



**Office
of External
Affairs**

THE BRIDGE

The Official Newsletter of the Office Of External Affairs

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Editor's Message

Along with NSU's #1 ranking among private universities in Bangladesh, it is also celebrating a milestone of 101 MoUs created with national and international institutions. A new item is the description of our outreach strategy to Bangladeshi Educators Abroad. This issue also highlights several new and renewed relationships with our partners like the University of Western Australia and Yunnan University. As always, we feature a current international student - this time from Somaliland, an alumnus finishing his PhD at Oxford and our very own Vice Chancellor, Professor Atiqul Islam as the International Faculty Feature. We hope you will enjoy reading The Bridge #9.

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UniSA Visits NSU



Mr. Juan Ospina Sarmiento, the Manager of International Business Development Office of the University of South Australia (UniSA) came to visit North South University (NSU) on Wednesday, 08 May 2019. He had a fruitful meeting with the Office of International Affairs (OIA) Officer Ms. Samina Alam Miti regarding student exchange opportunities for NSU students at UniSA.

Juan offered scholarship opportunities to eligible NSU students with a CGPA of 3.00 out of 4.00 in their undergraduate degree for a 25 percent tuition waiver for the first academic year of their graduate degree. Also, the OIA organized a face-to-face

interview for students who had questions.

Ms. Miti, the OIA Officer has been invited to visit UniSA to learn more about opportunities for NSU students.

Rohingya Camp Visit, 14th-16th May, 2019

The Department of Political Science and Sociology (PSS) and South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG), the North South University (NSU), is organizing an international conference on "Rohingya Crisis in Bangladesh: Challenges and Sustainable Solutions" to be held on July 27-28, 2019. The conference committee sent 3 committee members to visit the Rohingya camps on 15th and 16th May, 2019 in Cox's Bazar to conduct a scoping study which included Dr. Katherine Li, Director, OEA and Conference Convener, Dr. AQMA Rahman Bhuiyan, Chairman, DEML and Advisor, Conference Committee and Md. Saidur Rahman, Lecturer, PSS and Coordinator-, Conference Committee went to Cox's Bazaar.



The scoping study helped:

- (i) to promote the forthcoming conference to stakeholders working directly with the Rohingya community;
- (ii) to explore critical areas for future CPS research activities; and
- (iii) to equip visiting faculty members about the present status of Rohingya communities and developmental activities.

The NSU delegates got permission to visit Camp-13, as per the recommendation of Dr. Ahmed Hossain, Professor of Public Health, NSU through his NGO, the Health Management Bangladesh (HMBD) Foundation which is a competent humanitarian organization in Bangladesh established in 2014 to assist the people from disadvantaged areas with great health needs. By now, the HMBD has contributed in many ways to create the healthiest nation through research and actions.

It was also interesting to meet NSU student (on work leave), Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim, Camp Management Officer, Danish Refugee Council (DRC). He gave his insights on the public health scenario of Rohingya camp.

While visiting the camps, the NSU delegates met with around 75 orphans, who had witnessed the atrocities that led to fleeing Myanmar. Dr. Li feels she gained more credibility as the Conference Convener from the firsthand experience at Kutupalong Camp visit.



Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor of NSU Visits Western Sydney University



A meeting between Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice Chancellor of North South University and Professor Barney Glover, Vice-Chancellor and President of Western Sydney University took place on 07 June 2019. This meeting turned out to be very warm and productive. NSU plans to exponentially increase its research and has substantial funding for research grants across a range of disciplines.

North South University plans to increase the number of academics with PhDs. Professor Glover offered two fee waivers for high-performing academics ready to commence a PhD. The academics should be from Law and/or Business.

There is also interest in having NSU undergraduate Law students spend one semester at Western Sydney

University. Staff exchange will be an important part of joint research, PhDs and undergraduate semester abroad initiatives and will build the person-to-person relationships to ensure that the partnership between the two universities is productive.

Associate Professor Linda Taylor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International), Dr Masudul Haque, Convener of Bangladesh Studies Circle, School of Law was also present there. After North South University and Western Sydney University signed its Memorandum of Understanding, they had an open discussion about previously identified collaborative activities.



