Feather Diversity Statement

My academic training in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, my teaching experience in three foreign languages, and my extensive fieldwork and volunteer endeavors across North Africa and former Soviet states respectively have sensitized me to diversity. This sensitivity defines who I am as a person, scholar, researcher, and advocate. I strategically tailor my syllabi, teaching style, and mentoring to fit diverse student needs -- in a way that gives voice to the marginalized and levels the playing field for disadvantaged populations.

First, the academic training I received in my minor and graduate certificate in Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies allows me to understand and interpret discrimination in the world as stemming from asymmetrical power structures. This discrimination is compounded by the *intersection* of historically marginalizing factors, including gender, class, race, culture, sexual orientation, age, and marital status. Instead, I couple my understanding of the marginalizing effects of these intersections of discrimination to integrate and incorporate every student and his/her/their unique contributions into the class dynamic. I don't essentialize my students into generalizable categories, but instead, get to know each student as an individual. From there, I make accommodations where needed by practicing *deliberate inclusivity* to embrace all students unique experiences and perspectives.

Second, my twelve-years of teaching experience in Arabic, Russian, and French language classes and area studies seminars at several universities and colleges gave me a unique opportunity to work with a multicultural, multi-age amalgam of students with varied needs and expectations: *first*, the students often started the class with a wide range of skills and linguistic aptitudes. For example, some students may be second-generation English-speakers and may actually speak the *foreign* language at home as their first language but have no formal training in how to read and write in that language; whereas other students may be highly proficient English native-speakers, but beginners in this second foreign language. My objective was to adapt the courses to the specific needs of each student, while ensuring students acquired the necessary background from my class to move forward into more advanced coursework on the subject. I accomplished this objective by building off of their individual strengths and fostering a team-learning dynamic, where students use their strengths to help one another overcome any weaknesses. *Second*, I also believe in applied learning and service learning and cultivate ways for students to activate what they learn through real-life experiences as they also invest in their community. I achieve this goal in several ways:

- Inside the classroom, I create applied learning exercises, where students get "hands-on" training in the skills they need across various disciplines: leading a class discussion to simulate teaching or writing a literature or book review that conforms to the criteria of a reputable journal in their field, so they can potentially submit their work for publication. In the process, I pair and intermingle students to ensure all students are incorporated into the class dynamic. I foster collaboration among students through small group work, peer review, and joint projects.

- As a part of each class, I include a service learning component to encourage my students to merge their academic and real-life experiences. For example, if we're

studying human security in a human rights course, students may volunteer at a local charity that works with refugees or if we're studying food security, students may volunteer at a local food pantry. These encounters sensitize students to the human realities behind their academic work, while giving them the opportunity to provide valuable assistance to those in need within their local community.

- Outside the classroom my job as an educator does not end as I believe strongly in breaking down stereotypes and applied learning. To this end, I organized and lead two study abroad trips for my Russian students to Moscow State University and helped my Arabic students identify and apply to study abroad programs in Morocco, Tunisia, and Jordan. These immersion opportunities allowed students the chance to overcome cultural and religious barriers and dispel stereotypes at the micro-level through first-hand knowledge.

Third, my fieldwork with women's associations in Morocco and Tunisia demonstrates that competing ideological discourses *actually inform and are informed by each other*. I apply this same logic in the classroom by helping students realize that their collective abilities are greater than the sum of their constituent parts, i.e. synergy. I use examples from my fieldwork in North Africa to demonstrate how women's associations, though ideologically distinct and at times competing, collaborate on issues that impact women most, such as violence against women (VAW). This cooperation and collaboration occurs in civil society as well as parliaments as women (and men) put aside ideological differences to amend discriminatory legal codes and address the underlying causes of VAW. In addition, I have extensive volunteer experiences abroad. I taught computers in a high school on Salvador Island in the Bahamas as an undergraduate, lead student trips to study at Moscow State University two summers, and acted as a Russian translator for church groups to Magadan, Russia and Lugansk, Ukraine following the breakup of the Soviet Union. During each of these encounters, I was able to help others break down stereotypes while engaging in cross-cultural learning, fostered by a spirit of mutual respect and understanding. *Fourth*, I am an innovative *glocal* networker and collaborator, adding a global collaborative project to each course to enable students to reach beyond their own comfort zone, cross borders, and get to know the "other" first hand, possibly launching friendships and collaboration that can last a lifetime.

The academic training, teaching opportunities, and fieldwork and volunteer experiences abroad have given me valuable frameworks in which to promote and support diversity and inclusion in my classes. In addition, my background provides me with real-life examples of cooperation and collaboration as well as the ability and network to help students to start building their own professional networks. Above all, these experiences have made me painfully aware of the marginalization and alienation people may experience due to their social identity, and to ensure through *deliberate inclusivity* practices that students will experience only full inclusion, acceptance, and support in my classroom.