Diversity Statement
Rahul Yedida (Applicant for Fall 2024)

To me, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts are primarily about *empathy*. They are about understanding the challenges that come with unique backgrounds, life events, and the environments that students grow up or live in. It is impossible to move forward as a field if we, intentionally or not, fail to include people from diverse backgrounds, who can each bring unique perspectives on issues in the field and the classroom. A concerning study published in *Communications of the ACM* revealed that based on trends from the past 50 years, CS authorship parity will not be reached this century; moreover, the growth of female author proportion has slowed since around 2010 [Wang et al., 2021]. It is important to identify and address the reasons for this lack of diversity in Computer Science.

A major factor in under-representation is the lack of early exposure to computing systems. This disproportionately affects people of color, individuals with disabilities, and people from low-income households. At the early collegiate level, it is crucial to mitigate these disparities and foster an inclusive environment to promote diversity.

That said, it is pointless to bring in students from diverse backgrounds if we do not support them and give them the tools they need to succeed. Below are some ways I will contribute to diversifying our field in my daily activities.

Out-of-classroom support:

An important part of helping students succeed is providing access to necessary resources. Too often, students are not adequately aware of university- or department-level resources available to support them. This can be pointing to university financial aid services for students from low-income backgrounds, student mental health services for those struggling with mental health issues, and computing resources for those who cannot afford their own compute. While I will, of course, mention these in class, it is important to present an approachable demeanor so that students feel they can come to me for advice or support.

I will also provide sessions outside classes and office hours to help students who have had limited exposure to computer science catch up with their peers. This is especially important at the early undergraduate stage, where fundamentals are established, and attrition rates are highest.

Active outreach:

Actively reaching out to students of all backgrounds regarding opportunities such as TAships and summer research funding can make a difference in promoting inclusiveness. It is especially important to reach out to students who might not fit in the traditional boxes in CS.

Additionally, institution-level initiatives like NC State's "The Engineering Place", which focuses on diversifying engineering education by providing programs for underserved and underrepresented populations, and Women in Computer Science (WiCS) can have major impacts in diversifying the CS population.

Ultimately, promoting diversity is an *active* effort and I will treat it as such. By treating everyone with empathy, providing support outside the classroom, and pointing to and contributing to institutional efforts in DEI, I will help break down barriers for minority groups in computer science.

References

[Wang et al., 2021] Wang, L. L., Stanovsky, G., Weihs, L., and Etzioni, O. (2021). Gender trends in computer science authorship. *Communications of the ACM*, 64(3):78–84.