

Diversity Statement

The incorporation of diversity in a university and department is essential to keeping that community vibrant and fresh. Scientific research is intrinsically dependent on human resources and human creativity. New ideas and creativity emerge most readily from organizations that include people with diverse talents, backgrounds, and ways of thinking. I believe fostering diversity within any level of organization, from a university to a small research group, will serve to enhance human ingenuity and creativity. Below I describe my experiences, philosophy, and my goals related to developing a research program that is both inclusive and scientifically productive.

I have had a series of experiences in contributing to diversity through my research, teaching, and service. I have mentored multiple undergraduate students in independent research who were women. In particular, one of the students I worked with continued on to a successful graduate career in freshwater ecology. Other students began a career in environmental sciences outside of academia or a graduate career in a different field. Each of these students presented their research at either state or national scientific conferences. Also, I helped mentor and manage undergraduates in the laboratory that were simply seeking experience, but had other career goals (e.g. medicine, policy). Furthermore, a graduate student working on the project I have been managing during my postdoctoral fellowship is Hispanic. I have played an active role in developing her research projects and training her in laboratory techniques. I have also been an ally to her by actively learning more about her country, Costa Rica, her culture, and by attempting to learn Spanish. Finally, while in graduate school I encouraged young students to pursue science by judging science fairs helping to award scholarships for young women in science.

As a woman aspiring to an academic career in ecological and environmental sciences, I have seen evidence of discrimination, both deliberate and unintentional. From these experiences, I have become sensitive to how my actions can influence others and I strive to be inclusive in my roles as a researcher and educator. According to reports published by the National Academies (most recently in 2010), there has been a crisis in recent years in retaining women scientists and engineers at universities and thus one of my major goals as a professor at a university is to encourage women to pursue careers in science. One of my collaborators, Dr. Laura Leff at Kent State University, has been involved in a NSF-funded Undergraduate Mentoring in Environmental Biology grant, the goal of which is to encourage involvement of underrepresented groups in environmental biology. I plan to pursue similar funding upon starting a faculty position. Furthermore, I will take the steps necessary to identify my laboratory as an ally to everyone regardless of race, sexuality, or gender. I have interacted with a diverse group of people throughout my academic career thus far and will continue to do so openly and without bias. A professor who is an ally to those of different groups serves to reinforce the talents and potential for those particular students, and also helps guide the success for organizations and communities that will embrace these students after graduation. In my eyes, taking an active role to discourage oppression and to be available to those feeling oppressed are essential roles of a professor at any university.

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