

TIPS FOR CRAFTING A DIVERSITY STATEMENT



WHAT A DIVERSITY STATEMENT IS

A diversity statement is a type of autobiographical, personal essay that outlines past experiences and values around diversity, equity, inclusion, and your commitment to social justice. Sometimes a prompt or question is provided, but not always.

BEFORE GETTING STARTED

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (often seen as simply DEI) are words that are often lumped together when in reality, each word has its own unique and important definition. When considered alone, they exclude the intersectionality of identities. Before moving forward with developing a diversity statement, ensure you have a clear understanding of certain concepts.

BASIC TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

- **Diversity:** The range of differences and attributes in people
- **Equity:** The concept of providing individualized types of support to different people/groups in order to help them address the unique challenges related to oppression
- **Inclusion:** The concept that a community benefits from when all people are intentionally included and their needs are met; the concept that various identities and perspectives are valued and needed for the good of the community
- **Identity:** Group membership that is based on factors such as social identity (ex. gender identity, racial identity); refers to underrepresented identities as well as privileged identities
- **Equality:** The concept that all individuals should be treated the same and given the same opportunities in equal measure (primarily through legislation) regardless of identities held or oppression faced
- **Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage (e.g. racism intersecting with sexism)
- **Social Justice:** The concept that oppression is intersectional and systemic with the goal to remove barriers to access and success rather than exclusively providing supports for individuals to "overcome" oppression

HOW TO WRITE A DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Reflect

Think about your personal experiences, identities, and values

- What does diversity mean to you personally?
- What values do you hold? How do those impact the way you interact and engage with other people and environments?
- Do you hold historically underrepresented identity(s)? How do and have your identities impacted you and your lived experiences? Do you hold privileged identity(s)? How has that impacted you and your experiences?
- How do you actively engage in diversity, equity, and inclusion? How will you engage in the new role or program?

Share

The goal is to answer the following through specific, authentic examples in a narrative/storytelling format:

- Your personal story as it relates to diversity, equity, and inclusion
- Connect personal experiences that promoted your commitment to inclusion
- Outline your plans for contributing to and investing in DEI in the future and in the new role

Review & Edit

Take some time away from your writing and come back.

- Does this essay seem like an authentic reflection of you, your values, your actions, and your plans for the future?
- Does the essay read clearly? Are there clear themes throughout the essay?

BASIC FORMATTING

- Varies but typically 1-2 pages (double-spaced) or 500-800 words
 - 12 Pt. font with 1" Margins on all sides
 - Times New Roman or similar common font
- Review your specific provided information to confirm the requirements

WHAT TO INCLUDE

Describe of how your experiences have contributed to personal and professional development

Example

"When I first shared with a classmate my identity as a lesbian, I remember how liberating and simultaneously scary that experience was. I realized at that moment that I wanted to provide a space for others where they also felt comfortable being their authentic selves around me."

- The example shares personal experiences and identities that have direct impact on the writer
- To share personal identities is not a requirement, and it is up to you to assess if the statement is a space where you feel comfortable to share.

Share your demonstration and commitment (values & actions) to diversity, equity, and inclusion

Example

"In my second year at the university I was in a research lab. I noticed that the professor was consistently selecting students who visually present as white men for all in-class questions and when showcasing work in the space. During a class discussion, I told the professor that I noticed a very clear preference in his student focus and encouraged him to consider if identities were a factor. While the professor was initially defensive, it led to a very impactful discussion with our entire class where other students also shared their concerns and we were able to talk about how to create a more inclusive classroom environment."

- This example demonstrates the ability to recognize and address microaggressions and problematic behaviors through a specific example

Discuss how you will apply principles of DEI to the role or program

Example

"On the organization's website, I saw that you have Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) for various identities, and hold a specific day for staff to focus on their own personal growth on the topics of DEI each year. I am excited to participate in the ERGs that relate to my identity as a woman. I also plan to use the development day to research current literature on allyship best practices in the workplace, which I will use in the office."

- The example demonstrates possible actions to take in the workplace based on research of the organization and resources available

WHAT NOT TO INCLUDE

Other people's personal experiences; stories you've heard elsewhere

Example

"When my friend was in class, their professor mispronounced their name for an entire quarter even after being corrected by them multiple times, which is really disrespectful to them. They told me later that other professors have done the same thing and how much it affects them. That should not happen and I would try to stop it if I was there."

- This story is not about you, nor is not your story to share (even if you ask for permission). The focus on the essay should be on you and your experiences

Narratives unrelated to content to common understandings of diversity and social justice

Example

"I moved to the PNW after living on the East coast for most of my life and identify as an East-Coaster at heart. This huge culture shift was very impactful and isolating as I worked to adjust to the area. It was really hard to connect with and relate to others who were not from the East coast because our social interactions look so different"

- Discussing moving to the PNW after living on the East coast as an example of identity (geographic location is an affiliation, not a social group identity).
- This reflects a lack of understanding of identities, and the impacts of oppression and privilege.

Generalities instead of stories and the specific application of DEI principles

Example

"Diversity is really important and I think if more people cared about diversity, the world would be a better place."

- This example severely lacks depth, content, and personal application of DEI principles. Vague statements do not demonstrate a strong knowledge base in the intended topic of the essay.

False information about your values around diversity, equity, and inclusion

You have not intentionally invested time or energy into exploring topics around diversity, equity, and social justice. You believe that you need to say that you hold those values in order to get the job so you choose not tell the truth about your values, beliefs, and past actions

This is extremely problematic behavior. If equity and social justice are not values that you hold, we encourage you to grow and invest in your learning on these important topics. Do not put false information in your statement.