Spotlight on the Diversity & Access Team

The mission of the Diversity & Access team is to attract and support the next generation of outstanding computer scientists and computer engineers who reflect the many dimensions of diversity in Washington state and the diverse needs, backgrounds, and experiences of technology users around the world. We do this through K-12 outreach and recruitment efforts aimed at broadening participation in computing and through undergraduate retention efforts aimed at ensuring that students of all backgrounds feel like they belong and can thrive in the Allen School.

The Diversity & Access team reflects a commitment to supporting students from groups who are underrepresented in computing. We use the National Science Foundation definition of underrepresented in the computing field including students who are women, African American, Hispanic, American Indian, Native Hawaiian, Native Pacific Islander, and students with disabilities. Our definition is more expansive, however, and includes but is not limited to students who have different gender identities, who identify as LGBTQ+, who are Black and Latine, who are from low-income backgrounds, and who are first-generation college students. We also consider the intersectionality of different identity dimensions. Our activities and programs are open to anyone who shares the goal of providing a supportive environment for students who are underrepresented in computing.

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Spotlight on the Diversity & Access Team

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The D&A team includes nine professional staff members led by Chloe Dolese Mandeville. Their activities are split into four subteams.

**Outreach**

Juliet Quebatay - Senior Program Manager, K-12 Outreach
Fernanda Jardim - Senior K-12 Outreach Specialist

The Outreach team leads the Allen School’s efforts to expose K-12 students from a range of backgrounds to computing. We engage with youth through high school visits, on-campus field trips, partnerships with community-based organizations, and large on-campus events. Our signature activities include:

- Coordinating the CSEdWeek Open House and virtual activities for K-12 students and their families.
- Hosting an NCWIT Aspirations in Computing Regional Awards Ceremony for high school women and non-binary students.
- Overseeing the Changemakers in Computing four-week summer program for rising high school juniors and seniors.

- Supervising the Allen School Ambassadors – current students who serve as a near-to-peer connection to students who are interested in exploring computing, leading presentations, student panels, and computing activities.

**Recruitment**

Kayla Shuster Sasaki, Admissions Specialist
Isatou Ceesay, Undergraduate Recruiter

The D&A recruitment efforts primarily serve Washington state high schools and community colleges with significant numbers of first-generation college students, underrepresented students of color, and students from low-income backgrounds. In addition, we host information sessions and provide admissions advising to prospective Running Start & Transfer applicants. On campus, we participate in events including the UW’s Multicultural Outreach & Recruitment Affinity Conferences, application preparation events, Transfer Student Preview Day, UW’s Admitted Student Day and the Allen School’s Direct Admit Virtual Event Series. New in Autumn 2024, we will also have a team of five Student Recruitment Representatives who will support our recruitment efforts.
Ph.D. Visit Days 2024 Highlights

Elise Dorough & Les Sessoms

On March 12 and 13, the Allen School hosted over 120 students from around the world for our annual Ph.D. Visit Days. The purpose of the visits is to provide prospective doctoral students an overview of the school as a whole, a chance to interact with faculty and students working in individual research areas, and an opportunity to learn what life is like in the Allen School, our university, and in Seattle and the Pacific Northwest. Faculty and current doctoral students hosted research group information sessions, one-on-one meetings, and social activities.

Our current students hosted three affinity group receptions on the first day of the event:

- **Women/Diverse Genders & Allies Reception.** Hosted by doctoral student Junran Yang, the Diverse Genders in Research Reception brought students and faculty together in support of people who self-identify as a member of any historically underrepresented gender group – including cisgender women, trans people of any gender, and non-binary people – in a laid-back setting.

- **LEAP Alliance & Allies Reception.** Our community of LEAP Fellows is growing! All prospective PhD students were invited to join current LEAP Fellows, faculty and staff for a lively discussion centered on life as a grad student at UW as told by members of the UW LEAP community. This reception was co-hosted by first-year doctoral student Ryan Zambrotta.

- **LGBTQ+ & Allies Reception.** People who attended the LGBTQ+ & Allies Reception were welcomed by host, doctoral student Anjali Pal, faculty and grads. The reception featured a great conversation about the Allen School’s commitment to fostering a strong research community, where everyone is valued regardless of their sexual orientation.

Special thanks to all of the staff, faculty, and students who made this event happen! When it comes to visit days it really “takes a village” and the Allen School community showed up in many incredible ways to demonstrate why this is a fantastic place to pursue a Ph.D.

