

Diversity Statement

“Diversity: The art of thinking independently together.” Malcolm S. Forbes

Colleges bring together people who represent diverse cultures, religions, ethnicity, values, family structures, sexual orientation and disabilities. Working with faculty, staff and students who are in some way different from us creates an opportunity for genuine understanding of human diversity and a rich exchange of ideas that can enhance the quality of our lives.

**“When you are surrounded by sameness, you get only variations on the same.”
Kevin Sullivan, VP of Human Resources at Apple Computers**

I spent the majority of my early career in the School of International Relations at the University of Southern California. As the technical/computer consultant, I worked closely with faculty, staff and students of all races, religions and cultures to enable them to succeed with technology. From 1986 to 1999, I taught them how to use emerging technologies--PCs, voice mail, email, the Internet, websites, interactive multimedia, and hybrid online/on-ground courses. In all that time, I taught a very diverse population of people with different learning styles and cultural views. Yet, I saw only two basic types of people—those who were afraid of technology and those who embraced it enthusiastically. What I gained from them is a greater understanding of how to teach technology—or writing--to anyone.

“If we cannot end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.” John F. Kennedy

The advent of online education and its explosive growth in the educational marketplace enables more people worldwide to pursue higher education. What makes online education a safe place for diversity is its anonymity. As an online college instructor, I have had students of all cultures, religions, ethnicity, values, sexual orientation and disabilities. However, the online environment, in some respects, levels the playing field. Since communication is, for the most part, textual, students are judged by their achievements in the class, not by how they look or what they believe. In my welcome message to my classes, I have the following paragraph:

Everyone in this new learning community has value. Everyone has the right to express valid opinions and beliefs on the class discussion boards and in class chats—even if you or I disagree with them. This community can only be a safe learning environment if we all treat each other as we want to be treated--with respect, courtesy, and thoughtful consideration. Even if you feel very strongly about your opinion, please realize that we all have our own, diverse ways of viewing the world. An important part of learning is being willing to discuss many differing points of view, to analyze them critically and to come to knowledgeable conclusions about them. We can agree to disagree, and we can learn to respect others for their point of view even if it is different than our own. Since we all have varying levels of experience and expertise using computers, the Internet, email and college online environments, please be courteous and patient with each other.

In the job of educating others, the goal is to find the best way possible to enable learning. Diversity adds variety and richness to the learning process.