Diversity Statement

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I will take the diversity condition of students into serious consideration when I carry out my research and teaching. I strongly believe that students with diverse interests, backgrounds, cultures, and characteristics, can benefit our academic environment.

"Diverse" background of myself. Brought up in China, I spent six years of my secondary and high school in Wuhan Foreign Language School. This is one of the ten foreign language schools that were directly founded by Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China in 1950s; even rarer are students studying science and technology at these schools. At the early stage of my life, I was privileged to learn different world views, working habits, and lifestyles with the access of real Euro-American study materials and the interaction with foreign teachers. This experience makes me eclectic on diverse cultures that I encounter and make the best use of them.

Also, during my research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I have a chance to work with very diverse people. For example, one researcher that I worked is from Germany and has meticulous nature while another researcher who is brought in the US always has the enthusiasm to talk to people whenever he has an inspiration. I think there is no good or bad characteristic; different characteristics can fit into different situations. Thinking at an abstract high level can help in the stage of brainstorming. When I enter into the design stage, I choose to be careful and focus on low-level details. Regarding presenting the work, I then learn to how to "sell" the idea to draw people attentions. This experience makes me comfortable to work with different people and thus, I can contribute in the environment of different atmospheres.

Diversity in research. In my opinion, it is important to guide students differently based on their diverse background and characteristics, which was advocated by Confucius 2500 years ago. For example, many Asian students are obedient to their advisors. This characteristic can contribute to carrying out ideas, but is not very helpful to come out a new idea. For the students of similar characteristics, I will encourage them to learn to express their thinking and even feelings, which can help to improve the mutual communication. To find appropriate methods to cope with students of different characteristics, I will keep on being sensitive and patient. The working habits also play an important role when I assign different tasks to students. For example, some students are morning people while some are more efficient at night; some students prefer multi-tasks while some prefer carrying out tasks in orders. When I led a small project in my current research, I often made the arrangement by considering these factors; I think this approach can make most team members work comfortably and improve the effectiveness of the collaboration.

Diversity in teaching. The students of different characteristics can also impact how a course is taught. In the teaching, it is important to pay attentions to whether a student is extrovert or introvert. The US culture tends to favor extrovert people. However, recent research demonstrates that there are many virtues with the introvert characteristic [1]. To encourage more introvert students to share their opinions, I hope to make them more comfortable to share in my class. To achieve this goal, I plan to work outside of lecture hours. For example, I can use the minutes before and after the lecture and the time in the office hours, to communicate with students informally and encourage their sharing during the lecture.

Concluding remark. Treating diversity in students is not something that we can easily learn through our Ph.D. thesis. I want always to keep an open and sensitive heart to embrace this colorful world and always remind myself how wonderful our students are.

References: