

Statement of Purpose

Growing up in the slums, where going to university was not a rule, I did not have expectations about college — yet I trusted my high school teacher and followed her advice to pursue a major in Statistics, graduating first in my class. While dedicating the first year of college to co-founding an NGO that educates kids in slums; I started to grasp all the diverse applications that math has in real life. Soon I concluded that I could use my statistics training to take a stand for the vulnerable: collecting and sharing data that could show how education is difficult to achieve where people struggle financially, and how to implement successful policies to eradicate poverty.

That is how I joined my first data-related experience, becoming part of a European Union research to make improvements in the healthcare system. Here I became aware of how powerful statistics are, as they provide a method to describe and predict all kinds of phenomena on an empirical basis that people can understand and act upon. I realized that my mission was not to help educate the poor but to prevent the economic conditions that deprive them of accessing education. To attain this goal, data can be used to show where the major opportunities are when fighting poverty. What gave me the confidence that I can pursue this, is the fact that few people have this combination of hard skills (math, statistics, coding) with soft skills (sensitivity, empathy, leadership) that come naturally to me when working with the vulnerable.

Since then, my professional career took an exponential growth: from studying in Argentina and Chile, I worked for Buenos Aires Government, making predictive models to identify low-income areas in the city that needed aid; I moved to Athens to help Syrian refugees by teaching them programming; followed by working with geo-spatial analysis for climate change in the United Nations, and then building a startup in Mexico City that provides financial services to the people with no access to banks in Latin America. After five years of hands-on experience with data in diverse roles and organizations, I was able to become fluent in R and Python and learned that although there are various strategies to ending poverty, all of them depend on accurate estimates on economic livelihoods.

To be at the forefront of projects that aim to measure poverty in Argentina, I was granted the Fulbright scholarship, which is awarded to leaders working on pressing issues in their home countries. With this endorsement, I intend to join the Masters, program that will provide the best preparation for my goal of measuring poverty using robust sources of information. Furthermore, as this field is fundamentally a collaborative discipline, I am eager to become part of the schools dynamic community, to learn and work with fellow students and faculty members who are innovators in their fields.

Upon completion of my degree, I plan to return to Argentina to focus on developing a sustainable and robust method to measure poverty. There has never been a more critical time for governments and organizations to profit from the resources made available by technology that can provide a solution for the big gap that currently exists between understanding and fighting poverty. I am confident that with the Masters I will have gained all the necessary training to not only provide solutions for Argentina's need for economic data but to become a high-impact leader in the goal of driving inclusion and ending poverty.