

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Statement - Mallesham Dasari

Computer science and engineering disciplines have a DEI problem. I learned this from the first-hand experiences of being on two sides of the problem. Throughout my career, I benefited a great deal just because of my gender as a male. On the other hand, I had to endure a many challenges because of my first-generation schooling background. In the following, I will convey how I can relate and became passionate about solving DEI issues, my current actions and future plans towards DEI.

Personal experiences: Growing up, no one in my immediate and extended family had a formal school education background, and no one in my hometown had a college degree before me. I understand the amount of caring, mentoring, and support that was given for me and anyone to go from such far off background to be among one of the most advanced scientific communities in the world. I believe everyone deserves such fair and equal opportunity. However, I discovered that throughout my journey no one ever questioned my credibility of becoming an engineer; I have always been on the positive side of the traditional biases when interacting with people. Unlike me, my sister had to get married due to societal pressure right after her college just because she is a woman. I learned that gender unfortunately still plays a significant role in many professional settings and that male genders traditionally receive a great deal of unfair advantages over female genders. I also learned a great deal of systematic biases against non-male genders, racial injustice in America, Indian Caste problems, discrimination against LGBTQ+ communities, and more. These patterns are not just unjust but also resulting in a significant loss of talent in the scientific advancement of humanity. I am strongly committed to address this problem.

Current actions and outreach activities: I began contributing to improving the state of DEI during my PhD. Some of my most proud actions in the past include— 1) I participated in a Google IgniteCS program in 2016 to teach computing opportunities to rural junior high school students in Missouri; 2) I proactively volunteered to teach a course called WISE380: Women in Science and Engineering during Spring and Fall semesters of 2019, a seminar style course at Stony Brook University. The course focuses on teaching undergraduate women research methodologies in STEM disciplines; 3) As an elected vice president of graduate student organization at Stony Brook, I created a special interest group on DEI (SIGDEI) and allocated a special budget of \$30,000 to tackle issues specific to students from LGBTQ+ background in 2020. One of the critical outcomes of this initiative was to create gender neutral restrooms across the campus; 4) Throughout my PhD tenure at Stony Brook, I actively mentored students from underrepresented and challenged groups in research projects; 5) More recently, I participated as a mentor at OurCS 2022 conference at Carnegie Mellon University, a three day workshop on improving the gender balance in computing research. As part of this program, I taught computing research methodologies to a group of undergraduate women who study at different schools all over the US.

Future plans: My unique background has taught me that each and every strand of DEI— gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic class— is a tightly tangled topic that needs to be untangled. I have demonstrated in the past that I am passionate about solving DEI issues and will continue to do so by creating a safe and inclusive atmosphere for everyone in the future. As a faculty, I have several plans to pursue this endeavor. I will actively encourage students from underrepresented groups to pursue computing careers that include teaching, research, and industry. I will recruit students from diverse backgrounds to build my research group. Inspired by the recent success of Harvey Mudd in balancing gender ratio in CS, I will actively look for classroom teaching solutions to compensate for the head start that many male college freshmen begin with. Finally, I hope to create special interest groups of faculty, students and staff to bring different perspectives in solving DEI issues.