Diversity Statement: Ian Yang

University of Washington

My research investigates aligning AI to human needs under diverse sociocultural norms. During my PhD at UW, I aim to promote DEI by developing more socially aware AI systems, leveraging my background in philosophy and social science to be a socioculturally cognizant researcher.

In addition to my research, I am committed to leveraging my privileged position to expand educational access to underrepresented communities. Two of my most fulfilling experiences were mentoring 55 freshmen through the College of Computing Peer Mentorship program, which was developed knowing that many students come from underserved communities; and serving as a tutor for 1000+ Online Masters of Analytics students from across the world who did not previously have access to formal computer science education. Drawing from these experiences, I would be eager to be involved with the High School to iSchool events at UW. I would love to serve as a graduate mentor for the Innovation Challenge and H4SG, and work with other students and faculty to develop Inclusion Modules. I also hope to remain committed to educational equity by continuing to serve in instructional positions.

While working with Dr. Norman Sadeh at CMU, I had the privilege of mentoring a new REU student, guiding her through project onboarding and continuing direct collaboration throughout the summer. As a Ph.D. student at UW, I would look for similar opportunities with the Office of Undergraduate Research, and by mentoring undergraduates within my own lab.

Outside of academic mentorship, I also volunteered as a coach and judge for the Atlanta Urban Debate League so students from disadvantaged backgrounds could access the opportunities that I had as a debater. I led seminars teaching the fundamentals of debate, identity politics, and postmodern philosophy theory. Lastly, I was selected as one of 28 VOICE peer educators. VOICE is Georgia Tech's sexual and relationship violence prevention and survivor support initiative, and the peer educators spread domestic violence awareness and prevention resources to help ensure no one is worried about safety while getting an education. I hope to collaborate with the UW Title IX Office to continue pursuing unwavering safety for students.