Diversity Statement:

As an academic professor, my journey toward championing diversity and inclusion has been deeply influenced by my personal experiences of transitioning from a member of the majority to feeling like an underrepresented individual upon arriving in Canada.

Growing up, I was part of the majority in my home country, where I enjoyed the privilege of familiarity with the language, culture, and societal systems. However, when I immigrated to Canada, I suddenly found myself navigating unfamiliar territory, where few people spoke my language and understanding the workings of the Canadian system was a daunting challenge.

This transition opened my eyes to the experiences of individuals from underrepresented backgrounds who face similar challenges on a daily basis. Suddenly, I found myself grappling with the feeling of being a minority, struggling to communicate effectively and comprehend the nuances of a new culture. It was a humbling experience that made me acutely aware of the barriers that individuals from underrepresented groups often encounter.

As I pursued higher education and embarked on my academic career, I carried these experiences with me, fueling my passion for fostering diversity and inclusion in academia. I realized that true academic excellence can only be achieved when individuals from all backgrounds are given equal opportunities to thrive and contribute their unique perspectives.

In my classrooms and research groups, I strive to create an inclusive environment where every student feels valued and respected, regardless of their background. Drawing upon my own experiences of navigating unfamiliar territory, I work to provide support and guidance to students who may be facing similar challenges.

Furthermore, I am committed to leveraging my position as an academic to advocate for systemic changes that promote diversity and inclusion within educational institutions. Whether through curriculum development, outreach programs, or policy initiatives, I am dedicated to dismantling barriers and creating pathways for individuals from underrepresented groups to succeed in academia.

My journey from being a member of the majority to feeling like an underrepresented individual has shaped my perspective on the importance of diversity and inclusion in academia. It is my belief that by embracing diversity and fostering an inclusive environment, we can unlock the full potential of every student and pave the way for a brighter and more equitable future.

Here is a sample diversity statement for your professorship application:

"As an academic professional in the field of Computer Science, I am deeply committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive learning environment. I believe that diversity in all its forms - including but not limited to race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and disability - enriches the educational experience and drives innovation and creativity.

Throughout my career, I have strived to ensure that all students feel valued and heard, regardless of their backgrounds or experiences. I have worked to incorporate diverse perspectives into my curriculum, and have sought to create a classroom environment that encourages open dialogue and mutual respect.

In my previous role as a Postdoctoral Researcher at Carleton University, I had the opportunity to mentor students from a wide range of backgrounds. This experience reinforced my belief in the importance of diversity in academia, and I am committed to continuing these efforts in my role as a professor.

If given the opportunity to serve as a professor at your institution, I will work tirelessly to promote diversity and inclusion in all aspects of academic life. I am excited about the possibility of contributing to your institution’s commitment to diversity, and I look forward to the opportunity to discuss my qualifications further."

﻿Diversity can be the best possible growing ground for innovation and creativity.

﻿Diversity can be the best possible growing ground for innovation and creativity. However, due to our inherent preference for similarity, interaction in diverse groups does not

come naturally or automatically to us. In order to reap the

benefits from working in diverse groups, we need a minimum of awareness about how to interact with, and get to

know, people who are different from us. This is important

for teachers to know, as well as for students.

﻿create inclusive classrooms where diversity can thrive.

﻿practical tools and exercises with the purpose

to increase the feeling of inclusion in both small and large

groups.

﻿“Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of

backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact” (Shore, 2013).

﻿Diversity refers to a hoard of different

characteristics that helps us sort people into in-groups and

out-groups; what makes me similar or different from other

people? The typical diversity categories that come to mind

are the “in-born”, and mainly visible, ones. For example,

gender, ethnic or cultural background, age, and so on.

These are referred to as the primary dimensions of diversity.

The secondary diversity dimensions are differences that we

acquire throughout our lives, for example, language, family status, education, communication style, political and

religious affiliation, and so on (Shore, 2013).

﻿we inherently and automatically prefer similar

others (Byrne, 1971; Riordan, 2000; Lemyre & Smith, 1985).

We identify with people who resemble us, we are attracted to people who look and sound like us, and, when we

have a choice, we favor similar others.

﻿interacting in diverse classrooms help

student’s cognitive development, intellectual stimulation,

motivation, and satisfaction with their overall university

experience

﻿we should avoid focusing on differences but rather focus on creating inclusive groups where

diversity (uniqueness), as well as the sense of being member

of an in-group (belongingness), can thrive (Brewer, 1991,

Shore et al, 2011). Inclusion promotes learning and creativity. More, inclusion increases engagement and the sense

of engagement increases “performance”. “Inclusive classrooms are classrooms in which instructors and students

work together to create and sustain an environment in

which everyone feels safe, supported, and encouraged to

express her or his views and concerns” (Saunders & Kardia, 2013)

﻿ ﻿main teaching principles to help create inclusion in the classroom: (1) help students to get to know

each other, (2) invite participation, (3) give students sufficient

opportunity to interact with one another, (4) offer variation and

options in order to engage students (Dietz & Wäger, 2012)

﻿As someone who grew up and went to college in post-Soviet Russia, I don’t take the pursuit of

diversity and inclusive environment on a university campus for granted. Being one of only two

women in my undergraduate class of fifty, I was often told that I haven’t earned my grades fairly

or that I was only admitted so that the male students wouldn’t get bored. Moving from Russia

to Europe, and later to the US, felt like stepping into a time machine, fast-forwarding through

several decades of civil rights movements, and suddenly finding myself in a very different world.

