



**Office
of External
Affairs**

THE BRIDGE

The Official Newsletter of the Office Of External Affairs

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Editor's Message

Welcome to "The Bridge", which is the newly formed newsletter of the Office of External Affairs (OEA) at NSU. We are excited to let you know about all the wonderful activities that the OEA is involved with to support the internationalization of NSU as well our outreach to the NSU alumni. We hope you will be inspired by the articles and want to share your stories with us, too. Feel free to give us your feedback and/or ideas because we aspire to be your gateway to the rest of the world.

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What is the Office of External Affairs?

Six months ago, when one of my faculty members told me that she was becoming the Director of the Office of External Affairs (OEA), I congratulated and wished her the best. Little did I know that fate had already decided for me to move in here within the next three months. So, one may ask, what is the Office of External Affairs? What does this office do? Is this a newly established office or was it always shrouded at the corner of Admin building's fifth floor? It has been a little more than three months and now I can definitely answer all of these questions.

The Office of External Affairs was established in February 2015 at North South University for the purpose of connecting the external world with NSU. However, very few people actually knew about the existence or functionality of this office. So, it's best that the members of this office introduce the OEA to everyone. I asked everyone how they wanted people to perceive this office. The Director of Office of External Affairs, Dr. Katherine Li said, "I want people to perceive this Office as a gateway to the world and a platform to showcase NSU". She lives by those words by working every-day to brand NSU and fulfill the Vice-Chancellor's vision of reaching the top 100 Asian universities. She also adds, "The best thing about this job is that I get to put all of my skills to use on a daily basis like: leadership, strategic planning, stakeholder consultation, team-building, advocacy, networking, diplomacy, research, facilitation, cross-cultural skills, and social & emotional intelligence. Most of all, I get to continue to learn, grow and experiment with people I admire and respect".

The OEA has two sub-offices: Office of International Affairs (OIA) and Office of Alumni Affairs (OAA). The OIA is dedicated to the international students' wellbeing and offers them support to make their stay in Bangladesh as pleasant as possible. The office is also responsible for promoting NSU and developing liaisons, mutual understandings and agreements with universities and organizations overseas. The International Affairs Officer, Samina Alam Miti says, "I want this office to be recognized by students. Any support or information on study abroad, Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), scholarship programs and exchange programs can be received from this office. All they have to do is come and ask for it". All the international students of NSU (almost 200 in number) are getting support from the International Affairs Officer every day.



The other office, OAA is dedicated to communicating with the NSU alumni throughout the world. As every alumnus/alumna is a representative of NSU, it is important for the OAA to reach out to the alumni to represent NSU in their respective fields. The office keeps NSU graduates informed about and interested in the development of their alma mater and its reputation. The Alumni Affairs Officer, Farzana Haque says, "This office is the bridge that connects NSU and its alumni. After graduation, many alumni think that their role for their alma mater is done. This perception is wrong. As long as NSU stands, its alumni will stand with it to expand its reputation". The Alumni Affairs Officer works closely with the alumni and currently is creating a centralized alumni database, with the help from the IT Department for swifter communication.

The OEA has two officers for the better functionality and operations. They are the External Affairs Officer and Office Coordinator. The External Affairs Officer, Dr. Hasanuzzaman is assigned to guide and assist the international faculty members. Therefore, his primary responsibility is to arrange work permits, security clearances and tax returns for the international faculty members. When asked of his views on this office, he replied, "The OEA has been arranging many events in the last few months to enhance the image of NSU. However, with more engagement from different academic departments and the student body, this office can thrive more and properly portray the hard-earned stature of NSU. If you have something worthwhile to showcase, this office will give you the support for it". On the other hand, the Office Coordinator, Tasnia Azmeri Madiha, ensures the office is running effectively and efficiently. Therefore, not a single document leaves the office without her verification, nor a single phone call remains unanswered. All communication, scheduling of appointments and meetings are part of her responsibility. Regarding her job, she says, "This job taught me how to communicate with people from all walks of life. My communication is so diverse that it starts all the way up from the members of Board of Trustees of NSU to local vendors of different shops. It's amazing how I get to learn about and from these people and improve my communicative skills". It takes a lot of patience and perseverance to do her part, let alone successfully. Trust me on that.