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**Allen School Scholars Program**

*Leslie Ikeda, Allen School Scholars Program Senior Program Manager*

*Christina Huynh, Allen School Scholars Interim Program Manager*

*Lori Dowling, Allen Scholars Academic Adviser*

The Allen School Scholars Program (Allen Scholars) is a one-year cohort-based program that focuses on supporting emerging Washington state leaders from first generation, low-income, and underserved communities who are pursuing a degree in Computer Science or Computer Engineering. All students who select Computer Science or Computer Engineering as their first-choice major on the UW freshman application are considered for Allen Scholars by the Office of Admissions. The Allen Scholars program provides a structured first-year curriculum that establishes a tight-knit learning community and assists in developing fundamental skills necessary for the rigor of the Allen School curriculum and the computing field as a whole. Elements of the Allen Scholars program include a four-week summer bridge program, introduction to programming workshops, and weekly study halls. We are welcoming 60 new students for our 2024-25 Allen Scholars cohort, our biggest cohort so far!

**Student Programming & DEIA Spaces**

*EJ Pinera, Student Leadership Development Coordinator*

It is important that all of our students find community within the Allen School. We support over 20 Allen School-affiliated student organizations, including five affinity-based groups. We also provide support for student attendance at diversity-related conferences such as the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing and the Richard Tapia Celebration of Diversity in Computing.

Additionally, there are DEIA Spaces for students to find community and engage with in the Allen School. These spaces include the Student Group Lounge, the Undergraduate D&A Lounge, and the Allen School Meditation Room, and are open 24/7 for all students to utilize.

Learn more at the [D&A Team’s webpage](#).
Many of our students are passionate about teaching and eager to learn more about computing education. The Allen School supports their efforts by sponsoring student travel to the ACM Technical Symposium on Computer Science Education (SIGCSE) held in February or March of each year. While SIGCSE has always had a number of papers focused on broadening participation in computing (BPC), this year, recognizing its central importance, BPC became one of the symposium’s 5 official topics (along with Computing, Education and Experience, Curriculum, and Methods).

The Allen School SIGCSE student scholarship is run by Kevin Lin. Over the past 3 years, 60 students have attended the symposium through the program. At the most recent symposium (SIGCSE TS 2024) in Portland, Oregon, 16 students attended in-person and 1 student attended virtually. Two of our students commented on their experiences.

**Kianna Bolante:** Being able to present my own paper – entitled “Bringing Social Computing to Secondary School Classrooms” (coauthors Kevin Chen, Quan Zi Chen, and Amy Zhang) – at SIGCSE was an incredibly meaningful experience! In addition, the variety of sessions and people I met at this conference showed me the vibrant and welcoming community of educators in the field and encouraged me to continue exploring a future career in computing education.

**Suh Young Choi:** I’m a Master’s student in Classics and Textual & Digital Studies, former Allen School TA, and I presented a paper at SIGCSE 2024, entitled “It Can Relate to Real Lives: Attitudes and Expectations in Justice-Centered Data Structures & Algorithms for Non-Majors,” (coauthors Anna Batra, Yanbing Xiao, Kevin Lin, Iris Zhou, Chongjiu Gao and Sonia Fereidooni). This conference will make you tired in the best way-- there are always conversations to have, concepts to learn, and connections to make!

Applications for a scholarship to SIGCSE TS 2025 (in Pittsburgh during week 8 of Winter 2025 quarter) will open November 2024. Applicants must be current UW students at the time of the conference. In addition, we encourage students to review the Allen School’s Computer Science Education resources and opportunities.
**The Taskar Center for Accessible Technology**

**TCAT** The Taskar Center for Accessible Technology

In the context of educating the next generation of computer scientists, the Allen School is dedicated not only to advancing accessibility in technology, but also in providing its students with the understanding of the dynamic interplay between technology and different subpopulations, and practical experience with some of the thorny details involved with the integration and translation of computational products into the hands of real people. As part of this commitment, the school has housed The Taskar Center for Accessible Technology (TCAT) for the past 9.5 years. Though technology has changed and improved dramatically over that time, TCAT has been focused on guiding the translation of accessible technology from research products at the university to real products, handling the process in a nuanced, thoughtful and participatory manner on the part of UW students, faculty and partner communities. The Taskar Center stands at the forefront of that translation at the Paul G. Allen school.

TCAT’s core mission revolves around advancing accessible technology. But what does that mean? It’s about co-designing solutions that break down barriers for individuals with disabilities, rather than creating solutions in the vacuum of research environments and then shipping them over to the user population. This participatory design practice, which TCAT has been promoting since its inception in 2014, ensures that stakeholder populations can fully engage with the technology, and even become stewards of the technology that is being deployed.

