

Diversity Statement

My grandparents and great-grandparents arrived in Argentina from seven different European countries escaping violent discrimination, severe economic hardships, or both. My family's history has made me acutely aware of the value of diversity, the importance of tolerance, and the appreciation for different cultures. It has also inspired my enduring belief that motivated individuals can overcome big hurdles to find the opportunities they seek.

I enjoy learning about people's histories, and the eagerness to learn about different cultures has led me to travel extensively in Latin America (while I lived in Argentina) and in Asia (during the last few years). I feel privileged to have met so many people from different places and cultures, which both reflects and enhances my belief in the value of diversity.

I have always taken an interest in the hardships that people face and in the social backgrounds and personal histories that make people who they are. In different situations throughout my life, most often as a teacher, I have tried to help people overcome their limitations and pursue their goals. In particular, I have a strong belief in the value of education as an empowering tool.

I attended a very special high school, the Colegio Nacional de Buenos Aires (formally part of the University of Buenos Aires, UBA). A free, public high school, widely regarded as an educational institution with the highest standards of excellence in the country, it attracts a large and diverse pool of applicants, only a small fraction of whom can pass the highly selective entrance examinations. The cohorts in the school are characterized not only by high levels of academic ability and motivation, but also by very diverse social backgrounds. During my high school years I was happy to encounter this diversity, and I learned many life lessons from friends with different personal histories. I was also able to appreciate the hardships and obstacles that some people had to go through to accomplish their goals. I was mindful of the fact that social and economic hardships explained why some social groups were underrepresented in the school, but also pondered on how effort and determination can help to overcome deeply-ingrained hurdles.

My experience as a student of Economics at UBA also underlined the value of diversity. As a university student, I started my teaching experience early on as an *ad honorem* teaching assistant (i.e., as an unpaid volunteer, which is the usual case in public universities in Argentina). UBA is a public, free university, characterized by large classes (ranging from 50 to 120), a large fraction of students from low-income families (who often have to work and support themselves while studying), and low completion rates. As a teaching assistant there, I discovered my passion for teaching, which I see as a socially beneficial and personally rewarding activity that can help people from many different backgrounds overcome their limitations and pursue their goals.

My interest in economics has been honed by my concern with social issues and the hope that academic research may help us better understand the challenges faced by underprivileged people and inform policies to help increase social welfare. As a young student in Argentina, I witnessed first-hand the crisis of 2001-2002, the worst economic crisis in Argentine history, which involved a sharp rise of unemployment and poverty. I was deeply saddened by the hardships suffered by a large share of the population, which led me to ask why many low- and middle-income countries

often leave many of their citizens without opportunities of getting an education and find decent jobs. Over time, this question has continued to motivate my research.

Coming to the US to pursue a PhD gave me the chance to continue my commitment with teaching in a different context, as well as a unique opportunity to get to know people from all over the world. As a teaching assistant and instructor in several classes, I have had the opportunity to meet students from diverse backgrounds and have tried to help them in their learning experiences. Although most students at Brown University face relatively comfortable social and economic conditions, many of them have left their families far away to go study abroad, and often times they feel lost in one way or another. I have taken an interest in mentoring undergraduate students that reach out for guidance, and have been able to help some of them to overcome difficulties in their course work, make decisions about their studies and their future plans, and look for internships and jobs.

At UC Berkeley, I would strive to continue this involvement and commitment with students through teaching, mentoring and advising.

Diversity Statement

Stephen J. Terry

My past contributions to diversity take the form of a fairly unusual set of life experiences which, as a faculty member, would inform my future efforts to support and participate in academic mentorship programs. Such programs crucially offer the ability for researchers to pass along information about research careers and graduate school to historically underserved communities with potentially less information about life as a professional researcher, and I would immediately seek to participate in them as a new faculty member.

