# Diversity Statement

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In the highly pluralistic societies we live today it is crucial to develop educational and research programs that are welcoming to the broadest possible set of individuals. This is particularly relevant for computational sciences, which have historically been described in stereotypical terms; such as being interesting only to a narrow set of individuals, with a narrow set of skills. But computer science has become so thematically diverse (theory, systems, human factors, design, social aspects, education, etc.) and so pervasive, that it would be a great mistake to imagine people working in these areas as being only of a specific narrow kind. Computation has become so pervasive that it has become crucial to attract an intellectually diverse body of students. Having people participate from all sort of backgrounds ensures that a broad set of perspectives and concerns is included in the development of products, businesses and organizations. Developing supportive and inclusive educational programs also plays a major role in terms of removing barriers for non-traditional students and also for students that have historically not had easy access to higher education.

Over the years I had the opportunity to work with a very broad set of collaborators from all over the world, including people from Europe, South-America, Asia, Australia and Africa. This allowed me to experience the value of intellectually diverse teams and gave me an appreciation for the value of working in projects with people that have completely different perspectives on a given problem. My lab has frequently hosted students from all over the world allowing us and the visiting students to have highly rewarding and enriching experiences.

In my mentorship and advising activities I participated to a number of initiatives aimed at broadening inclusion and diversity. The most important ones are the NYU K12 program and the NYU Undergraduate Summer Research Program. The K12 program hosts high-school students over the summer to encourage them to pursue their studies in computer science and the summer research programs invites undergraduate students to work in research labs on a project to develop during the summer months. By participating to these programs I had the privilege to mentor students from varied background, including students from less affluent communities, students of different genders, and students from a varied set of cultural backgrounds. Finally, as a PhD advisor I have been the mentor of a 50+ years old student. Mentoring a student older than me has been an humbling and enriching experience that allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and stigma older students may face in academic settings.

In my teaching activities I have developed strategies to make sure all students are included and supported. Over 10 and plus years of academic teaching, I have developed an awareness to how much of my attention is devoted to different students. Unfortunately, the most natural inclination is to give attention to students that are outgoing and intellectually gifted and for this reason I have developed personal strategies to make sure all students have an opportunity to participate actively. Also, in university courses there is always a small proportion of students that are struggling or are completely disengaged and I found that often it's too easy to just give up on them. In my courses I am now constantly monitoring for early signs of trouble and I have learned to provide support early enough for every student to be able to solve problems and flourish.

There are a number of diversity initiatives that I would like to address with more vigor in the future. The first one relates to cultural diversity. In my experience as director of PhD admissions at

NYU, I have frequently noticed how not only faculty members may narrow their focus to students that come from a small set of countries, but also how the pool of candidates is also often skewed in a similar way. But geographical diversity often comes with a broad cultural diversity, which is very enriching and stimulating. In the future I would like to focus more on involving students from a broader set of countries through international programs and outreach activities. Students from less affluent countries may not have the necessary knowledge or support to apply to PhD programs in the US or Europe. For this reason I believe it is necessary to develop specific programs to promote talent from a much broader set of countries.

In my role as co-host of the Data Stories podcast I have organized a series of episodes called "Data Stories Around the World" in which we interviewed data practitioners from many different countries. The goal of the series was to learn more about data practitioners that work outside the US or Europe and I found this experience as one of the most enriching and rewarding I had in many years of producing the podcast.

Another initiative I would like to pursue is to support students at different levels of their career. My experience with an 50+ years old PhD student taught me that we tend to see PhD students within a narrow range of characteristics and goals. But different people may want to pursue a PhD for different type of reasons and aspirations. Being more receptive towards these people is desirable to avoid unnecessary barriers and to have more diverse programs.