# Diversity Statement | Yunming Xiao, Fall 2023

As a candidate for the tenure-track assistant professorship in Computer Science, I am deeply committed to fostering a learning environment where diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are not only valued but are considered cornerstones of academic excellence and innovation. I believe wholeheartedly that talent is uniformly distributed across all spectra of society, yet the opportunities to nurture and manifest this talent are often unevenly allocated. This conviction is not abstract but is rooted in my personal journey and professional ethos.

Growing up as a member of the Yi nationality in Yunnan Province, among China's minority ethnic groups and in one of its least affluent mountainous regions, I learned early on that equal access to resources and opportunities is a privilege that not all share. This insight has been a constant reminder and motivator throughout my journey. As the first in my family to attend college, each step was uncharted, making my academic journey not only a personal achievement but a breakthrough for my community.

The challenges intensified as I crossed borders to become an international graduate student, where I contended with an unfamiliar academic environment and a new cultural context. These challenges did not deter me; rather, they solidified my commitment to ease the journey for future scholars following a similar path. They forged in me a guiding principle: to transform the landscape of higher education so that it not only recognizes but actively supports diversity through tangible equity-driven initiatives.

In my professional capacity, I aim to promote DEI in the following ways:

**Equitable Access to Education.** I am actively engaged in fostering equitable access to education. My approach includes championing scholarship programs for underrepresented and international students, crafting adaptive learning resources to meet diverse educational needs, and endorsing initiatives that address the digital divide. I have already put this commitment into action: I have been keeping my community informed about the latest developments in U.S. doctoral program admissions and mentored a promising student from my hometown. Their exceptional ability and academic dedication led not only to the publication of our joint research at *EuroSys'24* but also to their recent acceptance into Boston University's Ph.D. program.

**Inclusive and Accessible Teaching Practices.** My commitment to inclusive education extends beyond acknowledging diverse cultural backgrounds; it encompasses creating a classroom environment that addresses a wide range of learning needs. For instance, as a teaching assistant, I have supported students who faced barriers due to physical impairments affecting their ability to write quickly, and others with visual impairments. These experiences illuminated the critical need for tailored accommodations, such as granting extra time for exams and supplying materials in large print, while discreetly arranging separate examination slots to honor their confidentiality. Inspired by such experiences, I am committed to implement adaptive teaching strategies, utilize assistive technologies, and develop customized support plans to ensure that all students, regardless of their cultural background, physical abilities or learning differences, have equitable access to education and can participate fully in the learning process.

**Inclusive Research Opportunities.** My research ethos is anchored in the principle that academic inquiry should transcend the boundaries of STEM and academia, extending its benefits to the wider society. I am committed to an inclusive and equitable research framework, one that conscientiously incorporates participants from diverse backgrounds and actively addresses the technological disparities prevalent in different communities. Such commitment is especially pertinent in my field of computer networks, where research often skews towards developed regions, neglecting the nuanced realities of developing areas. This oversight is not merely a matter of access but also a consequence of perceptual biases. In challenging this norm, my work employs innovative methodologies, such as the use of decentralized VPN networks, to expand Internet measurement studies to underserved regions. These efforts provide a more comprehensive view of global Internet infrastructure and enrich my development of systems designed for a diverse range of environments and users.

In conclusion, I am not a bystander in the narrative of DEI; I am a proactive participant, dedicated to cultivating a diverse, equitable, and inclusive academic environment. I view the role of an assistant professor as a platform to contribute meaningfully to the culture of DEI in academia. It is my intention to bring not only my technical expertise to the department but also my steadfast commitment to creating an environment where all students, staff, and faculty are afforded the dignity, respect, and opportunity they rightfully deserve.