

Diversity Statement

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I believe achieving diversity, equity, and inclusion for all race, gender, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and for all other underrepresented groups is my duty as a community member. I also believe that diversity, equity, and inclusion profits every community member including myself, not just those from underrepresented groups. Realizing the struggle and inequity underrepresented groups experience as a high school student, I have created and participated in various voluntary teaching and outreach programs to provide the underrepresented groups a better education environment. As a member of a diverse and inclusive community of Carnegie Mellon University, I have both experienced benefits of being part of a diverse community and felt the current limitations and the need for further actions. As a professor, I will fight hard to ensure a diverse environment throughout my classroom, lab, and the surrounding community. As I have done since my undergraduate years, I will organize and participate in outreach programs for underrepresented groups. I will also participate and enhance various programs offered by the University for diversity, equity, and inclusion.

I realized the existence of a strong inequity in academia as a high school student and have fought for diverse, equitable, and inclusive education since then. I grew up in a privileged environment, where both of my parents were professors. Then, I went to a low-rank high school in a suburban area where many of my friends came from low-income families. Helping them study, I realized that my notable academic performance was due to my privileged background. My parents were my supporters, teachers, mentors, and role-models as I was growing up. On the contrary, most of my friends did not have someone near them to educate, motivate, and inspire them to study. It was nearly impossible for my friends from low-income housing to overcome the already-formed educational gap to compete fairly with me.

Realizing the need, I have created and participated in many voluntary teaching and outreach activities to provide better education and mentoring experiences to various underrepresented groups. I have created English summer camps for rural areas (3 times) and a science class for multiracial families (1 semester) from scratch, where I contacted schools, found funding sources, recruited teachers, and organized and delivered the entire program. I also participated in many existing programs, including, but not limited to: teacher for low-income housing (3 years), teacher for multiracial families (3 years), and a mentoring camp for a high school in a rural area (1 time). As a graduate student, I participated in a hackathon for young female undergraduate students as part of CMU's educational outreach program (OurCS).

Coming to the U.S. for Ph.D., I realized diversity to be a valuable asset for the community. Unlike in Korea, where most of the population is Asian (Korean) and the engineering community is highly skewed to be male-dominant, the academic community was much more diverse and inclusive. Being exposed to this new, much more diverse environment, I found that being part of the diverse environment benefits me greatly. Collaborating and discussing with students who were different from me enriched my research experience, leading to innovative thinking. Sharing diverse points of view was a luxury I haven't experienced in Korea, where the academic society was male- and Korean-dominated. At the same time, I strongly feel that diversity have not reached a satisfactory level. The community is still very much White- and male-dominant, which we would have to work hard to change. Even as an Asian male which consists quite a large population in academia, I can sometimes feel unwelcomed from the community. I can only imagine how large the societal barriers would be to minorities in academia, and how painful and frustrating their struggles would be.

When I join as a professor, I will commit in making my classroom, lab, and the surrounding community to be diverse, equitable, and inclusive. I will collaborate with students and faculties from all groups. I will recruit students from a diverse pool to make sure my students can experience the luxury of working in a diverse and inclusive environment. I will also participate in and enhance various programs offered by the University for diversity, equity, and inclusion. In addition, as I have been doing since my undergraduate years, I will organize and participate in various outreach programs. I believe my work will be reinforcing the mission toward a diverse community.