The newest addition to the OEA is our student worker, Mr. Md. Haidaruzzaman Sujon. He works as our illustrator and content designer. If you have joined us in our programs, then you must have seen his wonderful designs on our banners and other promotional materials. When asked about his favorite bit of the office Sujon replied, "The best thing about this office is that I get a freedom of creativity. I was never given specific designs by the office. They just give me an idea of what they want and I turn that idea into reality". Our youngest member of the OEA is quite fond of his job as he comes straight to office after finishing his classes.

The OEA also has three motivated and hardworking Office Support Staff (OSS) members for the office's productivity and smooth operation. OSS member, Md. Imam Hossain expressed his pride over the fact that only the OSS members from the OEA are allowed to deliver and sometimes help with important and official paperwork related to visa, passport and so. Mr. Selim Reza, OSS member shared his favorite thing about the office saying, "I feel proud of the two weekly meetings (Sunday and Thursday) we have in this office. No one usually asks the OSS members to be a part of a meeting and give their input. Our Director, Dr. Katherine Li is the first person to ever do that". On a similar note, Mr. Shahnaz Uddin Mehraj shared how he loved the attitude of everyone in this office. To him the amount respect everyone has for each other, even for the OSS members is beyond admirable. Besides these, both OSS members feel proud to serve a foreign supervisor and learn the American way of administrative work.

The OEA is a wonderful place where the members of the office starts the week full of zest with a motivational meeting and work tirelessly for the entire week so that on Thursdays at 4pm, there is a celebration of all the progress made during that week. The OEA openheartedly welcomes people who have innovative ideas and want to promote or collaborate with NSU. Everything about this office, whether it is the environment, the people, or the work ethics, just draws you in. I, Sumaita Shaira Hasan, joined this office as a Guest Worker and to this day, all the members of this office have never made me feel that I am not a permanent member of this office. So, if you are looking for any support or curious about this office, just come to Room 502, level #5 of Administrative Building. And, if you still have no purpose to come to this office, we will still invite you for a mean cup of tea.

Pop-up American Center at North South University

On the 30th of January, the Office of External Affairs (OEA) of North South University (NSU) organized a program entitled “Pop-up American Center” where experts from the U.S. Embassy Dhaka came to NSU to help students learn about opportunities to apply to American Universities. The U.S. Ambassador to Bangladesh, Her Excellency, Marcia S. Bernicat and the Deputy Assistant Secretary, Mr. Daniel Rosenblum joined the program along with the staff of U.S. Embassy Dhaka. The Chairman of the Board of Trustees, Mr. Mohammed Shajahan opened the inaugural ceremony with his welcome address. Later on, the Ambassador, Her Excellency, Marcia S. Bernicat shared how delighted she was to see Bangladeshi students aspiring for further education in America. The Vice Chancellor (in charge) Prof. Dr. G.U. Ahsan thanked the Ambassador and the Deputy Assistant Secretary for their presence and were given crests as tokens of appreciation from NSU. After the inaugural ceremony, the Ambassador and the Deputy Assistant Secretary visited the booths set up by the American Center, the Office of External Affairs and the student clubs of NSU. The Members of US Embassy Dhaka gave informational presentations on academic exchange programs, student exchange programs, and English language programs, consular services, and other services available at the American Center. The program ended with a music session with Bimol.



