

Diversity Statement - Mitch Schneider

Throughout my life, I have sought to promote equity and inclusion both in and out of the classroom, advancing diversity and justice, propelling success for vulnerable populations, and designing leadership and development programs for diverse people and populations in many contexts. It is easy to look at diversity as skin color, gender, or age; however, even within a distinct population, there can be differences in values, cultures, and thought.

I feel that we must recognize diversity on all levels and act accordingly, including providing additional access and resources to the most vulnerable. It is the diversity of thought and perspectives which are paramount to growth, and my unique voice has been an asset, allowing me to represent and bring forth the experiences of those who may not have an effective platform. My personal, civic, and professional goals have been intertwined, led by an 8-year-old child's vision of fairness and equity. This has fueled a journey of developing innovative resources for people who have been historically and institutionally marginalized.

Growing up as a minority, born poor but raised middle class as an adopted son, I have spent a lifetime integrating multiple worlds via ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic status, and cultural diversity. I have dedicated my time cultivating partnerships in the social justice arena, leading nonprofit organizations, creating civic programs, and serving on government councils to ensure fair access to all. A small sample of my activities include-

- Grassroots community organizer for low-income Hispanic areas working to stop gang violence and the sale of drugs to minors while building stronger community alliances.
- Facilitated and grew the Breaking It Down program, which helped people of color raise money for their civic programs by providing access to government and foundation leaders and decision-makers.
- Created community empowerment and leadership programs focused on people of color, focusing on youth, community leaders, and nonprofit board members.
- Served on government commissions to foster greater social justice and funding for ethnic community organizations through the adjudication and block funding programs, respectively.

I have strived to foster social change through environmental assessments, power analysis, strategic planning, fundraising, and partnerships from grassroots advocacy organizations, social services, to business development institutions. As the former executive director of two organizations, including a multi-ethnic chamber of commerce and a small business development center, I nurtured growth and expansion of ethnic small businesses, packaged loans, assisted with minority business enterprise (MBE) applications, and taught entrepreneurship. Afterward, I created multiple high-technology social venture startups focusing on helping reduce the cycle of poverty. One focused on workforce development for low-income individuals, while the other helped low-income people of color stay in school, get better grades, and become more emotionally healthy. I thrive on teaching these concepts and guiding students to a future of social entrepreneurship, transformative leadership, change management, community empowerment, and emotional intelligence/ social-emotional learning, especially through technology.

Social Ventures include:

- A venture to provide Japan's poorest citizens an emergency alert system, accessible on multiple analog and digital systems, whereas previously only the rich had access to advanced technologies (1999).
- Kauzu helped low-income and part-time workers have better access to hyper-local jobs and with a 5-minute application process, which were accessible on flip-phones, smartphones, and computers (2011).
- STRUT Learning makes children both smarter and happier through emotional intelligence technology, making learning easier, faster, and healthier. For schools, it reduces costs, hours, and logistics. The focus is to ensure the most vulnerable are kept in school and afforded a pathway to a more positive life. Our team is 70% people of color and 40% female, near impossible in tech startups. (current).

My experiences traveling, living, and working abroad in over 80 countries, combined with my eclectic upbringing, have increased my potential for success. Witnessing tragedy, devastation, and inequality as a photojournalist in

Kenya, India, and Asia, as well as here in the United States, further inspired me to find innovative solutions to address social justice. Currently, it is through emotional intelligence, technology, research, and education.

My distinct and diverse experiences of addressing diversity and social change from multiple industries allowed me to stand out. My background brought a fresh voice to those around me, as I learned to utilize this voice in community and classroom discussions. I hopefully brought a compassionate, sympathetic, and empathetic perspective to help highlight the needs of different people, from the impoverished, immigrants, and refugees to the well-resourced and educated, and in an authentic manner.

My goal has never been to divide the "pie" but rather to expand it and elevate everyone to a higher level, especially the disenfranchised. With culture always dynamic, I frequently reflect on my moral compass and see how I can best translate my perspectives and initiatives for equity and justice in all areas of my life. It might be as simple as focusing on the casual words I use daily, watching the brands I support, or intentionally creating new opportunities for others. Regardless, I try to use a growth-mindset and try not to let habits, mainstream perspectives, or discomfort stop me from saying or doing what's right.

As a community advocate, I believe poverty is our biggest challenge and that education is the truest path to address multi-generational poverty and empower individuals and communities, especially the disenfranchised. While I acknowledge that external circumstances can be strong and limiting factors to success; nevertheless, high expectations, encouragement, and emotional intelligence can propel student achievement, success, and equity.

I seek to further my involvement through research and instruction. My desire is to create new research, share knowledge with the professional learning community, create new models for instruction, advocate for better technology-related ethical standards, and develop healthy technologies to cultivate truly personalized learning. One of my main areas of research focuses on emotional intelligence and social-emotional learning technologies and their ability to help overcome disparities in the education system, offering multiple benefits-

- To create differentiated social-emotional learning (SEL) frameworks, both academic and non-academic.
- To advocate for ethical standards to reduce learning technologies that lower emotional intelligence or the whole child within education settings.
- To develop best practices in scaling the delivery of EQ and SEL, including assessment and sequencing.
- To understand EQ and personality-related analytics to develop better metrics and predict learning outcomes.
- To optimize the learning processes through research, which can lead to adaptive EQ technologies that enhance engagement and outcomes.
- To create better pedagogical frameworks for the integration of multiple forms of digital media and technologies within learning.

As I seek an academic career, I am excited to share and integrate my diverse experiences and knowledge from grassroots to startups, and most recently, research and academia. I am equally excited to continue my learning in all areas including equity and inclusion. Education is a form of freedom, and it must be inclusive and accessible. I hope that my research and instruction can further these causes.

Sincerely,

Mitch Schneider