Minxuan Zhou — Diversity Statement

I firmly believe in the fundamental importance of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) for the flourishing of society. It is essential to foster an environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds are granted equal opportunities to be heard and achieve their aspirations [1, 2]. I am committed to promoting the DEI environment by **participating in DEI and outreach programs**, creating an **inclusive teaching and research environment**, and **being supportive and accessible** to students.

Mentoring students from historically underrepresented backgrounds can effectively increase the opportunity for students with diverse backgrounds to learn and contribute to computer science. I have mentored 5 students from the UCSD Computer Science and Engineering Early Research Scholars Program (CSE-ERSP), which aims to create a diverse and inclusive environment by promoting students from historically underrepresented backgrounds in computer science. In the overall program, 59% of students are female and 22% are Latinx and Black. Throughout the years, 57% of participants continued with research after ERSP and 83% of participants expressed interest in graduate school. Especially, an ERSP student under my supervision recently started the Ph.D. program at UCSD after 2-year research collaboration with me. This shows the success of this program can effectively lead to a more diverse and inclusive environment in computer science.

Broader outreach outside the university can lower the systemic barriers by providing equal opportunity in more diverse environments. Our research group has been actively participating in ENLACE, a program that encourages the participation of high school and university students from Latin America in research in the sciences and engineering. Over the years, our group has hosted more than 10 students in the ENLACE program to do research during the summer. Some students continued research with our team and applied to graduate programs (one is applying for PhD programs in the United States this year). Furthermore, I will be a mentor to host a high-school student in High Tech High Chula Vista, a high school in the underserved community of South Bay San Diego, in the Spring. I am excited to continue contributing to such outreach activities and promoting talents with diverse backgrounds.

Inclusive teaching and research environment is vital to ensure everyone's voice can be equally heard and everyone's perspective can be equally respected [3]. As a prospective professor, I strive to create an inclusive space in classrooms and research labs. I will open up various channels for students with diverse backgrounds to express themselves without concerns. When teaching a class, I will regularly collect students' opinions from the in-class survey, online discussion platform, office hours, and direct emails to dynamically adjust the teaching. When running a research lab, I will equally respect the opinions of different students, especially junior students who usually are shy and unconfident. I will also prepare differentiated and personalized instructions for different students.

Being supportive and accessible is the responsibility of a professor, who serves as the primary contact point to students through teaching and research, to foster DEI. I will encourage students to raise any DEI concerns for a course or the research lab through various communication channels convenient for diverse students. I will also prepare the necessary resources on campus and provide any necessary support for students to seek further help, like various Campus Community Centers and Student Organizations as well as the Office for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at UCSD.

Future Plan

Looking ahead, I am committed to deepening my engagement in DEI initiatives and outreach programs. I will mentor or encourage students in my research lab to mentor students in outreach programs like CSE-ERSP, fostering diverse talents and providing equal opportunities in research and academia. As a prospective professor, I will enhance the inclusivity of my teaching and research environments. This includes creating platforms for students to express themselves, collecting diverse opinions through various channels, and fostering an atmosphere where all perspectives are respected. Moreover, I will prioritize being supportive and accessible, encouraging students to voice their DEI concerns, and providing the necessary resources and support. I also aim to enrich the campus climate by spearheading DEI programming - organizing inclusivity training for staff and peer educators; hosting speakers on equity issues; and building partnerships with student groups and community causes related to diversity.

References

[1] DUBOW, W. M. Diversity in computing: Why it matters and how organizations can achieve it. *Computer 46*, 3 (2013), 24–29.

[2] FRIEZE, C., AND QUESENBERRY, J. L. From difference to diversity: Including women in the changing face of computing. In *Proceeding of the 44th ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education* (New York, NY, USA, 2013), SIGCSE '13, Association for Computing Machinery, p. 445–450.

[3] PRADO, Y., JACOB, S., AND WARSCHAUER, M. Teaching computational thinking to exceptional learners: lessons from two inclusive classrooms. *Computer Science Education 32*, 2 (2022), 188–212.