

Service Statement

I was fortunate to attend high schools and universities where gender representation was nearly equal. However, as I advanced into my Ph.D. and postdoctoral stages, I witnessed the gender ratio become increasingly imbalanced, particularly in leadership roles. As an underrepresented minority (URM), I understand the challenges posed by implicit bias and the profound impact that role models can have on early-career researchers and students. Motivated by this awareness, I view academic and community service as a vital means to foster an inclusive and healthy research environment.

Building and Maintaining a Supportive Community: I believe that inclusion begins with accessible mentorship. To this end, I have held public office hours for more than thirty junior researchers worldwide, including female and first-generation students. I provided individualized guidance on research directions, graduate school applications, and career development. Below are quotes from some participants:

- *“Shuijing’s office hour was insightful and motivating. It helped me clarify my research goals and focus on what truly matters for effective research.”*
- *“Thank you for your thoughtful advice on my research and career planning—it gave me valuable insights to reflect on. I will start my own office hour to support others in the same way!”*

In addition, I mentored a female student from Brazil in the Robotics: Science and Systems (RSS) Pathway Program and served on the Ph.D. admission committee at UT Austin. Through these experiences, I learned that small mentorship efforts can create a lasting ripple effect on a student’s career. In the future, I plan to expand the community by mentoring students from diverse backgrounds, leveraging AI technologies to lower barriers to higher education, and organizing skill-building workshops for underrepresented students.

Changing Perceptions Through Outreach: As a URM in STEM, I am committed to shaping the public’s perception of this field with my own voice by showing that innovation thrives through diversity. At UIUC, I gave live demonstrations of robot navigation and non-Newtonian fluids to K-12 students and their families. As a member of the Society of Women Engineers (SWE), I hosted admitted female high school students on a campus tour. During the tour, I helped them envision their future at UIUC and feel welcome in the community. These experiences reinforced my belief that early exposure and representation play crucial roles in changing perceptions of who belongs in engineering and research. In the future, I plan to continue outreach efforts, such as partnering with local K–12 teachers to design STEM curricula.

Promoting Interdisciplinary Research: As a robotics researcher, I have learned that impactful research emerges when ideas and expertise from different fields intersect. My efforts in this direction include (1) leading cross-department and cross-college collaborations with researchers in applied health science, aerospace engineering, and mechanical engineering, (2) co-organizing Robot Learning Reading Groups at UIUC and UT Austin, where participation beyond the organizers’ labs increased by approximately 24%, and (3) co-organizing the Workshop on Human-AI Co-Evolution at International Conference on Learning Representations (ICLR) 2025 to foster dialogue among researchers from different fields. As a professor, I aim to diversify voices in my department by organizing seminars with speakers from diverse backgrounds, co-advising students to broaden my perspective, and initiating collaborations that connect robotics with other fields such as psychology, design, and education.

Looking ahead, I aim to expand my service to strengthen diverse voices and inclusive communities in robotics and AI. By teaching and mentoring future researchers and engineers, engaging with the public, and championing interdisciplinary collaboration, I hope to cultivate a research community that reflects the diversity of the society that our technologies are meant to serve.