DIVERSITY STATEMENT

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Only 4% of students in introductory computer science courses in 2015 were first-generation, female college students.[1] I learned this while attending a UCLA BRAID research group panel at SIGCSE 2017, my first computer science education conference. Their paper explores the relationship between these students' experiences in computer science courses and their feelings of self-efficacy and belonging in the general computer science community.

I worked very hard to become a first-generation college graduate, and am proud to say I am a female with a Masters degree in Computer Science. One of my favorite aspects of my job is teaching and inspiring others who, like me, come from diverse backgrounds. I firmly believe that computer science educators have two goals: to teach computer science, and for *all of their students to feel confident enough to continue pursuing the field.* I do not want students to be afraid of learning computer science.

Today, computer science affects all aspects of life. Code is everywhere - it's in our homes, our workplaces, even our grocery stores. All types of people interact with code, so it only makes sense that all types of people should be designing and creating this code. It is imperative that we encourage **diversity** — people with different interests and preferences, and various cultural, economic, and ethnic backgrounds — in computer science. *Our world is diverse; diversity is the norm. It as abnormal that our field is currently not diverse.*

This philosophy is foundational to how I teach, train others to teach, and design curricula. To encourage diverse learners, I do the following:

- *Use gender-neutral pronouns* while addressing a group. Admittedly, my default pronoun for a group of people is "you guys." To avoid gender-bias, I am working on switching this to "y'all" or "team."
- *Be intentional with names in examples.* Instead of using names that may hold cultural or gender biases, I use animals in my examples. If I absolutely must use a person in my example, I find a variety of names that are inclusive of many cultures.
- *Make expectations for assignments and courses as clear as possible.* By stating explicit policies upfront, I avoid any assumptions regarding what students may be used to in a classroom environment. This also ensures every student is held to the same standards.
- *Create and assign a diverse set of projects.* When creating my curricula, I design a diverse set of projects in an attempt to cover as many different interests as possible by the end of the course. My past courses have included graphical and artistic projects, text-based programs, data-mining projects using real data from NASA, and projects in cryptography.
- *Listen to students and other stakeholders* when they talk about course content and general experiences. I also introduce impostor syndrome early to encourage open discussion and set the tone for an inclusive learning environment.
- *Reflect on my own biases.* I acknowledge that I am human which means I have biases. To be a better educator, I take time to consider my own biases to ensure I am doing the best I can. After a class meeting, for example, it is important to take some time to think about which individual students were visited the most, for example.

[1] http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=3017751

I am honored to be part of other's computer science journeys. It has been an incredible personal success to see learners share, "I didn't think computer science was for me, but after taking this class I am now seriously considering how I can incorporate it into my life and career path." I look forward to finding more opportunities to share in these successes. Now, more than ever, I firmly believe that encouraging diversity in entry-level courses is how we start changing the field of computer science for the better.