

Zeynep Ertem

Diversity Statement

As a woman, a first-generation Ph.D. in my family, and an international scholar, I am committed to making a positive change in diversity. I recognize the important challenges diverse groups face in our field and I am committed to making a positive change. I recognize the **gender bias** in technology and engineering fields not only in the academic programs¹ but also in the workforce². I recognize the hidden barriers to advance education for **certain socioeconomic groups**. Finally, I recognize the potential challenges that the **international students both at the undergraduate and the graduate level** face, simply through my own experience. Below, I describe my current and proposed efforts in advancing diversity addressing both retaining as well as attracting diverse talent.

Early in my career, I sought after role models that can provide me with support and I was lucky to find several. In the spirit of paying forward, during my graduate studies and post-doc I have mentored several female junior researchers both at the undergraduate level and graduate level. These interactions with these students were in the form of (1) sharing my own experience, (2) trying to find solutions or resources to the immediate challenges both technical and non-technical, and (3) strategically planning their future career paths. As I have enjoyed bringing the best out of these junior students, I plan to continue to **serve as a role model and mentor to support women**. I also plan to **design my classes so that they are engaging to students from diverse backgrounds**. For example, a popular New York Times article³ promoted the idea of re-framing the goals of engineering curriculum to be more relevant to societal needs to attract more women. I plan to leverage my research on healthcare system optimization to offer classes with societal impact. I plan to **be an integral part of women student groups** in the department by providing support in their activities to promote welcoming environments for women in the community.

I believe another dimension of diversity is about supporting the socioeconomically-disadvantaged student groups, as recent reports indicate that the education gap between rich and poor is growing⁴. Specifically, I plan to **leverage Federal Work-study programs**⁵ to support undergraduate research with an affirmative action towards economically disadvantaged. My goal is to introduce them to research early-on and **motivate them to pursue advanced degrees**.

Finally, as an international scholar, I plan to support international students as they embark on their graduate career in a new country. These challenges can be financial, cultural, and communication-related. When I work with international students I plan to be **upfront and transparent about the financial support and its constraints** to provide them with information for their secure financial planning. I plan to **encourage them to get to know the cultural aspects** of the new country they are in such as Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Christmas. Last but not least, as we do not expect any less from our international students when it comes to their academic productivity, I plan to **leverage university programs to support their development in academic writing**.

I am committed to making a positive change when it comes to diversity and I look forward to working with the colleagues that have similar goals in the department.

¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2013/10/06/magazine/why-are-there-still-so-few-women-in-science.html>

²<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/10/business/women-careers-technology-companies.html>

³<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/27/opinion/how-to-attract-female-engineers.html>

⁴<https://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/10/education/education-gap-grows-between-rich-and-poor-studies-show.html>

⁵<https://www2.ed.gov/programs/fws/index.html>