

DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Ahmed Saeed

I recognize the importance of diversity, not only as a way to provide opportunities for individuals coming from underrepresented groups, but also as a way to enrich and strengthen the community through the diverse point of views of its members. My approach to diversity and inclusion follows two paths: representation and knowledge sharing.

I have been an active member of all communities I joined. During my undergraduate studies, I was the representative of the computer science class of 2010 for three semesters. I helped deliver the concerns and demands of students of my class to the faculty. I also took part in several on-campus initiatives aimed at spreading technical knowledge between students. For example, I gave several talks on the open source movement and open-source projects, encouraging students to use and contribute to open source projects. Further, I organized the first Software Freedom Day at Alexandria University, which included two weeks of talks that attracted more than 600 students from all over Egypt, ranging from high school students to professionals. The team that helped me organize the event was 40% female volunteers, improving our outreach to female students to attend the event.

When I started my PhD, I joined the graduate student senate of Georgia Tech, representing students from the College of Computing. I was also the Vice President of the Graduate Student Council for the College of Computing. During my tenure advocated lowering the mandatory fees that most students have to pay out of pocket, despite receiving full funding for their studies. These fees adversely impacted international and low-income students. This push eventually led to an increase in stipend for graduate students at the College of Computing. I also advocated student clubs that represent cultural minorities and helped with the PhD visit day for incoming students. As a member of the faculty, I plan to take part in diversity and inclusion initiatives on campus, help make the voice of students heard and improve the inclusion of underrepresented groups on campus.

My approach to knowledge sharing during my doctoral and postdoctoral work is through teaching and mentoring. I try to make my work environment diverse, equitable, and inclusive. I mentored students at different stages of their education, and different genders. I plan on building an inclusive lab culture where all voice are heard and students can feel free to innovate and contribute. While I didn't get many chances to enact diversity and inclusion practices in the classroom, I expanded my knowledge of such practices by attending teaching workshops on diversity in the classroom. I look forward to employing several of the techniques I learned. For example, I plan to develop content that appeals to a diverse classroom (e.g., providing examples and use cases that capture the interests of underrepresented minorities). Further, I plan to highlight role models from diverse backgrounds, genders, and ethnicities, encouraging students to see themselves as future leaders in the field of computing.

As a member of the faculty, I realize that my sphere of influence will be expanding and with it my responsibilities towards creating an inclusive and diverse environment on campus. As a student, I have seen the many professional, mental, and financial struggles that graduate students go through. In many cases, such problems can be resolved or greatly reduced if the faculty are aware of the problem. I plan to use my voice, as a member of the faculty, to advocate for students. Another objective that I am passionate about is improving the diversity of the student body. To that end, I plan to start and contribute to programs that encourage undergraduate students to consider a career in research. For example, I was fortunate to observe the *Civic Data Science* program started by my advisor Prof. Ellen Zegura. The program hires undergraduates to work on summer projects that solve problems faced by the civic community around the university campus. I plan to develop a similar program or expand and contribute to the program if it already exists. The program will allow me to improve the diversity of the graduate program by hiring and encouraging undergraduates from underrepresented groups to pursue a career in research. Further, it will help identify and develop preliminary solutions to problems grounded in reality, starting a conversation between the university and the community, enriching my research agenda with impactful and relevant problems. Further, I plan to introduce a lighter version of the program, targeting K-12 students.