

# Diversity Statement

Vishal Sharma

---

**Perception.** I believe that diversity is an amalgam of the distribution of different communities in various dimensions of humanity such as race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status, appearance, language, (dis)ability, age, or political perspective (1). An adequate way to approach the issues of diversity, inclusion, and equity is to do so from the vantage point of calling in rather than calling out. Leaders in an organization must engage in creating a more equitable environment that facilitates conversations that allow for dialogue, the possibility of making mistakes, and the opportunity to learn. Inclusion entails a minimum atmosphere in which everyone feels not just included, but also safe enough to challenge the views of others and be challenged in return. My preliminary action in the direction of diversity and inclusion is amplifying voices in the room and ensuring that they are included in the discourse. As stated by the University of Michigan (2):

- ★ **Diversity** is where everyone is invited to the party
- ★ **Inclusion** means that everyone gets to contribute to the playlist
- ★ **Equity** means that everyone has the opportunity to experience the music

**Data and Psychology.** Computer science is one of the least diverse fields of science and engineering, with women making up to 25.6%, African Americans with only 8.4%, Hispanics or Latinos with 7.5% and Asians with 22% of computer and mathematical occupations (5) (6) (7) (3). In one of my research domains, the database research community, the number of women as first authors of accepted papers has increased from less than 5% in 1970 to 15% and 20% in 2020 at the SIGMOD and VLDB premier conferences, respectively (4). Despite this, there is tremendous room for significant development for women, underrepresented groups, minorities, persons with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people in the research.

There is a tendency in human psychology towards confirmation bias, which is the proclivity to seek out and favor information that supports one's own ideas or hypotheses and explains why humans prefer to interact with people who are similar to them. This is logical because identical groups tend to be more predictable and amicable. This results in preferential treatment for the average and rejection of outliers in thoughts, gender, race, or habits. My initial steps in achieving equality as an Assistant Professor is to cultivate a sense of self-assurance in my lab and students as in one's capacity to question one's assumptions and preconceptions.

**Efforts.** I realize the importance and demand for diversity, inclusion, and equality as a person of a different culture and country, which can bring some blind spots. My introduction to diversity comes from my epistemic curiosity in philosophy, human psychology and sociology and active participation in awareness of diversity. I have volunteered for outreach programs and attended workshops and events about diversity at Utah State University and Harvard University. I've made it a priority to have candid conversations with people who have different perspectives than mine. I think everyone should be treated with respect, which lets us all feel like we belong in the institution and in the conversation. I have rich experience working with individuals from a wide variety of backgrounds and ways of life. Although I was not entirely aware of the cultural variations between my colleagues from other nations, continents, and communities. By studying and empathizing with their experiences, I was able to comprehend their points of view and how this influences their decision-making and communication. To ensure fairness in my judgment, I plan to work on building an evaluation of teaching and research criteria for fairness in interactions with students. I still have a lot to learn, but I am confident in my ability to make positive changes in my life and the lives around me.

**Summary.** Computer science education begins in high school and continues through university and industry. There are instances where members of underrepresented groups drop out at an early stage of computer science education. Thus, as a faculty member, I would like to help promote diversity and computer science awareness at the earliest level of education. I hope to foster student confidence, amplify their voices, and create a welcoming environment. I commit myself to expand diversity initiatives in computer science research and at the university. Therefore, my goal is for everyone passing through high school and university to accept that people vary widely in various attributes and that this is highly valuable.

## References

- [1] <https://dei.extension.org/>
- [2] <https://diversity.umich.edu/about/defining-dei/>
- [3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity\\_in\\_computing](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diversity_in_computing)
- [4] Bonifati, Angela, Michael J. Mior, Felix Naumann, and Nele Sina Noack. *How Inclusive are We? An Analysis of Gender Diversity in Database Venues*. SIGMOD Record 50, no. 4 (2021): 31.
- [5] U.S. National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics*. 2020.
- [6] Issues in Information Systems. *Women and Minorities in Computer Science Majors: Results on Barriers from Interviews and a Survey*. 2013.
- [7] U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: United States. [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Retrieved 2019-09-29.