

Dear Diversity Committee,

I am writing to apply for Summer Diversity Academy at American University. I am a fifth-year Ph.D. student in the Applied Economics department at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. I received my master's in economics from the same university. During this time, I took advanced Ph.D. courses, including microeconomics, macroeconomics, econometrics, health policy, and health economics.

I am an applied microeconomist focusing on health, human capital, and technological policies. My research evaluates public policies and quantifies their effects on multiple dimensions, including health, human capital, inequality, and outcomes related to vulnerable and disadvantaged populations across rich and poor countries. I use a variety of data sources and advanced empirical methods to provide causal evidence. My career goal is to research people throughout the world for public policies for the disadvantaged. I want to inform the effectiveness of policies that have actual impacts on the lives of less advantaged people across rich and poor countries.

In my expected job market paper, I study how broadband technology affects the mental health of older adults in the US. This research has policy implications for underserved geographic areas and for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations. Preliminary results suggest strong positive effects on the mental health of women, African Americans, and low-income individuals. I explore some channels, like social connectedness and health literacy, and technological improvements in the local hospitals. This evidence calls for policy interventions for investing in these channels to mitigate mental health-related issues among older adults.

In my second paper, I focus on studying the effects of early life exposure to an agricultural policy of the Green Revolution (an agricultural policy that affected millions of children and families across the world) in India on cognitive outcomes and intergenerational human capital. The preliminary finding shows that early life exposure to the Green Revolution was significantly important for later life human capital and cognitive outcomes.

I contribute to the diversity in the field of public affairs in various ways. First, I bring a diverse social experience with me. I belong to the lowest socio-economic strata of Indian society, also referred to as *untouchables*. So, I was a beneficiary of public policies like food grains for households below the poverty line (equivalent to food stamps in the US) and government academic scholarships. Being a recipient of these aids made me want to study these policies so that how other people can get these benefits. Secondly, as a person of color and a member of the First-Generation community, I understand the importance of promoting inclusivity in all aspects of society. I have actively participated in diversity and inclusion initiatives from being a mentor for First-Gen undergraduate students to representing students on committees for hiring faculty and Ph.D. students. Finally, I bring academic diversity that involves investigating questions informed by actual experiences. For example, before joining graduate school, I worked at construction sites in India. Everyday interaction with daily-wage workers and understanding their real-life problems helped me develop critical views on labor policies and their ground effectiveness. I want to bring in their concerns in public policies.

Lastly, I would like to add that I am extremely interested in applying to the Summer Diversity Academy at American University for various reasons. First, the School of Public Affairs comprises leading scholars across the interdisciplinary fields that my research relates to Prof. Erdal Tekin in the area of inequality and health and to Prof. Persico on broadband and health. Being in such an active environment would be highly beneficial for my research, and I am sure it would also lead to potential collaborations. Second, I am particularly interested in the DC area because of my personal preferences. DC is the world's epicenter of policy debate, providing great advantages for my career.

I have included in my application my CV. The faculty members for my reference are Prof. Jeremy Foltz (UW-Madison) and Prof. Valentina Duque (Princeton University, American University). I believe the feedback during the Summer Diversity Academy at American University will help greatly in my career and in my job market. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Vikas PD Gawai, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Email: gawai@wisc.edu