I experienced an accelerated early education, graduating from high school at age 13, from my undergraduate studies in economics at age 16, and from a master's program in mathematics at age 19. After graduation with my master's degree, I immediately began full-time work as a teenager in an economic research department within the Federal Reserve System. Throughout my education and early career, therefore, I have continually navigated environments populated largely by individuals different from me, i.e. older than me. Naturally, my colleagues often had more capabilities, knowledge, and privileges than me. In a particularly humorous example, my fellow students often had the ability to drive during my undergraduate studies, although I was legally ineligible for a license at that point. More broadly, however, I was necessarily excluded from many social interactions or lacked background pieces of knowledge which were considered "typical" for most of the colleagues around me.

It is crucial to note that an accelerated education for me was a source of academic advantage rather than disadvantage, and I would hesitate to draw any false equivalence whatsoever between my background and the needs or concerns of an historically excluded or underrepresented community. However, throughout my time as an abnormally young student, I particularly and uniquely benefited from the conscientious work of advisors who guided me as an academic and professional.

Because advising relationships were so crucial for me as I sought as a teenager to navigate the early steps of an academic and professional career, I have read with great interest about the opportunities within the UC San Diego community for contributing to diversity through the established Academic Enrichment Programs. By enthusiastically participating as a faculty mentor in the McNair Program, for example, I could help to pass along my information, experience, and perspective surrounding doctoral work and research to a group of low-income or first-generation college students. Such efforts would represent a valuable use of my time, and if I were to join the UC San Diego community as a faculty member I would look forward to actively supporting and participating in such enrichment programs on campus.

Diversity Statement — Will Johnson — Department of Economics, Boston University

My perspective on diversity was first shaped by my experience growing up in Mobile, Alabama, a city whose deep racial inequities persist to this day. Remarkably, when I was in elementary school, we were, as far as I can remember, blissfully unaware of such divisions — children from all backgrounds played with one another, did homework with one another, ate lunch everyday with one another. But by the time we reached high school, such social harmony had all but disappeared. While my high school was *de jure* integrated, it would only be a slight stretch to describe it as effectively two high schools, one for black students, one for white students. The experiences of these two groups — in terms of classes taken, peer groups, and college and career expectations — were tremendously different.

Seeing firsthand how this played out — the gradual disintegration of social cohesion between elementary and high school, due to complex social forces beyond any one person's control — had a profound effect on my ultimate decision to become a social scientist. How could different groups of people start off on more or less the same page, but yet end up with such different outcomes? At a more macroeconomic level, how could different cities and states in the US, and different countries across the world, still have such divergent outcomes, even after multiple decades of economic integration? These are the questions that motivate my research agenda as an economist.

Rather than just researching these issues in the abstract, I also strive to directly work with people from different backgrounds as me, and to help those who are less privileged. In high school, I spent a few hours each week taking part in an after-school tutoring program, in which I helped fellow students with classes they were struggling with. During each tutoring session, I had to radically alter my approach depending on whom I was working with. Some students wanted to drill down the finer points of stoichiometry for their advanced chemistry class, while other students struggled with issues of basic literacy. Although I struggled at first, I had the luxury of being able to target individual students one-on-one.

This experience informed my teaching later on as a graduate student at Boston University. Even among the many BU students who come from economically privileged backgrounds, not all are equally advantaged within the classroom. For example, for many of the students I taught, English was a second language. I knew from my experience in high school that, even if many students were actively participating in class and clearly demonstrating fluency with the material, I still had to watch out for students who were on the verge of being left behind. In some cases I directed such students to free tutoring services similar to the one I had direct experience with in high school.

As a new faculty member, I am committed to continue to promote diversity along four dimensions, three of which — research, teaching, and service — are direct extensions of what I have already started to carry out. The fourth dimension is new: being a *mentor* to students. Students who are white, male, and from well-educated families will, by default, be more likely to see me as a role model. Students from different backgrounds may discount their ability to achieve what I have achieved, even if teaching economics and carrying out economics research (or following other, related passions) would be as rewarding for them as it has been for me. As a professor I will strive to be cognizant of this, making sure to pass along not just my knowledge of economics, but also my knowledge of how to navigate the byzantine, unwritten rules of the academic system, to those who are least likely to receive such knowledge.