Diversity Statement

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Diversity, equity, and inclusion are fundamental to collective prosperity in our society and university. A culture of diversity offers everyone equal opportunities to learn and contribute, strengthening our classroom, research, and workplace to become more innovative and efficient. Since I came to the USA as a junior undergraduate student, I have been grateful for my school experience that has been enriched by instructors, students, and mentors from a variety of cultural and scientific backgrounds. My experience also motivates me to make contributions to diversity through my research, teaching and mentoring, and academic services by including and strengthening diverse voices and viewpoints.

Contributions via Research. I have been devoted to conducting diversity-promoting research focused on the language usage and information access of underrepresented groups. While most research in Artificial Intelligence focus on widely used languages such as English, I am interested how to design intelligent systems that understand other languages that are used by fewer people with relatively low presence on the internet. To be specific, I have been working on a cross-lingual information retrieval project where we aim to build a computer system that can process, translate and summarize documents from different languages such as Swahili, Tagalog, and Somali. Such an intelligent system will greatly improve the efficiency of information access for millions of people speaking different languages around the world.

Contributions via Teaching. During my teaching assistant experience, I have also taken into account considerations of diversity to make an equal and effective learning environment for everyone. As computer science is multi-disciplinary, it is the instructor's responsibility to present course material in a way that is most fruitful for students with different majors and academic preparedness. For example, in my Natural Language Processing class, students from linguistics were the minority group and they were likely to share more concerns about programming and algorithmic issues. Therefore, during my office hours, I spent time for tutoring linguistics students to develop coding techniques and master the algorithmic method of language modeling.

Contributions via Academic Services. As diversity provokes thought and promotes innovation, we also need to make efforts to include diverse participants in the research community during our academic services. In a recent workshop proposal where I am a organization committee member, we have assembled a group of 6 invited speakers and 33 program committee members from 6 different research fields, 8 national backgrounds, and more than 20 institutions in both academia and industry. More than 40% of members are women. This demographic diversity makes an inclusive environment where researchers in different levels of scientific background and seniority can learn, communicate, and innovate more effectively.

In the future, I will continue to promote the values of diversity and inclusion in my classrooms and research group. I hope to inspire people from a broader demographic to study computer science by relating my research projects to other fields such as electronic medical records, linguistics, and social science. Furthermore, I will also take an active role in outreach, recruitment, and mentoring students from underrepresented groups. It is encouraging to see that we have growing common awareness towards a more inclusive and diverse community, I would like to demonstrate my commitment to this goal as a faculty member.