Diversity Statement   *Manling Li*

I am committed to fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in our community. As a woman researcher in computer science, I have often been considered a minority because of gender bias. I was fortunate to be surrounded by and inspired by female role models in my field, where I learned the importance of having a supportive and encouraging community to achieve success and, in many cases, to survive. I believe that this is not only true for women as the minority group, but it is also true for everyone else. It shapes my desire to promote diversity and strengthen a sense of community.

Build Supportive Communities: I am a member of **Global Women in NLP**, and have attended all activities since the "1st Global Women in NLP" workshop at the EMNLP'21 conference. I have actively participated in several activities that support the underrepresented groups, including the **EE CS Rising Star workshop**, the **Women Empowered in STEM (weSTEM)** at UIUC, and many others. They helped me develop a circle of friends with similar experiences and gave me insights into tackling challenges associated with being a woman in CS. An important aspect of creating an inclusive and supportive community is being an active community member. In the future, I will continue actively serving on social events to support the underrepresented groups. For example, I plan to organize and participate in workshops in top-tier conferences on "Women in NLP/CS/STEM".

Promote Female Leadership: A proud moment of mine was **leading a 19-student team** to develop UIUC Knowledge Extraction System and ranked 1st in DARPA AIDA evaluation in 2019 and 2020. One stereotype is that "women lack the leadership qualities"[1]. I was fortunate to have my advisor as an excellent role model and was proactively training me to be a woman leader. Her dream of "sending a troop of women PIs" has profoundly shaped my views. **I have been obligated to encourage every female student that I mentored to take on leadership roles**, and proudly to be a **vocal role model** for them.

Sustain Diversity Through Mentoring: I have mentored **12 students of diverse backgrounds** in **gender** (5 are female students), **race** (11 are of color), **geographical location** (including US, Singapore, China, India), **seniority** (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior college, master student, first-year PhD), and **specialty** (CS, ECE, Civil Engineering). My commitment to diversity is to provide students from all backgrounds with the tools necessary to succeed, especially when systemic barriers prevent them from accessing them. As an assistant professor, I will continue to be an advocate for students of different backgrounds, creating a welcoming environment for them that touches on all aspects of academia.

Outreach: I have actively exposed young students from underrepresented backgrounds to engineering and inspiring them to pursue engineering careers. I joined **ACM Mentor Program** at UIUC to open doors to freshmen about research, and served as a **CS Ambassador** at UIUC CS Visit Day to help prospective students demystify graduate school careers, and served as an **Advising Assistant** at UIUC PhD Orientation Seminar. I also offered to help the graduate school applications, including revising their application materials, optimizing personal websites, practicing interviews, etc. **All of my advisees have continued on to pursue graduate school or STEM careers, and three of them are currently pursuing Ph.D. degrees.**

---

https://ajges.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40856-017-0013-6

One of them has switched his major from Civil Engineering to Computer Science and plans to pursue a CS Ph.D. degree. It is my firm belief that research should be open to all qualified students regardless of their gender, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status, and I will work vigorously to make this possible as an assistant professor.

Encourage Interdisciplinary Collaborations: As a NLP+CV researcher, through out my career, I worked with people from diverse backgrounds in NLP, CV, Social Science, HCI, Linguistics, and Psychology. My research also greatly benefits from interdisciplinary collaborations with experts in various fields. Such a diverse setting ensures us to progress well as a whole, as we are capable of tackling different challenges from different aspects. As a result, **I ensured a diverse balance of speakers and panelists when leading a tutorial** at AAAI 2023 and I am **actively organizing highly interdisciplinary workshops** such as *Workshop on Knowledge Discovery from Unstructured Data in Financial Services*. In the future, I will actively engage in diversity-focused efforts, and I will support my students and other researchers in similar endeavors.

Ethical and Socially Situated AI Research: Artificial intelligence has the potential to have a significant impact on society. Although I believe that many of these impacts can be positive, I also aim to mitigate many potential harms through my research, including complex societal problems. For instance, people tend to frame different narratives based on their preconceived interests. By revealing the underlying meaning and bias of the text, it can reveal the author's opinions, intentions, and hidden agendas, which can reduce the level of ambiguity in the text. On a longer-term horizon, I see my vision of event-centric knowledge as being an important tool in distinguishing between objective facts and the way the narration manipulates the facts. I aim to contrast natural language descriptions with different author stances in order to uncover partial highlights on event structures, wording, and order of narration, and finally to gain a deeper understanding of propaganda, including the detection of misinformation, bias, and ideology.

As a new faculty member, I will continue to mentor a wide variety of students, and want to develop a diverse and welcoming research group with a healthy mix of graduate and undergraduate students. I plan to actively participate in, create, and lead the diversity and inclusion groups in the new department, continue to be active in women and minority groups. It is my belief that a research community composed of members with diverse backgrounds will be more likely to advance science in a way that will benefit all members of society.