YONGSUNG KIM | DIVERSITY STATEMENT

As a teacher, mentor, and researcher, I am committed to promoting diversity and inclusion by (1) actively recruiting and mentoring students from under-represented backgrounds; (2) providing more research opportunities and exposure to undergraduate students, especially those who are underrepresented in science; and (3) creating a learning environment where students with diverse skill sets and backgrounds can collaborate with each other.

My commitment to diversity and inclusion grew out of my teaching and mentoring experiences through Design, Technology, and Research (DTR) program at Northwestern University. As an open house committee in DTR that is in charge of recruiting students, we actively recruited and engaged students who were underrepresented in Computer Science. I believe such efforts contributed to the diversity in DTR program, where 40% of students are female. Specifically, 6 out of 14 students that I have mentored were from under-represented backgrounds. In the future, I will continue to foster connections between under-represented groups and the research program I will run to provide more research opportunities.

Second, I gained insight into how to provide more research opportunities and support to undergraduate students, especially students from under-represented groups, who would otherwise have no or less exposure to academic research. The structure of DTR allows to mentor more than 20 students where they direct independent research projects, and I was fortunate to be able to mentor 14 students on 7 independent projects during my PhD. By increasing the capacity to mentor more students on research projects, DTR allowed me to be able to provide more research opportunities to underrepresented undergraduate students, with the hope that skills that they practice in DTR (such as regulation skills) can prepare them for the workplaces after graduation. But more importantly, I hoped to give these students opportunities to see the value of doing academic research and inspire them to pursue a career in research. For example, one of my mentees, Kapil, who worked with me since his junior year, is now a PhD student at Northwestern University. I will continue to provide such research opportunities to undergraduate students as a faculty member to help them prepare skills that are essential for the real world and also inspire them to pursue academic research.

Finally, through my work as a teacher and a mentor, I also created a learning environment where students could collaborate with others who have different skill sets or experiences. As students join DTR with strong technical or design backgrounds, I paired students who have different skill sets and experiences to work together in a research project. By doing this, both my students and I experienced and saw the benefits and the importance of having a diverse skill sets in a collaborative environment where they could complement each other to successfully tackle complex work. Also, in the social and crowd computing class (EECS 395/495) that I served as a teaching assistant, I used class time for short presentations and hackathons, and encouraged students to collaborate with others who have different skill sets, backgrounds, and views.

My previous teaching and mentoring experiences, together with the life experience in studying or working in 8 different countries, allowed me to learn to respect and appreciate diverse set of cultures, values, experiences, and backgrounds. I will continue to take an active role in creating a learning and research environment to increase diversity and support under-represented groups.