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Diversity Statement

Throughout my artistic and academic career, I have always been deeply committed to encouraging a culture of diversity and inclusion, both inside and outside of the classroom. Growing up queer taught me the importance of identifying with and advocating for the empowerment of all who feel othered, and I affirm this commitment by creating safe and inclusive spaces that are open to all. As a result of my deep empathy for the experience of those who feel different, I have made significant steps in my life to affirm these deeply held values. My commitment is an integral part of my research and academic work, and I pride myself on fostering an inclusive and accessible classroom environment, where each student is respected, valued, and encouraged to express themselves openly.

Throughout my work and practice, I am proud to have demonstrated the ability to successfully lead teams of future leaders. Furthermore, I am committed to expanding and opening up opportunities to develop new leaders from underrepresented groups. As a researcher active in the international LGBTQ community, I am engaged in serving and representing underrepresented populations in academic environments, both as an ally and advocate for diversity in academia. Since joining Virginia Tech, I have been active in the LGBTQ Caucus, a group of faculty and staff that meets bi-weekly to discuss proactive measures for increasing and encouraging diversity in our student community. I am a regular faculty participant in Student/Faculty mentorship events hosted at our LGBTQ Resource Center, and annually walk in a "Lavender Ceremony", a graduation ceremony to highlight the LGBTQ student community.

As someone who strives for diverse representation to be reflected in all walks of life, I am committed to educating a diverse populace, and connecting them with opportunities to succeed. I currently serve on the Diversity and Inclusivity board of the computer graphics conference SIGGRAPH, where we encourage under-represented groups to thrive in the fields of interactive arts. We create opportunities for students and new members of the SIGGRAPH community to engage and connect with mentors and peers, through a series of meet and greets, panels, outreach events and lectures during each conference. Sponsored by the ACM and Activision, our annual summit has featured lively panels and discussions on computer graphics with an emphasis on inclusion and diversity. Our summit is an opportunity for audiences to hear the stories of legendary women in animation, groundbreaking African American imagineers, or LGBTQ theorists discussing gender and interactive media. This past SIGGRAPH, I organized a panel of speakers and led a discussion on the representation of characters in animation and interactive media. In November of 2019, I was an invited speaker at SIGGRAPH Asia and spoke during the Inclusion and Diversity Summit.

My commitment to diversity in the classroom also extends into the public sphere with my work and research. As an artist, educator and researcher, my work is often engaged with exploring the worldview and experiences of under-represented groups. These projects have taken the form of social practice, interactive technological interventions, as well as public performance and outreach initiatives that discuss issues related to class, gender, race and ageism. I remain open to growing and learning, always eager to find new avenues for nurturing diverse voices to develop, grow and further contribute to a diverse and inclusive global community.