

Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in academia is not merely a professional obligation but a personal commitment that has profoundly shaped my academic and personal journey. I firmly hold the belief that “Diversity Matters”. I have dedicated myself to fostering diverse and inclusive academic environments that enhance research and support broad community engagement.

Personal Background and Overcoming Barriers: Originating from Bangladesh, a country marked by gender inequalities and limited educational access, I have firsthand experience of the challenges of being a woman in developing nations. This background has been the cornerstone of my resolve to conquer these barriers, a determination that has strengthened throughout my academic progression to a Ph.D. student in Computer Science (CS) at Purdue University.

Motherhood and Academia: A pivotal aspect of my personal journey has been my experience with **motherhood twice** during my Ph.D. studies. Becoming a mother in 2021 and again in 2023 while navigating the demanding terrain of academia has imparted a profound understanding of the complexities faced by parent-scholars. This experience has been both challenging and enriching, offering me unique insights into the institutional barriers and societal expectations that often impact women in academia. It has underscored the importance of supportive policies and practices that accommodate the needs of parents, leading me to advocate for more inclusive and flexible academic environments.

Leadership in DEI Initiatives: My tenure as **Vice President** of the [Computer Science Graduate Student Association \(CSGSA\)](#) at Purdue University (2022-2023) was a definitive period in my advocacy for DEI within the academic community. In this role, I spearheaded a comprehensive proposal to tackle several pressing issues affecting graduate students, which included improving recruitment strategies, advocating for pay-scale increases, and reforming departmental policies. This endeavor required arranging town hall meetings and engaging with a diverse group of stakeholders, including undergraduate and graduate students, alumni, faculty, and staff, to collectively address the challenges within our department.

A notable achievement during my leadership was addressing the lack of family-friendly facilities in the department. I highlighted the absence of **diaper changing areas in the department’s male restrooms** and successfully advocated for their installation, emphasizing that childcare responsibilities should not be perceived as solely a woman’s task. Additionally, I pushed for the creation of a **unisex restroom**, promoting inclusivity for all gender identities.

Furthermore, I recognized the challenges faced by new mothers in our department. To support them, I successfully negotiated with the department head to establish a dedicated **nursing room**, ensuring that new mothers have a private and comfortable space to care for their infants. This initiative not only provided immediate support for parent-students but also set a precedent for accommodating the needs of student parents in the future. This effort received appreciation from both the faculty and staff of the CS department.

Additionally, we held meetings with Graduate Rights and Our Wellbeing (GROW), a graduate worker-led labor organization at Purdue University. These discussions focused on the **pay-scale increase** of graduate students, highlighting the need for equitable compensation in academia.

Professional Development and DEI Advocacy: My commitment to DEI has been significantly reinforced through participation in key conferences and workshops that champion DEI, each playing a crucial role in shaping my approach to diversity in computing and research.

I was honored to receive the **ACM Richard Tapia Scholarship** twice, enabling me to attend the [ACM Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing Conference](#) in both 2016 and 2017. This premier event, dedicated to acknowledging and promoting diversity in computing, was an enlightening experience that broadened my understanding of the vast scope of diversity in the tech

field and highlighted the importance of creating inclusive spaces.

In 2017, the **CAPWIC Scholarship** enabled my participation in the [ACM Capital Region Celebration of Women in Computing](#), a significant event where I connected with and learned from other women in the field, strengthening community ties and support for underrepresented groups in technology. My commitment to DEI in professional development was further enhanced by the **CRA-W Travel Award** in 2016 and 2019, which allowed me to attend the [CRA-W Graduate Cohort Workshop](#). This workshop provided a unique platform to engage with senior female computing professionals and researchers, offering essential insights into graduate school challenges and survival strategies specifically for women in computing. Additionally, being the **GHC Scholar** in 2016 facilitated my attendance at the [Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing \(GHC\)](#) conference, the world's largest gathering of women in computing. This event was particularly transformative, exposing me to a global community of women in tech and offering diverse perspectives on advancing gender diversity in the field. Together, these experiences significantly contributed to my understanding of the challenges and opportunities in promoting gender diversity and inclusivity in computing.

In addition, receiving the **ACM-W** scholarship was a pivotal moment in my career. It supported my participation in the [ICWSM'22](#) conference to present my research, furthering my engagement with the wider computing community and underscoring the importance of contributing to conferences as a means of advancing DEI.

Mentorship and Diverse Student Engagement: My role as a Ph.D. student in Computer Science at Purdue University and previously at Old Dominion University for my M.Sc. has afforded me valuable experiences in mentoring a diverse student body. As a teaching assistant at both institutions, I guided students from various backgrounds, focusing on academic growth and an inclusive learning environment. My collaborative research work with other universities during my Ph.D. and interdisciplinary projects during my M.Sc. broadened my exposure to different academic cultures and methodologies.

A significant aspect of my mentorship journey was volunteering with [Commonwealth Catholic Charities](#) for refugee resettlement, where I supported five Afghan children facing language and educational challenges. Utilizing my multilingual abilities, I was able to effectively assist them with their school work, exemplifying the importance of cultural sensitivity in educational mentorship. These diverse mentoring experiences have been instrumental in shaping my approach to academic guidance, emphasizing the need for adaptability and inclusivity to cater to the varied needs of students from different backgrounds.

Global Perspective Through Cultural Exploration: Traveling to **over 20 countries** and immersing myself in various cultures have significantly contributed to my global perspective. These experiences have not only enriched my cultural sensitivity but also enhanced my understanding of the nuances of global diversity in educational settings.

Future Goals in DEI: Looking ahead, my commitment to integrating DEI principles into mentorship, advising, course design, and research remains steadfast. I aspire to create an inclusive academic environment that values diversity and promotes equitable opportunities. My plans include leading diversity and inclusion initiatives within my department, focusing on creating a diverse and welcoming research group, and continuing to advocate for underrepresented groups in STEM.

In conclusion, my experiences as a **scholar**, a **mentor**, and a **mother** have deeply influenced my commitment to DEI. As I step into a prospective faculty role, I bring a unique blend of personal insights, academic experience, and dedication to fostering an environment where diversity is not just embraced but is seen as integral to academic excellence and innovation.