

# Diversity Statement

**James R. Wilcox**

I sometimes forget the sheer magnitude of the number of lives I have impacted, even though I only have a few years of teaching experience. Students bring a diverse set of backgrounds, skills, and needs into the classroom, and their interactions with my courses are filtered through their learned experiences. In my classroom and in my mentoring relationships, I strive to create a welcoming environment in which everyone is valued for who they are. Such an environment cannot exist without conscious effort to mitigate implicit and explicit biases in myself, nor without an accurate analysis of the power structures that students and I must navigate. For my own part, I believe that I must start by acknowledging my own position of privilege as a white man in a field traditionally dominated by white men. It falls on me to help dismantle effects, both subtle and overt, that maintain this unacceptable status quo.

In my classroom, I try to create policies and materials that meet students where they are, and help them get to where they want to go. When I was a grad student, I sang in the University of Washington music department's chamber choir, and one thing I learned from the choral conducting professor there about how to rehearse a choir is that every singer might need something different to achieve the group sound. There isn't one piece of feedback you can give to the whole choir and get the desired result. My experience is that this carries over to teaching. For example, in many of the 300-level classes I teach, students can take the class immediately after CS2, or as late as their last quarter on campus. This incredibly broad set of backgrounds means that an assignment that one student finds easy, another student will find unbearably difficult. To mitigate this fundamental challenge, I try to design adaptive pedagogies, where students can succeed on their own terms, as I elaborate on in my teaching statement.

I also take these issues seriously beyond my own classroom, at the department, school, and university levels. During my experience as a graduate student at the University of Washington, I witnessed a handful of situations where explicitly biased positions, especially around the topic of the role of women in technology, were advocated for by certain faculty members. I was among a group of graduate and undergraduate students who used our union-bargained contract to file a workplace grievance with university labor relations, which described how these discussions created a hostile working environment. This grievance was successfully resolved with management, who agreed to meet with an advisory committee made up of graduate students to improve official email communication protocols, among other topics. Since then, the school has successfully implemented a new email and Slack policy that codifies pre-existing norms about what kinds of discussions are appropriate to have on mandatory work mailing lists. I was pleased with the way that management cooperated with students to resolve the grievance, and I look forward to continuing to make progress on creating a welcoming culture.

One of the primary features I am looking for in my search for a permanent teaching position is a university with a commitment to fight for equitable outcomes. By meeting students where they are, continually learning about my own biases, and analyzing power structures for their unintended systemic effects, I believe I can make valuable contributions in such a fight.