

Diversity Statement

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I believe that diversity is key to a successful research group, department community, and individual development. During my academic career, I contributed to creating a more welcoming and diverse environment individually, within my research group, and community.

As an instructor, I encourage students to learn and excel in a variety of ways. To this end, I try to present multiple ways to solve a problem, and encourage students to be creative in their problem solving steps. I also understand that grading is a point of contention for many individuals, and so I have developed a variety of grading criteria to cater to the strengths and diversity of students. Instead of focusing on numeric grades, I implemented a grading scheme in symbolic programming (6.945) which provided qualitative values (check, check+ check-) based effort and not results. This is inspired by Patrick Winston's grading skill on facilitating a knowledge of skills (<http://web.mit.edu/fnl/volume/204/winston.html>). I will also have a diverse rubric for grading, giving students multiple chances to excel on quizzes or substituting a final/project for a missed or inadequate assignment.

As a mentor, I ensure that I support all students, especially those in special or critical circumstances. As a TA, I ensured that a student with disabilities was able to access the classroom and materials in a timely matter. I also make sure that students are fairly given extensions on assignments within reason. In terms of research advising, I am flexible with family travel or other deadlines. I ensure that I am able to meet via telepresence, and provide a variety of times for availability.

I have had experience collaborating in different cultural groups both domestically and abroad. As an intern at INRIA-Grand-Est, I learned French norms of research and society. As a participant in the MIT-SJTU Internet policy course, I helped to facilitate group projects between the Chinese and American students. Since the class was an interdisciplinary effort, many of the projects were very open-ended and creative, which is not standard in Chinese educational practices. Therefore, I helped to set some benchmarks and encouraged the Chinese students to engage in the new educational format. I also invited a former coursemate from SJTU to come teach with me, and instructed him on rules of engagement for teaching at an American university.

I am also passionate about mentoring women and underrepresented minorities. I was a mentor for Xerox, where I regularly chatted with female undergraduates pursuing engineering. Most of my mentees and I still talk regularly. I have also volunteered as a panelist at many women in tech events. As the organizer of EECS Visit Days, I ensured that all students felt welcome. I made sure that family housing apartment tours were arranged, even though that was typically not done before.

As a faculty member, I will continue to contribute to more diversity on campus. On a personal level, I will carry on learning about individual cultural and personality differences, and will remain open to adjust my mentoring and teaching to the special needs of my students. On campus, I would like to engage with the women in computer science groups to provide advise on career development and to encourage female students to reach their potential. Finally, I would also like to contribute to the hacking community. I was an avid hackathon participant in my undergraduate, and I would be excited to continue mentoring and encouraging the next generation.