TCAT’s focus areas include:

- **Mobility + Transportation**: TCAT collaborates with engineers, designers, and community members to develop innovative solutions related to mobility and transportation. From accessible public transit to adaptive vehicle controls, TCAT’s work directly impacts the lives of people with motor limitations.

- **Non-Ableist AI**: Artificial intelligence (AI) has immense potential, but it must be designed with inclusivity in mind. TCAT explores ways to make AI systems more considerate of diverse abilities. By challenging ableist assumptions, they pave the way for AI that truly serves everyone.

- **Work + Play**: Accessibility extends beyond work—it’s about enabling participation in all aspects of life. TCAT works on projects that enhance accessibility in both professional and leisure contexts. Whether it’s workplace accommodations or inclusive gaming experiences, TCAT’s work is far-reaching.

Within these foci, TCAT engages UW students, faculty, and partner communities, in sustaining accessible technology development, deployment, and translation into the hands of real users. Through pioneering research, advocacy, and community engagement, TCAT has been instrumental in breaking down barriers, moving the needle on WA state policy and even at the federal level, particularly in the area of access to mobility and transportation.

TCAT’s mission addresses the diverse and variable needs of all individuals, avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions. By collaborating with stakeholders from various backgrounds, the center develops cutting-edge technologies that empower users of all abilities. Its work spans a wide range of fields, focusing on three pillars of engagement: access to Mobility and Transportation; Access to Work and Play; and Non-ableist Artificial Intelligence and Data Science.
The Center for Research and Education on Accessible Technology (CREATE)

CREATE is dedicated to increasing equity and inclusion by supporting cutting-edge innovations in accessible technology and by reshaping the who and the how of accessibility research.

**Bigger than the sum of its parts**

In 2019, UW faculty whose individual work on accessibility had already profoundly influenced developments in accessible technology (e.g., Voiceover on iPhones and Talk Back on Androids) conceived of a multidisciplinary center focused on accessibility and technology that, by bringing together faculty and students across a range of disciplines, would be bigger than the sum of its parts. Such a center would foster collaboration, transformative approaches to access, and visibility for students, faculty, and people with disabilities. With an **inaugural gift from Microsoft**, CREATE began its work.

CREATE aims to embody the disability mantra “nothing about us without us,” a mantra that, in the case of the computing fields, asserts that accessible technology should be designed by (not for) people with disabilities. By supporting research shaped by people with disabilities, by reshaping STEM education to be accessible, and by ensuring that accessibility research translates into the world in ways desired by people with disabilities, CREATE seeks nothing less than a transformation in the future of accessible technology: futures designed by, with, and to serve people with disabilities.

**Training the next generation of accessibility champions**

CREATE works to ensure that the next generation of developers and engineers are champions of accessibility by advocating for students with disabilities while also educating all students about accessibility.

Student members of CREATE can enroll in Accessibility courses at the UW, participate in CREATE research, events, seminars and bolster their learning by participating in partner programs like HuskyAdapt, DUB (UW Design. Use. Build), and Teach Access. CREATE’s corporate affiliate program gives students opportunities to get involved with industry representatives dedicated to developing accessibility technologies. And its ever-growing numbers of disability-serving partners in the community means that CREATE students can get valuable experience working with—and developing technology for—people with disabilities.

"CREATE is driven by the vision, passion, and commitment of its faculty and students to shaping solutions around the needs and limitations of accessible technology."

–Jennifer Mankoff, Director of CREATE

Allen School Professor **Jennifer Mankoff** has been Director of CREATE since its founding in 2020—the first three years co-directing with iSchool Professor **Jacob O. Wobbrock**. In that time, CREATE has provided students with transformative ways of thinking about disability and about interdisciplinary research, established itself as a leader in the development of next-generation accessible technologies, and ensured that people with disabilities are included in and help drive new inventions.
One of TCAT’s primary initiatives is improving the non-motorized experiences for people with disabilities. In particular, the OpenSidewalks project focuses on standardizing and building a routable network of sidewalks compatible with other contributed data out there. As of early 2024, OpenSidewalks boasts the largest open shared dataset of accessible pedestrian infrastructure, including over 1 million paths collected into a set of routable graphs. The USDOT recognized the impactful change that consistent, standardized accessible pedestrian data could bring not only to trip planning, but also to transportation planning. Through the ITS4US program, the USDOT is seeking deployment of the OpenSidewalks data and tooling through 3 different states, and replicable everywhere else in the U.S. In the past two years, WA State advocacy organizations, including TCAT partners, Front & Centered and Disability Rights Washington, lobbied to have OpenSidewalks data collected throughout the entire state of WA, resulting in a first-of-its-kind Provisio voted by the state legislature to collect all of WA state sidewalks in the OpenSidewalks standard. This work is currently underway under the leadership of TCAT.

