

Statement on Diversity and Inclusion — Justin Z. Schroeder

A key facet of my Christian faith is that all people are created equal, have inherent value, and should be respected, whether or not they look, speak, think, or act like me. This attitude is expressed in my classrooms, where I consider providing a safe and hospitable learning environment one of my primary responsibilities as an educator. I make it a point to involve all my students in in-class activities and to provide access for all my students to any out-of-class opportunities. I take the time to ask, both privately and publicly, if students are having any issues in the classroom and if there's any way I can improve their experience.

While I grew up in a small Midwestern town where everyone had similar European roots, leaving home has opened me up to a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds, both inside and outside the United States. I really enjoyed working at George Mason University, an incredibly diverse campus in the culturally-rich DC area. And for the past 7 years, I have been living as an immigrant myself in the small Macedonian city of Gostivar while devoting myself to serving the country's minority Albanian population. Even though I would never claim to fully understand any one student's life experiences, my time overseas has given me a new appreciation for the added challenges and scrutiny that many minorities and immigrants face.

I like to think that mathematics itself is unbiased, and my goal is to make sure that mathematics *education* stays true to this principle. I joyfully affirm Federico Ardila-Mantilla's four axioms from *Todos Cuentan: Cultivating Diversity in Combinatorics*, which are reprinted below:

1. Mathematical talent is distributed equally among different groups, irrespective of geographic, demographic, and economic boundaries.
2. Everyone can have joyful, meaningful, and empowering mathematical experiences.
3. Mathematics is a powerful, malleable tool that can be shaped and used differently by various communities to serve their needs.
4. Every student deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

I place special value on Axiom 4, which serves as the foundation for pursuing the other three axioms. When Jesus said to *love your neighbor as yourself*, he also told a story to illustrate that everyone, near or far, should be considered my neighbor. This means that **every student is worthy of my respect and care**, regardless of their religion, age, gender, race, ethnicity, political party, or favorite football team.