

Grit doesn't always look loud. Sometimes it's quiet and relentless, like my mother. A single mom, she rebuilt her life from rock bottom with two daughters and a new career in instructional design. At a time when the field was male-dominated, she had no safety net, just her resilience. Her perseverance is my blueprint, showing me that leadership isn't about a title but about purpose. That's what I have aspired to do ever since: build access, build community, and create pathways for people like my mother and like me, who don't always start with a map.

Mom's story showed me the power of resilience, but it also made me wonder: what if resilience didn't have to be the only option? What if systems were designed to empower people from the start? Those questions are what drew me to the intersection of technology and business. I chose to double major in Management Information Systems and Project and Supply Chain Management to understand how industries operate and evolve. Through my coursework and projects, I've seen firsthand how artificial intelligence and automation are revolutionizing the workforce, but also displacing workers at an alarming rate. I believe we can flip that narrative. Artificial Intelligence doesn't have to eliminate jobs; it can be a tool to create new kinds of meaningful work, but only if we design and implement it ethically and inclusively.

At Penn State Behrend, I'm working to make that mission real. I recently founded Behrend Women in Business to create a space where women across disciplines could feel empowered, mentored, and equipped to lead. Our motto is "Lead, Empower, Inspire." We organize corporate networking events, mentorship programs, professional development workshops, and lead philanthropic initiatives. But our real goal is to make space for women in rooms where decisions are made. I'm not trying to change the whole world overnight. I'm starting with the people right next to me, on my campus, empowering them and helping them grow.

My own cross-cultural journey has also shaped my perspective. Completing high school in India before moving to the U.S. showed me that while systems differ, women in both contexts face persistent barriers. In both countries, I've watched women push for equal footing, often without the same resources or confidence as their peers.

That's why the Perreault Fellows Program speaks to me. My work with Behrend Women in Business has shown me the power of building a community with a shared purpose, and I want to scale that impact. The program's emphasis on ethical leadership, global service, and cultural exchange aligns with the kind of changemaker I want to become. I want to absorb knowledge from communities around the world on how they confront economic exclusion and uplift women and bring that wisdom back with me.

I know I'm just getting started, but I also know what I'm building: a future where technology is a tool for empowerment and where leadership looks more like inclusion. I plan to pursue an MBA to deepen my expertise at the intersection of technology and leadership, and to bring businesses and communities together to create opportunities for women and underrepresented groups globally.