The significance of this work is that this type of data has never before been available for researchers, urban and transportation planners and other application developers to use openly for technology innovation in the space of accessible technology, or in the space of metricizing and accounting for public reach and access to opportunity. Meta Maps recently formalized its partnership with TCAT to promote open shared data about pedestrian ways. The partnership is about reshaping transit experiences and fostering inclusivity for all traveler experiences. The achievement of the center was noted just this week by the Mozilla foundation, listing TCAT’s effort in its newly published AI Intersections Database. TCAT’s work is mapped in the connection between AI impacts and disability justice.

The center recognizes that data that does not get used and maintained, it can basically die untouched in a database. TCAT has always been about engaging the disability community in useful ways to use, assess, and be able to comment on the utility of the data. TCAT’s flagship translated application is AccessMap Multimodal.

### CREATE

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Jennifer Mankoff–CREATE Director, the Richard E. Ladner Professor, Paul G. Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering, and Director of the Make4all Lab–works with students on a physical computing/fabrication project.

**Collaboration and community**

Faculty and student members of CREATE hail from the Allen School, Mechanical Engineering, the Information School, Rehabilitation Medicine, Disability Studies, and Human Centered Design & Engineering. This interdisciplinary setting inspires new synergies across the fields. Some central areas of focus for CREATE are:

- **Early access and the brain** examines mobility devices and training for children with mobility challenges.
- **Mobility equity** empowers people with disabilities to navigate their communities, transportation systems, and even rooms.
- **Physical computing** combines consumer-grade fabrication, computing technology, and the maker movement to create solutions for individual needs and bodies, such as tactile maps and handheld devices.
- **CREATE Seminars** focus on important intersections with disability, such as examining disability and climate change, and have led to an initiative on Race, Disability & Technology.

CREATE also provides funding support for students and faculty working on accessibility and disability.
We are happy to have John Rumney join the Allen School staff as a Mental Health Consultant with the primary goal of increasing the awareness of, and the accessibility to, mental health services within the Allen School. John will provide mental health consultations to students, as well as staff and faculty who have concerns about a student. Consultations are brief, informal consultations that are free and totally confidential.

While not a substitute for regular therapy, counseling, or psychiatric care, these consultations will give students the opportunity to talk about such things as

- Personal concerns
- Problem-solving
- How to have a difficult conversation with someone
- How to manage short-term stress and anxiety
- How to better manage your thoughts and emotions

Most importantly, John will be able to direct students to resources and support both on and off campus.

John will also offer workshops to the Allen School community on topics related to mental health and well-being. Keep an eye out for these offerings and let him know if you have specific ideas for topics for workshops or presentations that you feel would be helpful to your mental wellbeing.

John is a Licensed Mental Health Counselor and has worked in higher education for over sixteen years including working as a counselor in the UW Counseling Center from 2013-2017. He holds an MS degree in Applied Psychology from Eastern Washington University, where he also worked as a counselor in the office of Counseling and Psychological Services. He has worked at both large and small universities, as well as public and private colleges and is happy to be back at the UW and working within the Allen School.

John is originally from Maine but considers the Pacific Northwest his home. He enjoys spending time outdoors walking, running, and exploring the city of Seattle and the outlying areas. He enjoys reading, writing, photography, admits to being a bit of a sci-fi nerd and is already aspiring to becoming a birdwatcher in his retirement years. He also enjoys studying human nature, interpersonal interaction, and human development, which adds to his enjoyment of working with university students.

Announcements

- **Students:** YOU can help the Allen School’s DEIA efforts! Volunteer to help with an aspect of our Strategic Plan implementation, build and help maintain a list of student opportunities, suggest and maybe even write, edit or proofread Newsletter articles. Interested in opportunities for the Summer or Fall quarter? Contact your friendly editor, Jan Cuny at jcuny@cs.washington.edu.

- Check out the College of Engineering’s Bias, Discrimination and Sexual Harassment resources, including its relatively new Incident Reporting System.

- **Faculty:** Over the next two years, a new federal rule requires that all digital materials for courses (slides, assignments, readings, and course websites) be made accessible to the WCAG 2.1 standard (www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21). Stay tuned for help in bringing your class materials into compliance.