Diversity Statement

Dwayne "Chris" Brown, Jr.
North Carolina State University

As an African-American male, I have been privileged to graduate with multiple Computer Science degrees. In these experiences, I realize the importance of creating a sense of belonging for students through identity, diversity, and equity. As a future faculty member, I will commit to these principles as a future researcher, mentor, and educator in higher education.

Identity

I believe allowing students the ability to exist with their identity is crucial to helping them succeed in their studies. My experiences incorporating identity into computing and higher education include attending national conferences for the National Society of Blacks in Computing (NSBC) and participating in the NC State Minority Engineering Graduate Student Association (MEGSA) and Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA). In my industry experience, I was able to help launch a new Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) community, B.U.I.L.D. (Blacks United In Leadership and Diversity) as a Quality Engineering Intern at Red Hat in 2017. This and other D+I communities at Red Hat show the importance and value of celebrating the identity and culture in the workplace. Additionally, as part of the Teaching and Communication Graduate Certificate program, I enrolled in *Teaching About Identity, Diversity, and Equity* (ECI 509) to motivate using identity and increasing diversity in my teaching approach. Through this course, I was able to gain practical examples of activities and ideas to incorporate student identities into activities, even for CS. For example, highlighting the accomplishments of minority computer scientists. As a future faculty member, I will allow students to freely express themselves in classroom and research settings.

Diversity

Many resources show that, especially in computing and STEM fields, diversity is lacking in higher education and professional ranks. While pursuing a Computer Science degree as an undergraduate student at Duke University, I also studied and received a minor in African and African American Studies. This helped increase my desire to increase diversity in computing. I have participated in many outreach events to help increase diversity in computer science, including teaching at a Duke FEMMES (Females Excelling More in Math, Engineering, and Science) event for middle school girls, volunteering at the INTech Mini-Camp to teach computing to African American middle school girls, working as a mentor for The Coding School codeConnects program to virtually teach Python to high school students from underrepresented groups, and many more. As a future faculty member, I will recruit a diverse team of researchers from various backgrounds and demographic groups to incorporate new ways of thinking and experiences into problem-solving and the research process and continue participating in communities and service opportunities to increase representation of underrepresented minorities in Computer Science.

Equity

While identity and diversity are very important, it is also vital that members from different identities and marginalized groups have equal opportunities to succeed in the course. As a research advisor for instance, this might mean customizing advising style for different students based on their own experiences and identities. Similarly, in a class setting equity involves providing the resources, tools, and support for students to succeed. I have also gained knowledge about treating students equitably through the Teaching and Communication Certificate. For example, I enrolled in *Accessibility in the Classroom*, a course that focuses on practical ways and tools to incorporate accessibility into your course and emphasizes how accessible content benefits all students. I was able to incorporate this as an instructor for the Introduction to Computing- Java (CSC 116) course, where I provided students with pre-recorded video lectures, live synchronous lectures and in-class activities, and reading materials from the textbook to help students learn the course materials. As a Computer Science professor, I will work to create teaching and research environments that foster equal opportunities for all students to succeed no matter their experience level or background.

As a future faculty member, I will commit to incorporating identity, diversity, and equity into my teaching and research approaches. I am also eager to learn from and work with other faculty members and positions in higher education to increase the representation of minority students in Computer Science and technology fields. To incorporate diversity into higher education, I will foster inclusive classrooms for all students to have opportunities to learn and succeed, recruit and mentor a diverse research team of students, participate in service and outreach projects to increase diversity in STEM, and explore solutions to various diversity problems in Computer Science and the software engineering industry.