DIVERSITY STATEMENT

BIANCA THOMPSON

As an undergraduate, I worked for the program Upward Bound; a four year program intent on helping at risk high school students become first generation college students. We worked with several high schools in the town of El Paso, Tx and built their confidence in the different subjects. We took them on field trips to different colleges in surrounding states. They opened up to us on how hard their families worked and how much they wanted to repay them in kind by going to college and becoming successful. Upward Bound was an incredible program, and my goal is to start more programs like it; helping just my 35 students is not enough.

Because of the NSF GK-12 fellowship at University of Hawai‘i, as a graduate student I was able to share my research interests with pacific islanders across the islands. I helped organize and secure funding for outreach events in Hawai‘i at Native Hawaiian immersion schools as well as shelters. I designed Hawaiian math activities in partner with Kamehameha High School (a private school for Native Hawaiians) to ensure that we created activities respectful of Hawaiian culture and rich in mathematics. I then taught some of these activities in the classroom and at MATCH (Math Teachers Circle of Hawai‘i). This emphasized to me the importance of creating STEM courses that respect and include indigenous cultures.

As an instructor, I have taught students from many cultural backgrounds and with different levels of preparation: El Paso Community College (predominantly hispanic and non traditional students), University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa (predominantly Asian or Pacific Islander), Smith College (a women's college with more than 30% people of color), Harvey Mudd College (STEM oriented students with the freshman and sophomore classes having around 60% people of color). My lecture style has evolved to include a mix of group work, lecture, and student presentations to better accommodate all the ways my students can learn. I attend workshops such as ally training at Harvey Mudd to improve my teaching and interactions with students. I now begin the semester requesting students tell me their preferred name and pronoun on their first homework. I hope to learn more so I can create a classroom that is more inclusive. People are diverse in many different ways and I want to make sure I show proper respect to them all.

I became a mathematician in part because I wanted to help bridge the gap between gK-12 and college. I want to lower the attrition rate of traditionally underrepresented minorities; it is important that we work together to keep these students from slipping through the cracks and make them feel included on campus. My experiences, attending Harvey Mudd's Office for Institutional Diversity workshops, and being a member of the Society for Advancement of Chicanos and Native Americans in Science and a member of Women in Numbers puts me in an excellent position to mentor underrepresented students and to create this open environment for them.

Date: October 26, 2017.