

Diversity is crucial to the growth of any field, as new perspectives promote conversations which lead to an enriched world view. Computer science, like many STEM fields, is fairly monolithic, being comprised of majority cis-gender, white men. This lack of diversity is not due to a lack of ability, but a lack of opportunity and feeling of belonging. As a research mentor and an educator, it is my duty to promote diversity in the field by nurturing the interests of those from underrepresented groups and to give them opportunities they may not otherwise have.

As the instructor for “Introduction to Information Technology”, a majority of my students were from underrepresented groups in computer science. I was given many freedoms when designing this course, so I used it to show the students the wonders of computer science and help them believe that they could do it. I surveyed the students to find their interests and background. This allowed me to understand how to relate concepts to things they knew, making computer science seem more approachable.

My proudest moment as an instructor was when I received an email from a student who was doubting their abilities. Their submission for the final project had syntax errors so it could not compile. To someone not from a CS background, this can feel devastating as they don’t know that only a few changes prevent them from having a working program. I sent them an email to encourage them by showing them just how close they were and how far they’d come. Here is an excerpt from their response:

*I appreciate the time and commitment you put into this email because it really gave me the motivation I needed because I felt pretty rough.*

...

*I am really grateful to have run into an encouraging professor. I decided to take CS 1110 in hopes to improve and I promise I won’t let you down!*

As a researcher, I have had a great mentor. Prof. Matthew Dwyer, my advisor, has gone out of his way to provide students from underrepresented populations research opportunities, whether it be an undergraduate summer research internship or as one of his doctoral students. I intend to follow his lead by giving opportunities to those who may not have been afforded them before. I will do this not only by giving my time as a mentor, but I will also look to acquire funds via grants to support these students so they do not feel they need to choose between research and supporting themselves.