Diversity Statement

Unfortunately, the computer science community is still actively failing at achieving equity for both industrial and academic opportunities among underrepresented groups. Sadly, this is a systemic problem that can not be solely fixed with short term fixes. Instead, tackling this problem requires two long term and continuous solutions: (i) creating opportunities at early stages of the careers of the underrepresented groups; (ii) creating safe and welcoming environments in shared workspaces to foster collaboration among diverse groups. To achieve this, my philosophy is to enact change through local efforts within the sub-communities to which I belong.

Creating Opportunities. I regularly volunteer for various programs directed at creating opportunities. As an undergraduate student at University of British Columbia (UBC), I volunteered for "Girls Smarts4 Tech" and "Girls Learning Code", programs designed to teach basic programming skills to middle school girls. I continued my volunteer efforts as a graduate student at Max Planck Institute for Software Systems (MPI-SWS). In 2022, I helped co-organize the 6th edition of CMMRS (Cornell, Maryland, Max Planck Pre-doctoral Research School), a summer research school designed for exposing undergraduate students to research. In 2023, I co-organized a Pre-Submission Application Review program, inspired by Columbia University's PAR program, with some other PhD students at the OS group to provide a one-time review of a potential systems applicant's CV and Statement of Purpose.

As a faculty member, I will continue creating opportunities for students from underrepresented groups. To do so, I plan to hold different types of research office hours on a weekly basis. First, I plan to hold research office hours targeted towards 1st and 2nd year undergraduate students from underrepresented groups to create a pathway for them to get started with research at an early point of their career. Second, I will hold public research office hours targeted towards a non-computer science audience to foster research collaborations across different disciplines.

Creating Environments. As an undergraduate at UBC, I served as an undergraduate representative for the Program Experience Committee of the CS Department. The role of the committee was to improve the experience of undergraduates taking Computer Science Courses. In recognition of my service to the department, I was awarded a UBC Computer Science Student Service Award. As a graduate student at MPI-SWS, I served as the student representative and acted as a spokesperson for students and their problems and acted as a conduit between the students and the faculty.

As a faculty member, I plan to create a diverse and welcoming lab environment and culture that will foster collaborations across the group. To do so, at the start of the academic year, I will conduct a lab orientation session to clearly communicate expectations for the new members of the lab. During the academic year, I will organize weekly lab lunches to help with group bonding. I also believe that organizing research-themed lab events throughout the year also help in fostering collaborations. Having been privileged enough to work in multiple such environments, I am fully aware of how important such an environment is for the technical as well as personal growth of the students.

Conclusion. While, I have ideas to promote diversity and equity among underrepresented groups, as a straight brown male, I am not part of any underrepresented groups in computer science. I am cognizant of the fact that underrepresented groups face a completely different set of challenges and experiences than I have had. Systemically solving diversity issues has to be a group effort, and I am personally looking forward to working together with everyone to promote equity for underrepresented groups.