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Program: Master of Science in Information Management, Data Science
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Statement of Purpose

Up until recently, I considered myself to be a purely technically inclined person. In fact, my deep admiration for the world of computing was what initially led me to pursue my bachelors' degree in Computer Engineering. However, this long-held notion dissipated as I embarked on my corporate journey at one of the world's leading consulting firms. Working as a consultant in the Artificial Intelligence & Data Engineering department of Deloitte over the last three years, I discovered the tremendous influence of information management in large-scale projects. I witnessed the use of analytical and management strategies significantly amplify the impact of technical implementations, and their absence hindering projects at even advanced stages of development. Over time, I realized that technical prowess alone would be insufficient in my long-term goal of wanting to bring extensive and meaningful changes in society via data-driven solutions.

My first concrete step towards this goal was back in 2014. After securing a 93rd percentile score in the All-India Engineering Entrance Examinations, I successfully received an admit at a top state university. Unfortunately, this was also when I suffered a potent setback. I had an accident that left me hospitalized with lower back nerve compression, a torn rotator cuff, and most devastatingly, a traumatic brain injury. The repercussions manifested themselves in multiple areas of my life – I was unable to walk for several months and struggled with pain management. The exhaustion of daily motor and cognitive therapy took a toll on my mental health. Inevitably, this also affected my performance in my first year of engineering, leading to results that didn't do justice to my erstwhile academic trajectory and potential. Recovering from that incident was a grueling ordeal; regardless, it set the foundation for the person I am today. Juggling physiotherapy sessions and steering my grades from a below-average performance in the first semester to the top 15 of the CS department in the final years reaffirmed my self-confidence and determination to succeed. It also taught me how crucial it is to love what you do, as even at times when motivation and discipline faltered due to mental saturation, passion kept me moving forward.

The primary takeaway from my undergraduate degree was learning the "how-to" of harnessing technological trends to forge solutions for pressing problems. My final year project, "Smart Helmet" - a device that used IOT, Machine Learning, and the Android SDK to detect vehicular accidents and enable timely aid to prevent irreversible brain damage - was a direct extension of this vision, drawing from my personal ordeals. Apart from academics, I was an active member of the university's debate society. Participating in and winning National debate competitions helped me hone my articulation, presentation, and oratory skills. In my third year, I ran for the student council elections and got elected as the Vice-Chairperson of my university's Management Society, governing over 1500 students. This role inculcated in me the quintessential values of leadership, teamwork, and decision-making - skills that I had not previously exercised at such a scale.

After graduation, I was ecstatic to receive a full-time offer from Deloitte as a Business Technology Analyst. Being a part of the 'Strategy & Analytics' vertical, I got the opportunity to meet with

multiple Fortune 500 client organizations such as Exelon, Merck and Eli Lilly, understand their requirements, and develop the technical processes to deliver the desired results. Extensively leveraging Python, SQL, Apache Spark, and Amazon Web Services on a plethora of projects, I built my repertoire of extracting valuable insights from massive volumes of raw data. Furthermore, Deloitte connected me to a diverse global community; it opened the doors for me to seek the mentorship of industry experts and receive guidance regarding my future aspirations. In conjunction with an increase in responsibilities arising from my promotion, this gradually made one thing clear to me – while I excelled in the technical areas, I lacked finesse in the strategizing department. After months of meticulous research, I decided to seek a masters' degree to bridge this gap. I narrowed in on the MSIM degree with a specialization in Data Science at the University of Washington, as it aligned perfectly with my myriad career goals.

Firstly, it provides a seamless path for me to round off my predominantly technical skill set with a deeper insight into organizational strategy and management of sophisticated information systems. Secondly, building on my significant programming experience, the Data Science specialization would help me broaden my knowledge of computational analyses of large data sets while also introducing me to interesting new concepts of inferential statistics and machine learning. Thirdly, the accelerated track allows me to return to the workforce in a year, at a location rife with exciting career opportunities. My career plans post this degree are twofold; short term, I'd love to join back in a Data Engineer/Data Scientist role, leveraging my past work experience and the skills acquired via my specialization. Long term, having attended one of the best graduate information programs in the United States and possessing a thorough understanding of the social and practical goals that information management serves would be crucial for me to obtain and succeed in leadership roles at top data-oriented companies.

I would like to conclude on a personal note. The process of shortlisting a masters' degree was an arduous one, and at times I found different universities and programs starting to blend into one. However, the University of Washington was the one school that I kept revisiting. Pictures of the breathtaking campus, bursting with cherry blossoms over the backdrop of an outcast Seattle day, seemed like a symbolic representation of the school's optimism and conviction. A conviction that with enough sincere effort, one can indeed bring positive change in the world. I also resonated with UW's foundation of inclusivity and drawing attention to the needs of marginalized groups. I have always been aware of the privileges I have benefitted from, like receiving the advanced medical care to bounce back from an accident that could have ended the career for someone less fortunate. Hence, I staunchly believe in taking the time and effort to pay back my dues to society. For instance, I leveraged my position as Vice Chairperson of the Management Society at the University of Mumbai to organize fundraisers for NGOs like CRY and PETA India, raising 500,000 INR cumulatively. I provided pro-bono mentorship at CareerEdge Counselling to students from low-income households aspiring to pursue their higher education at world-class institutions/break into the seemingly impenetrable professional fields of data analytics and engineering. In a similar vein, in addition to successfully building my career as an information leader, I also aspire to be a paradigmatic and positive representative of the UW. If given the opportunity to be a Husky at this vibrant and esteemed university, I am confident I can succeed in this vocation and continue upholding our shared personal missions.