

## **Diversity Statement** - Thaleia Dimitra Doudali - thdoudali@gatech.edu

### **Perspective on diversity.**

Growing up in Greece, a European country of just 11 million residents, let alone in a small town by the sea, I thought diversity was all about whether you're a boy or a girl. I was fortunate to be highly motivated and treated with respect during all the phases of my life, within my family having two elder brothers, at my school, even at a male-dominated engineering university. Since Greece is so small I was never exposed to the full spectrum of diversity and the level of impact it has on a personal and social scale.

It was when I moved to the United States in 2015 that I understood the real meaning and purpose of diversity. Within the first semester of my graduate studies I realised that people from all over the world, with different cultures and habits can be great friends and collaborators. Taking graduate level classes and attending top tier conferences on my research field opened my eyes to the world and the fact that a person can have exceptional mental abilities no matter their ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual preference or way of living. This is the reason why giving equal opportunities to all students irrespective of their background and identity is an indispensable part of education and what I personally strive to ensure during my academic involvement both now and in the future.

### **Actions regarding diversity.**

As a graduate student I have many opportunities to enhance the efforts of my university and community towards building an inclusive environment. First, I feel very strongly about mentoring junior female graduate students, especially in terms of how to find the proper work-life balance and feel successful, as these are personal milestones I found particularly hard to achieve. Additionally, participating in the CRA Women Grad Cohort Workshop early on my PhD journey was a valuable educational and networking experience and I highly recommend female students to engage in such events. Similarly, I support and encourage the involvement in activities organized by the university's various women in engineering clubs.

More broadly than just supporting female students, I work towards enhancing the diversity of my university through the PhD recruiting process, by helping run the visit days and encouraging students to join the program. I especially help international prospective students by sharing my experiences and clearing any worry they may have regarding life in the United States. Finally, I actively strive to maintain the cultural diversity in my university. I do so by connecting the students of Greek heritage with each other and organize events that expose our traditions either independently, by running the 'Hellenic Society at Georgia Tech' organization or as part of university-level events, where each country has a chance to showcase its traditions and unique characteristics.

As I continue my academic path I will vigorously work on building an environment where a diverse set of people feels welcome, maintains its identity and is treated equally.