Glimpses of the Pop-up American Center at North South University

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with University of Plymouth



On the 24th of January, 2018, North South University marked another auspicious day when Professor Nikolaos Tzokas from the University of Plymouth came to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with NSU. In Europe, University of Plymouth is renowned for its Physical Sciences and Engineering. The institute has excelled in other disciplines such as: Social Sciences and Humanities, Biomedical & Health, Life & Earth Sciences and more. On that day, Professor Tzokas was given a tour of the campus where he appreciated the campus facilities and complemented the aesthetics of NSU. On the following day, the Office of External Affairs organized a public address called “Adding Value & Enabling Success: Higher Education Trends and Scholarship Opportunities” where Professor Tzokas gave his ideas about University of Plymouth and how NSU graduates could apply for higher education over there. He gave his informative address in a witty manner with a PowerPoint presentation. He ended his address informing students on available scholarship opportunities such as: five scholarships each worth £5,000 for graduate applicants of 2018-2019 for the faculty of Business, Erasmus exchange for students and staff, and one PhD scholarship worth £5,000 per year for 3 years. After the address, there was a Q/A session and afterwards, the Vice Chancellor (in charge) Prof. Dr. G.U. Ahsan gave his vote of thanks and shared how delighted he was for this newly formed partnership with the University of Plymouth.

International Faculty Member Feature



Dr. Norman K. Swazo is Professor of Philosophy, Department of History and Philosophy, in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. Professor Swazo joined NSU in September 2014 and served as Director of Undergraduate Studies in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for the period January 2015 through August 2016. He currently teaches full-time in the Department of History and Philosophy. He has taught previously in the USA (University of Alaska, Fairbanks; tenured Professor of Philosophy and Department Chair, Department of Philosophy and Humanities) and in Saudi Arabia (Alfaisal University, Riyadh; as Professor of Philosophy and Biomedical Ethics, and Interim/Acting Dean, College of Science and General Studies). He specializes in ethics in international affairs, recent European philosophy, and biomedical ethics. He also publishes in religious studies, including Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Interviewer: From your bio, we can see that you have taught in the United States of America and Saudi Arabia. What influenced you to come to Bangladesh, specifically North South University?

Dr. Swazo: I had a Bangladeshi housekeeper for four of the six years I was in KSA, for whom I provide continuing financial support. Since I was completing my contracted employment there he preferred to go final exit as well and return to Bangladesh. At the time, NSU advertised for faculty, including in philosophy, and I jokingly informed him

that maybe I should apply. He was obviously excited that I do so, and so I applied. Lo and behold, I was offered the position I now have and here I am continuing my faculty role and continuing my assistance to him and his family in a village in Chandpur district. As I began at NSU I also understood that I would be helping to start a philosophy curriculum in a more sustained way, and that I endeavor to do.

I: What are the differences that you notice in the teaching paradigm of NSU and other universities?

DS: NSU is the equivalent of what in the USA we call a “comprehensive” university offering undergraduate and master’s degrees, with faculty workload dedicated primarily to teaching. The faculty teaching workload in the USA will vary by institution, but a comprehensive institution would have a teaching workload of about 9 credit hours (3 sections) per semester (with summer session normally voluntarily undertaken at additional compensation and otherwise devoted to research time). The number of credit hours in a faculty workload at NSU is 12 credit hours (4 sections) per trimester (fall/spring/summer), with high enrollment per section for most of the general education courses. This teaching workload leaves little time for actual research and scholarship, both of which I think are important for continuing faculty professional development and for informed up-to-date instruction. I expect NSU authorities will have to make some adjustments in teaching workload in the near future, if NSU is to move forward as a research university competitive with those in the top 100 regional institutions.

