

Diversity Statement

Yinuo Du

School of Computer Science
Carnegie Mellon University
yinuod@andrew.cmu.edu

Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental to my research and service work. Through my experiences at Carnegie Mellon University's Dynamic Decision Making Lab, I have experienced firsthand the value of diverse perspectives. Working with researchers from different countries, cultures, races, and genders has broadened my thinking horizons and enriched my interdisciplinary research that spans computer science, cognitive science, and psychology.

Throughout my PhD, I've been deeply involved in Women in Cybersecurity (WiCyS). I was fortunate to receive the student scholarship and attend the annual WiCyS conference, where I presented my research work and met women at various stages of their cybersecurity careers. Through the WiCyS mentorship programs, we shared experiences learning CTF and finding internships every Friday night. These interactions with young aspiring female students, answering their questions about pursuing research careers, have been particularly empowering. I have signed up to be a mentor next year to continue providing this support to more women in cybersecurity.

My commitment to expanding access extends to students from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. During my PhD, I served as a mentor in OurCS (for women in computer science) and the Path to AI program. I was paired with an undergraduate student in bioengineering interested in AI. Having always been inspired to explore new fields and having struggled to overcome entry barriers myself, it gives me great fulfillment to help others transition toward their fields of interest.

As an admissions reviewer for Carnegie Mellon's PhD program and Undergraduate Research Experience (REUSE) program, I noticed that talented applicants sometimes received less attention because they weren't aware of certain unpublicized expectations, such as how Statements of Purpose should focus more on research interests rather than personal stories. This observation led me to serve as a reader/mentor for Carnegie Mellon's CS Student-Applicant Support Program for underrepresented students. Through these programs, I've been able to proactively help applicants with writing statements and applying to PhD programs—assistance I was fortunate to receive from informal mentors in my undergrad, which I'm happy to pay forward.

In my department at Carnegie Mellon, I've taken an active role in building community. I've helped organize distinguished speakers seminars and participated in open houses and orientations to share my experience with new PhD students. For two years, I ran social hour, an informal gathering for women and non-binary graduate students. Despite our differences in research interests, I found it greatly helpful to have close friends supporting each other while navigating the PhD journey.

Looking forward, I plan to create a diverse research group by actively recruiting students from underrepresented groups and unconventional backgrounds. I will maintain connections with organizations like Women in Cybersecurity, Women in Data Science, and Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, and participate in workshops on diversity and inclusion. Drawing from my teaching experience, I understand the importance of accommodating different learning styles and backgrounds. I will design my courses with flexible support structures, such as providing step-by-step video demonstrations for students less familiar with technical environments, and creating detailed documentation to ensure accessibility. For international students, I will continue to provide accommodations during cultural and religious observances, as I did at CMU. I am particularly committed to helping students who face various challenges – whether due to their gender identity, language barriers, socioeconomic status, or racial discrimination – find their “individualized curriculum” toward research. Just as I've done in my mentoring, I will help students identify their unique skill sets and translate abstract ideas into concrete, feasible research plans. I believe that diversity brings valuable and unique perspectives to both teaching and research, ultimately leading to more innovative and impactful results. Through these efforts, I aim to strengthen the inclusion of diverse groups in science and society at whichever university I join.