

Angela Leon

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

I'm Angela Leon, a girl aged 26 from Spain. In my personal opinion, I have a different and diverse background that makes me stand out from the crowd and would make me the perfect fit for an MBA program.

I am an only child in a really big family. Even if I don't have any brothers or sisters I have 16 aunts and uncles and more than 20 cousins. We are a tight-knit family. I have always been the smaller one in the family, while I was still a child all of my cousins were adults, so I have been raised surrounded by them. This has made me a mature person since I was a child and has helped me develop strong personal values from a young age. From my family, I have learned about our culture, the importance of the family, supporting each other, and respecting elders. I also had a passion when I was a child, dancing ballet. Ballet wasn't just a hobby for me, it also taught me the importance of perseverance and hard work in order to achieve the best version of myself. My parents didn't approve of my decision of trying to get into a professional dance school. At that moment I was spending more than four hours each afternoon at dance classes and they were worried that this could affect my academic performance. After my dance lessons, I studied for several hours each day, normally until midnight, to succeed in the academic field too. It was hard, however, I was completely happy with my decision. I am self-demanding and I feel the necessity of giving my best and trying to do as good as I can in everything that I try to accomplish in life.

As an adult, I have also lived many experiences that have made me who I am today. Since leaving college, I have lived in four countries: USA, Spain, France, and Australia. This has helped me understand different cultures, traditions, and ways of thinking. My professional life has been quite diverse too. I studied engineering and worked as an engineer in an aeronautical company. Then, I decided to explore other fields and other professional opportunities and that made me start working first in Marketing and then as a Project Manager in an IT company. The sum of these experiences has made me really empathetic and has made me able to understand other's perspectives much better. For example, as a Project Manager, I have had to deal with many different clients from many different countries. Even being the younger in the department, most of the customers told me that it was so easy to work with me and to have me as their point of contact within the company. I was better than my colleagues in understanding them even having less professional experience. I approached them by respecting their cultures and traditions and defined the ways of communication and processes that suited them the best. I think that these skills are really important in business schools and the executive positions of companies. Today's leaders must be able to understand their employees and clients to achieve the best business results.

Dominika Lech

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

As a second-year Mathematics and Economics student, I am a person, whose quantitative background led her to exploring fields such as game theory and behavioural economics, and sparked interest in microfinance and strategic consulting. Although my primary focus has always been on Mathematics, the discipline that guides my everyday's cognitive processes, I never allow to put labels on myself. The interdisciplinary approach is what I believe is the most important aspect of shaping communities and businesses in today's world. Being "an interface", who connects the dots, leading to new solutions, innovative ideas. Such a "socratic" way of gaining knowledge about the world, seeing it from a perspective, might often be very insightful.

This also somewhat translates into good leadership, so important in business environment. I believe that the essence of it, is maximising the potential of all individuals. Based on my experience, I believe it can be achieved through attentive observation and understanding. Throughout my education and personal development, I managed to become a person who is an active observer of reality, who also knows how to listen, which is key to addressing many problems and situations. This year I had nice opportunities to gain experience in leadership, at first becoming the Head of Public Relations at SaveEUStudents campaign, then being elected as the Co-President of LSE SU Polish Business Society and Project Leader of LSE SU Polish Economic Forum 2023 conference. The roles in the Polish community became now my greatest challenge, but also the biggest source of self-development. Apart from organising the social aspects of our society, I am also leading the team towards delivering our flagship conference. I did not expect, how much I would learn about myself, and how many soft skills I would master through this position. Through structuring the team, managing our human resources, integrating freshers, preparing the architecture of the whole year of our society's work, getting in touch with sponsors, thinking through the main theme and discussion topics for the event, and many other.

Thus, being an analytical soul by nature, I am also a charismatic and open-minded individual, and I believe I would constitute a valuable asset in business environment. Environment that needs more people with high emotional intelligence, good intuition to people, and attention to detail. People who are able to notice, analyse, and act. Combining my extracurricular experiences with academic interests, and eclectic personality would make me indeed a perfect match, and I am now considering diving into the environment by pursuing Masters degree in Business Analytics, integrated with Data Science and Management.

