

## Diversity and inclusion statement – [REDACTED]

To me, inclusion means a commitment to accountability and to working for critical solutions to the sexism, racism, and a myriad of other obstacles that hobble those members of our community from historically marginalized groups. I believe that when we fully take on the responsibility to create and improve infrastructure to support an inclusive scientific community, the ultimate outcome will not only better meet the educational needs of students, but build a more creative and cohesive scientific enterprise for all.

When I began my career in scientific research as an undergraduate, I often wondered why I didn't see science or engineering faculty who were "like me" – where were the [REDACTED] faculty, the [REDACTED] faculty, the faculty from [REDACTED]. I worried, would whatever had kept them from the faculty ranks (or driven them away) happen to me too? Having progressed in my training from an undergraduate, to graduate student, to postdoctoral fellow, I have now lived many of the challenges that systematically drive our most diverse trainees away from science. I aim to raise the visibility of scientists "like me" who integrate our scientific and cultural identities, and through that effort empower people of all kinds to see themselves as potential scientific leaders. I've had the opportunity to participate in multiple service learning opportunities that aim to recruit, retain and nurture the career development of people from groups currently underrepresented in the sciences (see CV); I will highlight a few here.

### Past Activities

As a PhD candidate I joined a formalized system of peer mentoring (Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate), targeted to underrepresented minorities (URM) pursuing a PhD in the life sciences. I met weekly with two students throughout the first year of their graduate studies, with the goals of helping them acclimate to the campus and cultivate graduate school 'survival skills'. For example, we would discuss how to critically read journal articles, how to find housing that is welcoming to URM students, and how to engender balance between their scientific interests and those of their advisor(s). Moreover, our mentoring sessions provided the students with dedicated time to discuss their concerns and vision for the future. Both of my mentees were [REDACTED], and hearing about their life journeys and future goals taught me about the similarity of challenges and opportunities facing many URM scientists in graduate training. Both of my former mentees are currently working scientists in industry and government. Like my mentees, I am the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and experienced considerably anxiety as to whether I could reach my goals in the face of systemic inequities. Supporting these students as they brought their whole selves to their work and conquered their fears gave me the confidence to see myself as a leader capable of advising trainees from groups underrepresented in science, and has sharpened my desire to continue to do so as a member of your faculty. Written feedback from my mentees was an important part of the peer mentor program, and I have incorporated what I learned from them into my ongoing interactions with students.

As a postdoctoral fellow, I've sought to bolster my collaborative and leadership skills through engaging with undergraduates in research. I am passionate about creating a positive, inspiring, and safe intellectual environment wherein students can practice their scientific thinking skills without judgment. I began on the career path towards academic science because I was trained in just such an environment, and I hope that by paying forward the experience I can foster a love of science in future generations. My longest mentor-mentee relationship over the past five years has been with a talented [REDACTED] who went on to become a [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] lab after graduation, and this year entered a prestigious [REDACTED] graduate program. Witnessing the growth in her curiosity and critical thinking ability has been extremely rewarding, and our scientific discussions have pushed me to think about the field from novel perspectives, which infused the two publications that we have co-authored. While my trainee, she presented our collaborative research as posters at three successive annual meetings of the American Society for Cell Biology; she also won several undergraduate research awards within the UC [REDACTED] community. Based on this experience and others, I am confident that I will be able to recruit and retain trainees from marginalized and underrepresented groups, and advocate for them in service of their ideal career(s).

Over the past several years I have also interacted with [REDACTED] URM undergraduate and graduate researchers via the Annual Biomedical Research Conference for Minority Students (ABRCMS), which is managed by the American Society for Microbiology and supported by the National Institutes of Health. ABRCMS is a dedicated space for the scientific and professional development of over 2,000 students from historically marginalized groups. I have served as a member of the abstract review team for the section of Cell Biology, Genetics, and

Developmental Biology annually since 2015; I have also evaluated applications for ABRCMS travel awards. However the majority of my involvement has been as an in-person presentation judge at the conference. This responsibility included a 5 minute one-on-one interview with each of 20-50 undergraduate poster presenters, who have recently completed a major research project such as participation in an NSF-funded Research Experience for Undergraduates summer program. Through these interactions, I have directly observed that many ways that this upcoming generation of scientists will make academia stronger and these efforts have added depth and agency to my own scientific work. My participation in ABRCMS has led to many informal interactions with students as well, and based on these discussions I believe that attempts to increase student diversity, without a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere, are at odds with retention. My ABRCMS service has improved my skills as a student advocate because I have had the opportunity to listen to their experiences in interacting with others in my field, and identify a consensus of potential barriers to student success. While I have focused here on those underrepresented or historically marginalized in science on the basis of race, I recognize that inclusivity can take many forms, including but not limited to LGBTQ+ orientations, mental health issues, different kinds of learners, culture, age, religion, etc. Creating a truly inclusive community will require diligent work to alter the culture of academic research in support of all of these groups and more.

### Planned Activities

I am particularly excited about this cluster hire at UCB because I think that hiring multiple faculty members with concrete past contributions to the advancement of diversity, inclusion and equity could further the inclusive climate, centering the experiences/needs of students, postdoctoral fellows, staff and faculty from historically marginalized/URM groups. Looking forward, I plan to:

- ...Take an active leadership role in the Inclusive MCB (iMCB) program and support the expansion of the program to other departments. As a faculty sponsor and ally, I would mentor first year graduate students and participate in the iMCB summer workshop series. As I connect with, and learn from, the current iMCB leadership about their vision, I could see myself developing a new additional workshop series focused on “counter-narratives” of success for a diverse student body. The content of the workshop would engage and build on the recent seminal work *Counter-narratives from Women of Color Academics: Bravery, Vulnerability and Resistance*, edited by Dr. Manya Whitaker (Colorado College) and Dr. Eric Grollman (U Richmond). The book contains personal essays, reflections and poems by black women and women of color that detail their “lived experiences” of misogyny, racism and classism in the academy, yet the emphasis is on how they have **navigated and celebrated their identities to achieve professional success and personal well-being**. Reading *Counter-narratives* has transformed my career outlook personally, and I hope to team up with faculty from across the UCB campus (for example, affiliates of the Haas Institute for a Fair and Inclusive Society) to build that optimism with others in the UCB community. Beyond faculty associated with UCB, I hope to include the editors and/or contributors as speakers in the workshop.
- ...Use and **train students to use** inclusive language in the classroom, incorporate discussions of health disparity issues into the courses that I teach, and structure active learning activities to take into account considerations of position, power, and diversity. This could take the form of student projects that center scientific contributions from URM and white women e.g. Lynn Margulis, E.E. Just, etc with discussion of how their gender/race/status impinged on how their scientific contributions were received.
- ...Continue to recruit, advise and retain trainees from underrepresented groups. I plan to apply for funding through programs such as the UC-HBCU Initiative to foster alliances between UCB and historically black colleges and universities for summer research experiences in the molecular life sciences for undergraduates, which could lead to research collaboration with HBCU faculty and graduate program recruitment as well. I will also continue my service with ABRCMS and expand the UCB presence at the conference.

In conclusion, as an educator I look forward to serving a student body that is diverse in a multitude of ways. As a researcher, I will amplify the voices of other marginalized people and normalize dialogues about inclusion in the academy. As a member of the city of Berkeley and UCB communities, I will share my work and love of science with the public and promote access to cutting-edge scholarship. And as a student advisor and mentor, I will ease the isolation that so many experience in academia. I look forward to advancing equity and inclusion for all as a faculty member.