

## **Diversity Statement for Anthony J. DeMattee**

Understanding and accommodating diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice has been crucial to my development as an educator. But providing inclusive spaces is not enough, which is why I aim to set a positive example for students so that they can champion equity and justice across campus and in their communities and workplaces. I am aware of the many faces of diversity and understand that respecting differences in gender identity, religion, nationality, mental and physical ability, socioeconomic status, and other attributes is increasingly important. I am an ally to each of these groups.

Diversity is a term used to mean different things. *Diversity* itself means students, staff, and instructors add to the colorful variety of people, identities, and experiences that comprise the college campus. While some people are quick to share their diversity, others may be more reserved. This variation leads me to establish and support *inclusive* classrooms and other academic spaces. I invite and welcome individuals who have valid, open-minded, civil, and non-dominant ideas and identities. If attitudes of bias and inequity encroach, I rush to defend groups whose *equity* might feel threatened. Then, outside of the classroom, I counsel individuals who harbor deleterious beliefs, seeking advice from professionals as necessary. *Justice* is the ongoing concern to challenge and change the institutions that reinforce the dominance of bigotry or protract unfair exclusivity. The most enriching educational environment is one where diversity, inclusion, equity, and justice receive equal attention.

I am a white male man. I am hetero, and I am a social-justice Catholic. These factors mean I have lived most of my life from a position of privilege. But I am also a first-generation college student from a family of plumbers who accepted hefty loans to pay for my education. As an undergrad, I felt the embarrassment of economic inequality. In my sophomore year, my parents lost their home, and we fell behind on tuition payments. Days later, an instructor called me forward before the start of her class to tell me that I had to leave because unpaid tuition bills had made me a liability to the university. The shame struck me so hard that the only coping mechanism produced by my teenage brain was the sarcastic quip thanking the professor for the "get out of jail free card." I was forced to move out of my college dorm that day, and that night I was homeless and one-thousand miles from my nearest relative. The situation lasted for several nights before my university permitted me to reenter my dorm. That act of charity showed me the priceless role institutions of higher education have in our society. A decade later I experienced racism while working in Haiti as an NGO consultant, and more recently conducting dissertation fieldwork in Kenya. I can vividly remember several occasions when violent glares from groups of men communicated a united hatred of me without knowing anything about me except for the color of my skin. I fully recognize my experiences are a mere sample compared to what people of color, immigrants, First Nations people, and underrepresented groups experience on a daily basis. My familiarity with these matters is limited to the above experiences and supporting friends who were victims of racism, bigotry, harassment, and rape. My experiences were short-lived, but my friends' were not. Some still struggle with their experiences years later. These direct and indirect experiences allow me the opportunity to understand the difficulties that accompany structural inequality, toxic masculinity, sexual assaults, and hate. These experiences motivate me to be an ally and an agent for change.

My commitment to diversity and inclusivity is at the core of my teaching. Developing these pedagogical skills has not been easy, and I recognize I require further development in this area. Earnest diversity training is outside the pedagogical requirements at Indiana University and my professional associations, and I suspect they are not outliers. I thank universities for their leadership on this matter and hope to join their efforts as a faculty member and ally. As your colleague, I will strive to build safe spaces that welcome, protect, and support students and coworkers. And as an individual, I will advocate for institutional change here, now, and in the future.