Houefa Ségolène Semilinko

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

From my earliest memories, I have always found myself at the intersection of culture, fields, and beliefs. It has not always been a smooth ride. However, I am grateful for the traits, such as cultural empathy, emotional intelligence, and open-mindedness, I then developed. As a curious mind, I often try to see the world through someone else eyes in order to, if need be, reevaluate my position and form my own opinion.

The first intersection I recall was between the African and European cultures.

Despite being born and growing up in a multicultural environment, I began to develop a sense of self-identity and cultural belonging around age 7. Indeed, this breakthrough happened after my first-time visiting Africa. I distinctly remember coming back from my summer vacation and showing my classmates the map location of the country where my ancestors originated. From there on out, I developed an interest in people's cultural backgrounds and how it impacts their choices and beliefs.

The second intersection I encountered in my life journey was between the clear-cut roads of arts and science. The French high school system is divided on the unwavering understanding that one is either gifted for sciences or for literature. Students usually excel in one and are average or even mediocre in the other. That was absolutely not my case. My dad is a journalist who took pride in making me enjoy reading the best literature, while my mom is a pharmacist who truly excels in chemistry. Thus, I had to find the best combination of options and subjects to allow my true capabilities to shine through despite the rigid organisation of the academic system.

These intersections have put me in a unique position to bridge gaps and navigate a global, inclusive world. When I decided to pursue a BSc. in Computer Science without having written a single line of code prior to starting the curriculum, I relied on the skills I honed. As a female in STEM, I did experience bias, I used it as fuel and successfully graduated with a first class. Shortly thereafter, I started my entrepreneurial journey by joining the Entrepreneur In Training program in MEST Africa. This transcending experience led to the birth of my first start-up in the health industry. It also pointed out my lack of expertise. Thus, I decided to pursue a master's in biomedical engineering to gain an understanding of the field. It also allowed me to analyse the mindset of the different actors in said field. I have what seems to be an atypical journey but, I believe that my difference is a strength and, during class discussions, it will enable me to bring a unique point of view emanating from all the experience I gathered. Not only, am I an engineer who would be able to bring a practical and analytical mind to the table, but my journey has also allowed me to develop a unique awareness of the societal dynamics in Africa and the efficacy of diverse penetration strategies in emerging markets.

Receiving good business training will empower me with the right tools to become a successful entrepreneur in the health industry. The GMAT talent and opportunity scholarship is key to my future plans as it will give me the tools, I need to ensure I can access the best business training available worldwide.

Shu-Han Yu

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

Having grown up in Taiwan and Sweden as well as studied in Hong Kong for two years and now living in Copenhagen, I have experienced vastly different societies which has not only made me a learner with an exploring spirit but also taught me the importance of embracing diversity. It has developed my ambition to improve my global mindedness and reinforced my desire to help our society's pursuit for a more diverse and embracing environment. With these ambitions in mind, I have therefore undertaken various professional and extracurricular activities in relation to my areas of interest, consulting and education, to improve my competence.

My interest in consulting developed during a full-time internship through the TechLeap program at the Boston Consulting Group Stockholm. Being one of the few females and the first and only non-Scandinavian ethnic recruit, I was mainly staffed on providing support for international projects from e.g. China where I supported contextualisation of analysis through providing specific market insights and translation of materials. It occurred often even though the analysis made mathematical sense, it was hard for my colleagues to grasp as they did not have an understanding of the business context. Through these projects, I realized that having solid financials solely is not sufficient in providing good business analysis and that being able to formulate a winning business strategy also requires a holistic understanding of the local context in which the business case takes place. As more firms are operating at a global scale, it is therefore essential to have a diverse staffing to contribute unique business knowledge from different parts of the world. Realizing this, I aimed to further broaden my horizon in hopes for one day being the bridge that connects the west and the east. To achieve this, I therefore decided to spend my bachelor studies in HK and Copenhagen, where I was able to explore yet another two very different learning and business environments.