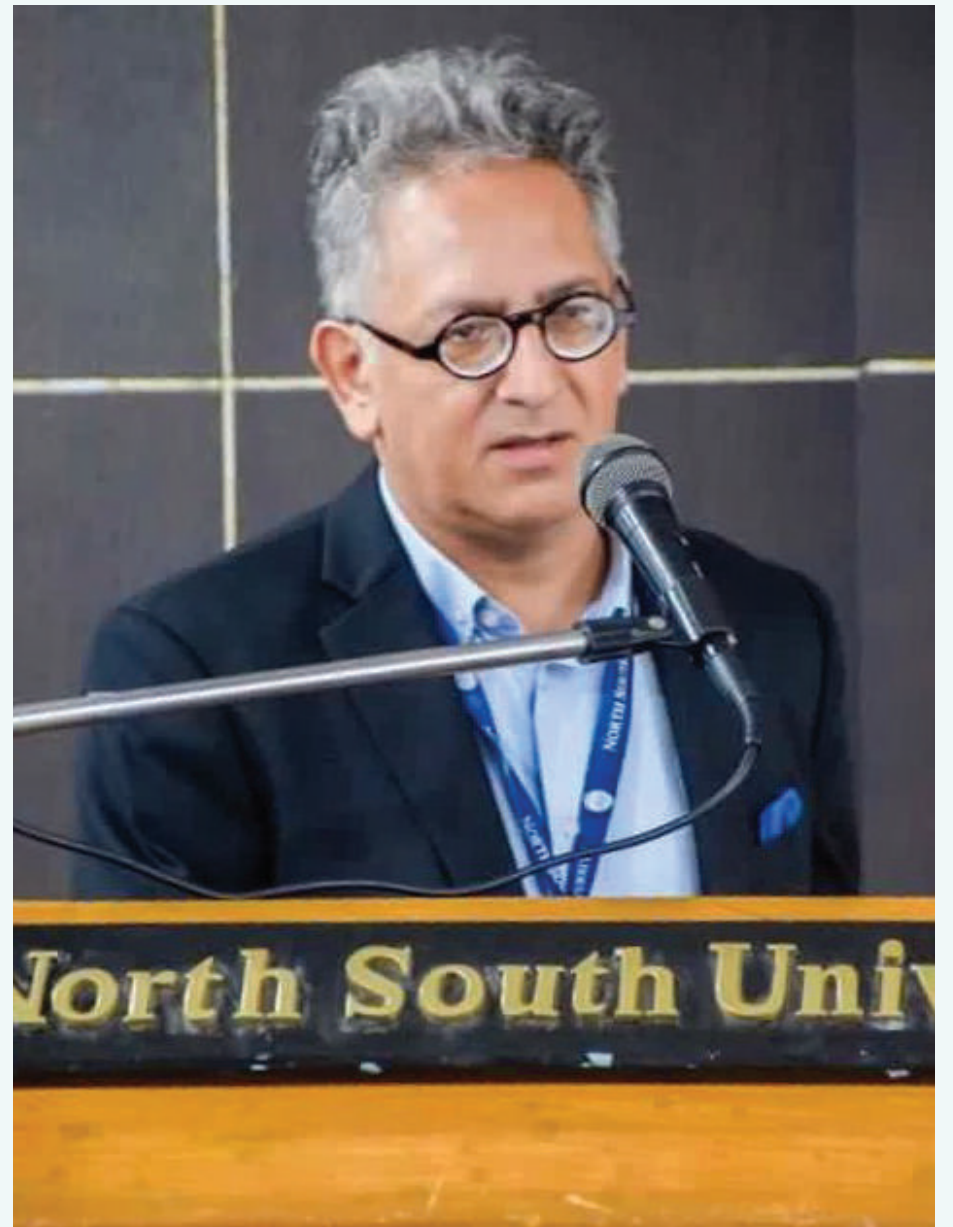
I: What is it like to be an international faculty member at NSU? Can you share some anecdotes?

DS: Speaking in general, I would say that we all have our sets of practices and life expectations. Foreign faculty come here with varied experiences and expectations. Sometimes these will be aligned with NSU’s institutional and communal culture and

sometimes not. Compromise is to be expected from both sides when there are differences of opinion about practices and expectations. When I first came to NSU and started serving on various university committees, most of those meetings were conducted in English. More recently more meetings start off in English and then gradually shift to Bangla. It's a matter of the utility of the moment, I suppose—the operative assumption is that the greater good is served for the greater number involved in the deliberations by speaking in Bangla rather than English. Understood...But...a point worthy of some thought...

I: Plagiarism is a burning issue in every education institute. As an expert in ethics, how do you propose to stop plagiarism? How can we make students more ethically aware of this ill-practice?

