Diversity Statement

As a woman in computing who is privileged in many ways, I have seen both how DEI initiatives and outreach have benefitted me personally and ways they need to change to support people whose experiences differ from mine. These experiences have made me more intentional in my approach to diversity in the classroom, in research, and in service.

Diversity in the Classroom

In the classroom, I strive to create an environment in which all students feel comfortable learning and engaging in discussion. To create this type of environment, I aim to build students’ confidence in their own abilities by providing low-stakes opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge or practice using a new concept, build in anonymous means of communication for students who may feel uncomfortable voicing concerns otherwise, and highlight the positives in every submitted assignment.

I also aim to be proactive in anticipating potential barriers to full participation in the classroom and mitigating those barriers before students need to out themselves to me. Making course materials accessible before receiving any specific accommodation requests is one of these strategies. Ensuring documents are screen reader accessible, videos contain closed captions and audio descriptions where needed, and graphics use accessible color schemes and alt text shifts the onus off of the students who require these accommodations.

I also use accessibility to shift the perspectives of students who may not have thought much about it before. To proactively make course materials accessible, student-produced course materials (e.g., slideshow presentations) should also be accessible. When needed, I provide explicit guidance on how to create accessible materials, why it is important to make materials accessible, and what the expectations are for submitted materials.

Diversity in Research

My motivation for conducting research is to learn how to create technologies that better serve people, which means working directly with people who are often overlooked in the development of new technologies. Doing research with any community of people requires relationship building and trust, which I approach by being transparent with participants about my goals, inviting criticism, and listening actively. I also work collaboratively with community partners to ensure participants get something out of the process, whether that is compensation for time, a sense of agency in the design process, or a report back with results or updates on the research.

I also remember learning what research really was while I was an undergraduate and want to be mindful in mentoring students learning whether they may be interested in research themselves. The Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program I participated in at Indiana University Bloomington solidified my plan to apply to graduate school. We had space to learn how to read a research paper, how to approach the GRE, and how the application process for graduate school differed from the application process for undergraduate degrees without feeling judgment or condescension. During my time in graduate school, I have tried to emulate that mentorship as I have mentored 23 undergraduate research assistants, more than half of whom are women or nonbinary. One of my proudest moments as a mentor was months after a student graduated when she reached out and asked to grab coffee. She had written me a letter.
about how much confidence her research experience had given her and how the experience had helped her get a job she was excited about. Moments like these reaffirm my approach to research.

I also aim to make my research products as accessible as possible. I am encouraged to see a shift toward making open access publications more typical. I try to write papers so people from a wide range of professional backgrounds can easily read it. I pay out of pocket for an Adobe subscription so I can ensure PDFs are screen reader accessible. My advisor and I have worked to make StoryCarnival publicly available and as low-cost as possible. The software is available for free, and we provide instructions on how to make the voice agent as cheaply as possible. We also provide voice agents free of charge to professionals who work with children.

**Diversity in Service**

My undergraduate class at Earlham was the first in its recent history to have enough women majoring in computer science for us to qualify to form an ACM-W chapter. I served as our chapter’s first vice chair and later served as chair. We organized a couple of official campus events as a group and traveled to a couple of conferences, but the most important aspect of having the chapter was the space to discuss anything that impacted our chapter members. I have stayed in touch with this group, even as our career paths have diverged: one is also in graduate school, some have jobs in industry, and a couple have pivoted to careers outside of tech. We debriefed after conferences or outreach events hosted by other organizations to discuss what worked well and what we would want to do differently – for example, we wanted to make a conscious effort not to schedule events on religious holidays and wanted to avoid boxing students into restrictive roles. At one multi-day conference, “diversity lunches” were scheduled on a single day at the same time which meant one of our members who qualified for three of the lunches felt she had to prioritize one aspect of her identity over two others. These experiences made me more intentional in how I support and organize diversity and outreach events.

My work with children has led me to develop a philosophy of encouraging the natural curiosity of students of all ages without pushing an explicit message to pursue a career in STEM. Learning about computing can benefit all students, but students can tell when outreach experiences prioritize a specific agenda. In teaching coding camps, leading workshops, and volunteering at museum STEM nights, I have found the STEM experiences that children are the most excited about are the ones in which they were able to exercise creative control and teach their peers and adults about a topic they are interested in.

In Spring 2023, I worked with the Graduate Student Action Network and the National Association of Graduate-Professional Students to organize a virtual town hall on disability justice. We hosted a panel of current or recent graduate student self-advocates with a range of disabilities and graduate school experiences. Each panelist led a breakout room discussion in which attendees could share their experiences, lend each other support, and learn from others’ experiences. Panelists and attendees described how important it was to them to have a space both to meet with others with similar experiences and to learn from how their own experience of graduate school differed from the experience of others. Moving forward in my career, I want to continue to work to create more spaces like the virtual town hall where students can find people they relate to and can learn from.