

Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Statement

Abhilash Chandra Singh

I grew up in a well-educated family in a semi-urban city in India. Given my lower-middle-class income background, I had limited options for a scientific education. I prepared for an incredibly competitive education system during my teenage years where entrance exam results determined one's career and future prospects. Enrolling in one of India's premier engineering schools transformed my life. I had to *learn to learn fast* and make social sacrifices to catch up on essential skills. In my pursuit of higher education, I will be the first to earn a doctorate from my native village where the term *PhD* is not part of the lexicon. Although I take pride in my accomplishments, I acknowledge that I was fortunate to overcome the obstacles I encountered. I also recognize how higher education can provide young adults with the means to overcome socio-economic challenges. Scholarships were crucial in allowing me to attend top universities despite financial constraints, and as a result, I have a deep appreciation for the equitable environment created by scholarships. To give back and assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds, I aim to continue scholarship initiatives by promoting awareness, participating in fundraising, and volunteering my time and expertise as a mentor. At IIT Bombay, I launched a campaign that connected alumni with children of war veterans, funding 12 undergraduate students in total. In my senior year, I mentored 12 freshmen, addressing both curricular and extracurricular challenges. I've been an advocate for gender equality and supported initiatives to incorporate more female students into engineering programs. In my master's program in Austin, Texas, I supervised female students in the civil engineering program, some of whom went on to pursue graduate studies at top universities. Finally, in London, I volunteered with the Amos Bursary to mentor Black African and Caribbean students, helping to create a more diverse workforce.

My first exposure to diversity in the classroom came from interacting with students from diverse socio-economic and demographic backgrounds, where my classmates spoke 22 different languages. The inequality among students was exacerbated by limited English proficiency and a lack of exposure to technology. This taught me that even if people attend the same institutions and classrooms, their backgrounds have a significant impact on how they can learn from and leverage the resources around them. As a teacher, I believe that effective mentoring requires more than just expertise in the subject matter; it also requires gauging the skillset of mentees from diverse backgrounds, among other factors. As a Teaching Assistant (TA), I proactively identified students who are struggling with the course content or have no prior programming experience and offer additional office hours and one-on-one support to help them succeed. My experiences during undergraduate and graduate school have equipped me to be an effective and compassionate teacher and supervisor. I strive to create a comfortable and supportive environment for my students. I recognized that some students were struggling due to personal challenges, such as being away from home for the first time. I reach out to these students and directed them to university resources for support, showing them that there are people who care about their well-being. I understand and empathize with the academic and personal challenges faced by students from marginalized communities. To make my lectures more inclusive, I use examples that are relatable to a wider audience. I change pronouns and names to be more diverse and avoid using generic Caucasian names. I believe in creating a global classroom environment and often incorporate topics with global ramifications or use foreign currencies as examples. When discussing a specific country or context, I invite students from that region to share their perspectives and make my instruction more of a discussion. These interactions have led to some of the most inclusive academic discussions, which bring me immense joy and make learning fun for all.

Higher education has instilled in me a deep appreciation for scientific diversity. In addition to taking courses various departments, I have co-authored papers with researchers from Economics, Network Science, City and Regional Planning. This has allowed me to conduct interdisciplinary research, which I hope to continue as a colleague in your department. Working with people from different backgrounds has made me more confident in communicating my research to a diverse audience, a skill that was particularly useful when I taught the Discrete Choice Methods course to a group of professionals at Imperial. As a Lecturer or Assistant Professor at your university, I intend to continue being inclusive in my teaching and research activities. I can relate to the majority experience while also empathizing with the immigrant-minority experience, which has been my experience for the past 7 years. My travels and research experiences have enabled me to respect and appreciate the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity in my surroundings. Given my own experience as an international academic member, I think I would be well-suited to contribute to initiatives aimed at making international students feel at home in your institution.