

Diversity Statement

Brandon Marshall

As a result of my biological parents having separated when I was younger, I've spent years navigating often strained family relationships, having to figure out how to balance visitation in a way that ensured everyone felt loved and appreciated while giving me the time to pursue my own life. This has helped me to develop empathy for individuals with troubled or unstable family situations as well as a respect and understanding for those who have a strong sense of familial duty, especially among first generation academics like myself.

I have also had many first-hand experiences dealing with the impact mental health problems can have on a person's education. Personally, I have ADHD and Asperger's Syndrome, alongside a history of generalized anxiety. Learning the skills needed to succeed in academia in a way that works for my atypical perspective has been and still is at times a challenging task, but one that I have been able to meet. Furthermore, my undergraduate university, Austin Peay, was located near a military base, resulting in a student population with a large number of current and former military. As a tutor I was given training on interacting with students struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder. This combination of experiences means I'm particularly keen to the importance of maintaining good mental health in order to succeed in college. I reflect this through providing information about mental health resources and being flexible with assignments so students can focus on their mental-health first.

Furthermore, Austin Peay was the first time in which I was in a school system with a significant minority population. Prior to this I lived in areas that were primarily white, as is often the case as result of de facto segregation in the South. As a student worker in the political science department, however, I worked with faculty members who recognized the important of working to encourage greater diversity in politics. For example, our department was responsible for organizing a Young Women's Leadership symposium, which worked to encourage women to participate and get involved in politics in leadership positions. I hope after working with them I've developed an awareness of the challenges women and minority students, faculty, and staff face. One step I've taken to be more inclusive in this regard is to draw upon the work of women and minority scholars in both the literature I present to students and the literature that informs my work.

Similarly, as an instructor at Stony Brook University, I've had to work with a large number of international students, particularly those from Eastern and Southern Asian countries. In developing courses, I've planned on many students lacking a lot of cultural and historical knowledge. One way I've addressed this is by incorporating political history and development research into my courses, which has the added bonus of helping students who may not have received education on less represented groups be better informed of those histories.

As a faculty member, I will continue to use my experiences to remain aware of and respectful to the many challenges students face. Furthermore, I will continue to highlight the diversity of our field through the inclusion of women and minority scholars in both my teaching and research agendas. Finally, having had the fortune of having several good mentors in my academic career, I am fully aware of the importance of good mentoring for keeping students involved and on track in the academic world.