

Diversity Statement: Raghav Malik

I am committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive environment, both in the classroom and in my research lab.

During my PhD, I mentored five undergraduate students, two of whom were underrepresented minorities and one of whom was a woman. About half of these students were part of SURF, a summer research program at Purdue that provides funding and research opportunities to undergraduate students, many of whom are first-generation college students or come from historically underrepresented groups. I was the primary mentor for the SURF students: I scoped and planned research projects for them, guided them through learning the requisite knowledge, and gave them feedback to improve their writing and presentation skills. I ended up coauthoring papers with all of them, and for the two SURF students who wanted to pursue a PhD, I gave them advice and helped review their graduate school applications; both are now successfully completing their PhD's at Georgia Tech. I am dedicated to make my research group a diverse and inclusive space as well. I will continue to participate in programs that give research opportunities to students who might not otherwise have gotten involved in research, particularly to first-generation college students and underrepresented minorities.

When I taught Data Structures in Summer 2024, the class size was about 80 students. As with any class this large, the students came from a very diverse set of backgrounds. I implemented a number of policies to keep my class as inclusive as possible to students of different backgrounds and learning styles.

Many of my students were working full-time jobs while taking the class. To ensure that they could still engage with the course and keep up with the material, I recorded my lectures, and posted the recordings along with all lecture materials to the course webpage. I also relaxed my attendance policy to allow for submitting attendance poll responses up to 24 hours after lecture, so that students who were unable to attend class for any reason could still get credit for participating in discussions.

I recognized that students often learn material and show mastery in vastly different ways. To keep my course accessible to students with varying learning styles, I gave students multiple opportunities to demonstrate mastery by providing extra credit opportunities throughout the course. Thus, if a student generally struggled with the exams due to test-taking anxiety, they could still make up their grade by performing exceptionally well on the projects, and vice versa.

Finally, I gave all students five penalty-free late days they could use throughout the semester without approval, and an additional five late days on every assignment for a marginal penalty. By instituting a generous late-work policy, I helped foster an inclusive environment for students who were struggling with mental health issues or other problems at home, and ensured that, even if they couldn't make some deadlines, they could still be successful in the course.

Besides working to make my course generally inclusive, I also made specific accommodations for students who reached out to me. One student had some recurring health issues that had been flaring up throughout the semester and preventing her from being able to complete some of the projects. She reached out to me towards the end of the semester, worried that she had missed too much to be able to pass the class. We worked together to devise a specific plan that would exempt her from certain assignments and grant her reasonable extensions on others so that she could demonstrate mastery without being overwhelmed. I checked in with her frequently and helped her stay on track, and ensured that by the end of the semester she was able to successfully pass.

I intend to apply these principles to my course design and teaching. I will strive to make my classroom a safe and inclusive space for students of varying needs and backgrounds to succeed. I will also continue to educate myself on diversity and inclusivity issues to better foster such an environment.