

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

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As an African-American woman with engineering degrees from a predominantly white institution in the south, I have been privileged enough to experience and study how integral it is to create a sense of belonging for students through diversity, equity, and inclusion. This statement will discuss how I plan to uphold these principles as a faculty member leading my research group, mentoring students, and in the classroom.

Diversity: Inviting a variety of people to the table.

Diversity to me means encouraging and recruiting researchers from a wide background of experiences in both areas of expertise and identity. Having a diverse pool of Ph.D. students in my lab will allow students to bring a wide range of experiences to solve the tough interdisciplinary problems I set out to answer.

This means going beyond the comfort zone of being approached by students who are already familiar with my research, to going out and recruiting students who have not yet been invited to discuss the breadth research opportunities in Computer Science. Thus far, I have done so by mentoring students who identify as women and underrepresented groups. Beyond being under my research guidance, I have used my privilege as a Ph.D. student to recruit and encourage other undergraduate students of different STEM related fields to pursue graduate research studies. Through the NSF sponsored Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation (NC-LSAMP) Undergraduate Research Conference I have reviewed research posters, explored future research projects, and discussed the opportunities of graduate research with students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities(HBCUs) and Tribal Colleges and Universities(TCUs). I have since started forming collaborations with faculty and researchers that study Hispanic Serving Institutions(HSI) and other Minority Serving Institutions(MSIs).

As a faculty member, I will continue to recruit and tap into students who identify with a broad range of marginalized/minoritized identities in higher education [1] including students who identify as LGBTQ+, gender-nonconforming, international, and those who have proudly served in our military.

Equity: Making sure everyone has a place to sit.

Equity to me means having a fair shot once they get to the table. This can manifest as some students being at a disadvantage due to systematic processes that can disenfranchise their to access to tools and resources paramount for success.

In a research lab, this may look like receiving different types of feedback and guidance from their advisor. For example, this can include an advisor highly encouraging some students to seek funding opportunities and not doing the same to other students who are already funded. The goal in this scenario is to make sure that all students are funded and thus may require a different type of conversation about funding for one student from another. It is important to foster a research group that demonstrates this, and even further normalize that everyone will need different, *not better*, types of support in order to be successful.

As a faculty member, I will be sure to communicate what it means to be equitable to my students and encourage them to explore how that context will be applied in their career.

Inclusion: Providing *everyone* with *everything* they need to stay there.

Inclusion to me means fostering an environment where everyone feels comfortable actively engaging. Students of marginalized groups are often dropped off on the steps of a university and left to figure of how cope with challenges of “being the only one” while trying to succeed in their technical endeavors. However, in order for these students to succeed it is important that they have the support of infrastructure in place. Many organizations struggle with

this by placing the burden of the student to start these communities—forgetting that in order to truly foster an inclusive space for students, these mechanisms and communities should already be in place [2]. As vice president of the Minority Engineering Graduate Student Association(MEGSA), I have been able to foster an importance of cultural engagement and scholarly service—a highlighted guideline to successfully mentor African-American Ph.D. students in Computer Sciences [3].

To best include students, opportunities to actively participate should not be limited to only cultural engagement, but also through scholarly work. For example, as a faculty member I will guide my students to be involved in the scholarly research community by connecting them with collaborators at other institutions, encouraging them to conduct and submit manuscripts about the impacts of their research, and selecting them for opportunities to enhance their technical contributions to our field.

As a faculty member, I hope to continue to be active in research and culturally engaging support services to help students identify that balance to make sure everyone has the resources to succeed.

References

- [1] G. D. Hoffman and T. D. Mitchell, “Making diversity everyones business: A discourse analysis of institutional responses to student activism for equity and inclusion.” *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, vol. 9, no. 3, p. 277, 2016.
- [2] J. F. Jackson, L. J. Charleston, J. E. Gilbert, and C. Seals, “Changing attitudes about computing science at historically black colleges and universities: Benefits of an intervention program designed for undergraduates,” *Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 17, no. 2, pp. 162–173, 2013.
- [3] iAAMCS, “The iaamcs guidelines for successfully mentoring black/african-american computing sciences doctoral students,” 2018, http://diversitycomplete.com/iaamcs/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/iAAMCS_digital.pdf.