair dressers, food vendors and other roles. They are excellent at what they do, but stumble when they try to navigate City Bureaucracy. This prevents many of them from growing their business and achieving a middle-class life. I use my expertise to help them navigate these issues so they can focus on what they do best.

Before moving to DC, I volunteered for two years as a disability support officer in Sydney Australia. Working with children with a range of disabilities I became acutely sensitive to the challenges that people with disabilities face. Through this experience, I learnt the critical role that community advocacy, training and social inclusion plays to reducing discrimination against disadvantaged groups.

**Supporting Diversity in my pre-Academic, Professional Career:**

I worked as a legislative consultant in NSW State Parliament, where I was partly responsible for minority policies. In this role, I liaised with several minority advocacy groups and members of minority communities. Sharing the experiences and stories of immigrants and diaspora groups in New South Wales made me aware of how broader inclusion could enrich our communities. It also required me to think carefully about the trade-offs governments must face to systematically diminish discrimination and encourage inclusion.

I worked as a USAID and UN consultant in several war zones and post-conflict nations. My local staff had different work practices and customs that I was not used to. By regularly engaging with people from diverse backgrounds in the workplace I have become familiar with different approaches to work and the unique benefits and challenges each brings. The experiences forced me to think through tough challenges where local customs conflicted with USAID policies and practices.

**Lived experiences that influence my approach to EDI in teaching.**

My ethnic background is Middle Eastern. In Australia, I faced cultural and ethnic discrimination – especially in the five years following the September 11 terrorist attacks. Following these acts, Australians became increasingly suspicious of ethnically Middle Eastern males, and I suffered several physical attacks, including a racially motivated assault with a weapon that led to severe injury (a cricket bat). These attacks became acute during the 2003 Cronulla Race Riots. For three days, groups of white Australians organized into groups, and searched the streets and beaches for Middle Eastern youth to attack. Several cars owned by Middle Eastern Australians were set on fire in my neighborhood. After these race riots, I took part in community education projects that explained middle eastern culture and practice to the majority European Australians to reduce discrimination and encourage inclusion. Through this experience I learnt the value of sharing experiences in reducing discrimination.

I accept that my experiences in Australia do not directly translate into the difficulties that some minorities in the United States face. However, I feel like these lived experiences inform how I engage people from diverse backgrounds in my community and at work. What is more, experiencing differences in the US context attuned me to the fact that all students can suffer discrimination, and that discrimination can take on many forms including race, class, language difficulties, disabilities, and income. I make this clear in my classes, and this could help explain why a diverse set of graduate students seek me out as a mentor.

Another set of experiences that attune me to diversity surround economic disadvantage. In my final year of high school, my father suffered a severe stroke and became permanently disabled. Over the next six years, I had to both care for my disabled father and provide financial support to my family. This caused me to delay college. When I eventually enrolled in college, I continued to work several jobs, totaling 20-30 hours a week to support my family financially. The mixture of experiences gives me an unusual window into the lives of economically disadvantaged. On the one hand, I grew up with many of the advantages of the middle class, and with a family that prioritized education. But once I arrived at college, I experienced many of the burdens that financially disadvantaged students struggle with. These experiences serve me today as I engage economically disadvantaged students at UCSD. For example, if I set textbooks, I always all students to select old additions. For both graduate and undergraduate students, I explain how to purchase all academic books on half.com (where books cost \$4 second hand). For students in my data-science class, I have made my personal laptop or other laptops available to students in class who cannot afford a computer.