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 **Diversity Statement**

As a first-generation American, I come from a family that started as a poor family that spoke no English and did not know the culture. After putting all of their efforts into each generation I am proud to be a doctoral student earning a degree in Educational Technology. I have been a teacher for over a decade and I believe that education can lead to a better life.

When I started my teaching career in El Paso, Texas, most of my students were Hispanic. Some were born in the United States, some were legal immigrants from Mexico and some traveled across the border each day over the bridges taking several hours each way. The students I taught were excited about being in my class because it meant that they were in a safe place, learning skills they would use in the future. Of my students, there were those that spent each day avoiding the drug gangs of Ciudad Juarez in the pursuit of education. Regardless of where they came from, it was my responsibility to provide an education to the best of my ability.

While the city of El Paso is a city with a small-town feel it still had its drawbacks. As a Caucasian man, I was a minority in the predominantly Latino culture. Over the years I was denied jobs based on my skin color on more than one occasion. Regardless of the setbacks and the feeling of not being given a fair chance I still was able to find a job as an educator. I met my future wife who is of Latin descent in this city and earned my master’s of education.

In my years of teaching in Aurora, Colorado I worked as a teacher for one of the state’s most diverse and impoverished schools. Students came from a wide range of countries, religions, and ethnicities from all points around the world. The challenges they faced showed me how important it is to treat every person with dignity and respect. It is crucial to embrace the diverse backgrounds as well as the common ground that we all share. In my classroom, students could show their uniqueness while embracing their new culture.

At all levels of my teaching career, I have experienced a wide range of people from different walks of life. It has been the difference that I enjoy as it brings a great connection to the very humanity, we all share. My students have taught me a great deal and in return, I have been given the opportunity to teach kindergartners to seniors in college. I have molded young minds with creativity and understanding. But as a person, they have helped shape my perspective of the world around me with diverse views and cultural connections. These years have shown me that we all have our biases or misunderstandings. By far the most important thing is not to judge someone on their worst day but to remember we all have flaws. Knowing that it is possible to learn from all of life’s experiences is what really makes us who we are.

I acknowledge my own inability to fully embrace all cultures. Not every person bears responsibility for their race, gender, religion, or sexuality. Therefore, it is not fair to assume that one person must be the embodiment of all that is good or bad. I see that there are flaws in all of us. It is the actions we take toward each other that show our true character. It is those who are our friends, family, and those we teach that represent who we are. It is how I present myself in the lowest parts of my life that dictate who I will be in the best of times. As an educator, I consistently try to see my students as individuals who have been given the chance to learn in my classroom. It is because of this that I take responsibility so seriously. It is ultimately my job to make my students feel that they are heard and that I am here to share the wonder of learning with them.