

I am deeply committed to diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) in academia, drawing upon my personal experiences. As a first-generation college graduate and a person of color belonging to the lowest socioeconomic stratum in Indian society, I have firsthand experiences with the challenges that underrepresented minorities encounter, not just within academia but throughout social life. Given my background, I am well-positioned to contribute to the university's DEI and social justice efforts through my research, teaching, mentorship, and advocacy for equity.

Originating from India's lowest socioeconomic strata, I have encountered various forms of discrimination. I was mistreated by high-caste teachers in school several times. Also, high-caste landlords often deny my family housing due to their biases toward the low-caste people. This caste-based inequality provided me and my family with restricted access to fundamental rights, including education, the labor market, and social capital. On the other hand, I was benefited from public programs, such as food subsidies for low-income families and competitive government scholarships. These policies have played a pivotal role in facilitating education and ensuring food for my family. Through these competitive scholarships, I became the first person from my village to embark on a journey toward higher education in the United States. The support I received through scholarships and subsidies has propelled my academic pursuits and ignited my passion for research on how other marginalized people can benefit from these policies.

As a graduate student, I actively engage in diversity initiatives in and outside the university. I mentored two first-generation and two undergrad students at UW-Madison in their capstone project. I also mentored the *NextGenPop* program (funded by NICHD), nurturing a diverse cohort of 18 future scholars. Secondly, I represented students in faculty and Ph.D. selection panels. Through these roles, I aimed to attract diverse and historically under-represented talents to economics, honing skills to implement DEI measures in hiring. During my visits to my village in India, I engage with local schools to share insights about higher education and narrate my journey to the United States.

I still have more to learn from diverse cultures. I was recently chosen as a Diversity Scholar at American University, where I had the opportunity to spend time with scholars from other diverse backgrounds, including Native Americans, Blacks, and Hispanics. I learned how my experiences are both the same and different from other minority groups.

As I move to a faculty position with more authority, I will continue taking initiative in and outside of the classrooms to foster equity. First, I will be providing mentorship for first-gen students under the existing platforms at the university or setting up one if it does not exist. Secondly, I will present my life story in the classroom so that students may see differential struggles. Also, I will purposefully recruit students from underprivileged minorities from the US and outside, who the system would have otherwise overlooked.