

Rohan Padhye - Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

My commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion manifests through my actions and my role as a researcher, educator, and a member of the global academic community.

I recently published a [blog post](#) [1] on visa issues affecting equitable participation of researchers in international conferences. In the article, I summarize several inclusive policies that conference organizers can consider to mitigate the systemic biases against national origin and citizenship that many researchers have to deal with. The post received considerable circulation and discussion [on social media](#). Concretely, my effort prompted the chairs of ICSE 2020, PLDI 2020, and ICFP 2020 to update their websites and/or call-for-papers adding explicit support for authors who may be denied a visa to attend the conference and present their work.

I am also mindful of the challenges faced by those I work with and I try my best to make a positive impact where possible. For example, I once noticed a fellow student at Berkeley making self-deprecating comments on social media in response to discussions about her research. I privately pointed this out to her and encouraged her to be more forthright about her achievements. Over the next few months, I was glad to observe a shift in her writing style towards increased self-confidence. Recently, she sent me a note that said: *“for some reason, you pointing out an actual, resolvable, instance of me shooting myself in the foot, while also saying that you did appreciate my technical contributions, reduced my imposter syndrome”*. (quoted with permission)

As a teacher, I try to create an inclusive classroom using well-studied methodologies. For example, I make it a point to learn students’ names, address them individually during discussions, and thank them for their participation. I also make sure to accommodate the diverse set of engagement styles that some students might prefer based on cultural or personal differences.

Finally, I am heedful of institutional policies and their impact on diversity and inclusion. Where necessary, I actively endeavor to effect change. For example, I recently championed the reconsideration of the GRE requirement for applicants to the PhD program at Berkeley EECS. Studies have shown a disparity in GRE scores: women and minorities in STEM tend to have lower scores on the quantitative section [2]. Studies have also shown that the scores themselves are a poor predictor of success in graduate school [3, 4]. Moreover, GRE scores are rarely used in our department’s PhD admission process in practice. The monetary costs and stress of taking the GRE is an unnecessary burden that disproportionately affects students from the developing world and from underrepresented groups. I initiated the conversation on our department mailing list. With the overwhelming support of the student body, I was able to get a discussion table dedicated to this issue at the annual town hall. Although we could not affect the current admissions cycle, I am liaising with the department staff and graduate student assembly to possibly introduce reforms next year.

I intend to continue promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion while leading my future research group, as a member of the faculty, and as an active participant in the academic community.

References

- [1] Rohan Padhye. (2019). Equity and Inclusion in International Conference Attendance—What can conference organizers do? <https://blog.padhye.org/International-Conference-Attendance/>
- [2] Casey Miller and Keivan Stassun. (2014). A Test That Fails. *Nature*. 510(7504), pp 303-304. <https://www.nature.com/naturejobs/science/articles/10.1038/nj7504-303a>
- [3] Robert J. Sternberg and Wendy M. Williams. (1997). Does the Graduate Record Examination predict meaningful success in the graduate training of psychology? A case study. *American Psychologist*, 52(6). <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1997-04591-002>
- [4] Liane Moneta-Koehler et al. (2017). The limitations of the GRE in predicting success in biomedical graduate school. *PLoS One*, 12(1). <https://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0166742>