

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.

Experiences to work and collaborate in diverse, multicultural, and inclusive settings

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 the 1950s. 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 to have the interaction with foreign teachers. This experience makes me easy to respect diverse cultures and learn from them.

During my research at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, I conducted my research under the TCIPG (Trustworthy Cyber Infrastructure for the Power Grid) center, which was a major multi-university collaborative effort between academia and industry. In this project, I had a chance to work with people of diverse characteristics around the world. For example, one researcher that I worked with has a quiet and meticulous nature while another researcher is energetic and always prefers sharing his opinions with others. I think that there is no right or wrong characteristic; the researchers of different characteristics can contribute to my work or my future research group in various ways. Thinking at an abstract high level can help in the stage of brainstorming. When I enter into the design stage, I learned from that first researcher and tried to be careful and focus on concrete details. Regarding presenting the work, I learned from the second researcher and tried to be energetic to present the idea in a vivid appearance to draw attentions. This experience makes me comfortable to work with different people, and I can contribute in the environment of diverse cultures.

Creating welcoming, inclusive, and diverse environment

In my opinion, it is important to mentor students differently based on their diverse backgrounds and characteristics; this philosophy was advocated by Confucius 2500 years ago. For example, some students tend to be obedient to their advisors. For the students of such characteristic, I will put more focus on helping them to be more assertive and creative. Specifically, I will encourage them to learn to express their thinking, even if the thinking appears to be impractical at the initial stage. Also, it is important to let them share their feelings, which can help them to feel comfortable in communications. On the other hand, some students are more eager to express and show their capabilities and ideas. For those students, I will encourage them to put more focus on details and implementations whenever they have new ideas. 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 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.

Improving learning environment for diverse students

In my teaching and lecturing, I will carefully consider the students of different characteristics. Specifically, 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 unique opinions, I hope to make them more comfortable to share in my class. To achieve this goal, I plan to work outside of regular lecture hours. For example, I can use the minutes

¹ Mary Claire Lagroue, (2015, November). Being shy in a world that tells us extroverts are better, [Online] available: <http://verilymag.com/2015/11/shyness-introverts-extroverts-small-talk>.

before and after the lecture and the time in the office hours, to communicate with students informally and encourage their sharing during the lecture.

Additionally, I will work carefully on setting up groups in course projects by considering the students' diverse backgrounds and experiences. At the University of Illinois at Chicago, I gave lectures on all lab sessions of ECE 367 (Microprocessor-Based Design) for two semesters. In this course, I carefully interacted with almost each student to help them efficiently collaborate on course projects. This experience makes me realize that it is important to keep a sensitive heart to notice the potential problem at the early stage, communicate with students with respects, and make adjustment appropriately. I will use the principle of "equal opportunity," which is established in US academic environment, to guide and discipline students in my teaching.

Concluding remark

Treating diversity in students is challenging and important in my career as a faculty. I will always maintain an open and sensitive heart to embrace this colorful world and always remind myself how wonderful our students are.