DS: It is important that all faculty explain what plagiarism means, in all sections they teach, every semester—explaining orally, explaining in course syllabi, reminding during written assignments and exams, etc. It is important that appropriate proctoring occurs, of course, during exams in particular. In many cases I have experienced here at NSU, students do not understand what plagiarism is or what they must do to avoid an allegation of an act of academic dishonesty. They must be educated to know this, especially if they are already in the habit from SSC/HSC level of copying and presenting assignments that are in fact plagiarized from sources.



I: Since you have been teaching here for a while, can you understand some words or phrases in Bangla? Have you ever heard or understood Bangla conversations about you?

DS: I have some basic conversational skill to engage workers who know no English—the cleaners who clean offices; the Office Support Staff who provide faculty assistance; Security staff; to navigate by rickshaw or CNG; etc. My grammar is not correct but my Bangla is functional for the limited purpose such as those. I don't recall overhearing conversations about me in Bangla.

I: What would be your advice for your future students?

DS: Read, re-read, and read again! Many students do not like to read course materials. Many students also do not have good study skills such as taking good notes of class lectures, having confidence to ask questions in class, to make comments in class, to visit faculty during office hours. All of this is important to student success at NSU. Learning has to be active, pro-active on the part of the student, even as the faculty member works to enable that learning by what s/he teaches.

Professor Swazo usually teaches courses like, PH101 Introduction to Philosophy, PH103 Scientific Reasoning, PH104 Ethics, PH104 Business Ethics. The Office of External Affairs is grateful to Professor Swazo for sharing a bit of his life to us.

Next Generation Leadership

The next generation leadership will be smarter and faster. They will work more swiftly and skillfully. By using their knowledge and expertise, they will take mature decisions and will not fear challenges.

The successful young leaders expressed their views on the nature of future leadership in the event “Next Generation Leadership”, on Wednesday, 24th of January, 2018 at North South University, organized by the Office of External Affairs (OEA) under the leadership of the Director, Dr. Katherine Li. In this event, NSU Alumni talked about their success and leadership in their respective sectors of work.

The panelists of the seminar were Mr. Ziauddin Adil, media personality and CEO of Top of Mind, Ms. Rehnuma Karim, Founder and CEO of Heroes for All, Dr. M. Masrur Reaz, Senior Economist and Program Manager of International Finance Corporation, Department of World Bank Group and Mr. Sakib Adnan, Co-Founder of Shikhbe Shobai.

The objective of organizing such an illuminating seminar was to create awareness among students on the current market scenario and the role of leadership, so that students can prepare themselves for the job market as well as to become leaders in future themselves. The chief guest of this panel discussion was the Pro-Vice Chancellor (designate), Prof. Dr. G.U. Ahsan and the dean of school of Business and Economics, Prof. Dr. Mohammad Mahboob Rahman was the special guest. Chairs, faculty members, administrative members and many students attended this event to hear the stories of the alumni. This event was inspiring for the students as they got to learn about leadership and how to become a leader from the NSU alumni.



Alumni Feature



Ziauddin Adil is a Bangladeshi businessman, social worker, and all-around media personality. He is currently the CEO of Top of Mind, which under his leadership has become one of the largest, most integrated one-stop solution for media investment for many clients in Bangladesh. Mr. Adil's lengthy background (with over 18 years of experience) in media and marketing has earned him the name "Living Archive of Media" and has an in-depth knowledge about the Bangladeshi audience and how to create something unique. Mr. Adil is a sports lover and proudly holds the sponsorship right of the Bangladesh cricket team. He is also the Honorary Counsel General of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Bangladesh. He was the executive producer of the most unique film creation in Bangladesh's history in film industry called "Aynabaji" and marks the benchmark of entertainment marketing in the nation. Aynabaji has been honored in renowned film festivals like - Seattle Film festival, 65th International Film Fest Mannheim-Heidelberg and 47th International Film Festival of India.

