Diversity Statement

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Computer science has a problem with diversity, both as an academic discipline and an industrial career path. This observation is particularly poignant in a world where the results of computer-related fields of study affect everyone's lives; regardless of race, gender, social class, and sexual orientation. I have the goal of understanding what are the obstacles to diversity, and how I can remove them; in the capacity of teacher, researcher, mentor, and member of the computer-science community in general.

I became aware of how important diversity is when I moved from Portugal to the US, on an internship at University of Maryland. Suddenly, I went from being part of the vast majority group (native cis-gendered white man) to a smaller group (non-native foreign students). The subsequent day-to-day interactions with the members of my research group and department showed me how different, and unique, my personal experiences were when compared to my peers that, either studied in the US or were from different countries than the US or Portugal. I believe that experience gave me the tools and concepts to be able to learn how diverse members of the computer-science community navigate their world. Since then, I pay close attention to the opinion that people from underrepresented groups express about our community, either in person or through books, articles, or personal blogs.

Below are some of my experiences and future plans to contribute to diversity in computer-science.

Prioritize Gender Parity. When organizing a regional seminar on programming languages, I took as one of the goals to ensure that women participated by presenting their work or attending the event. During the seminar, I prioritized questions from women members of the audience. In another example, when putting together a list of invitees for an workshop on Dynamic Software Updating, I ensured that it included women and other underrepresented communities. In the future, I plan to do the same when preparing lists of invitees for events, committees, and panels.

Inclusivity. One of the main goals in my teaching philosophy is to create an inclusive environment where all students feel that their voice is heard. I believe this is vital for fostering diversity, as members of underrepresented groups may naturally shy away from direct participation in class. Therefore, creating many different ways for students to engage with the material being taught (e.g., anonymously voting on multiple-answer questions, splitting the class in small groups to work together) allows for all students to voice their concerns, regardless of their identity.

Outreach. I acknowledge that efforts to increase diversity should happen before college. I plan to engage in outreach programs that include high-school students, and to use that opportunity to inform members of underrepresented groups about how they can be part of the computer-science community, regardless of their background or identity.