

NSF GRFP Personal Statement: Broader Impacts

Serving as head TA was important to me for a reason outside of gaining teaching experience: it afforded me the opportunity to be a role model for students, a role model that I really could have benefitted from having. I am an openly queer, nonbinary chemist: I present androgynously, and I go by the nickname “Clover” to all my students and professors. This might not seem like a huge deal, and to most, it isn’t, but to those few students I have had who are members of the LGBTQ+ community, I know it matters, because I know how much Dr. Tom Rutledge, the first openly gay chemistry professor I would come to know, mattered to me. He taught me how to be unapologetically, authentically yourself, and inspired me to be open and honest about who I am. However, even though I was able to be a role model for younger students, I found myself struggling to find mentors myself, or even a community among the graduate students at Northwestern. Therefore, I sought out GoSTEM at NU, the graduate student chapter of Out in STEM, an international organization whose mission is to support LGBTQ+ students in STEM fields. To my dismay, the executive board was all but graduated, so I met with the advisor and outgoing president and decided to take on the role of president myself. With the help of a few new board members, I was able to organize a social event during Pride Month this past academic year, where over 40 graduate students across multiple departments came together to learn about the goals of GoSTEM. One initiative I am particularly excited about is the Buddy Program I will enact with the undergraduate chapter of Out in STEM at NU. By pairing undergraduate students with graduate student mentors with whom they identify on a personal level, both groups of people will benefit: the undergraduates will have mentors that can provide guidance and support, and the graduate students will get the opportunity to give back and learn how to be an effective mentor. I will build on the work that the previous executive board of GoSTEM has done and put together a community of LGBTQ+ STEM graduate students at Northwestern that will be able to support one another, both personally and professionally.

NU Grad School: Diversity Statement

At the time I joined the organization, AXE was run by a senior chemistry major named Anna. She was the first female role model I had in the chemistry world. She showed me the ropes, helped me get into a research lab, and inspired me to volunteer at an event called Expanding Your Horizons (EYH). This event is a one-day conference that aims at sparking young girls’ interests in science and math through hands-on activities. I participated in a pH demonstration, using red cabbage juice as a pH indicator. I will never forget the look of wonder on one girl’s face after the purple juice turned blue when mixed with soap. Perhaps what was more satisfying was seeing her understand the science after I had explained why that color change occurred. This experience made me realize I had the potential to positively impact the STEM education that young girls receive, and I hope to participate in similar events at Northwestern University. I would also love to participate in the Women in Science and Engineering Research (WISER) program at Northwestern University, as I believe that building a close community of women in science is an excellent way to encourage support and growth for all involved.