



## **DIVERSITY STATEMENTS**

### ***Frequently Asked Questions***

#### ***What is a diversity statement?***

A diversity statement is an essay that highlights some aspect(s) of your diverse background and/or experience(s) and the impact that it's had on your life. This document is often required as part of an application for a diversity-related scholarship or job opportunity.

Students often ask whether their background and/or experiences are a match for a diversity-related position. The answer may vary based upon how the employer defines diversity. Be sure to read the employer's prompt carefully for any guidance.

#### ***Is there a right way to write a diversity statement?***

Yes and no. There is no one correct way to write a diversity statement. Students, who understand their own experiences best, should feel empowered to craft a diversity statement in the way that best conveys their experiences and/or point of view.

However it's structured or written, though, a diversity statement should—as it says above—clearly highlight some aspect(s) of your diverse experience and the impact that it's had on your life. Generally, you will be showing the reader how your diverse experience has had a positive impact on your life and/or outlook. You might also explain how your diversity will be an asset to the organization. Thus, the overall tone of the statement should be positive.

It is also important to remember that you should only write about what you're comfortable discussing in an interview. Just because an anecdote might strengthen the essay doesn't mean you have to share it. Or, you can think about alternative ways to convey the same overall thought.

In trying to determine what to include in a diversity statement, it can be helpful to think about the overall message or theme that you want to communicate and work backwards from there. For example, if you want to discuss how your diverse experience(s) has changed your perspective on work, decide on that and then think about specific situations that illustrate the impact on your work.

Finally, follow any instructions in the employer's prompt. Respond to the specific question(s), if any, posed. Also, adhere to any length requirements. If the employer doesn't specify a word or page limit, an optimal length is 500 words or fewer.



***Are there any additional resources students can use when creating a diversity statement?***

Yes. Based upon a review of successful diversity statements written by current/former GW Law students, the Career Center has created a template with additional guidance and elements of compelling diversity statements.

The template provides examples of how an excerpt from a particular section might read. Please do not use any portion of the examples in your statement. Using someone else's words is generally not the best way to tell your story and may result in disqualification from the job you're seeking in addition to other possible consequences.

Also, please note that, with one exception, all examples are pulled directly from successful statements written by GW Law students. They are good examples, but are not intended to cover the full spectrum of topics, backgrounds, or experiences that might make for good essays.

You can also refer to this article, [\*Diversity Personal Statements - What Makes for a Compelling Essay?\*](#) for additional guidance.

If you would like further assistance with your diversity statement, you may schedule an appointment with a counselor in the Career Center.



## ***Diversity Statement Template***

### **I. Attention Grabber**

Your first sentence or first few sentences should aim to draw in the reader. The most successful diversity statements often begin with a poignant vignette from the student's experience or a very pointed/insightful observation.

*Examples:*

- I was born in Nigeria. But, in 1998, with one suitcase and \$100 to our name, my family immigrated to America in search of a better life.
- As the second of three sons born to Ethiopian immigrants, I was raised between children and cultures.

### **II. Put Yourself and Your Diversity in Context**

Now that you have the reader's attention, take the rest of the paragraph or the next couple paragraphs to let the reader get to know you. Tell them about how your experience was different. Were you one of the only people of color in your high school or college? Did you grow up in a very different socioeconomic environment than many of your law school classmates? Were you the only person of your gender at your last job?

As much as possible, show rather than tell the reader about your experience

*For example:*

- Everything was done secretly; no one could know we were leaving. It took us four buses, two trains, and a ride inside a liquid transport barrel to reach the north coast of Cuba. We then boarded a small wooden raft to reach less shallow waters where a boat waited to take us to the United States.

*As opposed to:*

- Words can't describe how difficult it was to leave your home in secret.

### **III. Explain How Your Diversity Affected You, Presented Challenges, or Made You Feel Different**

Now, take a paragraph or two to explain how your diversity presented challenges for you or made you feel different. The challenges or feelings don't need to be distinctly positive or negative. They should simply convey why your diversity matters to you.

*Example:*

- Often, I was the only black student in classes in my suburban middle and high schools. While my white classmates saw me as Black, the few African-American students saw me as an African, and hence as different. Once again, I found myself in the middle.

### **IV. Impact of Diversity**

This is where you tell the reader what impact your experiences related to diversity have had on you. Do they motivate you to work harder? Do they drive you to always understand and respect the perspective of others? How has your diversity affected who you are and how you approach life?

The diversity statement should always reflect your authentic experience. Please keep in mind, though, that the diversity statement is still a marketing tool and writing sample in that employers are using it, along with your other materials, to assess your candidacy for a position. Framing your statement in a positive way will likely help show the employer that you would make a great hire.

*Example:*

- Moreover, that experience shaped me into the individual that I am now and also informed the way that I approach all my endeavors. Today, I make a point of educating myself about different cultural traditions, and I endeavor to treat others as they want to be treated. I think the best way to promote diversity is by embracing it and working to build an understanding. I try to get to know my colleagues and classmates on a personal level, regardless of their culture and background, which has deepened my appreciation of differences and has helped me to promote an inclusive and welcoming work environment in my life.

## **V. Diversity in the Context of Your Career or Future**

After you've explained the effect your diverse experience has had on your life, you should share your thoughts on how it will inform your future choices. Will it make you more resilient in the face of challenges? Will it make you want to devote more of your time and energy to helping others? Will it do something else? If you can find a way to do so, this is also a good place to connect your experience or outlook to your interest in the position that you're seeking.

*Examples:*

- Having lived through such vastly different cultures across the world, I believe that I'm well-positioned to better understand, connect, and resonate with people.
- I am confident that my experiences, diverse background, and education will allow me to succeed, and I would greatly enjoy the opportunity to pay it forward. In the future, I plan to do everything possible to be a mentor and a meaningful resource for diverse students entering the legal profession.

## **VI. Tie Back to Your Application**

This is where you'll quickly tie everything together. Write a sentence (or two or three) about how your diverse experience and/or what you've learned will make you a better fit for the position that you're seeking.

*Example:*

- With the resilience I developed through all my challenges growing up, I feel confident that I'll be able to tackle even the most difficult projects as a diversity fellow with George & Washington LLP.