

I was born in Kharkov, Ukraine, and immigrated to the United States at the age of four. My parents and I lived in the poor immigrant neighborhoods of Queens, New York City—though it was a step up from Ukraine. Both of my parents received advanced degrees, managed to emigrate from a country that was collapsing around them, and rose to stable jobs in the United States. Their perseverance is a constant source of inspiration to me. They have instilled in me their tenacity and diligence.

Through the experiences of my friends and colleagues, I have glimpsed the racial and gender barriers that prevent many from achieving higher education. I also see, through both my parents' experience and the experience of many colleagues, the difficulties international students face at both the undergraduate and graduate level. I am committed to combating these effects.

I first worked on reducing barriers to education during my undergraduate years, where I taught AP Physics C on weekends for local students whose schools did not teach that class. My students received 4s and 5s on the AP exam; one is now in graduate school at CMU. In graduate school, the same logic had me volunteering for Seattle-area math events at disadvantaged schools.

I also brought my interest in reducing educational barriers to the UW department-wide PhD mentoring program. Last year, when I coordinated that program, I instituted a policy to ensure that every international student had at least one mentor from outside the United States, guaranteeing that every incoming international student had a mentor to help them adjust to a new country, navigate the visa system, and learn American academic norms.

It is thanks to my parents and their drive for a better life that I have the privilege of living in a stable and peaceful society, let alone receiving a good education and pursuing an academic career. In order to justly use this unearned privilege, I feel compelled to extend the same benefits to others.