

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Statement

Economics, and macroeconomics in particular, suffers from a striking absence of diversity. My experience as a graduate student hailing from India has convinced me that fixing this is an urgent challenge for the subject, given the severe consequences of this lack of diversity for the scope of questions asked and methodological approaches pursued in economics. As an economist, I therefore commit to make every effort possible to promote inclusion in economics. In my work as a faculty member, I will take conscious steps toward supporting the success of all my students and colleagues, recognizing the incredible privilege I have enjoyed in being able to pursue my field and striving to address my own unconscious biases. I am committed to promoting and adhering to the principles of radical inclusion in the workplace, and actively encouraging the participation of students and colleagues from racial, ethnic, and religious minorities, as well as non-traditional students including first-generation and low-income students, veteran students, mature students, and students with disabilities in economics.

Teaching

In my role as a teaching assistant, I have had the opportunity to work and interact with students from an immense range of backgrounds. These interactions have instilled in me a deep appreciation both for the value of diversity in the classroom and for the challenges groups underrepresented in economics face.

As a teaching assistant at the London School of Economics, I was a teaching assistant regularly working with 20 students on EC210: Macroeconomic Principles. My classroom included a diverse group of candidates who came from all corners of the world, with different academic backgrounds and different levels of initial preparation for a math-intensive course. I strove to tailor the support I could provide to students based on these initial differences, and was rewarded with a substantial narrowing of the variance in performance on the course as the year progressed. One of my students faced a special learning disability, and I provided them with the specific support they required to handle the class via extra one-on-one mentoring sessions. The student went on to secure a 2:1 (equivalent to a GPA of 3.6/4) on a particularly difficult course.

At Stanford, as a teaching assistant on Econ 143: Finance, Corporations and Society, I worked with several mature students, enabling them to form groups to work on their final projects and providing them with the encouragement necessary to participate in a class predominantly composed of sophomores. I was responsible for instituting content warnings on a relatively new module in the class dealing with the untimely death of a child due to corporate negligence. Due to the pandemic, Econ 143 was assessed via a novel final project, intended to allow student groups to showcase examples of the tenuous relationship between corporations and society. I advised multiple final project groups composed of Black students to explore how racism enters this relationship. My encouragement led to these project groups exploring America's growing reliance on private for-profit prisons and the resulting increase in incarceration and recidivism rates, particularly among minorities. The groups appreciated the ability to work on this issue, one they considered particularly relevant, and remarked that this relevance encouraged them to put in extra effort and to contribute to a greater extent to the class than they otherwise would have – allowing me to develop a deeper appreciation for just how transformative incorporating diverse viewpoints into the classroom and into assignments can be. As a teaching assistant on Econ 52, Stanford's second year intermediate macroeconomics course, I was responsible for the execution of a final project requiring students to apply the intellectual apparatus of macroeconomics to studying their own topics in lieu of a final exam. This new format for evaluation proved to not only be more appropriate for the online context in which the class was held, it also allowed students to explore issues close to their heart and engage with the content with their own unique perspectives. In latter iterations of Econ 52, I was responsible for preparing assessment questions, and made an explicit effort to introduce issues associated with economic inequality and racial inequality in the curriculum, as well as guiding students to resources reflecting these topics in macroeconomics.

Moving forward, I recognize that as a faculty member, my role in facilitating inclusion in the classroom will take on a newfound importance. I commit to creating a welcoming and inclusive culture in the classroom that is open to all points of view, and to encouraging constructive and well-informed debates on the wide range of topics

we will explore. This will involve both an honest conversation about how the historical absence of diversity in economics has affected the existing body of economic research, and explicit attempts on my part to incorporate the work of economists from underrepresented groups in class materials and discussions. I also commit to providing the flexibility and empathetic treatment that will enable my students to flourish in the classroom, remaining cognizant of the specific challenges students from non-traditional backgrounds will face. In addition to teaching, I commit to being a good mentor, and to encouraging students from such backgrounds to pursue economics further and add their unique perspectives to the profession's discourse.

Mentoring

I am particularly aware of the value mentoring can have – I was able to successfully apply to LSE's master's program only because senior members from my undergraduate institution guided me through the application process and informed me about financial support and resources for students from India in London. I have attempted to pay this forward since, by offering guidance on the master's and PhD application procedures, on what to expect from the courses, on funding opportunities and on living in London and in the US. Several juniors I have mentored have joined top predoctoral programs and top PhD programs in the UK and in the US. All these juniors have been women.

At Stanford, I have worked hard to enable my students to achieve their goals. I have connected students from underrepresented groups with colleagues in the financial sector, enabling them to enter a sector notorious for its lack of inclusion via referrals. I have also guided multiple students, including ones from minority backgrounds, towards the resources and contacts they require to join the economics honors program and have advised them on how to go about applying to graduate school. I have served as a student recruiter for Stanford's Economics PhD program, through which I have sought consistently to recruit a diverse set of candidates to the program.

In my career as a member of your department, I will continue to support the inclusion of underrepresented students in economics. Being originally from India, I am best suited to provide mentorship to international students, who face specific challenges associated with the culture shock and the distance between them and their loved ones. However, I will strive to mentor one and all, both through providing advice and by creating a welcoming environment in my field and my department.

Scholarship

My research explores how complex relationships between technological change, education, and the labor market affect labor market inequality. When exploring these topics, one fact that has struck me is how little we understand about how the impact of technological change on the returns to skill vary across groups and over time. In my dissertation work, I explore how technological changes have led firms to slowly reduce their reliance on hiring skilled workers, with adverse effects on growth in the demand for skilled labor. Key challenges for my work and in the wider literature in labor economics includes a focus on male full-time employees, and a natural extension of my work will be to understand how these changes in technologies have affected different gender and racial groups. This could be of particular importance because the increasing representation of several minority groups in college has come at exactly the time the skill premium is decelerating in growth, reducing the extent of benefits these groups may experience from college attendance.

In addition, work I am currently undertaking with Stanford's Human-Centered AI Initiative explores policy measures that could encourage employment in data science related medium-skilled jobs as a transition policy for first-time employees into the higher paying career trajectories enjoyed by tech employees, and these policies are likely to disproportionately benefit minorities who have faced substantial costs in the form of job displacement via trade and technical change.

In the future, I intend to continue to explore innovative approaches to understanding how technical change can benefit minority groups. As part of a wider agenda seeking to understand the labor market experiences of college graduates and how this experience has changed over time, I also intend to continue to characterize and understand the experiences of minorities who successfully attend college in the labor market.