

# Anh Luong

## *Diversity Statement*

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The days of garage science are gone. Engineering has now shifted to the point where it is extremely interdisciplinary and requires large teams to make an impact. When people from different social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds come together, it is critical to listen, accept differences, and be flexible to change. I envision building a diverse research group and realize that this will be challenging for a number of reasons. Even though it is changing, there is still a social stigma in many circles towards engineering, but I believe this can be overcome by working closely with students at the K-12 and undergraduate level.

I have been fortunate to work with a variety of underrepresented minority students throughout my graduate school experience. For the most part, these interactions are no different than with any other student. There is, however, the rare occasion when a difference in cultural background and expectations requires attention. I have developed active listening and keep an open mindset to nurture a transparent and open dialog, set expectations and goals, and navigate any differences.

In my experience with underrepresented students, they tend to restrict their potential growth because of the inability to feel included. With students that I am mentoring or advising, I set expectations and manageable goals early to ensure my students' future success. It is important to build an environment where all students are comfortable to speak out and express their opinions. This is critical for success in research. To elaborate, we would start with one-on-one meetings, then progress to group presentations, and then to a public presentation at department/university seminars. For students who come from cultures that are uncomfortable with asking questions in public or in front of a crowd, I would encourage them to write down the questions and interact with the presenter afterward. Similarly, international students might need additional visual examples due to the language barrier; activities like paper discussion and group projects are great channels to ease them into communicating their ideas and share their understanding with other students.

During my time at the University of Utah, I volunteered at a public library as a mentor to introduce and engage ethnic minorities with financial difficulties to STEM topics. I saw the struggles they had due to lack of available resources early on. In addition to publicly available coursework, I would like to make older research hardware available to encourage tinkering through guided workshops. Another unfortunate fact is that women are substantially underrepresented in my field of study because of the stigma of gender in engineering. Through the future outreach events at K-12 and local public schools, I would like to inspire by showing examples of female success in STEM and through my actions by giving all students the required attention.