

Diversity shapes today's ethos and solves problems. When facing tough challenges in any setting, people who can collectively draw on a diverse set of skills, experiences, and viewpoints are more likely to succeed. A classroom or a research lab is no exception. However, the field of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) has historically struggled with diversity. I believe an important part of the job of a faculty member is to promote it wherever possible. As a senior member of the diverse research group I currently belong, I encourage students to discuss class material with each other and to work together on research projects, learning from this process to appreciate and value both their own and each other's distinctive attributes and approaches. In my professional life, I have mentored and collaborated with numerous students of different origins, gender, and cultural background. I have also been advised by mentors originating from Europe, Asia, and the United States. Moreover, it is a common theme among the co-authors of my papers to have diverse origins, religions, traditions, mentalities, and sexual identities. I am, therefore, personally committed to supporting all students and creating an inclusive environment within my research group and collaborations.

As an international student from Greece, a country that was severely affected by the last economic recession, I'm particularly attuned to the struggles faced by international students, especially in financially difficult situations. During my graduate studies, I was a member of the ECE Graduate Student Association Board, at the University of Maryland, the main goal of which is to bring together the diverse pool of students in the ECE Department of the school, and help newly admitted international students to adjust to the new norm. Special attention was given to minorities, people of color, and women, with emphasis on cultural and religion-related differences. My interaction with this diverse community has been eye-opening.

A similarly eye-opening experience was through my interaction with my long-term partner, who, during her graduate studies as a psychotherapist, focused on the phenomena of white privilege and supremacy observed in the leading research groups of her scientific field. For me, a straight white male, talking about privilege and diversity is a choice: with the same ease that I opt-in to such discussions, I could also opt-out, and it would not adversarially affect almost any aspects of my everyday life. For an LGBTQ or an African American fellow, however, it is not a choice; the challenges and obstacles they face being part of an underrepresented minority are real and ever-present. I feel the responsibility, as a faculty member, to acknowledge the background of these groups and promote equity among all students and academics.

Finally, as a person of partial disability myself, I have strong compassion for people with physical disabilities or mental problems, such as workload-related anxiety disorders. When, during the third year of my doctoral studies, I was diagnosed with a severe autoimmune disease located in my large intestine, I suffered long periods of extreme physical and mental fatigue. My advisor was extremely supportive of me, and there is no doubt that I will double down and inherit the same behavior towards my students, as well. Thus, I am looking forward to my role as a faculty member and I am committed to always "opting-in", seeking opportunities to promote diversity and inclusion whenever possible.