This first-hand experience of what difference an inclusive, bias-free environment can make,

gives me a powerful incentive to promote diversity and equity. As an academic, I plan to advance

this agenda through three main types of efforts. Firstly, I am committed to continually educating

myself and my students on diversity-related issues. An example of such an issue is implicit

bias: unconscious stereotypes about various social groups, which can affect our perceptions and

behaviors without us even realizing. When I first took an Implicit Association Test (IAT) [2] for

measuring gender bias, it showed that I associated science and career with men more closely than

with women—an unexpected and disturbing result. The good news, however, is that recognizing

your biases is the most important step towards overcoming them [3]; therefore I believe it’s

important to talk about implicit bias in class and encourage students to take IATs.

Secondly, I will put emphasis on fostering inclusive and fair collaboration, both in my class

and my research group. Several recent articles [5, 6] have drawn attention to the collaboration

problem in STEM: while team projects are a core component of STEM education, for many people

from underrepresented groups (in particular, women) their first encounter with collaboration is

to be treated in stereotypical ways by their peers. A recent study [5] identifies this as one of the

main reasons why women leave engineering. To address the collaboration problem, I plan to

raise awareness of the issue among students, and give them guidance regarding team formation

and work distribution in collaborative projects. More concretely, some effective strategies [4]

that I plan to adopt include assigning teams pseudo-randomly and instructing students to have

specific rotating roles and to document assignment of responsibilities. In addition, I believe that

it’s useful for students to learn about gender differences in problem-solving strategies [1], which

would help them better understand their team members.

Finally, I plan to continue participating in mentoring and outreach programs for underrepresented social groups. In the past, I took part in a Seminar on Women in Computer Science at

Ochanomizu University in Tokyo, where I and several other female computer scientists gave

presentations for Japanese undergraduate women. In my presentation, I tried to debunk various

stereotypes about female scientists and engineers, which could hold these women back from pursuing a career in STEM: for example, that scientists are not feminine, that they are locked in their

labs, and are unlikely to have fulfilling relationships and families. I also participated as a guest

speaker in the MIT’s Women in Technology program, which gathers talented female high-school

students from across the country and provides them with the opportunity to study programming

and electrical engineering at MIT over the summer. Both of these experiences were extremely rewarding and I look forward to participating in a more diverse set of outreach activities as an

educator.

I wish I could just step into a time machine again and end up in a future where every

computer science classroom and research lab is filled proportionally with people of different

genders, races, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and socioeconomic statuses, where everyone feels

that they belong and that nothing hinders them from achieving their full potential. Unfortunately,

there’s no such time machine. It is our responsibility to create this future through commitment

and hard work, and I consider it a privilege to do my part.

﻿As someone who grew up as a member of an underrepresented group in Turkey, I do not take the

pursuit of diversity and inclusion in an academic environment for granted. Overcoming cultural

obstacles and breaking stereotypes is never easy and could be an enduring struggle. Since the

beginning of the first world war, when my grand-grandfather migrated from North Caucasus region

to Ottoman Empire, till today, I and my sisters are the first generations to have the chance to go

to a four-year college. Therefore, I am well aware of the difficulties that lie ahead of members of

minorities. On the other hand, moving from Turkey to the United States for graduate education

was a true transformation as my identity was not the opening statement of any conversation, but

what mattered the most was the work I do. My experience in both worlds has helped me build a

toolkit for fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion both in teaching and research.

In academia, diversity is a reality and a necessity: students, faculty, and staff comprise a broad

mix of individuals from numerous backgrounds, skills, and cultures, while diversity is proven to be

a catalyst for creativity and innovation. I am committed to fostering a culture of inclusion where

every student in my class or research group has full assurance that they are accepted, valued and

offered mutual respect. According to research1, individuals prefer to interact, work, and favor with

similar others which is also the case in academia. Therefore, to promote diversity, I thrive to create

inclusive classroom applying following principles: (1) invite students for participation, (2) offer

options and variations to student engagement, (3) help students to get to know each other, and (4)

help students to get acquainted. In my experience, first two principles are very effective in active

student engagement and boost their interest in class. Third and fourth principles are particularly

effective to break the ice between students between different groups and improve communication

among the students. In my current university, we welcome students from more than 40 different

countries and I actively engage and take part in annual cultural diversity festivals on our campus.

My advisees are composed of African, Asian, Middle-eastern, and European students. Each student

has a different style of learning and doing research; some students require micro-advising, while

others are independent learners. Hence, I continuously develop skills to find the right guidance for

students.

It is no recent news that diversity makes better science and perspectives of diverse groups can

lead to positive outcomes and that diverse group members will bring a multitude of knowledge

and information to the group. One of my best students was raised and lived in war zones in Syria

and his progress in sciences always boosts my belief in diversity. The problems that we face today

are complex and interdisciplinary and requires contribution from diverse tools and abilities. I will

continue to expand these inclusion efforts in the community that I live. I am interested in working

with outreach programs to help K-12 educators from low performing, minority middle schools so

that they can spark the interest of their students in STEM fields in which diversity needs to be

improved.