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 experience 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 efforts through my research, teaching, mentorship, and advocacy for equity.

I contribute to the diversity in the field of economics and public policy in various ways. First, I bring a diverse social experience with me. Being from the lowest socioeconomic stratum of Indian society exposed me to various forms of direct and indirect discrimination throughout my life. This stratum, loosely equivalent to the Blacks in the US, has historically faced severe discrimination in fundamental rights, including education, access to the labor market, and social capital. For instance, my family often encountered difficulties in finding rental housing due to the reluctance of high-caste landowners to rent their properties to low-caste tenants. On the other hand, I have benefited from public policies such as food grain subsidies for households below the poverty line (similar to food stamps in the US) and competitive government academic scholarships (e.g., full funding for an MS in economics), which have made my education and my family's survival possible. This government scholarship also made me the first person from my village to pursue higher education in the US, a significant achievement. Being a recipient of these public programs has motivated me to study how these policies affect people's health, behavior, and welfare and how other underrepresented individuals can benefit from similar initiatives. Whenever I visit my home country of India, I make it a point to visit the local school near my village and inspire schoolchildren to aspire to higher education.

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, ranging from mentoring First-Gen undergraduate students to serving as a representative for students on committees involved in faculty and Ph.D. student hiring. Through these roles, I have had the opportunity to recruit talented students and faculty from non-traditional backgrounds to the field of economics and develop the skills necessary to implement DEI initiatives during the hiring process. I have also served as a mentor for the NextGen Population program, funded by the NICHD and Population Association of America (PAA), which aims to increase diversity within the population field and nurture the next generation of population scientists. Furthermore, my academic diversity involves investigating research questions informed by other social experiences. For instance, before joining graduate school, I worked at construction sites in India, which provided me with everyday interactions with daily-wage workers and a deep understanding of their real-life problems, allowing me to develop critical perspectives on labor policies and their practical effectiveness.

Lastly, I was selected as one of the Diversity Scholars at the Public Policy Department at American University for the summer of 2023. During that time, I had the opportunity to spend a week with scholars from similar backgrounds, including American Indians, Blacks, and Hispanics. This experience enhanced my understanding of the diverse experiences within academia. These experiences have equipped me with the critical lenses necessary to understand and interact with individuals from diverse backgrounds and foster an inclusive environment. I contribute to the DEI initiative by addressing the concerns of underrepresented individuals in my research. For example, I study how the same technology can have differential access and effects based on race, geography, or gender. Specifically, I have identified stark disparities in high-speed broadband internet access based on race, rural areas, and gender in the US. Similarly, I examine how the massive agricultural technology of the green revolution has uneven access based on caste in India, with resources predominantly concentrated among higher castes. In my future research, I will investigate whether internet access varies based on disability, utilizing restricted data from the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) program.

In conclusion, my personal experiences, a strong commitment to DEI, and research focus position me to make significant contributions to academic diversity and inclusion efforts. I am dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment, supporting underrepresented individuals, and ensuring that diverse perspectives are valued and integrated into economics and public policy. I am excited about collaborating with colleagues and students from diverse backgrounds, driving positive change, and promoting a more equitable society.