

# Personal Diversity Statement

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From the day I was born, it seemed inevitable that I would eventually develop an interest in computer science. My father was a computer scientist, so shortly after my birth, my family bought our first computer. That computer represented the first step in my long, passionate journey into the realm of computer science and technology.

When I was in high school, I was ranked first in Shanxi Province and won the Bronze Medal for the entire nation of China. However, a lot of my male peers downplayed my achievements in the Olympiad in Informatics, implying that the boys on my team were truly responsible for my success. Even my high school advisor also adhered to the stereotypical notion that “computer science is too hard for girls”, and strongly advised me to choose a liberal arts major in university. It wasn’t my last experience with similar attitudes about girls in tech; I was determined to challenge these assumptions.

At Beihang University, which is widely considered to be one of the top four engineering research universities in Beijing, I held true to my ambitions and selected Computer Science and Engineering as my major. After entering the university, I actively participated in the Google Girl Hackathon and Google Code Jam to I/O for Women 2020, and ranked among the top 3% in the world. In addition, I took part in the Ada Workshop@ISSTA2019, the first diversity workshop aimed at strengthening the tech pipeline for women and providing them with advice and networking opportunities that they might not receive otherwise. Thanks to my engagement in these technical communities, I have met many seniors and peers with the same pure passion for technology that I have. It was through these experiences that I realized that I didn’t need to deny my feminine identity to prove that I was in the right field: all I needed to do was express myself freely and positively in the computer industry, and trust that my accomplishments would be recognized on their own merit.

Inspired by this realization, I organized the first all-female ACM girl team in my school, in which I served as a team leader, and won the Best Girls' Team Award at ACM-ICPC. Alongside my love for computer science, I joined my school's mountaineering team and became the first girl to reach the summit of Peak Nochma of Minya Konka (5588m). I am also a staunch believer in affirmative action for women and broadening opportunities for underprivileged women. As a volunteer, I teach basic programming knowledge to teenagers in underdeveloped villages in the Lyuliang Mountains, near my hometown. Through our online platform, I have had the opportunity to share my experience in programming competitions, so that children in poor areas and girls whose aspirations were denied by their teachers can have the courage to pursue their computer science dreams.

During the sudden outbreak of COVID-19, my supervisor invited me to join his project to build a big data visualization platform for COVID-19. In the beginning, my advisor was hesitant to give me a lot of tough work, fearing that it would overwhelm a "weak girl", but with my continuous effort, my flexible grasp of WebGL/GLSL won his full approval. He was surprised and pleased to note that my "feminine qualities" were actively beneficial to the group, especially when communicating with the company we were cooperating with, and he praised my aptitude for dealing with visual color schemes.

The process of transforming knowledge into productivity and contributing to society has made me more aware of the responsibilities and significance of computer science researchers. I profoundly realized that technology has been a great enabler for societies during the pandemic. It has been used to sustain many essential facets of daily life, including education, remote work, and even virtual workshops for reducing inequalities and exclusion. I predict that the post-COVID-19 era will see an increased reliance on technology, and a realization of its importance in our day-to-day lives. Tech will take on a heightened role as a facilitator of human activity, communication, and coordination. I look forward to using emerging technologies to reach more vulnerable and underrepresented groups, and I will utilize my unique experiences as tools for creative problem-solving, drawing upon my diverse perspectives to benefit both the university and society at large.