Interviewer: What it is like to be the 'Honorary Counsel General' of the Democratic Republic of Congo in Bangladesh?

Ziauddin Adil: To me, it is a matter of pride and honor to facilitate the promotion of businesses of our country in a foreign land. I am very interested to promote the trade and business of our country in the untouched territories abroad. Given that Bangladesh does not have a historic bilateral relation with DR Congo, as an 'Honorary Counsel General' I am trying to develop a bilateral business and socio-economic relationship between Bangladesh and Congo. We are trying to give the Bangladeshi companies the preferential first mover's advantages in the Congo market. This is a great opportunity for our country, as we can facilitate and promote trades between the two countries. Bangladesh is very resourceful in business and trade sectors such as manufacturing industries like pharmaceuticals, Garments and IT solutions. I believe that building a mutually beneficial relationship with Congo will help Bangladeshis to start up their businesses in the unmapped territories of Congo.

I: As we know, 'Aynabaji' was a huge hit in our country and was highly appreciated by film industries in abroad. What was your reaction to that? When you were producing this film, were you able to predict its immense success?

ZA: The idea and concept of the movie "Aynabaji" first came to me through Amitab Reza and Gousul Alam Shaon. Later, the story was scripted by Anam Biswas. When Amitabh told us the story, we told him that we will depend on his intellectual creativity and will not interfere with his casting, selection and other day-to-day operations. But, after finishing the movie, Amitabh has to give us the plot of the movie for marketing and other promotional activities. So, when Amitabh was creating the movie we did not interfere with his work and neither did he interfere with ours. Amitabh reflected sheer ingenuity in the movie, whereas we complemented it with our marketing knowledge and promotional capabilities. It is our teamwork that made "Aynabaji" a big success. I believed in Amitab's vision and he believed in our marketing and promotional campaigns. The perfect blend of artistic content with appropriate marketing efforts made "Aynabaji" one of the most watched movies of all.

I: Is there any aspect of the main character that you can relate to?

ZA: 'Ayna' the main character of this film plays several roles simultaneously such as a businessman, an autistic child, a postman, a politician etc. He is switching his character and having a journey through the previously mentioned roles which happen to be his passion and profession. Since it is a fictional character created purely for the purpose of entertainment, it does not have any relevance in real life. Ayna's character is extremely rare, and there is almost nothing ideal about his character. However, I could relate to the environment and the aura of this film such as, the hustle and bustle of the Old Dhaka, people sipping tea by the street, the Buriganga River, the jingling sounds of rickshaw bell, children playing football on the roof of the building, etc. Though the main character was fictional, each action played by 'Ayna, can be related to many people of our society and community.

I: There is a negative impression of media by the general people of Bangladesh. How do you think we can change that? Can we start this change from NSU? How do you think we can motivate our students to pursue a career in the media industry?

ZA: This perception of media in Bangladesh has changed a lot since the '90s. People are no longer perceiving the media industry as a trial but a full-fledged profession driven by a passion for creativity. The fresh graduates now want to utilize their marketing skills which they have learned to improve and expand the advertising and media industry. A large pool of new talents from different sectors is entering in this industry. A large number of NSU graduates are doing well in the advertising and other media related agencies. The negative perception of media has changed. Now, we can make it even more sophisticated with the combination of academic and experienced practical knowledge.

I: Recently, you came back to your alma mater after a long time as a panelist for the seminar titled, 'Next generation Leadership'. What was it like to come back to NSU? What are the changes that you noticed and how did you feel to be part of the panel?

