Student Spotlight: Siddhartha Bora 04/21

For the April DEI Student Spotlight, we are featuring Siddhartha Bora who is PhD candidate in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics (AEDE). Siddhartha was **recently awarded the 2021 William E. Krauss Director’s Award for Excellence in Graduate Research** for his lead-authored paper entitled "The Rationality of USDA Forecasts under Multivariate Asymmetric Loss".

What is your field of study?

*I am a graduate student working towards a PhD degree in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental and Development Economics (AEDE) within the CFAES. My research focuses on improving the accuracy of agricultural forecasts.*

How do you plan to use your degree in CFAES in your career?

*I hope to continue my research as a member of academia after I receive my PhD degree. I feel that the training and experience I received during my time with CFAES have prepared me well for the challenges ahead.*

What challenges have you faced while achieving your goals?

*I grew up in a small village in a remote corner of India, working on muddy paddy fields and keeping cows. Due to the poor connectivity, it was not easy to access services such as education and healthcare.*

What has helped you thrive toward your goals?

*Since my childhood, I care about things that grow, and people that grow them. I believe that my research can help influence agricultural policy, and facilitate informed decision-making by farmers. This keeps me motivated to work harder.*

What experiences as a member of the CFAES community have helped shape you as a person?

*As a member of the CFAES community, I have learned most from discussions with my peers. Also, I learned a lot from my students when I served as a teaching assistant. Particularly, teaching online during the pandemic has never been easy. But the experience helped me recognize the importance of understanding the special circumstances affecting each student. For example, not every student might have the same level of preparation and might require additional assistance.*
What can the college do to continue to create an inclusive environment?
The college should conduct more events to bring people from CFAES departments together while create a healthy environment to discuss DEI topics. In particular, I really appreciate the support I received from the Graduate Student Support for CFAES students for the past few months. This is a place I feel comfortable discussing diversity issues I experienced. The college should strive to offer more such friendly spaces where one can express themselves freely.

What ways do you suggest that someone could get involved in DEI work in the college? Where do you wish more people would get involved?
I would suggest anyone who is interested in DEI work is to have more interaction with people from diverse backgrounds. From my own experience, overcoming cultural taboos about discussing DEI topics is very important. Another way is to become involved in a student organization. As the treasurer of the Graduate Student Association in AEDE, I can say that recognizing the diversity within someone’s own student community is the first step. Throughout my time at CFAES, I have been part of a great student soccer group consisting of people from different nationalities and cultural background, and this experience has helped me become aware of DEI issues.