Diversity Statement

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As an educator and investigator in physical layer and cybersecurity at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I am deeply committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia. These principles align with my personal values and are essential for fostering innovation in cybersecurity. My journey as an international student from Nigeria, studying in China and the United States has profoundly shaped my understanding of the importance of diversity in academic and professional settings. These experiences have taught me that diverse perspectives are crucial for solving complex cybersecurity challenges and creating a more inclusive and equitable society.

During my master's studies in China, I had the opportunity to work alongside international students from various countries, including Zimbabwe, Indonesia, Malaysia, India, South and North Korea, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Ghana, the United States, Iran, Nepal, Ethiopia, the United Kingdom, Ukraine, Russia, and China. We lived in the same international student accommodation, attended lectures, and collaborated on school projects. This environment was a melting pot of cultures where we shared our unique traditions, foods, languages, and perspectives. I also participated in international forums, sports programs, and cultural events, which further enriched my understanding of the value of diverse interactions. This synergy enhanced our academic experience and fostered mutual respect and understanding. These interactions have made me appreciate diversity's richness in any endeavor.

As an international student in the United States, I have continued to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I have taken courses and collaborated on projects with students from various countries and cultures. These experiences have further reinforced my belief that a diverse workforce and research group are essential for driving innovation and solving the complex problems we face in cybersecurity. For example, during a course project, a team member from a different cultural background introduced a novel approach to problem-solving that significantly improved our project's outcome. This experience highlighted the importance of diverse perspectives in enhancing the quality and creativity of our work.

I have also mentored an undergraduate student in the Machine Vision Laboratory during my master's studies in China. This student, from a different cultural background, benefited greatly from my guidance and support. I assigned tasks, monitored progress, and involved the student in data collection for my research. This experience helped the student develop essential research skills and confidence in their abilities. Upon graduation, this student gave me a hand-drawn sketch of myself as a token of appreciation for my mentorship. Additionally, I have mentored students from the United States who have expressed their gratitude for the guidance and support I provided. It was fulfilling to see how my mentorship positively impacted their academic journey. These experiences have reinforced my dedication to mentoring and supporting students from diverse backgrounds.

I am committed to actively recruiting students from underrepresented groups to join my cybersecurity research team. I also plan to participate in university outreach initiatives to K-12 schools to spark interest in STEM fields, particularly

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cybersecurity, among minority and female students. Additionally, I aspire to create summer programs that introduce these students to cutting-edge topics in threat analysis, network security, and cryptography.

I will implement strategies to foster inclusiveness and mitigate unconscious bias in the classroom. This includes incorporating diverse perspectives in cybersecurity case studies, discussing the importance of diversity in the tech industry, and setting clear expectations for respectful communication. I aim to create an inclusive learning environment where students from all backgrounds feel valued and empowered to contribute their unique perspectives to cybersecurity.

Beyond my teaching and research, I intend to contribute to university-wide diversity efforts. I will advocate for equitable applicant treatment by mentoring students from various backgrounds, including hiring. This includes developing strategies to contextualize the achievements of minority candidates effectively and considering the challenges they may have overcome.

To further extend the impact of diversity initiatives, I plan to collaborate with organizations that introduce high school students to cybersecurity principles. By participating in programs like the National Cyber League and CyberPatriot, I hope to inspire and prepare a diverse group of future cybersecurity professionals. Additionally, I will prioritize inviting speakers from underrepresented groups to seminars and workshops at the University, increasing their visibility and providing role models for students interested in cybersecurity careers.

My commitment to diversity also extends to my research practices. I will continue mentoring students from various backgrounds, including institutions with limited cybersecurity research opportunities. By providing guidance, building confidence, and connecting students with industry and academic networks, I aim to empower them to become future leaders who will enhance diversity and inclusion in our field.

Through these initiatives, I strive to create a rich educational and research environment at the University that prepares students for success in the ever-evolving field of cybersecurity. This commitment goes beyond representation; it is about cultivating a culture where everyone feels valued, heard, and empowered to contribute. By actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, we can develop a new generation of culturally competent cybersecurity professionals who will drive innovation and strengthen the security of our digital world.