ZA: We, NSU alumni always feel very fortunate whenever we are able to do something for the institute that shaped us 20 years ago. After so many years, we still try our best to contribute something to our beloved Institute. Whenever there is a forum or seminar in NSU, I try to attend and share my experiences with the young minds of the institute. Whenever NSU needs any advice or support from us it gives NAASBE alumni great pleasure to be able to contribute to our institute with whatever we have. One of our objectives to come back to NSU is to understand the current students, what they think, how they think, their perceptions and how they address issues in their lives. I think we can learn a lot from their approach to life as a whole because I believe that this generation is far ahead in terms of their thinking ability. We are seeing a lot of startups and entrepreneurship which wasn't there 20 years back. They are more open in their approach to life and do not view themselves as skilled workers but as entrepreneurs and leaders, which is a drastic shift if compared to our generation. They are full of ideas. Their way of doing things is enlightening and educational for us. As a panelist, I learnt from the students while my fellow panelists and I shared with them the situations and experiences we faced as professionals for their learning.

I: You are already one of the distinguished alumni representing North South University throughout the country. What else do you want to do to heighten NSU's reputation?

ZA: I believe that not only me but any former student who tried to uphold the reputation of NSU are all distinguished alumni. Whenever we achieve success in our professional life or we share our success stories with a larger audience and always loudly and proudly state that we are the products of NSU. I think that the students of NSU uplift the reputation of the institute by default whenever they start their professional life in any industry. One can easily differentiate an NSU graduate from the students of any other universities. I don't think individual alumni can heighten the reputation of NSU. I believe it's our quality, work ethics and combined efforts that lifts up the reputation of the institute not only locally but also globally.

Profitably Powering the Clean Energy Economy

Dr. Daniel M. Kammen, Professor of Energy at the University of California, Berkeley, Director of Renewable and Appropriate Energy Laboratory (RAEL) and Chair in the Energy and Resources Group (ERG) came to North South University on the 18th of February, 2018 to talk on “Profitably Powering the Clean Energy Economy”. This event was organized by the Office of External Affairs and facilitated by NSU HR Club. He informed the audience members on Bangladesh’s changing energy landscape—electricity for all by 2021, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and insufficient power supply of the rapidly growing demand for electricity. Dr. Kammen also showcased Bangladesh’s remarkable success in Solar Home System (SHS). When most countries were skeptic of solar energy system, Bangladesh became one of the pioneers to start this new program. He informed that Bangladesh, just starting from 2003, has the largest off-the-grid program in the world. The 4.5 million SHS installed as of July 2017 are generating over 200MW of electricity. To illustrate the current situation of the energy/fuel system, Dr. Kammen used the analogy of the horse race where energies from solar and wind are going neck and neck and other forms of energy such as nuclear, water, coal are lagging behind. Then he informed that, the concept of energy storage was not even an option 15 years ago. It was when China started mass producing solar panels that the prices dropped significantly and people started relying on solar energy. Like a dark horse, SHS is sweeping in and winning the race for clean energy economy. Dr. Kammen stressed that Bangladesh has an ample amount of clean energy resources from which a profitable and empowering economy can be built. Dr. Kammen is an expert in his field having authored/co-authored 12 books, written more than 300 peer-reviewed journal publications and contributing to Nobel prizewinning climate work with the professors at University of California, Berkeley. For his valuable words and time, Dr. Kammen was presented with a bouquet of flowers by the Director of External Affairs, Dr. Katherine Li and a crest by the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Atiqul Islam as tokens of appreciation from NSU.



International Student Feature

Faruq Dahir Salad is an undergraduate student from the department of Environmental Science and Management. He is from Somalia and on his leisure time enjoys reading and playing football. He is also a lover of nature.

Interviewer: Tell us something about yourself.

Faruq Dahir: Hi, my name is Faruq Dahir Salad. I was born in Garowe Puntland state of Somalia. I learned everything I needed to know there--Everything that has to do with life and so. I started my education there and I will continue it wherever I go. My life was just as normal and fun as any other kid. But I was a unique child that made my education different and more enjoyable. I completed elementary school, middle school, high school, college and finally now, I am here at North South University.

I: What made you choose NSU as your alma mater?

FD: I was recommended to join NSU. I have also done some research before applying and was very happy with this university. I chose this university because it has a good reputation for both academic results and behavior of students in and around the university. The university has a reputation of excellence in academia. NSU is first and the best private university in Bangladesh having excellent faculty members with an international education, sincere academic altitudes and great achievements for the last two decades. NSU has a mixture of international exposure and rich Bangladeshi culture that is insurmountable if compared with all other universities. And that made me realize that North South University was where I was destined to go.