Participation of NSU Delegation in South & Southeast Asian University Cooperation Network Forum Organized by Yunnan University

A team of NSU delegates, led by the Honorable Trustee Member, Mr. Benajir Ahmed attended a Rectors' Forum (South & Southeast Asian University Network Forum) meeting in China, from 10 th June, 2019. The meeting covered, "Regional Internalization of Higher Education". The NSU delegation team was also represented by Prof. Gias U. Ahsan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (D) and Dean, School of Health & Life Sciences, Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Chair (Department of Political Science & Sociology) & Director (SIPG Program) & Dr. Md. Jakariya, Professor (Department of Environmental Science & Management). Prof. Gias U. Ahsan was the Keynote Speaker in the forum on the topic, "Internationalization of Higher Education in South Asia". North South University has been working with Yunnan University for more than one and a half decades as a lead partner of the priority programs of the Government of People's Republic of China, through the establishment of NSU's Confucius Institute since 2006 which received the "Best CI Award 2016" of over 500 Confucius institutes of the world.

The purpose of the visit to Yunnan University in China was to attend The South and Southeast Asian University Network Forum on Regional Internalization of Higher Education, which also marked the second South and Southeast Asian University Presidents Forum in Kunming on June 10th-13th, 2019. The ceremony was attended by Mr. Yang Baojian, Deputy Director of the Standing Committee of Yunnan Provincial People's Congress, H.E. Mr. Thong Khon, Minister of Tourism (Kingdom of Cambodia), H.E. Mr. Ounethouang Khaophanh, Vice Minister of Information, Culture & Tourism (Lao People's Democratic Republic), Prof. Lin Wenxun, Secretary General of the South & Southeast Asian University network, and Chairman of the Yunnan University Council. Delegates from 45 universities were invited to attend the forum. The forum was important for North South University for the specific following reasons:

- Signing of MoU between Yunnan University and North South University
- Keynote presentations
- North South University stall demonstration
- Networking with regional institutions
- Special meeting with the Vice President of the Yunnan University



An important bilateral meeting with Yunnan University high authority and NSU delegation was held on 11th June, 2019 at the Howard Johnson Hotel, Kunming to finalize the next year priority activities and support. Mr. Benajir Ahmed, Chairman, Board of Trustees, Founder Life Member, NSU Trust signed the MoU with the Yunnan University. Authorities of Yunnan University present there were Prof. Li Chenyang, Vice President, Dr. Yang Wei, Director- International Office, Dr. Wu Yun, Director- Confucius Institute Office, Deputy Director- International Office, Prof. Luo Hong, Deputy Dean, School of Foreign Languages, Prof. Li Xiaobin, Deputy, School of Ethnology and Sociology, Prof. Ma Chongwei- School of Ethnology and Sociology and Prof. Zhao Xiaoqing School of Resource Environment & Earth Science.

North South University was given the opportunity to conduct a special meeting with the Vice President of Yunnan University to discuss bi-lateral issues. The Vice President of Yunnan University offered five scholarships for students of North South University to pursue their higher education.

Mr. Benajir Ahmed, representing the Board of Trustees of North South University, also offered five scholarships to students of Yunnan University to pursue higher education in North South University. An opportunity for a faculty exchange program was also emphasized during the meeting. The Vice President also asked for exclusive support for a Bengali learning section in Yunnan University, similar to the Confucius Institute in North South University.

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The Vice President specifically asked for support for deploying faculty members to help them organize the section more effectively. On 12th June Professor Dr. Jakariya was invited by the School of Resources, Environment and Earth Science of Yunnan University to deliver a public lecture on climate change issues. The lecture was attended by the Dean of the School along with senior professors and graduate and undergraduate students.

Practical solutions of certain issues could materialize from the discussions of the meetings. Bilateral Meeting Outcomes with Yunnan University:

- 5 full scholarships for NSU Students including tuition fees, accommodation and travel costs.
- 5 Postdoctoral Fellowships for NSU Faculty Members.
- Joint Research Program covering Climate Change, Public Policy, Public Health & Bioscience Program.
- Students exchange between North South University and Yunnan University.
- Continuing with the Summer Camp Program every year.

