

Diversity Statement

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Promoting diversity and inclusion is integral to my values as a researcher, educator, and community member. My experiences in outreach, mentorship, and collaboration have reinforced my commitment to fostering an equitable and supportive environment in computer science.

During my time at UIUC, I participated in outreach activities that introduced second-graders in a predominantly black community to computer science. Although the children were from relatively lower income households, they were equally curious and smart, and many of them showed great interest in the programming game that I taught. I had no doubt that, given the equal opportunities, some of these students could become great computer scientists. These sessions were a powerful reminder of the importance of early exposure to STEM fields, especially for underrepresented groups. By designing engaging and accessible lessons, I aimed to spark curiosity and confidence in young learners, planting seeds for their future interest in technology and innovation. I believe that this is the most efficient way of increasing equal participation in computer science.

To learn more about the voices and concerns of underrepresented groups in computer science, I attended the MobiCom 2024 N2Women event, which provided a platform to hear and understand the challenges faced by women and other underprivileged groups in the field of computer networking. This experience deepened my awareness of the systemic barriers many face: for example, many minorities are subject to unfair accusations such as “you got this job/admission only because you are a woman/black/hispanic”, etc. , and develop a serious impostor syndrome at their places of work. This unique experience motivated me to take active steps to support diversity in my professional career, such as organizing and participating in more such events in the future.

On a more personal note, I have witnessed my fiancée’s struggle as she navigates through her PhD and job hunting process, as most of the people in power involved in this process – professors, directors, hiring managers, recruiters, interviewers, etc. – are predominantly white males. From time to time she felt treated in an uncomfortable way without the other party noticing anything wrong. This reminds me of the unique challenges the underrepresented people face that are often ignored by the majority, and encourages me to make our research community more welcoming for all.

Throughout my research career, I have collaborated with individuals from underrepresented groups, including women, Latinos and African Americans, in multiple research projects, that resulted in multiple publications and submissions. Despite coming from diverse backgrounds, we have proven to be able to work together to a common goal. These collaborations have been enriching and have underscored the value of diverse perspectives in producing innovative research.

Looking ahead, I am committed to continuing and expanding these efforts as a faculty member. I plan to:

1. **Promote diverse participation** in my research group by actively recruiting and mentoring students from underrepresented backgrounds.
2. **Support inclusive initiatives** by organizing and participating in events that foster a welcoming environment for all, such as workshops, seminars, and mentorship programs.
3. **Develop outreach programs** that introduce young students from marginalized communities to computer science, inspiring them to pursue careers in STEM.
4. **Advocate for diversity** within my department and broader academic community, contributing to policy discussions and initiatives aimed at addressing inequities.

I firmly believe that a diverse and inclusive academic environment not only enriches the learning experience for all but also drives innovation by bringing together varied perspectives and ideas. I am excited to continue contributing to these efforts and to help build a more equitable future for computer science.