Alex Mariakakis Diversity Statement

While attending a staff meeting at Sage Bionetworks, one of the presenters gave an analogy regarding diversity that has since resonated with me. In her words, "diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is feeling comfortable to dance at the party, and equity is being involved when the party is being organized". Although I had been involved in many efforts that push for diversity, inclusion, and equity in STEM, hearing those definitions has helped me articulate why those efforts are important to me.

I recognize that people like me (an upper-middle class, white American male) are sometimes afforded privileges due to unfair biases that pervade our society. These privileges range from being heard at meetings to enrollment in premier STEM programs. When these privileges are not shared by everyone, they can create an uncomfortable workplace environment. I want to work in a place where everyone feels welcomed, so my personal motivation for promoting diversity is to help create that kind of environment.

To engender diverse classrooms and research labs in computer science where everyone feels represented, I spend time talking with underrepresented populations about computer science. A Google-Gallup report in 2016 highlights that underrepresented populations receive less exposure to computer science than their peers and are thus less likely to pursue such classes. I believe that ubiquitous computing (ubicomp) and human-computer interaction (HCI)—subdomains grounded in relatable applications—provide compelling motivation for people to pursue careers in computer science.

As a graduate student, I regularly introduced K-12 students to ubicomp and HCI by participating at the University of Washington's quarterly Dawg Bytes and Discovery Days (link) outreach programs. Through the CS4HS program (link), I have also led lectures for high school teachers regarding how computer science and technology can be combined with the natural sciences and mathematics to form interesting applications they can present in their classes. I would like to start a similar program at UNIVERSITY NAME for computing.

Another way I have encouraged underrepresented populations is through mentorship. Beyond the wonderful undergraduates I have mentored during my academic career, I have also mentored three talented high school women. Two of those students have received recognition for their work through the National Center for Women & Information Technology (NCWIT)—an organization dedicated to women's participation in computing. Because I admire NCWIT's goals, I have regularly presented our lab's work at their local events and recruited NCWIT awardees to pursue research either with our lab or others. As a professor, I plan on starting my own high school mentorship program and advertising opportunities for women and other underrepresented minorities in local high schools.

Another way I have sought to include people from all background is by helping students get exposure for their work. Many University of Washington students interested in HCI do not get the chance to attend doctoral colloquia at top HCI conferences for reasons ranging from limited availability to financial constraints. Because such events are a great opportunity for students to network with academic and industry leaders, I came up with idea for a local doctoral colloquium without travel or cost called the DUB Doctoral Colloquium (DUB DC, link). My fellow DUB graduate student coordinators and I organized the inaugural colloquium in 2017, and it has been an annual event since. I would be excited to start such a program at UNIVERSITY NAME for graduate students within and across subdomains.

One last effort I would like to highlight is my participation as a mentor in the UbiComp Broadening Participation Workshop (link). The workshop provides an inclusive environment where students from traditionally underrepresented groups can present their work to more experienced members of the ubicomp community. The students taught me about the research problems relevant to them, such as rickshaw driving assistance and environmental sensing. In return, I connected them with mentors from my past industry internships who I felt would be interested in their work.

I have sought to encourage diversity, inclusion, and equity in the workplace throughout my academic career to create a welcoming environment for all, and I look forward to continuing these efforts at UNIVERSITY NAME.

1. Google-Gallup. 2016. *Diversity Gaps in Computer Science: Exploring the Underrepresentation of Girls, Blacks and Hispanics.*