

Zhu-Tian Chen | Diversity Statement

I am committed to promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion in my research group, my courses, within the department, the university, and my research communities. As an international researcher, I myself have experienced huge cultural shifts over the past seven years, and thus profoundly appreciate the necessity of cultural and individual diversity in our society. The experience of being a teaching fellow at Harvard University deepened my understanding of equity and inclusion – I noticed that Asian students tended to ask me, rather than other teaching fellows, for help. I couldn't help but imagine if there were more teaching fellows or faculties from underrepresented groups (e.g., female, LGBTQ+), they would definitely have a positive impact on students from these groups or even the entire community. These experiences strengthen my will to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion as an educator through my teaching, mentoring, research, and service.

In my Ph.D. and Postdoc, I bring my values of inclusion into the work environment and support historically underrepresented populations in my mentoring. For example, when teaching, I use gender- and value-neutral language and emphasize collaboration rather than intense head-to-head competition. With the experience of working with people with disabilities, I deeply understand the importance and methods of fostering a comfortable atmosphere for them. For example, I treat them equally but quietly ensure they have equal access to resources. Within and outside work environments, I seek to support students from underrepresented groups as a mentor. For example, four of the six Ph.D. students I have mentored are female. I have encouraged and guided them throughout the process of completing their own Computer Science research projects. All of them published or submitted their own first-author papers. In particular, Tica Lin, a Ph.D. student at Harvard University, received an honorable mention award at IEEE VIS 2023. In addition, I actively mentor people of color. For example, I have volunteered to be the research supervisor of Brian Nzuki, a Harvard undergraduate student from Kenya, Africa. In addition to instructing him in a research project on document retrieval, I also shared my experiences to help inform his choice between a career in academia or industry. Salma Abdel Magid, a female Ph.D. student of color at Harvard, has worked on a startup project on sports videos under my mentorship. Our effort led to two publications at the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference, the premier sports industry conference. We are also working on a research project targeting top computer vision conferences.

As a faculty member, I will continue my effort and take concrete actions to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion. Below are some concrete steps I plan to take:

- **I will encourage students from underrepresented groups to apply to Ph.D. programs and join my lab.** Specifically, I will actively meet and chat with students interested in working with me or joining my lab and share information about scholarships targeting students from underrepresented groups. I will accept Ph.D. students with no bias towards ethnicity, gender, color, and background..
- **I will provide positions in my lab for students to experience research projects.** Specifically, I will open internship positions in my lab for students who are unsure whether to pursue a Ph.D. The focus of these positions is to help students experience the process of a research project, instead of their research outputs.
- **I will embrace open source to lower the barriers to STEM education.** I will make my projects open source and write instructions to help others reproduce, make progress, and develop their own systems based on my research. Additionally, I will also develop online open courses for MOOC platforms.
- **I will do my best to listen to and hold dialogues with marginalized students and colleagues,** and bring the willingness to listen and learn to the table.