

As a second-generation Colombian-American and as a female in a STEM field, tenacity and resilience were ingrained throughout my upbringing. These values have guided me through personal adversity and professional experiences. Furthermore, my persistence has made me determined to empower other underrepresented minorities and provide educational opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible through the Center of Engineering Diversity and Outreach (CEDO) and the Society of Women Engineers (SWE) at the University of Michigan. I began these efforts as an undergraduate student and will continue to do so while pursuing my PhD and throughout my future career as a research professor.

My grandparents emigrated Colombia in the 1960s to fulfill my grandfather's mission to provide for his family, regardless of the sacrifice. He worked tirelessly, both working full-time and taking night classes, to achieve his dream of opening an accounting office. This did not come easy, as my grandfather experienced many setbacks, but he learned from them and was undeterred from continuing to pursue his dream. When he achieved his goal, he did not stop there; he worked to give back to those that helped him. He donated computers and school books to the orphanage he grew up in while in Colombia so that the children there would have more accessibility to education than he did. His persistence and commitment to education were his legacy after he passed away from an undetected heart disease. These foundational pillars inspire me to pursue opportunities to empower minority students, reduce barriers to education, and overcome personal adversity.

My parents' example significantly impact my ability to face and overcome adversity. My mother was a first-generation college student, who graduated law school while raising my older brother. Similarly, my father worked full-time helping my grandfather with the accounting office while obtaining his bachelor's degree. After obtaining his degree, he gave back to family in Colombia by funding their education. My parents' commitment to education have instilled in me a love of learning and a drive to achieve my goals despite the circumstances. Both of my parents passed away in a car accident when I was 12. I had to make a choice in how to respond: either allow the loss to consume me or build upon their example. The perseverance and resilience I was taught led me to choose the latter, and everything I do is fueled by compassion and dedication in their memory. It has been a very arduous task dealing with their loss, but I have grown into a driven, independent, and empathetic person, with the goal of helping others overcome adversity and share my love of education and learning.

As a Latin female in Biomedical Engineering, I know what it is like to feel out of place. There were limited opportunities to be mentored by faculty or graduate students from my background, which only exacerbated the feeling of displacement. This, in addition to being resolute, have guided me to participate and lead programs related to empowering underrepresented minorities and to seek educational outreach opportunities. As a peer mentor with CEDO, I helped three first year underserved students over the course of two years in their transition to the College of Engineering and the University of Michigan. This involved weekly meetings to create personalized academic and personal goals and serve as a resource for questions they might have. The relationship with these students has carried over, as they still reach out to me for advice. My mentorship has impacted my desire to work with underrepresented students and minimize the feeling of displacement they may experience. Furthermore, as external vice president of SWE at Michigan, I worked on expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. I planned an unconscious bias workshop between different engineering identity-based organizations and hosted an

interdisciplinary summit in honor of Rev. Dr. King Jr. This summit was the first of its kind that Michigan-SWE has hosted and we were able to provide a space to discuss race, gender, and social disparities, and solutions to address them. CEDO and SWE have provided tools for students to face barriers that they may face because of their race, gender, or ethnicity and has allowed me to realize my goal of empowering the next generation of students in the STEM field.

My family's example and my driven personality have led me to focus on educational outreach, working as Global Engagement Co-Director in SWE. In May 2017, I planned and led a 10-person team from the US on a weeklong outreach trip for 80 rural high school students in Walchandnagar, India. This involved the budget, outreach curriculum, and travel logistics. During the planning process, my co-director and I experienced many challenges, with the most crucial being funding for the trip falling through. Rather than expect the participants to pay more or the organization to cover the balance, we were determined to find other funding sources without greatly impacting our curriculum. By contacting corporate sponsors, the Office of the Provost, and other funding sources on campus, we were able to cover the expenses and even buy new Lego Mindstorms, which were to be used for our computer programming activities. Our tenacity carried over while we were at the camp, where we emphasized the theme of persistence when designs didn't go to plan and in combating the male-dominated education system and workforce. I particularly focused on reiterating that there was never one right answer; that through creativity and critical analysis of prior designs, there were many ways to achieve the desired results. As for addressing the male-dominated culture, my co-director and I implemented a female empowerment session into the schedule to have a greater impact on the community. This session focused on learning about the female students' aspirations and providing solutions to obstacles they may face in the STEM field. The most important takeaway of the session was the value of supporting one another in our dreams. The students' enthusiasm made this an extremely rewarding endeavor and ignited my passion to share the lessons I've learned from my life to empower others and provide educational opportunities to underserved communities.

My family history, personal loss, and extracurricular activities have molded me into a driven, independent, and compassionate individual. They have taught me the value of spreading compassion and persistence to help others succeed and overcome their personal challenges. These characteristics will aid in my success in graduate school, as it will require focus and dedication. I believe my individual tenacity in overcoming adversity and experience empowering others align with the goal of creating a diverse community at Cornell University. For that reason, I am applying for a diversity fellowship, to contribute my unique perspective to the community, which is conducive to open dialogue, learning, and empowering others to succeed.