
Diversity Statement of Tanay Kumar Saha

I am committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion throughout all facets of my career as an academic – in service, teaching, and research.

During my time as a Lecturer in Computer Science, I have advised underrepresented female students. I have also helped to mentor younger graduate students from the diverse socio-economic background. I have participated in one-on-one discussions with my students to hear their frustrations. This listening process has helped me understand the kinds of day-to-day behaviors that can make people feel that computer science is “not for them.” Whenever I assigned a project which involves both the male and female students, I used to give the equal share of time to everyone so that everyone can talk. This is because I was aware of the fact that computer science is male-dominated and there are unconscious biases. Moreover, if some students lack in computational resources needed to finish the project, I tried my best to allocate the resources from the department’s computational resources. For this reason, sometimes I stayed in the office more than necessary hours just to make the student feel welcoming.

During my time as a PhD student, I worked as a Teaching Assistant. In that time, I actively worked to avoid unconscious preferences in my interactions with everyone in my department and outside. Because I had little experience with cultures outside of my own, I looked for opportunities to learn from others with different perspectives on a variety of topics. While on campus, I served in different roles in various organizations. I served as a treasurer of the Asian Student Union, a member of School of Science Graduate Council, a President of Bangladesh Student Association, and as a peer mentor for incoming graduate students. This involvement gave me opportunities to learn about different culture and values. During my TA hours, it provided me another layer of confidence while interacting with the students. I hope to continue working to address diversity problems as faculty.

As a Professor, I wish to encourage the diversity in the classroom. I believe all students should have the opportunity to see problems both within and without of their intellectual comfort zone, and irrespective of their race, ethnicities, gender, and sexual orientation. I plan to make the course materials accessible to everyone, course projects evenly distributed and include myself as a project partner in hope for attracting and retaining students who traditionally turn away from the field. From my experience in working with different student groups (both the undergrad and graduate), I saw many indications of the powers of cooperative learning and encouraging diversity. I believe diversity strengthens the classroom community beyond everybody’s comfort zone by breaking stereotypes.

As an advisor, I plan to recruit graduate students who are women and people of color. As an instructor, I encourage all students to recognize that computer science both in the industry and continuing in academia can be welcoming and supportive, even when they feel the stress of being in the minority. I look for opportunities to contribute to inclusion in the undergraduate curriculum for students who did not have access to computer science preparation in high school. Above all, I recognize that I do not have all the answers and I will keep listening to other perspectives to understand how our field needs to evolve.