I: As you mentioned the mixture of international exposure and Bangladeshi culture, do you notice cultural diversity in NSU?

FD: I am living in a vibrant multicultural campus, so finding cultural diversity is quite evident. It was great moment for me to get knew and understand cultures other than my own. Day by day, NSU is becoming more multicultural, which means that people and traditions from many different countries and cultures are becoming more noticeable and celebrated. I was able to meet people, and experience situations that were unfamiliar to me. I learned about different cultures and that was a great way for me to develop an idea of cultural diversity. The most important thing to remember is that everyone, regardless of their cultural background, has different opinions, habits and ways of life. The sooner you accept that everyone is different, the easier it becomes to understand and embrace cultural differences.



I: What was your experience like when you first came to Bangladesh? Can you share some incidents?

FD: Well, I got lost on my first week in Bangladesh. It happened in May, 2015. I was travelling from Bashundhara to Dhanmondi. It was supposed to take an hour to reach there. But Dhaka city has an unparalleled reputation for its traffic jam. So, it took more than two hours to reach there. During this time, I was really confused as I was not used to this sort of experience. After going to Dhanmondi I picked a rickshaw to reach the place I have been looking for. Somehow, unfortunately, I got lost. There were countless people moving aimlessly in the street and cars and rickshaws constantly running without following the laws. Seeing all these made me panic. It was worse because neither I could speak nor understand Bangla. I had a hard time instructing the rickshaw puller the right directions. After moving here and there for few minutes, I realized that I was lost. I asked a few people to help me to go to the specific place but they were unable to understand my words. I had two options at that moment, 1) Moving forward and getting help from the locals or 2) going back home and trying again another day. So, I reviewed the two options. It won't be wise to go back as I had already spent three hours here. Therefore, my mind pushed me to choose the first option- moving forward and seeking help. So, I kept strolling around. I walked and walked and walked. All of a sudden, three young boys called me. They understood that I was a foreigner and most probably lost (they were totally right). To communicate with me, one of them started to talk in English. Then I told him about myself and where I was supposed to go. He understood what I said and he and the other three boys helped me to find that particular address in Dhanmondi. When I went to the specific address with the three boys I invited them to have soft drinks with me. But they said they were just happy to help me. At that time I remember myself being mad, feeling hot, hungry and tired. But, now that I look back, it was fun. I got to know how random people of Bangladesh are so nice and helpful. If those three boys had not helped me, god knows where I would have ended up that day!

I: Where do you see yourself in the future?

FD: I am happy that I made the decision to continue my education. Looking forward to my future is very important to me. I really want to do and go anywhere my heart desires. All I need is a plan to follow through. The feeling of fulfillment and accomplishment of what I set out to do is wonderful. You ask where do I see myself in the future? Well, I have many dreams and goals in my life. I had inspirations of being an expert, a researcher or an environmentalist when I was a kid. But, I realize there are so many other steps I need to take in order to achieve these so-called goals. And that includes graduating from university and finding that perfect job. My expectation in the next five years is to see myself well educated and living my life to the fullest with my family.

I: Do you have any message for the local and international students?

FD: What I really want to tell is, try to make friends with each other. We spend four years here doing our bachelor's degree. It is comparatively harder for an international student as they come here leaving their homes and families. So, my message is to take the initiative and be friends with each other. I became friends with many great people with whom I share all these fond memories. So, local students, if you see a fellow international student struggling or in need, just extend your helping hand to him/her and become friends. International students, you also need to do your best and reach out to the local students. The effort has to come from both sides, not just one. The friends you make here, you will remember them no matter where you end up. So, seize this opportunity and create unique bonds of friendship with each other where you continue to support, motivate and enlighten each other. For those who are about to take on the same journey, I wish you an equally fulfilling North South University life ahead of you.