In addition to building my knowledge, I actively pursued ways that can contribute to improving diversity in various areas. For example, I initiated a recruitment project at the BCG TechLeap, where visits and workshops were conducted at schools in more ethnic diverse areas. The program has since then been able to recruit at least 40% non- Swedish ethnicity. Additionally, I have also been part of Copenhagen Female Leadership Academy which aims to support women in industries where females are traditionally underrepresented. Besides from gender and ethnic diversity, as the first person in my family to have entered higher education, I also believe that economic diversity i.e. having candidates from various socioeconomic backgrounds is also essential for the future business environment to develop their understanding for issues such as economic and educational inequality in order to be able to continue operate in such a way that brings positive impact on our society and environment. Therefore, I have also been volunteering as partnerships and recruitment officer at a student-driven international non-profit organization- Project Access, which aims to reduce education inequality and provide access to top education and career for underprivileged students.

I believe my experiences with diversity issues of various forms has helped me to build a deeper understanding for their causes and consequences as well as how the magnitude and manifestation of the problems can vary depending on the contexts (e.g. industries or geographical area). I hope to continue to build on my knowledge in this area and become a business leader that can help bridging the gap across culture, gender and socioeconomic status in order to create a more accepting and open-minded learning and business environment.

Garima Upadhyay

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

While growing up, my father always told me the stories of strong women who have marveled and succeeded in their endeavors. His stories to me always implied the importance of education and the opportunities it led to women with the mix of “can do” attitude. And when today statistically the parity’s not even in higher executive roles, it fuels my ambitions and encourages me to do my best effort to be the one and help others reach up, and establish the balance.

So here I am 29-year-old Indian, living in Toulouse (France), and working with Airbus operations as an Aerospace System Architect. I work every day to break the barriers and be the woman of my father’s stories.

Coming from India to pursue a Master’s degree and working overseas has allowed me to embrace and learn from diverse environments. My experiences have brought me an understanding of people’s needs, caring for their emotions during the transformation phase, co-create new ways of working, adapting to effective communication styles, and flexible implementation strategies, hence a global mindset and multicultural literacy to my personality. Moreover, it has been the catalyst for me to identify my personal and professional values and live by them at all costs. To continue nurturing this international outlook and provide me with more opportunities and insights, I would love to be part of an eclectic group of peers in a prestigious institution with diverse backgrounds and stories to share. I believe in contribution, collaboration, and sustainable development. So, my objective in pursuing one such program is to assume our corporate responsibility to create, establish and promote purpose-driven business practices.

My 5+ years of experience in aeronautics, from Hardware designer to Aerospace system architect with the AIRBUS, familiarized me with the key drivers critical to any development cycle comprising time, cost, and production efficiency. And as a system architect, I am learning the importance of understanding customer needs, assuring safety, reducing complexity, and weighing architecture trade-offs to facilitate the best solution.

Apart from this, my experience as the only woman in my current role enables me to overcome gender disparity at my level and prepares me to work for inclusion. Indeed, with perseverance to succeed, and persistence to learn what this experience teaches me, I accept it with my CAN DO attitude. An example of this is my ongoing mentoring experience with an SVP, where I try to identify the areas which push me out of my comfort zone and thus allow me to learn something new; On occasions when I am part of decision-making, I use methodical approaches, giving me confidence and motivation about my suitability for leadership roles in the business environment. For example, while adopting the digitalization approach across my domain in AIRBUS, I tried to identify the people’s needs and develop confidence among my colleagues while addressing the primary reluctance issue. It helped to change the status quo and persuade the people to accept the change.

To conclude, I would like to emphasize the importance of diversity in a multi-cultural business environment and how it fosters understanding, teamwork, and mutual respect. Indeed I believe in bringing that diversity element to our learning process through open discussions.

Similarly, my thought process, problem-solving skills, and curiosity, thanks to my experience and background, could be an asset for organizations to leverage.

Ken Goigner

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

Following Cromwell "He who stops being better stops being good", I believe that you grow with the tasks you set for yourself, which is why I now strive for this unique opportunity to prove myself at GMAT to, consequently, apply at Stockholm School of Economics.

I believe that everyone may contribute to a diverse learning and business environment by being themselves and embracing who they are and where they come from. Different backgrounds and experiences add up to the diversity of our society, which we should be proud of. Said this, I strongly believe in the strength of a diverse team that replicates reality and promotes openness.