Study, Research Scholarship & Visa Requirements for Germany

In association with Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany, DAAD Bangladesh and the Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, the Office of External Affairs of North South University organized "Study, Research Scholarship & Visa Requirements for Germany" on Wednesday, 12th June, 2019. Representatives from the three organizations were present there.

Ms. Rumana Kabir, an NSU alumnus and only Bangladesh Representative and Information & Office Manager of DAAD Bangladesh, gave the opening note. Ms. Tamamra Kabir, the Culture & Education Officer, represented German Embassy Dhaka.

Mr. Rakibul Hasan, DAAD Young Ambassador, shared his experience with the audience. Prof. Shahadat Hossain of the Department of Mathematics & Physics, North South University, shared his experience of studying in Germany. He did his Postdoctoral Degree from Germany.

DAAD showed their gratitude to North South University for the wonderful and enthusiastic participation at the Information Session which was both informative and helpful.

Rumana Kabir provided an outlook on institutes of higher education, foreign students in Germany, and Bangladeshi students in Germany. Tamara Kabir gave a talk called, "Student Visas for Germany, Myths and Reality about Germany". The DAAD Information Centre in Dhaka provides information on study and research in Germany, advises students and academicians on funding opportunities.

DAAD also assists in building ties between institutions of higher education and research from Germany and Bangladesh. Their services also include:

- Information sessions on higher studies and research opportunities in Germany
- Individual counselling
- Presentations at partner institutions, universities on request





Goethe-Institut Bangladesh promotes knowledge of the German language abroad and fosters international culture. The Goethe Institut is the Federal Republic of Germany's cultural institution operational worldwide. They promote the study of German abroad and encourage international cultural exchange.

Goethe Institut also fosters knowledge about Germany by providing information on its culture, society and politics. At the Goethe Institut Bangladesh students can successfully learn German for their career, studies or everyday life. Their team is always happy to help with any questions or concerns anyone has.

Their committed teachers ensure lively lessons with plenty of variety. Goethe Institut helps students to prepare for the examination of their choice. They value respectful, content-related dialogue.

NASA's Cassini Mission to Saturn: A look at the Ocean Worlds of Titan & Enceladus



Office of External Affairs of North South University organized a research talk titled, "NASA's Cassini Mission to Saturn: A look at the Ocean Worlds of Titan and Enceladus" on Thursday, 13th June 2019. The speaker for this topic was Dr. Shiblee Ratan Barua. He is an Assistant Professor (on Research Leave) in the Department of Biochemistry and Microbiology, North South University.

Dr. Barua is currently working as a Postdoctoral Researcher at NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, USA. At, NASA Goddard, he is employing his Computational Quantum Chemistry expertise to understand photochemical reactions taking place in the upper atmosphere of Titan. He believes that this knowledge will assist planetary scientists to develop better numerical models for Titan's complex organic environment.

He works in close collaboration with Cassini mission scientists, astrobiologists, ocean world experts and exoplanet scientists. Dr. Sohridul Islam, Chairman & Associate Professor, Department of Biochemistry & Microbiology, North South University gave the closing statement and presented Dr. Barua with a crest as appreciation. Students and faculty members of the department were present in the research talk.

NASA's 20 year-long (October 1997-September 2017) Cassini Mission to Saturn was one of the most ambitious space exploration endeavors humankind ever attempted. The monumental mission was a combined effort of NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Italian Space Agency (ASI). The Cassini spacecraft carried with it the Huygens probe that descended down to the surface of Saturn's largest moon, Titan and revealed spectacular Earth-like geological features.

Dr. Katherine Li's Norway Visit, 1st-14th June 2019



Dr. Katherine Li, Director, Office of External Affairs, visited Norway from 1st-14th June 2019. The purpose of her visit was to present a paper, "Is Lifelong Learning a Foreign Concept in Bangladesh?" at the "Changing Bangladesh" Conference held at the University of Oslo. She also met with the Peace Research Institute Oslo PRIO representatives, to establish a partnership for curriculum development for the NSU proposed Center for Peace Studies (CPS).

