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There is a Japanese word, “ikigai”, which means “reason for being.” For me, this ikigai is data science and machine learning; This field allows me to use mathematics and creative problem solving to understand the world around me and learn new perspectives that only numbers could lead me to. My motivations for pursuing graduate school align closely with my ikigai and initiative outlined in my statement of purpose; however, my lived experiences between the lines extend beyond previous work and classroom experience. A core value of mine is also making computer science equitable and accessible to all who want to learn, and through acknowledging my own privilege, I’ve leveraged my positions through academic service and leadership within the student body to perpetuate equitable data science opportunity. Collectively, this background in addition to the initiative in my statement of purpose helped affirm my decision for graduate school.

In addition to my contributions on course staff, I have promoted Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion serving on the board of two student organizations in the computer & data science space. I accomplished this through mandatory seminars and participation activities on DEI values, providing examples of conduct violations within academic and professional contexts. As a result, not only does the board carry themselves with DEI in mind, but this behavior sets the example for general members, having led to a reduction in DEI related conflicts to *just one* in the previous year. Additionally, both these organizations host consulting and project cohorts to increase accessibility to learning and participating in data science and ML outside the classroom. As a Project director, I passed down technical and soft skills from my previous industry experience to these students and encouraged underrepresented individuals, especially those with no experience to apply and provided them an equitable environment because at my core, I am committed to sharing the value of data science. Overall, this involvement has helped me become not only a better leader, but also understand where I fall in relation to others socioeconomically in the field.

Building on the importance of equitable data science, I engaged in a guided research project on public transit accessibility based on different socioeconomic factors in the NYC area focusing on inequality issues through income, proximity to public transport, and crime rate. I utilized geospatial data science to create a metric to score regions of the city based on how equitable public transportation was to someone based on their region, accounting for bias to ensure a more robust score assignment. This project further propelled my desire for graduate school as it not only led to me joining my first research group, but also embodied my initiative to utilize data science for human health & development.

I am fortunate enough to receive an undergraduate degree, and my academic service served as a way to give back to the community that fostered my success. Collectively, my academic involvements shaped my decision to pursue a graduate degree, specifically in a program that aligns with my lived experiences and contributions in both industry data science applications *and* equitable computing education. Overall, I look forward to attending Berkeley: an institution that supports my initiative to pursue a higher education in computing and acknowledges students of all backgrounds, especially those less privileged than mine.