

The “I” in INCLUSION  
Ishita Tandon

Biographical Information –

Ishita Tandon is a Ph.D. candidate in Dr. Kartik Balachandran’s lab in the Department of Biomedical Engineering. She holds a bachelor’s degree in biotechnology engineering from India. Her research involves developing multiscale in vitro and in vivo models of heart valves aimed at studying the early detection and monitoring of calcific aortic valve disease. She has received the American Heart Association Predoctoral Fellowship and the University of Arkansas Doctoral Academy Fellowship along with multiple other honors and travel grants. She has also published 8 peer-reviewed articles, a book chapter, and given 11 conference presentations including an invited talk.

Ishita served as the finance chair of the Graduate Society of Women Engineers (SWE) and was the co-founder and president of the Biomedical Engineering Department Graduate Students’ Organization. Her career objective is to pursue translational biomedical research. Her leadership goal is to inspire and uplift women who lack opportunities for education, self-development, growth, and leadership.

Abstract –

The current times have forced each one of us to rethink the concepts of diversity, inclusion, equity, belonging, and social justice. With the rise in incidences of discrimination, hate crimes, and increasing social injustices around the globe, there is a pressing need to call for action and reform, at an individual level from the grass root up. As a brown international female student, I am passionate about increasing awareness and creating learning opportunities to bridge the cultural and social gaps to contribute towards an inclusive work environment. A workplace that promotes equity and social justice, where people feel like they belong, creates an atmosphere for innovation and growth. To bring these reforms, I have worked with various student organizations, collaborations, and professors. Through association with the Graduate Society of Women Engineers and Biomedical Engineering Graduate Student Organization, multiple events and programs were organized with the intent to promote awareness and inclusion. Panels with key faculty members, virtual town halls, talks, and presentations were organized with the goal of creating a more supportive, inclusive, and an encouraging environment tailored to the needs of all individuals from different backgrounds. With more students, faculty, and staff actively involved in the conversations and action towards a better workplace environment, it will not be difficult to bring about a positive change.