Diversity Statement

Daniel Kang

I have a longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion. To this end, I have worked towards addressing inequity in ways for which I am uniquely suited given my skills.

First, I have taught computer science in Ethiopia to underrepresented minorities in computer science. I taught in 2016 and 2018 as part of AddisCoder. Many of the students we taught have never owned a computer. Furthermore, there were unique challenges of teaching in Ethiopia. In 2016, we had initially planned the curriculum with the intent of having the students use an automatic, online grading system. Unfortunately, the computer lab had no internet access, despite promises to the contrary. As a result, we had to redesign the exercises to be self-contained without internet access. We had to deal with a number of other challenges, including a computer virus that infected the USB drives we used.

In 2018, we decided to expand the program and I returned as a lecturer. As a lecturer, I had both more responsibilities and more latitude to make the course more streamlined to accommodate more students. For the preparation week before the course and the first week of the course, I directed the teaching assistants to create self-contained assignments. I further ensured an adequate gender balance of the TAs in the different labs, which helped normalize the participation of women in computer science to the students there. My TAs reported to me that this especially helped the women students.

Due to our efforts in AddisCoder, several students from Ethiopia are now at top computer science undergraduate programs, including MIT, Harvard, and KAIST. Many of these students were not aware that computer science was a viable option. I am proud to have helped in these efforts.

Second, at Stanford, I was a teaching assistant for CS197, a course that taught the research process to undergraduates. Because of the lack of diversity in research, we focused on diversity in selecting students for the course (which the students had to apply to enroll in). I was in charge of the artificial intelligence section, which has had problems with diversity. I am proud to say that my section was gender balanced as a result of our selection process, which strongly considered diversity.

Third, I have mentored a number of students from underrepresented groups at Stanford. I have mentored 14 students during my time here, over half of which were women. As an example, I mentored Thao Nguyen, who has completed a Google Brain residency and will be a PhD student in the University of Washington computer science department. I also mentored Karey Shi, who started off with nearly no programming experience. She went on to intern at Google, in part due to my interview coaching. Furthermore, I mentored Daniel Martin, who is a first-generation college student.

Fourth, I have contributed towards making graduate school applications accessible in the Stanford computer science department. I volunteered to give a presentation, along with my colleague Deepti Raghavan, on applying to graduate school. Our presentation had a particular focus on resources for low-income students. For example, we described ways to waive application fees, which we have found to be a blocker for underprivileged students applying to graduate schools. Our presentation was used as the basis for Professor Karen Liu's presentation on the Stanford CS graduate program at the Grace Hopper conference.

As a faculty member, I hope to continue to use my skills to increase diversity and inclusion.