

Statement of Diversity and Teaching Philosophy
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I have demonstrated my passion and commitment to diversity by advocating for underrepresented students' rights as a grass roots organizer of a student run activist group, dubbed SLO Solidarity, at California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo (Cal Poly). As a collective of students we demanded for our institution to become committed to playing an active role in providing an equitable and inclusive campus for our underrepresented and undocumented students by developing an action plan that lists recommendations to dismantle the systemic violence that has been affecting underrepresented and low-income students for decades. I spoke against hate, such as: death threats, racism, and micro/macroaggressions, and pointed out the lack of diversity and cultural-sensitivity in front of thousands of faculty, staff, and students. I have also held positions on committees and boards such as the student diversity advisory council, inclusive excellence council, queer student union, men of color initiative, comparative ethnic studies student association, and the university union project advisory council. Through these positions I was able to voice concerns, opinions, and needs as a student representative to help shape our campus at Cal Poly to be a more of a diverse and inclusive campus for our underserved populations.

Beyond the university, I extend my commitment to diversity by giving back to all of my communities I identify with in modes of scholarship, activism, servitude, and leadership. Within the greater community of San Luis Obispo, I have promoted diverse views on preventative medicine and sexual health practices to alleviate stigma from the HIV positive community, as well as raise HIV testing. My passion for raising awareness of the lived experiences that marginalize underrepresented groups have been widespread. For example, at the National Association for Chicana & Chicano Studies conference in Denver, Colorado, I engaged with graduates and undergraduates from around the nation and Mexico by presenting my undergraduate research project that informs audiences about the relationships of undocumented families with Immigration Customs & Enforcement and its effect on seeking access to healthcare. My efforts as a leader, activist, and dedicated scholar have been recognized by the CSU System through the Board of Trustees' award for outstanding academic achievement, an award that is granted to one student from each campus in recognition of their service and coursework, as well as financial need.

My intersectional identity as Indigenous, Queer, Chicano, and Low-Income (while attending a predominately white institution as a first-generation college student) has made it necessary to challenge the status quo and think critically both inside and outside of the classroom. It is for this reason that I consider my pedagogical approach to be one that combines both a decolonial and feminist of color theoretical framework. Incorporating my experience navigating through the academy and seeking various resources to promote academic excellence is a narrative that I intend to provide to my students in hopes of enabling them to explore the realm of higher education. Alas, my identity is one that allows me to traverse between communities, such as LGBTQ and Chicana/Latina, and educate others on issues that are lacking in common discourse. My experiences are not only relevant, but they are necessary for the advancement of social change and for applying culturally relevant pedagogies in and outside of the classroom.

In regards to my teaching experience, I held a Teaching Assistant (TA) position in the Ethnic Studies (ES) department, under the direction of Dr. Jenell Navarro at Cal Poly. I've also been invited to guest lecture by faculty within the College of Liberal Arts. As a TA I assisted Dr.

Navarro with the following courses: ES 112: Race, Culture and Politics in the U.S., ES 114: Introduction to Comparative Ethnic Studies, & ES 310: Hip-Hop, Poetics, & Politics. In each course I held individual and group tutoring opportunities for students, including incentivized group study sessions in preparation for midterms and finals, conduct lectures that produce critical dialogues and augment students' cultural literacy, and provide mentorship opportunities to students' through office hours and email. Additionally, I've had the privilege of developing and facilitating academic content-specific workshops, such as an invited conversation engagement with UCSB professor of Sociology Dr. Victor Rios in which over 100 students came to learn and ask questions in regards to the school-to-prison pipeline and the youth control complex in juvenile justice.

Furthermore, as a guest lecturer in Cultural Anthropology, I was given the task to teach undergraduates Research Methods for a class project that focused on epistemological fieldwork. It is my responsibility as an educator to care for the development of students' consciousness in a way that encourages participation and fosters' a learning community within the classroom. By incorporating group activities, relevant media, and having an open-door policy with students, I feel that the students I've interacted with felt both supported and have benefitted from a decolonial and feminist of color pedagogical approach. I see it in their writing for course blogs and assignments, and also in the productive dialogues that occur inside the classroom. In the Introduction to Ethnic Studies course, I had students form a talking circle in which we discussed not only the readings in regards to women in the American Indian Movement, but also had them self-reflect on the culmination of their own class projects and discuss whether or not women were incorporated into their projects, and if so, how.

Linda Tuhiwai Smith describes in her book, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, the effects of colonial and imperial perspectives in research, otherwise known as western research. Smith describes research as, "... a significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other [sic]" (2). This is a struggle that I have been noticing more frequently and why I decided that a decolonial theoretical frame work would assist in actively engaging in research, but it is not enough to simply deconstruct western research methods and privilege the voices of Indigenous knowledge producers; we must explore the margins and examine what is not being heard and what is not being spoken. A dismissal of theoretical approaches and research protocols that are emphasized by Western Institutions is not the argument here. However, Smith enlightens us by saying that decolonization, "... is about centring [sic] our concerns and world views and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes" (39). This allows for students to reflect on their own experiences with empirical methodologies and methods of research, and to think critically about producing knowledge that grafts their absorption of material with their daily lives.

I am confident that my research, professional work experience, and intersectional identity; allows me the capacity to effectively contribute to the first-generation and low-income community through scholarly endeavors in pursuit of a Ph.D. I want future generations and my communities to look to my journey through education as a statement that says they can overcome their obstacles as well. This is what I can bring to the Writing Center, a multifaceted perspective that advocates for people of color, disadvantaged groups, and resources for the students to help pave their own pathway to success.

Thank You.