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Diversity statement

Let me explain my own point of view regarding the importance of diversity.

Diversity: Philosophy. I grew up in a small town in the middle of Germany. It was a time where there were not too many people from different cultural backgrounds in Germany in general, and in smaller town in particular.

I did not spend my entire youth in that comforting home: I moved into a bigger city for (the German analog of) college, where I met a wide range of people from different backgrounds. This new experience really impressed me and I found several good friends from various ethnic backgrounds. Together we learned a lot and part of the reason I loved going to college was the exchange of ideas with my friends from various cultures and countries.

Because I had little experience with cultures outside of my own while I was young, and because of my positive experience in college, I seek opportunities to learn from and with others with different perspectives on a variety of topics.

Nowadays I am strongly in favor of a diverse community that samples broadly from the general population. From a selfish perspective, it lets me learn from a variety of different, strange, and interesting people. From a larger perspective, it creates a robust community.

Diversity through research. Mathematics was a “single-man-game” for a big part of its history. However, this changed drastically in the last decades. Nowadays, we emphasize the importance of teamwork for projects. Teams are much more effective in modern mathematics given a problem that they work together to solve. For example, the number of useful ideas generated is bigger than for single mathematicians; novelty level of ideas is also significantly bigger.

In general, but in mathematics in particular, having teams with varying cultural, sexual, ethical etc. backgrounds even improves the outcome of teamwork. So, even seen from a selfish point of view, seeking diversity for research is a valuable goal.

Diversity through teaching. Many courses in mathematics have strong problem-solving components, and students are encouraged to work together. This provides an opportunity for introducing issues of diversity. Partially because of my own experience, I seek a learning environment where diverse perspectives are recognized, respected, and seen as a source of strength, and where teamwork is seen as a valuable goal for itself. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by teaching classes, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit.



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