

# Statement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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## Enhancing Equity in Research

Enhancing equity is a constant theme of my research. In one of my dissertation chapters, I studied how undercompensated land acquisition (implemented by a government) provokes resistance of the affected households. Specifically, I explored how governments misuse their power over people in the process of land acquisitions. I advocated restraining the “absolute power” of governments to prevent “absolute corruption.” In another working paper, I explored the YouTube Premium membership, which viewers can purchase to enjoy ad-free video services. The membership enables YouTube to collect information of its viewers’ tolerance to seeing advertisements so that YouTube can adjust its strategy of advertisement insertion accordingly. By bringing this innovative price discrimination to academic attention, I aim to promote policies that balance market power between the monolithic platform and its users. Eliminating power disparities has been a major theme of my past and ongoing research and will continue to serve as the main aspiration of my future projects.

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Teaching

Having taught for three different campuses of UConn and two top liberal arts institutions, Wesleyan University and Trinity College, I have worked with students of various backgrounds, capacities, and learning preferences.<sup>1</sup> As a first-generation college student who comes from a socially disadvantaged family, I always attempt to create diverse opportunities to engage different students. The outstanding student evaluations that I have received for teaching for a total of ten classes testify to my strong ability to handle various teaching situations including in-person and online teaching modes and teaching theoretical and empirical courses (seven different courses in sum).

My first principle to ensure equity and inclusion is clarity. This is the necessary premise to ensure equal opportunities to success for everyone in the class. I always deliver my lectures in a clear, vivid, and engaging manner. I use charts and graphs to illustrate abstract theories and demonstrate the application of theories with analyses of current events, and real-life cases. I have also developed the ritual of posting weekly lecture summaries to help students learn how to form a structuralized understanding of the covered knowledge.

During the isolation period under the pandemic (20-21 semester), I spent the first 10-15 minutes at the beginning of the class reviewing the key knowledge points of the previous lecture. I also design the material of the current course to establish a smooth transition from previous knowledge to the new content. I specifically designed this course format out of the sympathy of what students experience under the lack of access to facilities and assistance when classes were remote. I received compliments from students on this teaching style for my understanding and consideration, recognizing that support services were not as easily accessed.

I provide sufficient flexibility to meet diverse needs. After the first semester’s teaching of Econometrics at Wesleyan, I found that most of the students were finding it a challenge to write their final projects. In the second semester, besides one-on-one consultations during office hours, I also incorporated lectures on writing, giving students detailed guidance on how to professionally compose an academic project. Using Bellamare’s *How to Write Applied Papers in Economics* as a reference, I explained to students the function of each section of a complete academic paper. My teaching and advising helped students to write with clarity, persuasiveness, and confidence. Students appreciated my mindful response to the challenges under the difficult situations.

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<sup>1</sup> The institutions that I worked for include state university in a rural area with a significant proportion of students that are athletes and cadets; state university at an urban setting where students mainly come from socially (economically) disadvantaged backgrounds; liberal arts colleges where more students come from affluent families.

Working as a visiting faculty member for a liberal arts institution elevated my awareness of students' common interest and passion in enhancing gender/race equality. I incorporate into class more and more content that prompts students to critically think about the assumptions that society may hold that lead to stereotypes and biases. One of the examples is from my teaching Econometrics. From my first semester at Wesleyan, I found students still carry the strong inertia of inserting all the relevant variables into the regression. It was challenging for them to accept the idea of causal inference where all the covariates introduced to the regression should be relevant to the variable of interest. In the second semester, I illustrated how causal inference can be used to evaluate the unbiased influence from factors such as race and gender on differences in job capacities. I demonstrated to students from an econometric perspective that the traditional way of attributing the income difference to some demographic differences, say, race or gender, ignoring other contributing factors (such as the influence of network), is biased.

This demonstration greatly enhances the effectiveness in arousing students' passion to adopt causal inference for their empirical research. Several students provided feedback to me after the class sharing that it was exciting to find the method that they learned could be used to debunk the gender/race-based biases that lead to income inequalities. They suggested that this method prompted them to reevaluate whether they made other judgments and assumptions based on correlation, not the true causality (such as mistakenly thinking athletes from certain countries are born to have advantages in certain sports, ignoring the training and sports-related culture in those countries that may play a more deterministic role for the outstanding performance of these athletes). During my teaching at liberal arts institutions, I specifically pay attention to and respond to such callings from students (and an institution's mission) for the promotion of diversity while fostering their critical thinking skills by leading them to experience how economists attempt to approach an unbiased understanding of this world.

The diversity aspect of teaching, in my understanding, should also include exposing students to different cultures, values, and ideologies. I am eager to engage students by providing my observations and thoughts from an international perspective in my lectures while welcoming students' voluntary resonance with their perspectives and stories. In my Law and Economics class, I lead students to explore the differences in the countries that adopt distinct legal systems. Specifically, I compare China and the U.S., introducing that the collectivist and imperial history of China gave rise to a civil law there, which differs from the U.S. with its individualistic and constitutionalist background. I also highlight that these differences are in parallel to the opposite economic systems between these two countries, namely, planned versus market economy.

Students appreciate this conversation for prompting them to think critically about the news and opinions about China and the U.S. My lecture guides students to examine whether the news writer misjudged the policy of another country from the stance of their own country's system, which reflected their lack of consideration for the international differences. This is one example of how I prompt students' rigorous reasoning and enhance equal respect towards diverse values and ideologies that come from distinct cultures.

In sum, my philosophy of serving students with diversity includes patience, respect, sympathy, and consideration. I always remind myself that I should think of students' diverse backgrounds and various types of needs and how I can best guide them. I also share my international background to engage students in conversation. My teaching, research, and service consistently work together to contribute to aspects of supporting and enhancing diversity, equity, and inclusion.