According to their website, PRIO was founded in 1959, as an independent research institution known for its effective synergy of basic and policy-relevant research. In addition to such research, PRIO conducts graduate training and is engaged in the promotion of peace through conflict resolution, dialogue and reconciliation, public information and policymaking activities. The Institute's working language is English.

Dr. Katherine Li met with Dr. Marte Nilsen, Senior Researcher at PRIO and also the Coordinator of the Research School on Peace and Conflict. Her research interests are Political conflicts and the ethnicity-religion-nation building nexus in Southeast Asia with particular focus on Myanmar and Thailand and is currently carrying out research with the Rohingya population in Bangladesh.



Dr. Li also met with Dr. Åshild Kolås, who is a Social Anthropologist and Research Professor at PRIO. She was the head of PRIO's Conflict Resolution and Peace building Program from 2005 to 2011. Her core research interests are ethnicity, identity politics and peace building.

MoU signed between NSU & Link Staff Co. Ltd, Japan

Link Staff Co. Ltd, Japan and NSU signed an MOU on 16th June, 2019 whereby Link Staff will help NSU by providing Japanese language instructors and other necessities so that the Department of English and Modern Languages (DEML) and Career Placement Center (CPC) can start a Japanese language course soon.

In addition, Mr. Sugita, CEO of Link Staff announced that they will be recruiting NSU graduates for companies like TOYOTA, HONDA, MITSUBISHI, SONY, HITACHI, etc. Professor Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor, North South University, Dr. Mohammad Khasro Miah, Director, CPC, Mr. Hossain Muhammad Lukman-Link Staff Co., Ltd. Japan, Dr. Katherine Li, Director, External

Affairs, North South University and Dr. AQMA Rahman Bhuiyan, Chairman, DEML, were present during the MoU signing. The memorandum of understanding includes training diligent, amenable, and sincere Bangladeshi graduates who are conversant in Japanese and basic Japanese culture and developing them as high-quality human resources targeting the different industries in Japan.



OEA Reaches out to Bangladeshi Educators Abroad



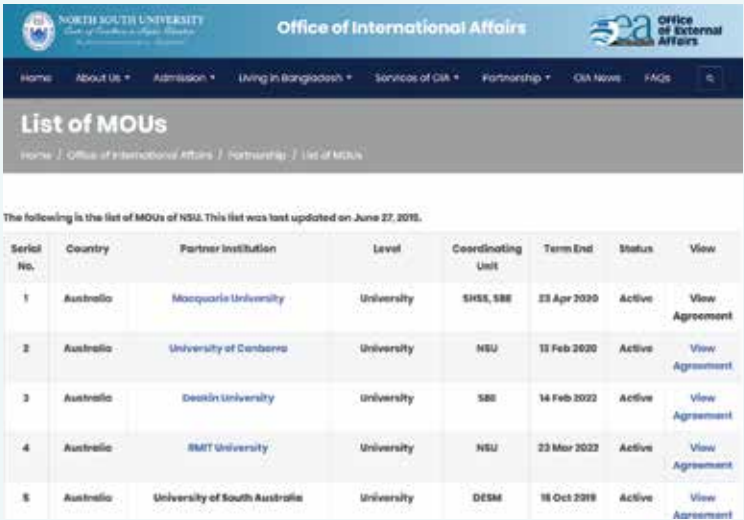
As part of NSU Vice Chancellor, Professor Atiqul Islam's vision for the University, outreach has become a critical part of the Office of External Affairs' strategy. As such, *Bangladeshi Educators Abroad*, a website that lists Bangladeshi academics living out of Bangladesh who work in universities around the world, has become the primary source of contacts. The list consists of about 1,500 contacts. Systematically, the OEA is reaching out to them to establish relationships for academic collaboration with them through Skype, e-mails and face-to-face meetings. They show a huge interest, because of their desire to see Bangladesh develop.

