

## **Diversity Statement**

My travels in the arts have led me to many situations of working with people from many ethnic groups and from many cultures. During a residency at Northlands Creative Glass in Scotland, I resided and worked alongside two other international artists from distinctly different backgrounds. The three of us worked together learning from each other about our cultural backgrounds and skill sets. We learned about the differences in our upbringings and it was the first time that I can really recall of understanding what privilege is. The education I received from working close quarters abroad taught me something that I would have never learned in a classroom. In the end we completed a group exhibition together culminating our time together and made what seemed to be a positive impact on the community. I carry that experience with me to this day.

As a college professor, I work with many different ethnic groups, cultural backgrounds, and personal abilities. I have tailored assignments to entire curriculum based on the changing needs of the classroom. Most recently, my institution developed a collegiate athletics program. This has resulted in two distinct demographics coming together in a short period of time: rural students from the local community and inner-city urban students from major population centers throughout the Midwest. These rural and urban students melding their experiences together in the classroom provides an excellent opportunity to create an atmosphere of learning about common experiences and themes. Unlike many other subjects, art is one that I have recognized that bridges many gaps between equality and inclusion. Art reflects society – both the gracious and gritty parts. I work exceptionally diligently to ensure all my students have an opportunity to succeed and learn equally to contribute in their own way.

Many students from my current region are the first in their generation to earn a college degree, coming from what is Ohio's most impoverished area. The mix of these local students with students throughout the nation and the world presents an excellent opportunity to share important lessons about diversity, as it may be the first time they are exposed to individuals of different cultures. I find that through the technical areas demonstrated and cohort brand of critical engagement, my students not only learn from each other through peer interaction, but also collaborative projects. It is an important part of my teaching and managing style that I demonstrate the ability to not only work well with diverse personalities, but also take a genuine interest in facilitating these conversations.

From examples of multi-cultural significance throughout history, to contemporary works, I believe in providing a broad range of diverse material in the classroom. Part of my teaching philosophy includes encouraging student to include their own heritage and experiences when approaching their assignments. In the classroom, we have many lively discussions surrounding personal experience and the influence on artwork, as this is a cornerstone of artistic expression. Students must learn to engage on the level of putting themselves into others daily existence in order to truly appreciate the artistic process. Diversity is where everyone is invited to be a part of the project. Equity means that everyone gets to contribute to the project. Inclusion means that everyone has the opportunity to participate in the outcome. I will continue to work with my students in a cohort brand of education while at the same time tailoring to individual needs based on my assessment.