

## **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement**

Austin Clyde

I am an LGBT first-generation student from a non-traditional family, and a program at the University of Chicago—The Chicago Academic Achievement Program (CAAP)—transformed my life. The program brings together 40 first-generation low-income students (FGLI) from diverse backgrounds the summer before students' first year of college. During the summer, students are paid a living wage, taught all sorts of “secret” skills educated families typically pass along (office hours, building connections for reference letters, handling microaggressions, etc.), take mock classes for a grade, and live among a diverse cohort of students. Ever since I began graduate school, I have been an instructor and mentor in this program—seeing over three cohorts of students who were just like me over eight years ago. My goal is to continue and grow this work in my future academic endeavors. My main objectives will be:

- (1) supporting a diverse research environment in my group through inclusive team-building exercises, recruitment, and our research agenda
- (2) creating support groups for FGLI undergraduate students to foster mentorship, comradery, and nurture the structural support they need
- (3) continuing my advocacy at the university and federal level to increase structural and systematic support for students.

DEI is meeting students where they are, listening to their questions, their concerns, and their interests. Often in academia, those in charge of the classroom set the agenda, and it is no wonder why academic pipelines slowly begin to look more like those who have taught class over the years. During my introduction to computer science course, I run a data-science project which aims to inspire students to bring their issues and concerns into the classroom rather than leave them outside. The final project was to develop a particular local policy issue of their concern. Then, by teaching students ways to identify what kinds of data and methods can help them with their questions, students went off to develop final papers on a concern of their choice. During final project presentations, students were engaged and thrilled as they were able to identify patterns in predictive policing that they had experienced or witnessed. Some students went to understand aspects of water quality in their neighbors with statistically significant differences in areas with different social and economic statuses. Others even traced the sentiment of different racial slurs in newspaper archives dating back to the early 20th century. These projects do more than just include diverse issues and students in the academic project: they give students tools for incorporating local and contextualized methods into their own world.

I aim to develop programming and support groups for FGLI students. First, given computing's traditional white male stereotype both in the classroom and outside, I think it is imperative to rethink the future faces of AI and representation more broadly in science. Towards this goal, I have participated in bringing in a diverse set of speakers and voices for panels I have organized around AI. Similarly, I have participated in round table listening sessions with students from the FGLI program at UChicago to gain new perspectives on how I can support their needs. During one of these roundtable discussions on inclusion in CS, where I highlight the students and their voices, students often express that the way topics are presented fits a particular kind of person: those interested in video games, debate, and logic. While these topics belong as a part of CS education, I have found that diversifying teaching methods in the classroom leads to more diverse classrooms. In my fall seminar on AI and human rights, by focusing on democratic participation and human rights globally, the course was able to attract a diverse set of students from a variety of backgrounds—far more than I have personally experienced in courses which do not consider students interests, backgrounds, and contexts. With this in mind, I hope to continue to develop

courses that reach students where they are and involve topics and policy agendas that are interesting, insightful, and challenging for them, not just me.

I have supported DEI in computer science and AI at the federal and global levels. In conjunction with SEED AI and the Congressional AI Caucus, I brought 10 FGLI students to a policy roundtable with local congresswomen, congressional staffers, and diverse start-up founders. During the Chicago AI Across America Event, I ran a panel on systematic barriers students face, where students fielded questions from politicians regarding barriers they face. The event spurred exciting new conversations around even seemingly simple policy choices, such as getting traction for creating an NSF fund to support work-study programs where the “work” is practicing good study skills in advocacy support groups, just like CAAP. The panel brought such great attention to barriers students face, even for simple supplies for a computer science education, that we will be continuing the panel series in various AI Across America Events and South by Southwest. My policy advocacy at the national level continues where I have submitted comments for calls to the Office of Science and Technology Policy on equitable inclusion of diverse students and learning based on this experience. I plan on continuing to work with SEED AI as an advisor and the Congressional AI Caucus in developing policy initiatives that drive inclusivity and diversity in science's agenda and faces.

Lastly, as part of my research agenda, I focus on equality at the global level when it comes to access to science and technology research products and opportunities. I have published opinion pieces that argue that global access, especially about the global south, should be a driving item for scientific funding. I organized a minisymposium at an international supercomputing conference focused on including the public in global science, where I invited panelists from various career levels, backgrounds, and disciplines to present on how science can invite more public inclusivity, overcome traditional barriers in the global research environment, and be a beacon for representation, not exclusivity. I hope to continue to run panels at supercomputing conferences that promote the importance of reaching researchers globally and supporting their research.

I believe that by developing across local, university, and federal initiatives, I can support and uphold the values of inclusion and equality, adding to the already diverse and rich fabric of programs available. Beyond the programs outlined, I hope to aid current endeavors around campus and be open to improving, refining, and growing these programs through collaboration with others around campus, student groups, and new initiatives.