

# Student Perspectives: Stepping out of her comfort zone



**Master of Public Policy candidate Deepika Bagaria shares what it was like to move from the professional world in India to being a full-time student at UC San Diego**

By Deepika Bagaria | Contributor

I moved from India to San Diego with my husband in September 2019. While I applied to the [UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy](#) (GPS) because my family was here in San Diego, I realized it was a blessing in disguise. GPS is one of the best places to pursue a master's degree for someone with an Asia-Pacific regional research focus.

Prior to moving to San Diego, I had the opportunity to work as a technical adviser to the CEO of the largest power generation company in India - working with executive-level management and ministry officials on the one hand, while actively engaging with the community at the ground level through my social work endeavors on the other. This experience led me to appreciate the fact that public policy is one of the key instruments to bring about sustainable development and brought me to GPS to pursue a [Master of Public Policy \(MPP\)](#) degree.

Having been a professional for 11 years, entering a master's program entailed stepping out of my comfort zone and was intimidating to me. And then the pandemic happened. I was quite anxious as to how taking classes during COVID would be, considering potential challenges in comprehending lectures, making friends and doing group projects and assignments.



Deepika Bagaria | Contributed photo

As it turned out, the online experience couldn't have been better. The classes were in a hybrid format with an option to attend 33-50% of the classes for most courses, depending on the number of students willing to take in-person classes. I took all remote classes as with my baby, I wanted to be extra cautious.

The professors did a terrific job of encouraging and efficiently managing participation of both the in-class and remote students on Zoom. They conducted regular office hours and were very welcoming. The teaching assistants were super helpful and patient with clarification of concepts and helping out with the assignments.

As many of us were attending school remotely in these difficult times, we developed a very close-knit student community on WhatsApp and on Zoom calls, enthused by feelings of camaraderie and fraternity. Anyone working on an assignment would just post a Zoom link in the group, and anyone else working on the same would just hop in. It was very similar to an actual study group - just more easily accessible and inclusive. A friend hosted regular Friday Zoom socials, which provided an excellent platform to chill out after a week's hard work.

The [GPS Career Services](#) team deserves special applause for working relentlessly

with us on our resumes, elevator pitch and cover letters for applications for internships. They provided us with invaluable experience of interacting (virtually) with many GPS alums from every field as they shared their experiences of working in the professional world. This was especially helpful for the international students like myself for becoming familiar with U.S. institutions and developing contacts in the job market. The Career Services team does everything they can to help us secure quality internships and jobs.

During the quarter, I undertook research on the political economy of electricity regulation in India under the supervision of assistant professor [Michael Davidson](#). His research focuses on institutional conflicts inherent in deploying renewable energy at scale. Working with him infuses me with energy and excitement, and I admire his amazing mentorship and tremendous domain expertise. During the course of the research, I also came to know of his multidisciplinary projects with students from the engineering and data science departments and got an opportunity to interact with them and learn about their research, as well.

Being a mother to a young one and pursuing a rigorous study program like this, I couldn't have imagined a smoother experience in sailing through the quarter, thanks to the awesome professors, staff and peer group at GPS. I am looking forward to meeting each one of them in person - very soon!

*Deepika Bagaria is a first-year MPP student at the UC San Diego School of Global Policy and Strategy (GPS).*



Deepika Bagaria and her child at the Flower Fields in Carlsbad, California. [Note:

photo taken before the COVID-19 pandemic.] | Contributed photo