Diversity Statement

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1 Mentoring

During my postdoctoral appointment at UMass Amherst, I had the privilege of serving as a mentor to both undergraduate and graduate students. My approach to guiding their educational journeys revolves around fostering a sense of dedication and collaboration while maintaining a balance between their creative autonomy and my supportive guidance. For instance, when working with undergraduate students, I provided them with clear project goals while also encouraging them to explore their own interests, strengths, and areas for growth. This approach allowed for open communication, enabling students to share their ideas and concerns.

Over the course of three summers, I had the opportunity to mentor six undergraduate students, all of whom were motivated to pursue hands-on graduate-level research experiences through independent study courses. In addition to my work with undergraduates, I also had the privilege of closely mentoring four Ph.D. graduate students and twenty-four master level students. Together, we collaborated on their research projects, resulting in co-authored publications, open-source solutions, and award winning honors. This mentorship relationship extended beyond the classroom setting, creating a platform for experiential activities that balanced theoretical knowledge with practical skills. Through regular interactions and constructive feedback, I aimed to cultivate a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment for their growth and development as researchers.

2 Promoting Inclusion

As a future faculty committed to promoting local growth, my leadership efforts will focus on local undergraduate and graduate students, while developing plans to enhance participation in the CS faculty and student population. By fostering inclusive excellence, I aim to create an educational environment that nurtures talent, fosters belonging, and addresses the unique needs of diverse learners. Recognizing the importance of access to quality education, I have actively engaged in outreach programs such as the UMass Turing Program that target underrepresented communities. By collaborating with local high schools, I have helped developing a program to inspire and support students from diverse backgrounds to pursue higher education in STEM fields. These efforts include organizing workshops, mentorship programs, and summer research internships, all designed to cultivate a passion for learning and provide guidance on academic and career pathways. Additionally, at the graduate level, I have actively sought opportunities to mentor and support local and foreign students. By providing guidance on research projects, advocating for funding opportunities, and fostering an inclusive research environment, I have supervised 28 students – including 20 female students –, all of whom got hired by important companies and startups, helping them overcome barriers and succeed in their personal pursuits.

Figure 1: Introducing (green shirt) local cluster to UMass Turing students (2023)

3 Goals

To unlock our maximum potential not only in education, but in society itself, it is imperative that we use our leadership and role to harness the full range of talent available to us. Achieving a balanced representation is crucial, and my commitment to attaining full equality in all supervision levels is a significant concern for me and that has the potential to set an example for others to follow. It is crucial to emphasize that underrepresented groups within the academic community are equal and should not be deemed superior or inferior to anyone. Rather, they bring unique life experiences, perspectives, and priorities to the university and its communities. This diversity of thought and background leads to comprehensive solutions and drives social innovation forward. As such, they should not only feel welcomed, but effectively included in the academic realm, actively participating in discussions at all levels. This underscores society's needs for equality and rejects any notions of superiority or inferiority based on gender or underrepresented status.

Primarly, my aim is to induce better outcomes that benefit society as a whole. By embracing and valuing the differences, we can create a more inclusive environment that maximizes the potential of students where the main beneficiary is the university. Looking ahead, my commitment to leadership in diversity and inclusion extends beyond individual efforts. I plan to collaborate with colleagues, administrators, and student organizations to develop and implement comprehensive strategies that promote openness, diversity, and inclusion at the department and university levels. My plans include:

1. **Engage with the Office of Equity.** I will collaborate with the Office of Equity to enhance its identification in addressing systemic barriers to the campus initiatives. I also want to ensure representation and mutual differences are stimulated for creativity and knowledge exchanges in the community, as advised by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

2. **Promoting Participation.** I will strive to create a participative classroom environment where every student feels respected. With a predominantly local undergraduate and an international graduate population, this involves actively acknowledging and addressing biases, providing diverse perspectives in course materials, and encouraging open dialogue that embraces different standpoints and experiences.

3. **Fostering an Attentive Learning Environment.** Building trust and rapport with students is crucial. I will create a safe space where students feel comfortable expressing their thoughts, asking questions, and making mistakes: there is no learning without mistakes. I encourage collaboration and peer support, emphasizing the value of teamwork and collective learning. For underrepresented students, I can provide additional support and resources that include mentorship opportunities and targeted academic assistance.

4. **Empowering Students.** I believe in enabling students to take ownership of their own learning journey. I encourage active engagement by incorporating student-centered activities, such as open discussions, research projects, and hands-on experiments. I also provide opportunities for students to make choices, explore their interests, and connect course content to real-world applications. Empowering underrepresented students involves promoting self-efficacy and building their confidence through mentorship, positive feedback, and highlighting their achievements.

As computing evolves and impacts various domains in the scientific community and society itself, it is crucial for faculty members to possess versatility, adaptability, and a understanding of the ongoing pedagogical challenges. By implementing these strategies, a university can effectively prepare students to become professionals who prioritize their community into their work, contributing to the development of well thought solutions. Finally, I am committed to promoting a student-centric approach that acknowledges diverse learning styles and backgrounds, fostering a supportive community.