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I believe that it is of great importance to providing every student with equal opportunity, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender. Diversity in the educational environment is especially important, because of the benefit to society and the positive influence it has on students' intellectual growth at an impressionable point in their lives. I have been fortunate to observe excellent leaders who cultivate diversity during graduate school and have had the opportunity to participate in a small way in the process. These experiences have enriched my life and broadened my worldview. As a future professor, I am committed to advancing diversity both inside and outside of the classroom by providing a safe, encouraging educational environment and supporting outreach programs.

My perspective on diversity is shaped by my own background: I was born and raised in Jordan. I have finished my undergrad and master's degrees in computer science in Jordan, then moved to the USA to pursue my Ph.D. degree. I understand, from experience, how adjusting to new cultures is intimidating and difficult, and how it can take a long time to dispel the feeling of being an outsider. This experience has taught me to accept and understand other cultures; I have learned to minimize my tendency to classify people based on stereotypes. People differ in terms of their opinions, race, nationality, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religion, lifestyle, and so much more, and I have come to understand why all forms of diversity are vital for the wellbeing of contemporary society. At my current university, I was an instructor for two courses; Applied Databases and Network-Based Application Development. These courses attracted both freshmen and sophomore undergraduates as well as graduates studying computing and informatics. I have taken an active role to promote diversity in the classroom. In the very first class I taught, I conducted a survey to gather background information from students and sought to organize a group project that brought together students from different backgrounds. One effective way I found to encourage mixing was to encourage students to engage in peer discussions. In this way, all students learned from one another and gained an appreciation for the benefits of diversity in the student body. As an instructor, my role was to create and manage an inclusive classroom so that every student felt comfortable participating in discussions, and to achieve this goal, I usually selected a topic that interests as many students as possible. I believe that a diverse and cooperative environment in higher education is an ideal way to prepare students to become better professionals. Inside the classroom provides an opportunity for me to cultivate a safe, nonjudgmental environment for students of all kinds. Much of what I believe makes a good teacher applies to encouraging diversity. I believe empathy for underrepresented students and an open mind to constantly learning about the challenges of others are core values important for diversity. In one of the courses I have taught, there was a particular female student who felt uncomfortable asking questions in class, even though she was an excellent student. During office hours, she tended to ask good questions and demonstrated a solid understanding of the material, but expressed uncertainty about speaking during class. I started calling on her in class, especially when I was sure she knew the answer, to help ease her burden of speaking out. She eventually participated on her own more often, and became a model student for the rest of the class. As a Ph.D. candidate at UNC Charlotte, international student, researcher in the field of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), I have long been interested in promoting cultural diversity in the field, and thereby creating an environment of creative innovation.

Future goals towards diversity

I plan to actively seek opportunities in research, in the classroom, and across campus to enhance diversity and opportunities for individuals from historically underrepresented backgrounds. As educators, we have a responsibility to ensure that all students are prepared to work in a diverse environment and collaborate with others who bring new perspectives. I hope to take an active role in your department to promote inclusion and awareness of diversity among students, working with students and faculty regardless of their race, ethnicity, gender, age, religion, language, abilities/disabilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, or country of origin. Finally, I

feel that I am in a position to make a useful contribution to the organization of courses and workshops by drawing on my experiences at UNC Charlotte to promote diversity, and equity, thereby boosting academic excellence.

As a faculty member, I will strive to recognize and remove implicit biases, and to foster a welcoming environment, where all people can find a comfortable space regardless of their background or prior exposure to computer science. Overall, my philosophy regarding diversity is two-fold. First, it is important to watch, listen, and learn: these three actions ultimately lead to respect. Listening is especially important because diversity is not always apparent at first glance: it is much deeper than that. Second, it is important to do what you can to support everyone, especially underrepresented groups. If you can help these underrepresented groups, then you can help everyone.