In my case, I graduated with a first-class honour's degree in International Business (best 1% amongst 2,675 students). Currently, I am doing a Masters in Global Markets, Local Creativities that aims to target global challenges with suitable local solutions and covers subjects in Innovation, economic history, and sustainable business development. In addition to my academic merit, I was able to gain a lot of international experience by attending various exchange programs. I participated at summer universities in Copenhagen, Hanoi and recently in Montreal, did an exchange during high school in Helsinki and wrote my bachelor thesis in Buenos Aires. Within my multi-degree graduate program, I complete courses in Glasgow, Barcelona, and Bogota. Due to these numerous experiences abroad, I can proudly say that I master Spanish, French, English and German.

Furthermore, I supplemented my studies with social and political engagement. In three consecutive years as the student representative at high school, we established feedback mechanisms, modularized PE curriculum and organized a "Europe Day". I soon engaged with federal education politics and ran for the student representative's office of my state. After graduating from high school, I chose to join the French NGO Solidarité Jeunesse, a non-formal education movement that promotes peacebuilding and educational justice. Together with international volunteers, we began a weekly animation workshop for children at primary school, organized cultural activities with residents of the local nursing house and participated in a local radio broadcast.

I feel a strong and personal connection with issues linked to qualitative education and social mobility since I come from a working-class family myself, but thanks to the social policies in my country I could pursue higher education. I believe that my socio-economic background accounts for a large part of society that is currently under-represented in the business school community, which leads to business practices that are not suitable for all members of our society. By being the first family member with a high school degree (Matura), I had to prove extraordinary stamina and willingness to succeed in a world with academics or people related to the Academia. Consequently, I gained a profound understanding of two very different social settings that are both parts of our diverse society. This makes me a valuable part of successful learning and business environments.

As part of the LGBTQ+ community myself, I highly value the protection of sexual orientation and gender identity within our society. I would like to set a good example and pursue a successful business career as an

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openly gay man. I believe that investing in making business schools more inclusive and open towards the LGBTQ+ community, directly translates into more successful business practices by using synergies between all members of our society.

To conclude with, I want to highlight that I might not be the typical business student, which is why, I believe that I am the perfect match for this scholarship that aims to embrace diversity and innovative learning practices within the business school community!

Diana Rukavishnikova

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What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

One of my life goals is to make the world a place where every person gets equal opportunities for equal outcomes. In other words, to enhance both the quality and the number of opportunities for currently discriminated groups. As a young woman, I face ageism and sexism daily, and I thus believe that I should stand for equality and diversity everywhere, including business and educational spheres. Considering the goal, it is relevant to estimate how my personal background and experience may diversify a learning and business environment.

To begin with, my mentality is created based on a mixture of Asian and European values, which is quite unique and based on a non-typical background of spending childhood and youth in the city at the official border of Europe and Asia. Hence, not only I understand that different civilizations can collaborate, but I also know how to make this happen, and this skill is vital in business and educational spheres.

As for the business background, I have an outstanding experience of communicating and signing contracts with business owners as a sales manager in the retail sphere at the age of 15. For this reason, I can demonstrate that age is an insignificant parameter both in a learning and business environment by example. Although it may be considered a small step in fighting ageism, I believe that fighting stereotypes by becoming an unconventional example is one of the most efficient ways of diversifying business communities.

Furthermore, not only I acknowledge the problems of discriminated groups, as mentioned before, but I also have experience of acting and bringing opportunities to discriminated communities. At the age of 18, I began my international career in an edtech startup founded by one of the most astonishing female investors and philanthropists. It was time when I realized the importance of the social aspect of my work. As a communication manager, I brought to life a partnership with a non-profit educational organization for underserved youth in the USA and the UK. As an edtech service for children, we provided supplies for hands-on afterschool STEM activities for under-represented communities.

Additionally, I have extensive practical knowledge of cross-cultural communication and collaboration, which is intrinsic in a diverse environment. I have a profound experience in working remotely from Russia and collaborating with the international team based in the USA, China, Cyprus, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, I have participated in the exchange program in France, where I have been introduced to multiple cultures from Italian to Japanese, as students on the program are from different angles of the world.

