Diversity Statement Lauren Pick

Encouraging inclusion and diversity within computer science and academia is a key part of furthering innovation and scientific discovery, as a diverse range of perspectives can give rise to new and different solutions. I have been involved in endeavors for promoting diversity within the computer science and broader STEM research community as a student and postdoctoral researcher, and plan to continue being involved in such efforts in the future.

Outreach

As a Ph.D. student, I was involved in the Society for the Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) chapter at Princeton, which at the time of my involvement, was very recently established. I served as the secretary of the chapter for two years and watched it grow to provide a space for many STEM students across Princeton.

I was also involved in the Prison Teaching Initiative (PTI) program at Princeton University, in which volunteers help teach college-accredited courses to incarcerated students. As a participant of this program, I served as an instructor for an undergraduate-level statistics at Fort Dix federal prison in New Jersey. The demographics of the students at the federal prison were significantly different from those of the largely traditional undergraduate students that I had taught at Princeton. I believe that this experience will help me contribute to the inclusion of nontraditional students of a range of backgrounds.

As a postdoctoral researcher, I served as a mentor in the Transfer-to-Excellence (TTE) Summer Research Program at UC Berkeley, in which graduate students and postdocs mentor a community college student in a research project for the summer and aid in the student's transfer from the two-year community college to a four-year institution. The overwhelming majority of community college participants in this program are from underrepresented groups in STEM and have also transferred to a bachelors in STEM program after a summer with TTE. During my involvement, I co-mentored a community college student in a project on program synthesis. I have continued to maintain an informal mentoring relationship with this student – who has since successfully transferred into a four-year institution — providing advice on future career paths and research opportunities.

Future plans

Going forward, I plan to continue my involvement with similar programs. I am especially interested in being involved in (or starting, if it does not yet exist) a program similar to the Prison Teaching Initiative at Princeton. Such programs not only help the students of these offered courses but also expose any volunteer instructors to a different population of students than they would encounter serving as, for example, teaching assistants for undergraduates at a university. I believe that this exposure to diverse student populations will better equip graduate students to contribute to inclusive environments later on as instructors and researchers. I would also like to continue to be involved in mentoring undergraduate students who belong to underrepresented groups in computer science and to encourage their future involvement in the computer science and broader STEM research community.