

I love living in state and specifically in Southern California, where what we see around us is the very essence of diversity. Beach and border towns are within hours of each other, communities of various nationalities are everywhere, and just as ubiquitous are deep ties to the LGBT communities of Riverside and Palm Desert. The diversity that I see and am part of is easy to understand, accept and explain to others. I had a strong female role model in my mother and loving male figure in my father. My father was a janitor who did not graduate from high school, but later received his GED in his 50's. My mother graduated from high school, in the deep-south. I heard many stories of her segregated grade school and high school years in Solcomb, Alabama. She decided to go back to school in her 40's, and as a child I remember the late nights when my mother was studying and writing term papers. I did not understand why I could always hear the typewriter non-stop when my mother was home, but on just as many nights, she was not home to put us to bed because she was in the library researching and studying, as this was before personal computers and wide use of the internet.' These experiences mirror the 2020 version of circumstances of many students.

As an educator, where I focus my time on ensure inclusivity and equity are in areas I am not as familiar, such as creating universal design materials for disabled students and ensuring my non-native English speaking students are grasping the content material and will apply concepts as well as the native English speaker student. I believe our goal as educators is to understand the reflexivity needed in our roles, and show awareness of the kaleidoscope of backgrounds, experiences and values of our students. Pursuing education is not being the smartest person in the room, but about striving for higher and better, and achieving competence in a subject matter you can speak to with confidence. My objective is for students is to not be experts, but to have a safe environment to learn and begin to practice what they are learning.

At Cal Poly Pomona University, I will actively seek opportunities to engage with students. In my own college experience, I was the first female chair of the National Society of Minorities in Hospitality (www.nsmh.org). I have a passion to mentor students who are in leadership or who pursue leadership or entrepreneurial opportunities, and especially those from under-represented backgrounds. When my mother passed away in 2008, she was buried in Solcomb. As we buried her in the church she grew up in, I admired the community that was still there. My mother's funeral procession was two miles long – the community she grew up in was still there and trying to thrive. Without having the luxury of the resources of big cities, many underserved populations of women, minorities and the under-employed do not have the advocacy to nurture their entrepreneurial spirit. My doctoral studies and research focuses on managerial leadership and I want to build connections with student groups in the College of Business to enhance student passions toward leadership.

I have supported many 'first steps' for friends of all backgrounds striving to achieve more – including helping a friend obtain a GED and assisting another with writing a business plan for a new venture. I look forward to working with students and faculty regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or country of origin to further an learning environment that not only promotes an inclusive workplace, but the philosophy that all students should be given equal opportunity to thrive.