To conclude, I have always been in the middle of different cultures, absorbing multiple ways to look at people, questions and problems. Moreover, I have seen how a diverse environment enhances the most remarkable ideas and extraordinary minds and leads to outstanding results. Therefore, I can bring this experience to a diverse learning and business sphere to create equal opportunities for equal outcomes. I am confident that I can add this value thanks to my passion, background and commitment and use the described experience to make the world a better place.

Sixto Cerna

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

My name is Sixto Cerna, I'm currently enrolled in third year of the "Cycle Pluridisciplinaire d'Études Supérieures" at PSL University studying Mathematics and Computer Science in Paris. Afterwards, I expect to join HEC – I'X master's in Data Science for Business.

Before heading to Paris, I was in El Salvador where I was born and raised. Growing up in a developing country was a double-edged sword. Even if my personal development was limited by the opportunities that my country had to offer, this same challenge pushed me to take advantage of my education and fostered me to think outside of the box by seeking opportunities elsewhere. Indeed, in 2019, I won a scholarship to attend courses on Mathematics and International Business at Columbia University, NY. Later, in 2020 I was awarded with a highly competitive full scholarship (Bourse d'Excellence Major AEFÉ – Campus France) to pursue my studies in France.

More recently I've gotten the chance to dive deeper on the field that interests me the most: the applications of AI in business. First and foremost, this year I completed a research internship at École Normale Supérieure in Paris in which I worked on the implementation of learning algorithms. I received a mark of 20 out of 20 for my paper and the oral I presented at the end of it. Secondly, I'm currently developing two projects. On the one hand, I'm working as an intern within a Parisian start-up called Tripartie in which I'm building from the ground-up an AI model to solve litigations in second-hand online marketplaces. On the other hand, I've launched my own Data Science and AI start-up in El Salvador called Overview-AI. My vision for Overview-AI is twofold: facilitating the use of AI in Latin America and innovating when it comes to the uses of this powerful tool. As of today, I've finished the pilot project I was conducting in the HR sector. By using AI, I've built a dashboard for a Salvadorian recruiting company that significantly simplifies the process of candidate comparison. My software parses the information from the resumes and creates figures which allow to compare in a glance the skillsets, years of experience and education from all candidates at the same time. Until now, these technologies have only been accessible to the largest companies.

Furthermore, by following a multidisciplinary program I've gained a lot of breath in the courses I have followed. I expect to leverage this knowledge to think about new ways in which AI could be used in other fields. Finally, in high school I was a member of the student council, a member of the health and citizenship board and a class representative. Besides, I was part of the soccer school team for ten years. All these activities have developed my ability work within a team.

I believe that my strong academic background and professional experiences will allow me to quickly adapt to the challenges that might rise when building AI-based solutions for business. Likewise, I consider that my resilience, creativity, and sense of cooperation will bring a valuable asset into this realm.

Igor Laakso

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

My name is Igor Laakso, born in Ukraine, currently 25 years old, and a senior student in International Shipping and Trade at Copenhagen Business School. I have the ambition to get accepted in Harvard or any other top business school that accepts deferred MBA applicants. Based on my international background and unique experience, I truly believe to be a contributor to a diverse learning and business environment.

Firstly, my background, I was born in Ukraine but had the privilege to be moved at an early age to be raised and educated in Finland. Having had this unique opportunity at an early age, my mom raised me to always do my best and work hard. As I matured, I understood more and more how privileged I was. Therefore, I took a leap of faith and decided to move out from my parents at the age of sixteen, to live and study in Stockholm, as I believed to learn something new there. In addition to my studies, I had to work part-time to finance my rent and living costs. However, studies and work aside, this move of mine came at a price, I did not fit in socially with the other students, as most of them had known each other from elementary school. This led to me developing a stutter and becoming very introverted, despite my very extroverted and social personality. Living alone at the age of sixteen and being seen as an immigrant from Ukraine, from a working-class family, with a speaking disability in a top high school with spoiled children was mentally the three most challenging years of my life. Nonetheless, it shaped me towards who I am today – an openminded, considerate, and ambitious individual who likes to overcome challenges and learn from others.

