
Engineering Teaching Portfolio Program

▀▀ Diversity Statements ▀▀

Topic Objectives

By the end of this topic, participants will have:

- had an opportunity to think about issues of diversity in engineering
- discussed diversity issues with peers
- articulated their thoughts about diversity
- received peer feedback about their diversity statement

▀ This Session:

Handouts

Diversity Statements (this document)
Example Diversity Statement
Possible Search Committee Questions about Diversity
Reasons for Switching M-F & M-W

Links

Nontraditional Undergraduates, National Center for Education Statistics, US Dept. Ed.
<http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/2002012.pdf>
National Science Foundation Merit Review, Letter from NSF Director Rita Colwell
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/iin127/imptnot.pdf>
Merit Review Broader Impacts Criterion: Representative Activities
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2002/nsf022/bicexamples.pdf>
<http://www.cs.washington.edu/diversity/>

Introduction – Engineering & Diversity

The lack of diversity among students and faculty in engineering is a well-documented, persistent challenge for engineering educators, and the business, government, and industry groups that hire engineering graduates. Many variables impact the population of engineering degree recipients, but three in particular are of particular importance in engineering: demographic patterns and trends, student retention, and economic/market influences.

People feel uncomfortable addressing diversity issues for a variety of reasons, including concerns about being accused of racism or, at the other end of the spectrum, being expected to represent the views of a particular underrepresented group. Few engineers can afford to avoid the subject these days because, while there has been progress, it has been small and slow. Faculty job postings increasingly mention diverse student populations. Funding agencies are providing the lever to encourage researchers to specify what roles they play in addressing this challenge. Well-conceived discussions of the broader impacts of engineering research have served to differentiate which highly ranked research proposals receive funding.

There is no better way to meet this challenge, than to discuss it among your peers before it comes up in more formal settings, such as a campus interview or proposal review.

What is a Diversity Statement?

Your diversity statement might discuss the importance of a diverse scholarly community or its significance in your field. You might use your statement to describe how you interact with students and colleagues with different backgrounds and experiences. You want your statement to demonstrate that you have given serious thought to the issue, explain why you take the actions that you do, as well as provide some examples.

Activities

The primary purpose of these activities are to provide you with an opportunity to think about diversity and articulate your thoughts *before* you are required to do so in an faculty interview or grant proposal. You may or may not opt to include this statement in the 'public' version of your portfolio.

Activity 1

Many people are unclear about why diversity issues are being highlighted so much in engineering education. Please re-read the introductory paragraphs above about diversity in engineering.

- a) The emphasis on diversity issues in education is sometimes interpreted as a push to teach students from some groups differently than students from other groups.
 - Discuss why the 'different methods for different groups' approach is problematic.
 - Discuss other approaches to teaching that you might take.
- b) Identify the reasons for increasing diversity in engineering that you find most compelling.

Activity 2

Choose 3 questions from the Search Committee Questions handout (listed above). Individually, take 5-10 minutes to read and make notes about how you might answer these questions. If you do not feel you have answers at this time, what kinds of actions could you take to put yourself in a position to answer them? Either as a large group or smaller groups, process your responses to the questions.

Activity 3

As a group, brainstorm ideas about what people might choose to include in a diversity statement. Select one person to record and distribute the groups suggestions.

Before you leave today's meeting:

Decide on the layout and typographical details that will make it easiest to give and receive feedback in the next session.

What you should bring to the next session:

3 copies of the first draft of your diversity statement (1 for yourself, 2 for your peer reviewers)

■ Between Sessions:

Assignment: First Draft – Diversity Statement

The purpose of this assignment is to help you take the first step in thinking about your perspective on the diversity challenges in your field. This draft statement should be about 500 words in length. Choose any format or organization that is comfortable for you, e.g. a narrative format or one that uses headings/subheadings.

▼ Next Session:

Status Update

1. What was the most challenging aspect of this assignment?
 2. As a group create a list of the kinds of feedback that would be most useful for improving your diversity statement.
 3. Peer review. Each person should review at least two other diversity statements.
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