I am deeply committed to fostering an environment that embraces diversity, equity, and inclusion in all communities. My commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion is grounded through my personal experiences working with students from a wide range of backgrounds. I am comfortable engaging in open, constructive discussions and understanding the challenges faced by underrepresented individuals.

Prior Engagement

Over my career so far, I have been fortunate to work with students from underrepresented backgrounds in a variety of capacities, including as a teaching assistant, as a research mentor, and in a mentoring program for undergraduates. In these interactions, I have worked with students from a wide range of ethnic, racial, gender, and cultural backgrounds. Some of these students, particularly those from less privileged socioeconomic backgrounds, had limited exposure to programming and other technical areas due to inequities and limited resources in their prior education. While I have been fortunate to have worked in supportive environments, I am also aware there are other traits, such as religion, sexual orientation, and disabilities, that can also face discrimination and barriers.

As a teaching assistant and research mentor, I have had the opportunity to work closely with students. My experiences in these roles have further deepened my understanding of the challenges and opportunities that come with a diverse student body. I have actively worked to create an inclusive learning environment, ensuring that all students feel valued and supported in their academic journey. In both roles, it was critical to identify the challenges that the students were struggling with and help identify resources to solve the challenge. These challenges were often highly variable based on the student's background. Students coming from under-resourced communities may need extra assistance to catch up on fundamentals, and classes with a mix of students from different socioeconomic groups benefit from clear guidelines to encourage mutually beneficial collaboration.

I have actively participated in the annual Stanford Computer Science undergraduate mentoring program. This initiative aims to mentor undergraduates from underrepresented groups, fostering their academic and professional growth with the long-term goal of engaging them in research, either at Stanford or elsewhere. I am proud to have contributed to this program, recognizing its impact on the lives and aspirations of young individuals from diverse backgrounds. In the program, I served as a mentor to undergraduate students, engaging in regular meetings with my mentees to provide guidance and support, as well as to share my research experiences and provide information on research opportunities. By discussing my own journey, what inspired me throughout graduate school, and the excitement of research, I aimed to inspire and motivate the mentees to consider pursuing research opportunities. More importantly, I worked to foster an environment where the mentees felt encouraged to explore their interests and aspirations. As I move forward in my career, I am enthusiastic about expanding such initiatives.

With regard to my area of research, I am aware that new technology, including machine learning, can unfortunately result in inequities if used irresponsibly. Biases in machine learning can perpetuate or even exacerbate existing disparities in all domains, including in healthcare, and performance can vary substantially across different populations. It is crucial to implement responsible practices to ensure that models are fair and do not cause harm to underrepresented groups.

Philosophy and future plans

Looking ahead, I am eager to contribute to and expand existing programs. I am committed to engaging with initiatives that promote diversity, equity, and inclusion both within the department, across the campus, and the broader community. Moreover, I intend to bring forward ideas to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion further. From recruiting a diverse group of students into my lab to mentoring underrepresented students and conducting outreach efforts, I am dedicated to leveraging my position for positive change.

Creating an inclusive group   As a faculty member, my closest interaction with students is within my research group. Taking on the responsibility of a role model for the group, I aim to create an environment where students feel comfortable bringing up concerns to allow issues to be rapidly and effectively corrected. I will be responsible for addressing the unique individual needs of my group members.

Opportunities should be transparent   A major cause of the underrepresentation in academia is inequities in prior education. It is also vital to address systemic barriers and lower barriers in the academic pipeline. I will continue to mentor early-stage students to encourage members of underrepresented groups to participate in research, as well as advertise research opportunities to affinity groups in the machine learning community. Additionally, it is important to support students as they progress in their careers, and the mentoring program can be expanded to cover more than just research, including non-academic career paths, as well as other fields of research.

Elevating underrepresented voices   Creating an environment that encourages feedback is essential for growth. To make myself approachable for feedback, I strive to cultivate an open and non-judgmental atmosphere. I actively seek input from others and express genuine curiosity and appreciation for diverse perspectives. I acknowledge that there is always room for improvement and that constructive criticism is a valuable tool for advancement. I make a conscious effort to listen attentively, showing gratitude for the insights shared.

I have been lucky to have supportive and understanding supervisors, but I know that not all of my peers have had the same experience. Some classmates, particularly those from historically marginalized groups, have encountered challenges in navigating hostile environments. Recognizing the importance of fostering an inclusive academic community, I am committed to making myself available as a resource for students, providing a safe space for open dialogue. By actively listening and offering support, I aim to contribute to a more equitable and respectful academic environment, ensuring all students can thrive and reach their full potential.

Commitment to serving the community   Service toward building a diverse, equitable, and inclusive community falls disproportionately on those from underrepresented groups. I believe that service to the community should be a shared responsibility among all members of the community, and I will continue my service toward fostering inclusive environments.