Secondly, my unique experience, after high school I decided to apply and serve in the Finnish Defense Forces, where I quickly climbed the ranks and was trained as a Reserve Officer where I later became promoted to a Second Lieutenant. Having been through this experience, has taught me the value of teamwork and friendships, but also how to be a leader and when to make tough decisions, as I ultimately was responsible for over 100 conscripts. Over one year of military service later, I was not sure whether to continue a career in the military or pursue a university education, as neither my father nor mother had been through a higher education themselves. I decided not to rush but rather have an additional sabbatical year, which turned into three. During these gap years, I worked part-time simultaneously in four very different roles and industries;1) in a restaurant with service;2) in a warehouse with logistics;3) as a caregiver in an elderly home;and 4) as a ski and snowboard instructor in Austria. These workplaces taught me a great deal of how these industries functioned, what the employees thought about it, and most importantly how the managers acted and lead the businesses – something I will always keep in mind. Lastly, after completing my undergraduate education, I believe that my past experiences combined with a shipping and logistics knowledge will be both valuable and unique in a class-room full of professionals from various industries.

In conclusion, I believe that both my background and experience would contribute to a diverse learning and business environment. This scholarship would help me taking a step in the right direction, by preparing me in the best way possible for a high GMAT score. Which ultimately, will be an important factor in my overall upcoming MBA applications.

Diāna Zariņa

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

I come from the countryside of Latvia – a small, Eastern-European country that for the past years has been trying to integrate the values of democratic society in its post-soviet environment. I started my educational journey at a school with around 100 students. Needless to say there was almost no cultural, racial or socioeconomic diversity. My surroundings were full of old values, stereotypes that shamed disability, various sexual orientations and stuck to outdated gender roles. I was shamed by teachers of not being good at “girly” things – music, arts and crafts, - to them it seemed rather unconventional for a woman to like maths and science. My uncle is deaf and he has never really been integrated into society. He did not go to a school, he does not work, my grandparents never put in an effort to learn sign-language. By this old-way-of-thinking, he was doomed to be the problem-child and I was criticised for not being like everyone else. I never much related to my family’s and those around me way-of-thinking, but also never opposed it - that is what I was taught and that was what I believed.

My thoughts, however, switched when I started my undergraduate studies. It was a major step out of my comfort-zone. For the first time in my life I was in an international environment, communicating only in English - language foreign to me. I was taught to value different opinions, social and cultural backgrounds as well as age and religious diversity. I realised that diversity is one of the greatest assets to the human race - it allows us to adapt and survive in the forever-changing surroundings. However, diversity alone is never enough, the preliminaries that need to exist are compassion, tolerance, acceptance and inclusion. Without them diversity is just a statement, its real power is not realised until people learn to listen, work together and build upon the variety of their opinions.

From here, I see an opportunity to contribute to the educational and business environment. Growing up in rather uniform circumstances and suddenly stepping out as I started my bachelor studies made me realise the value of diverse conditions. This experience has taught me how to deal with pure ignorance and hatred towards specific groups of people, how to introduce people to new ideas in a way they truly accept and follow them rather than feeling pushed to attend to certain norms. I have seen the world around me become more open to new ideas, facilitating acceptance and educating the society on topics as green-thinking, LGTBQ-community and linguistic diversity. I believe, a person, who has learned acceptance rather than already born into it, has more power to teach and change others. They see the reason for it, others simply see the fact.

My contribution comes not only from my roots, but also from the experience I have gained. I have always strived for variety in everything I do. In highschool I participated in competitions from maths, chemistry and physics to arts, literature and languages. Similarly, I have worked in companies covering financial services, logistics, bank and entertainment sectors. With these various experiences come new perspectives - to be a good businessman means to know how your company integrates into society as a whole, business does not end at your office walls.

The continuation of studies marks my willingness to help further develop and integrate my home country into European society. It takes one who has directly been influenced by the denial of the diversity benefits to change instilled values of others. I believe my background, previous experience and education has prepared me to do just that!

Amanda Barbosa

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What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

When you are a child, and you belong to an underrepresented group, you know your chances to succeed will be harder. It is not because you are not capable, but because opportunities are not equally distributed.

