Diversity Statement

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Computer science in the United States is far from being gender and racial balanced. According to the 2020 Taulbee survey from the Computing Resource Association in the US\textsuperscript{1}, only 19.9% of 2020 graduated Computer Science PhDs are women. Among current CS faculty members, only 23.2% are female. Minority groups, such as black or African American individuals, account for only 2.3% of faculty members\textsuperscript{2} while Hispanic individuals only make up 2.8%\textsuperscript{3}. As an Asian woman, this has been reflected in my research life. I recall being the only female presenter in my session at ICLR 2019. Fortunately, I was surrounded and inspired by female role models in my field. In my early years, a long conversation with a senior female PhD student changed my view on graduate school. I learnt to be brave enough to express my own ideas and learnt that having technical arguments can be beneficial for everyone. Receiving encouragement from another female PhD student (now an assistant professor) meant a lot for me. And I believe that this is not only true for women as the minority group, but it is also true for everyone else. As a result, I realized that an inclusive environment can be created by having a diverse group of people who share certain common characteristics with each other. Furthermore, an inclusive and welcoming working environment can reduce mental stress and help research progress. Thus I wish to expand the scope of the research community to people with diverse backgrounds in a more inclusive manner.

To achieve this, I have mentored five female students from four countries during my PhD. Besides providing research and technical assistance, I also provided offline support to them on a regular basis, such as providing advice on visa-related issues as an international student, sharing my experience as a woman in the department, and easing any of their concerns about entering the field. I paid particular attention to their personal development and encouraged them when I noticed any signs of imposter syndrome. I also successfully recommended one student to The Data Incubator program, a Cornell-funded data science training organization. As a collective effort, I served as a panelist for the CS Woman PhD/PostDoc Panel at UMass Amherst. I shared my story about entering a PhD program in an encouraging manner. In addition, I shared the support available around me so they can feel more inclusive entering the overall environment. I am not only interested in bridging the gender gap in the field, I also served as a mentor for UMass Amherst’s PhD application mentorship program for underrepresented groups. I advised four PhD applicants, including three females and one male from four different countries. I believe that these efforts support my central belief that we should have a diverse research community and everyone should be involved in the development of science.

In the future, I plan to continue contributing to the increase of diversity in this field. The first step in my plan is to create a research group with students from different genders, races, and nationalities, and build a welcoming and inclusive classroom when teaching. In addition, I plan to increase outreach efforts. As a first-generation graduate student, I find it hard to gather graduate school information. I believe that it is impossible to take advantage of an opportunity if you do not know it exists. Therefore, I intend to make graduate program opportunities more visible to groups with limited resources, as I did at UMass in mentoring underrepresented PhD applicants. Going forward, I will hold online information sessions and promote similar events. Moreover, I plan to join the diversity and inclusion groups in the new department, continue to be active in women and minority groups in NLP and ML, such as WiNLP, WiML, QueerInAI. Finally, I will ensure a diverse balance of speakers and panelists as a workshop organizer. In conclusion, given the increasing importance of AI safety and AI ethics, I believe a research community with members from various backgrounds and experiences will be more likely to advance science in a general direction that benefits all of society.

\textsuperscript{1}\url{https://cra.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/2020-CRA-Taulbee-Survey.pdf}

\textsuperscript{2}14.1% in the US population.

\textsuperscript{3}18.7% in the US population.