Yannis Katsis
Statement of Contributions to Diversity

Throughout my life I have had the opportunity to spend extended periods of time living in a multitude of countries (17 years in Greece, 5 years in Germany, 2 years in France and 10 years in the US). These stays allowed me to experience a variety of different communities, each with their own unique cultural, racial, religious and ethnical characteristics. Having been part of a minority myself on some occasions, has helped me to not only identify the challenges that underrepresented populations are facing but also realize the advantages that having a diverse population brings to both learning and social interaction. I have indeed found during my research, teaching and mentoring experience that some of the best learning and research outcomes are obtained by bringing together individuals of diverse technical and social backgrounds, each with their own unique point of views. Based on these experiences, I am committed to both assist minorities with their unique needs and also promote diversity within the university environment.

As a Postdoctoral Scholar at UC San Diego, I worked towards this direction in a variety of ways. Being of Greek origin, I collaborated with graduate students and other members of the community to found the Hellenic Student Association, whose goal is to bring together people interested in Greek culture. My involvement included running a big part of the association including organizing events, reaching out to the student body and giving lessons in Greek language as part of the Language Table program, coordinated by UC San Diego’s International House.

On the educational side, I assisted a Greek non-profit organization in their US Educational Trip; a one-week student exchange program from Greek universities to UC San Diego, with the goal of exposing the students to a different university environment from which they can draw inspirations for contributions that they can make to their own schools back in Greece. Interacting with the students during their visits to university organizations and local companies and looking at UC San Diego through their own eyes, was a unique experience for me that further strengthened my view of the importance of diversity in a university environment.

Finally, leveraging the health-related data about San Diego county that we have integrated as part of the DELPHI project (please refer to the research statement for further details), I assisted in the mentorship of two groups of Women in Computing students to create visualizations of these datasets specifically tailored to be displayed on the large scale visualization display of the California Institute of Communications and Information Technology (Calit2).

As a new Professor in your department I look forward to continue my work on assisting underrepresented populations and promoting diversity. My plan is to work with already established minority groups (such as the Women in Computing group I worked with at UC San Diego) and also to reach out to other populations, including highschool students and members of the broader community. Data analytics and visualizations provide a unique opportunity to inspire and engage individuals of all ages, as they not only yield results that have tangible benefits for people’s lives, but can also be used for interesting student projects and community involvement activities, such as hackathons. Finally, I also plan to continue my involvement in student exchange both from and to the United States.