

## Diversity Statement—Dawid Tatarczyk

To demonstrate how I employ my cultural competency in the classroom, I will focus on my experience teaching at Albion College and Western Michigan University as well as my personal and professional background. My teaching style is modeled on the Socratic method since I strive to dialogue with students during the lectures. This entails asking questions and opening the floor up for discussion. I am very aware, however, that it is very easy for some people to dominate the conversation. As a result, I have developed ways to encourage shier students to speak out without pressuring them. If for example, male students dominate the discussion, I intervene by saying: “this is interesting, but I am wondering how female students perceive this issue.”

I did not have to learn to increase my cultural competency because I have experienced first hand how it feels like to be excluded from the dominant culture. Growing up in Poland, I was socialized in an environment that is very different from the American one. Arriving in the US as a teenager to begin my undergraduate education was both exciting and terrifying. Many times, I was unable to express my point of view during class discussions because instructors lacked the ability to facilitate a comfortable educational environment. Today, I am an instructor myself, and my goal has been to make sure that no student feels excluded, in any way, ever.

Two additional experiences make me particularly alert to challenges faced by students from different backgrounds. For the last ten years, I have worked as a swim coach with swimmers from all ages, from kindergartners to adults. This helps me establish good working relationships, especially with older students who can feel out of place surrounded by people much younger than they. Furthermore, I worked for almost two years as a job coach in Pontiac, Michigan. I was helping people find steady employment, and in doing so, I dealt mainly with minority groups and individuals at the margins of our society. In addition to helping people find work, I prepared them to complete the General Education Development test (GED), showed how to obtain essential identification documents, and assisted in applying for federal and state level assistance programs. These additional activities were not included in my job description, but I quickly realized that it is impossible to find employment if one is hungry, without a high school diploma and with no form of identification. Eventually, I was assigned to work the most demanding individuals—recently released felons, including kidnappers, murders, and rapists. My job was not to judge them but help them transition into the workforce, and I did that successfully. I have also helped some felons with applications to attend local community college, so they could discover their talents and develop them.

In the end, cultural competency is not a technique that can be learned, but an acquired set of experiences. Given my unique cultural and professional background, I am well equipped to help students from different backgrounds deal with their problems while making sure that they feel comfortable in my classroom.