

# Diversity Statement

TALIA RINGER

My commitment to diversity is about giving students of all backgrounds the tools necessary to succeed, especially when systemic barriers deprive students of those tools. My approach is to analyze the systems or lack thereof that deprive students of those tools, and to leverage my own experiences when relevant.

My main diversity focus so far has been on improving access to role models and creating better mentorship systems. For example, as an openly bisexual woman, I grew up experiencing shaming, harassment, and discrimination for my orientation. This would have been easier to endure had I had an openly bisexual role model. To ensure that more LGBTQ+ computer scientists have access to appropriate role models, I wrote a blog interview series about LGBTQ+ computer scientists called [The Identity Function](#). I also served as a role model for others through the University of Washington (UW) Queer Mentorship Program, at times navigating mentees through life-or-death situations. I will continue to speak up as an LGBTQ+ role model, and I will help others do the same.

As a woman, I was not encouraged to program as an adolescent, and I did not take my first computer science (CS) class until college. It was difficult and almost scared me out of CS. It was thanks to mentorship from senior women and a Google diversity initiative that I chose to pursue CS. I have since made a point of mentoring more junior women in CS, from software engineers during my time as a software engineer at Amazon before graduate school, to students through the [TUNE House](#) and through UW. My role as a [P.E.O. scholar](#) makes me a visible role model for women across all fields. I plan to expand my mentorship efforts to reach other gender minorities.

Throughout my career both serving as a mentor and searching for mentors myself, I noticed that it was both vital and challenging to form lasting connections with mentors outside of my institution. This was especially important when I was looking for more senior women to help me navigate the challenges of starting a career in a male-dominated field. To help others form these connections, I started a cross-institutional long-term mentorship program. I piloted the program with 173 mentees and 95 mentors from over 30 countries around the world [at a conference in August 2020](#). I also served as co-chair of the [Programming Languages Mentoring Workshop](#) at the same conference, and I was retroactively awarded a place on the conference [organizing committee](#) in recognition of my mentorship efforts. I am in the process of forming an ACM SIGPLAN long-term mentorship committee so that I can expand my mentorship program. I plan to serve as chair of this committee.

During graduate school, I struggled with mental illness and psychological disability. I did not have a big support network in Seattle at the time, and this made it difficult to cope. In response, I formed the [Care Committee](#), a support network for CS graduate students at UW during times of need. We hosted peer support hours, distributed care baskets, listed resources, and worked to dismantle the taboo around discussing mental health among graduate students. I plan to help students organize a similar effort at my next institution.

Access to role models and mentors is a necessary step toward overcoming systemic barriers, but it is not sufficient. For example, Black Americans have been systemically denied access to safe and welcoming learning and work environments in and beyond CS. In hopes of building an actively anti-racist programming languages community, I co-organized the first [ShutDown PL](#) workshop. As part of the workshop, we drafted a Black Lives Matter programming languages [community letter](#). The letter gained over 150 signatures, and led to the expansion of [SIGPLAN PAC](#) funding to specifically cover [HBCUs and MSIs](#). I will continue to build anti-racist communities in CS.

Going forward, I plan to continue and expand the programs I have started, and to always work to identify a need to improve existing systems or build new systems. I will frame my work on diversity with three overarching goals: 1) use my status as a professor to fill the needs that I see and to help students fill the needs that they see, 2) be a vocal role model whenever my experiences are relevant, and listen and learn when my experiences are not relevant, and 3) actively work to build lab, university, and programming languages environments that welcome all and that encourage sustained investment in diversity initiatives.