DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Kai Shu (kai.shu@asu.edu)

I believe that diverse working environments are more efficient and innovative, as diversity provokes thought. Moreover, equal opportunities represent a fundamental goal of modern societies. As technical fields increasingly dominate our lives, all genders, races and ethnicities should be equally involved. I am strongly in favor of a diverse community that samples broadly from the general population. During my Ph.D. studies, I found that my graduate school experience was enriched by the diverse pool of students and faculty, people from a great variety of countries and cultures, and from different underrepresented groups. I consider myself to be contributing to the cultural diversity on campus, by bringing my experiences and sharing them.

Ensuring Diversity with Teaching/Mentoring As a teaching assistant of both undergraduate and graduate level courses, I paid special attention to the diverse backgrounds of the students. To cope with the different academic backgrounds, I volunteered to give tutorials and answer questions data science for students from other departments. I always keep aware of the issue of diversity by encouraging group discussions and projects among students of mixed races, genders and backgrounds. I ensured that all of the students could ask questions and share their thoughts freely. In addition, students were encouraged to ask questions anonymously through an online discussion forum if they were not confident. I also ensured that neither the class nor the office hours were dominated by a certain group of students, e.g., native speakers. I have also contributed to diversity through my mentoring experiences. I have mentored seven students, among whom two are female students: Lu Cheng and Raha Moraffah. Lu Cheng and Raha Moraffah are both second year computer science Ph.D. students at ASU. My mentoring goal was to help them develop outstanding problem-solving skills and be passionate about their research. The effectiveness of my mentoring led to three publications under review.

Valuing Diversity with Research My research mainly focuses on developing novel machine learning algorithms to understand, analyze and model complex data in social media, to alleviate the problem of limited labeled data. Due to the anonymous nature of social networks, people with different races, genders, backgrounds and personalities post content freely. One of my major research themes is to study the behaviors of these diverse users, and how their background may affect the information consumption. I believe understanding their online actions can potentially help many people’s needs in real life, e.g., preventing gullible people to believe fake news. As an example, with the aid of social media data and deep learning tools, we are able to identify user emotions towards misinformation and fake news pieces. By analyzing user generated texts and images, we are able to identify populations with depression, anxiety, or other mental disorders in order to provide them with help, care, and love. For example, I study how to detect cyber bullying behaviors for online users to mitigate the issue on offline societal problems.

Future Goals towards Diversity As a faculty member, I am also committed to applying the values of diversity, fairness and inclusiveness to my student teaching and mentoring. I intend to conduct further researches (1) to enable voices from minority people to be heard by the public; and (2) to help minority people have a better life. Examples of these researches include identifying content from minority people that is buried in massive social media data. My interdisciplinary interests also drive to communicate among individuals who have different backgrounds (for example, to encourage interaction between students interested in computer science, sociology, psychology, and economics). I would also like to pursue funding opportunities from various agencies such as NSF to directly support these types of training and collaborations. Meanwhile I will take an active role in growing programs in the university targeting students from underrepresented groups. It is exciting to see that your department explicitly emphasizes the importance of campus diversity, and I hope to contribute to these conversations as faculty and staff.

Sincerely,

Kai Shu
Ph.D. Student
Computer Science
Arizona State University

http://www.public.asu.edu/~skai2