

Creating a diverse, inclusive environment is an ongoing challenge across all of computer science. Despite considerable effort and progress, we have struggled to establish a community that is representative and diverse across gender, race, socio-economic status, and other dimensions. Building on my own background and experiences, I strive to improve the diversity and culture of my department through advising, mentoring, and department outreach efforts.

I am extremely fortunate to have had the opportunity to complete my education at UC Berkeley. If not for diversity and community outreach programs, it is likely I would not have attended UC Berkeley, nor ever sought a PhD. I am a first generation college attendee from a low-income, single parent household. Upon graduating high school there were very few educational options available to me, as a 4-year university was both logistically and cost prohibitive. I spent several years attending community college while working on-campus to support myself, with the goal of eventually transferring to a 4-year institution.

During my time at community college I participated in a transformative UC Berkeley led diversity outreach program which brought me to campus, provided transfer counseling, and paved the way for my education. Upon admission, the university offered me a critical financial aid package that enabled my attending. While at UC Berkeley, the support from professors and staff afforded me the opportunity to engage with research, and ultimately identify my career path. After selecting UC Berkeley for my graduate degree over several similar programs, I received a Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) fellowship. These programs were critical in enabling my own education, and helping bridge the diversity gap within the university.

I strive to ensure that I can use my position of privilege to help others, while also improving the diversity and culture within our department. To aid with graduate student diversity, I spearheaded and led a graduate admissions sub-committee focused on ensuring that diverse applicants received adequate and fair consideration during the admission process. I continued this effort subsequently when reviewing applications for our research area and group, advocating for various merit- and needs-based fellowships for our applicants.

While Computer Science Graduate Student Association President, I facilitated department outreach programs and events, such as EECS Peers, a department support organization, and graduate-undergraduate student mixers, aimed at getting undergraduates involved in research. I have also volunteered with high school and department outreach programs and panels throughout my time at UC Berkeley.

Independent of organized events, I have served as an advisor and mentor for many upcoming and current transfer students, helping them successfully transfer and adjust to life within the department. Presenting myself as a success story to newly transferred community college students under tremendous curriculum pressure was critical in demonstrating that they too have the opportunity to achieve their academic aspirations.

Having a diverse and inclusive department across numerous dimensions is critical for a vibrant, healthy, free exchange of ideas. Achieving such diversity requires the efforts of the entire community at all levels from staff, to undergraduate and graduate admissions, to faculty hiring. I look forward to having the opportunity to continue my efforts as I build my own research group, as well as through my teaching, mentoring, and outreach.