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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

My commitment to mentorship and diversifying the academy reflects not only my belief that diverse and inclusive teams produce better work, but also from my experiences as a first-generation American, high-school dropout, and first-generation college student. Going through college and graduate schools was difficult. I could tell that faculty and admissions were skeptical as to whether someone with my background could be successful. I am still having to learn how to navigate through a world that is in many ways foreign to me. Nevertheless, I have learned a lot about the challenges involved with navigating this space. I also know it can be done successfully. I have learned a variety of strategies, coping mechanisms, and the value of support and mentorship – that sometimes all it takes is someone to make you believe in yourself. Because of my lived experiences, I have an ability to connect with students and colleagues from a variety of backgrounds, bring diverse people together, show them how they can learn from each other, and accomplish their goals.

My arrival at Rice to begin my PhD was not only an incredible opportunity for me to pursue my academic interests it was also one of the first times I found support and mentorship for all my identities. I knew moving forward I would need to devote my energy and efforts to amplifying the voices of other underrepresented scholars. I set a goal for myself that I would develop institutions to maintain and enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion policies at Rice – and that I would carry that commitment with me to every institution I was a part of thereafter.

During my time at Rice, I founded the Minorities in Social Sciences (MSS) group. As former president and current interim vice-president, I set the mission, tone, and itinerary for MSS group's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. MSS is the first group at Rice University to address the needs and mentorship of underrepresented graduate students of color across the social sciences. It seeks to push the boundaries of science and increase the representation of minorities in academia. It also seeks to provide mentorship to underrepresented and underprivileged high school and community college students, especially those attending low-income and/or predominantly black and brown institutions. First, MSS focuses on developing community within the social sciences by hosting a variety of events for students of color. These activities include mentorship, speaker series, meetings with faculty members of color, and informal group activities like happy hours. Second, to expand this network across the university we co-host events (e.g., NSF grant writing workshop) with STEM oriented groups like the Black Graduate Students Association. And third, we conduct outreach to local community colleges and high schools. A project I am particularly proud of involved developing ties with local community partners Mi Familia Vota (an NGO) and Northside Highschool. Each year, students from Northside are registered to vote by Mi Familia Vota and then brought to Rice on an all-access visit. These high school students are taken around campus by MSS members, participate in Rick Wilson's social science lab, and meet with professors of color to exemplify representation in academia. At the end of their visit students are aware of what it means to be a social scientist, that they too can be one, and that schools like Rice are open to them.

I am committed to continuing to advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion if given the opportunity to join the academic community. I am passionate about advocating for policies that can help the generation of new knowledge thrive. I also have a proven track record for creating institutions that facilitate the comradery and success of underrepresented and previously excluded students and scholars. During the 2021-2022 school year, I will work with the University of Arizona's School of Government and Public Policy, a Hispanic serving institution, as a predoctoral social scientist to complete my dissertation and work with the SGPP's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion committee. I am excited at the prospects of working with a student population that I am uniquely well-suited to engage with and serve as the kind of mentor I could have used even earlier in my own life. At SGPP we are designing activities like the

ones I created at Rice to facilitate the representation, equitable treatment, and inclusion of underrepresented students at the university level.

It is important for me to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded and currently underrepresented populations. I believe that mentoring my own students, while also engaging in outreach initiatives is crucial to this endeavor. I have learned a great deal about how to be successful with limited resources and how to handle setbacks while moving forward. I have also learned how to be a mentor who guides, supports, and empowers her students. My goal is to recreate institutions like MSS and provide the mentorship I received at Rice to my students in the academy. I believe that it is through providing this experience that I can best help my students achieve success as they define it.