

Stephanie Biagetti, Ph.D.
Candidate for Associate Dean of Graduate Studies
California State University, Sacramento

Diversity Statement

Diversity in any environment is an asset. Whether the environment is a business environment, an educational environment, or even a natural environment, systems function most effectively when there is a high level of diversity. Furthermore, equity and inclusion depend on diversity at the core. While many may have a narrow definition of diversity, my understanding of diversity comes from both personal and professional experiences with diversity. Diversity that is both apparent and unseen.

Personally, I identify as a heterosexual, cisgender multi-race woman. I am a first generation American - the daughter of an immigrant from Trinidad who experienced generational racism due to her African roots and endured even more racism when she landed in America in the 1950s. I am the wife of an immigrant whose family fled Argentina when political conditions reached a boiling point who experienced differential treatment and harassment due to their status as English learners. I am the mother of a young woman of color of Mexican descent, and I am also the mother of a young woman with a disability. Diversity abounds in our family, and I witness first-hand how equity and inclusion, or the lack thereof, impact our lives. However, I would be remiss if I did not also acknowledge my own privilege. I pass as white. I was raised in a middle class household. I attended a public university that my parents were able to finance. I work as a professor and live in a suburban neighborhood with high-quality schools and low crimes rates. I acknowledge my privilege and recognize that others may not as easily access the opportunities that I have. As such, I honor the various experiences and perspectives others have who come from backgrounds different than mine.

Professionally, I have worked to further diversify leaders in the classroom and the faculty. I strive to amplify unheard voices and construct equitable spaces where all feel invited, included, and safe to participate fully. As a Los Angeles public high school mathematics teacher in the early 1990s, I employed pedagogical practices that today would be termed culturally relevant teaching. I intellectually challenged my students daily and created a classroom culture in which students listened to other student explanations as intently as they listened to mine. I ensured that all students, every day, had the opportunity to talk about their mathematical thinking and learn from one another. My scholarly research has consistently focused on classrooms in public schools with highly diverse student populations, exploring how to increase student learning outcomes through classroom conversations using equitable teaching practices. As the Department Chair for Teaching Credentials, it was vital that our student body reflected the diversity of the Sacramento Region; however, when I began as the Department Chair, our pre-service teachers were mostly white. Over the years, through collaborative efforts, we greatly increased the student diversity within the teacher preparation programs using innovative recruitment strategies and securing large grants that provided a minimum of \$10,000 stipends for underrepresented students. I also utilized the full array faculty recruitment best practices to attract diverse candidates by advertising positions in publications that underrepresented educators subscribed to and using professional list serves and other personal connections to increase the faculty application pool, especially potential underrepresented faculty. As a result, I was able to hire three highly diverse faculty of color. Currently as the Director of Graduate Studies and Special Assistant to the Dean, I manage the wrap-around graduate student support activities designed to enhance student retention and shorten the time to graduation. While the activities are open for all graduate students,

we design the activities based on best practices for supporting underrepresented graduate students. So why have I devoted my time and energy to these endeavors?

All along the educational pipeline, not only is it important to build and retain a diverse student population, but it is also vital that students experience leaders, mentors, and instructors who mirror their own diversity. The diversity can be reflected in race, ethnicity, disability, sexuality, gender, and perspective among others. Diversity is key to understanding others, creating an ethic of care, implementing equitable practices and policies, and developing a sense of inclusivity and belonging. I have spent my professional career working diligently to understand and act upon issues of diversity. I intend to continue learning about and advocating for equity and inclusion at Sacramento State in any position that I hold.