Studying, improving your skills, testing your limits, and leaving your comfort zone: these are ways you can achieve your goals and deal with the lack of opportunities. Especially being a Latina, a woman, in a male-dominated field like Technology.

Since I was a child, my mother always told me: "Education can set you free. Study and seize all the opportunities you can". I have lived by this phrase ever since.

I graduated in Business & Marketing, and years later, I pursued an extension course on Big Data and Business Intelligence, due to my passion for Technology and Data Analysis. When I was in high school, a teacher told me Mathematics wasn't a fit for me. He told me I "should study something easier". Years later, when studying Big Data, his phrase followed me and made me doubt myself and my skills several times. That hasn't been something easy to face. Now and then.

I never gave up. One important factor that helped me on this journey was to join communities, such as Latinas in Tech and Brazilians in Tech. Finding your tribe makes you aware you are not the only one. It gives you strength to continue on your path and helps you face any adversity.

When I was making my career transition, I made sure to follow my mom's wisdom and seek all the opportunities I could: I was granted a scholarship to attend the Grace Hopper Celebration 2019, the largest global conference for Women in Technology; I was granted a fellowship to take part in the Chicago Women's Leadership Accelerator program in 2021, as the first Brazilian woman to participate - I have been promoting and advocating the program since then, in hopes more Brazilian women also get the same opportunity I had; and I put my skills to work volunteering at Favela Inc., an NGO in Brazil, as a Data and CRM Analyst during 2021. I believe paying it forward is important.

I have been meeting amazing people along the way. Many of them became professional colleagues, friends, and mentors. One of my mentors once told me: "When you are trying to change the system, you will feel uncomfortable. Being the first one will always make you feel uncomfortable. But it is rewarding. Being the first one, paving the way to others, giving opportunities, and opening doors to other minorities".

I believe my background, skills, and lifelong learning mindset can bring a different perspective to the business workplace. The connections I will make in a diverse learning environment can help me grow as a professional and human being. Being granted a scholarship for GMAT can help me financially and professionally, while I invest in myself with other resources needed to study in Europe. This scholarship will make my dream to study in Europe and do a Master's in Economics come true. I want to use this opportunity to develop myself and pay it forward in the future. That will open the door for me to continue studying and specializing in the field that I chose.

Aaron David Hadfield

What do you believe your background and experience will bring to a diverse learning and business environment?

Throughout my education, I have always pushed myself to integrate with different cultures and challenges that put me out of my comfort zone, into the unknown. I studied Spanish & Japanese language courses as my major for my bachelor's and successfully completed exchange study and work placements across the two countries. Furthermore, I have volunteered as a language tutor for international undergraduate students to prepare them for IELTS exams and given presentations about British culture in Tokyo and Mallorca.

Neither of my parents completed their A-Levels, let alone received an undergraduate degree which only amplified this sense of accomplishment. This emotion drove me to my current Master's Degree studies in Business Management at Cardiff University where I have completed several projects with a group from 3 continents all to a distinction level. Education has been a topic close to my heart with completing Samsung Electronics' "Solving Inequality In Education" programme which culminated in creating an app that paired disadvantaged children with mentors to begin their career journeys. This collective effort with my team helped us reach the final 25 teams in the UK from a pool of over 450 in their "Solve for Tomorrow" competition and allowed me to participate in an advert for the company at CES which gained over 33M views.

Collectively from these experiences across the globe and obtaining new points of view, I have been able to translate this into my current job as a Sales Executive at a 3D Printing company where I help bring a unique approach to problem solving and demonstrate the power that foreign languages & translation skills have in the working environment. The UK's increasing monolingualism rates & withdrawal of academic programmes for foreign languages means that Britain may fall behind to other economies if more linguists are not allowed to pursue these degrees.

In the future I hope to undertake an MBA outside of the UK either in the US, Asia, Germany or Spain where I can build a global network and further immerse myself in a challenging yet rewarding environment. I want to use the skills and connections I develop to transform how languages are perceived by society, encourage them in the workplace and ultimately try to improve moving processes for those wishing to study or live abroad.