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DIVERSITY STATEMENT

As a middle-class white female, I acknowledge the privilege I was born into. It is sometimes easy to become desensitized to the advantages I have received. Working at Agnes Scott College, a historically women's college outside of Atlanta, has given me a new mindset. I am educated on diversity and inclusion on a daily basis. Over time I have become more and more sensitive to the disadvantages or challenges many of the students face everyday. It certainly puts things in perspective. I imagine I would grow *professionally* in any job if I worked there for 7+ years, but I am sincerely grateful for the *personal* growth I have obtained from my time at Agnes Scott.

The students of Agnes Scott are remarkable. A large population of the students have a deep understanding on issues of inclusion. We have an extremely diverse student population with a majority of students identifying as a person of color and a relatively high percentage of students that identify as a member of the LGBTQIA community. We are currently ranked as one of the top 5 LGBTQ-friendly educational institutions by The Princeton Review. Our campus is also extremely sensitive in acknowledging neurodiversity. During the 2016-2017 academic year I was fortunate to oversee the Bringing Awareness Involving Neurodiversity (BrAIN) living learning community on campus. When this group of students originally proposed this community in the spring of 2016 I had been working at Agnes Scott for over 5 years and that was the first time I had been introduced to the term neurodiversity. One of the many examples of how I am constantly learning from students.

As a residential college with under 1,000 students our campus often attracts applicants that might feel uncomfortable attending a large college or university. Out of the roughly 50 registered student organizations on campus 10 are related to race or culture, 4 have religious affiliations and 3 focused on LGBTQ students and allies. Several others are gender focused, such as empowering women in STEM fields. Recently our campus has undergone some turmoil with the identification as a historically "women's" college. Our campus is an inclusive community that strives to provide a safe learning environment for all students, including those who challenge gender norms within our society. Over the years I have proudly watched the popular student chant "we love our sisters!" change into "we love our siblings!". It is also a common practice on campus to always introduce yourself and state your preferred pronouns as we could unknowingly make the wrong assumption regarding someone's gender identification.

As an alumna of a women's college and a staff member of a women's college I have a combined 11+ years in a women's institution. I am surrounded by intelligent, strong female students every day, yet I recognize STEM fields are known to have a lack of female representation. This has inspired my participation in national organizations such as the American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Women in Biology (WIB) as I am deeply passionate in promoting gender diversity in the sciences and leadership development in students who do not necessarily fit the traditional role of leadership in our society. I have also been fortunate to turn this personal passion of mine into part of my career. As the Assistant Director of Residential Education I have developed 3 new living learning communities on campus including the STEM House, Global Learning House, and Leadership Development House. I also collaborate with the first-year living and learning community for Generating Excellence in Math and Science (GEMS). These communities have been designed to bring students together based on their passions or desire to learn about an area that historically lacks gender diversity. With the help of the resident assistants, we have designed programming to create opportunities for these students to think deeply and engage in the intellectual and social challenges of their times. We have had various professors over for dinners and discussions, trips to the WIB presentations at neighboring colleges, discussions of our leadership skills and strengths based on the Strengths Finder assessment tool, participated in the AAUW Atlanta chapter meetings, and created mentor relationships between these juniors and seniors with first-years and sophomores on campus. For this pilot year, these communities each have between 7 and 9 students. It has been an amazing experience to get to know these 24 remarkable, intelligent individuals and help them find their academic and professional path.

With more and more job applications requiring a statement of diversity, I know higher education is making strides in the right direction. I have a deep commitment to continue to work toward achieving equity and enhancing diversity in STEM and leadership roles. This will always be an important part of my profession. The previous Vice President of Diversity and Inclusion at Agnes Scott, Dr. Kijua Sanders-McMurthy, coined the expression "Everyone is on a different page in the Book of Life. Some of us are on chapter 10 and others might be on chapter 2. Some of us might be on page one and others might not even know what book we are reading." This phrase is used to explain that not everyone has the same knowledge or understanding on diversity and inclusion. When students and colleagues are less knowledgeable about diversity it doesn't make them bad people. We are all on this journey together and we must have these discussions to move forward with inclusion in our society.