

## **Diversity Statement**

Bhargav Gopal  
Columbia University

As the child of a working mother, I grew up understanding the challenges that women face in balancing family and career aspirations. My mom's shift as a call center agent would end at 5pm, and throughout elementary and middle school, I vividly recall being one of the last students remaining in after-school programs designed to support working parents. Over the last twenty years, my mother has climbed up the corporate ladder, now serving as a manager in a Fortune-500 company. Her personal experiences sparked my interest on the barriers women face in obtaining roles in corporate leadership, which is reflected in my research that studies the effectiveness of corporate board gender quotas. My dissertation that explores these barriers has also made me appreciate the challenges faced by other underrepresented groups, including individuals from unique ethnic, socioeconomic, racial, sexual orientation, disability, and intellectual backgrounds, in securing leadership positions. In my research, teaching, and service, I have taken measures to better understand the challenges faced by these diverse communities.

In my job market paper, I document a striking absence of women on corporate boards, and then ask whether gender quotas are effective policy levers to promote gender-diversity in corporate leadership. In response to a policy implemented by California in 2018 that required the presence of at least one woman on corporate boards by 2019, I find that gender quotas can successfully increase female board representation without harming financial outcomes. These results question why all-male corporate boards were prevalent prior to the legislation. I show that women are less likely to possess employment connections to corporate leadership, which contributes to the lack of gender diversity on corporate boards. In future research, I plan to study whether policy pressures to increase other dimensions of diversity – not just gender diversity – can increase both minority representation and financial performance.<sup>1</sup>

My somewhat unconventional path to graduate school in economics has helped me to appreciate the value of curricular diversity in instruction. Prior to starting the PhD, I worked under Professor John Donohue at Stanford Law School, who stressed the importance of combining economic theory with rigorous empirical evidence. Guided by an understanding that economics curriculum can encompass more than supply and demand, I proactively reached out to Professor Dan O'Flaherty in my second year to become a teaching assistant for a class titled "The Economics of Race in the United States." That year, I guided 60 students in understanding issues related to race and discrimination, and received excellent teaching reviews. The undergraduate economics major has historically lacked students from underrepresented backgrounds, but this elective class attracted students from a variety of races, genders, and ages.

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<sup>1</sup> More specifically, I plan to study whether California's AB979, which mandates the presence of underrepresented communities on corporate boards, was successful in increasing minority representation.

The experience taught me that a curriculum that emphasizes diversity, equity, and inclusion can help to attract a diverse student body.

Two years of service on the executive board of Columbia's student government has further contributed to my understanding of how educational institutions can create welcoming communities. Each year, the graduate student bodies of all the Ivy League schools gather to discuss ways in which student government can better serve its constituents. As Columbia University's graduate student representative to this conference in 2020 and 2021, one of my responsibilities was to articulate how Columbia's graduate student government respects diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). All the conference participants were eager to learn about effective practices, especially because the leading educational institutions in the United States have had a long history of excluding women, religious minorities, and people of color.

In both years, when it was my turn to speak, I started by acknowledging that there are various dimensions to diversity. I further prefaced my discussion by highlighting that measures to promote diversity cannot be disentangled from measures to promote inclusion. I then described specific actions implemented by Columbia's student government during my tenure on its executive board. We created a Covid-19 hardship fund for low-income students, organized social events such as group baking to build community, and collaborated with Columbia Health to disseminate timely information on how all students can access Covid-19 testing. As acknowledgement for these efforts, I received the "Honorary Owl" award – one of the top service awards offered by Columbia University. I will continue to understand the importance of diversity in my research, teaching, and service as a faculty member.