Reaching out to the Bangladeshi diaspora has proven to be an excellent strategy. For now, this is an experimental project with the following success rate:

Countries	Number of Emails Sent (rounded)	Number of Contacts (rounded)
Australia	158	200
Brunei	3	15
Canada	68	100
Fiji	1	5
Japan	2	10
Malaysia	2	50
Qatar	1	15
Saudi Arabia	3	50
United Kingdom	13	100
United Arab Emirates	2	20
United States of America	350	600
Total	603	1,165

Out of 603 emails sent to different BD Educators, the OEA team has got a successful response of 560 contacts. The website link is <http://www.bangladeshcircle.com/resources/bangladeshi-educators-abroad/>.

NSU Celebrates #1 Ranking Success & OEA Celebrates 101 Memorandums of Understanding



The following is the list of MOUs of NSU. This list was last updated on June 27, 2019.

Serial No.	Country	Partner Institution	Level	Coordinating Unit	Term End	Status	View
1	Australia	Macquarie University	University	SHSE, SSE	23 Apr 2020	Active	View Agreement
2	Australia	University of Canberra	University	NSU	11 Feb 2020	Active	View Agreement
3	Australia	Deakin University	University	SSE	14 Feb 2022	Active	View Agreement
4	Australia	SMIT University	University	NSU	23 Mar 2022	Active	View Agreement
5	Australia	University of South Australia	University	DESM	16 Oct 2019	Active	View Agreement

North South University celebrated being the top private university in Bangladesh. According to a study conducted by ORG-Quest Research and newspapers Dhaka Tribune and Bangla Tribune, NSU secured the first position among private universities in the country. BRAC University and East West University hold the following positions.

The university celebrated its achievement with a day-long program on its campus in Bashundhara Residential Area. The Information Minister, Mr. Hasan Mahmud was the Chief Guest while Mr. M A Hashem, then Chairman, Board of Trustees, North South University was the Special Guest at the function. Prof. Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor, North South University presided over the

meeting. Among others present were the Press Club President Mr. Saiful Islam and Kaler Kontho Editor, Mr. Indadul Haque Milan.

Addressing the function, Information Minister, Mr. Hasan Mahmud said the university materializes the dream of people. It has proven its excellence by maintaining a high standard in education. Mr. M A Hashem, then Chairman, Board of Trustees, North South University, said the university holds the top position as it ensures necessary facilities and provides world-class education to its students.

Prof. Atiqul Islam, Vice-Chancellor, North South University, said North South University has set an example that a private university can provide a quality education. Alongside NSU's success, the OEA team celebrated the compilation of 101 MoUs, both national and international.

When Ms. Samina Alam Miti, International Affairs Officer, OEA joined back in April 2017, NSU had only 27 MoUs. She then started collecting MoUs from different academic departments of the university which brought the total to 51 MoUs.

When Dr. Katherine Li, Director, OEA joined the team in July 2017, she decided to make the MoU list accessible to all NSU admin, faculty member and students. After designing various formats, the OEA team finally came up with the existing standard format displayed in the NSU website at present. The MoU List can be seen in the given website link: <http://institutions.north-south.edu/oea/international-affairs/partnership/list-of-mous/>

Back in the July, 2017 the Vice Chancellor, NSU, Professor Atiqul Islam gave the OEA team a target of facilitating 150 MoUs for NSU within the year 2020. Dr. Li and OEA team worked day and night to bring it to 101 MoU by 2019. As the OEA team is ahead of their target, it is expected that 49 MoUs will be achieved by July, 2020 with everyone's effort at NSU.

International Faculty Feature

Professor Atiqul Islam is currently the Vice-Chancellor of North South University (NSU), one of the top universities in Bangladesh. He obtained his B Com Honors and M Com degrees from the University of Dhaka. He also holds an M Com from the University of New South Wales and a PHD from the University of Sydney. He previously held the positions of Pro Vice Chancellor at Edith Cowan University in Australia, Dean, Business and Government at the University of Canberra, and Head of School of Commerce at the University of South Australia. He also served as an academic at the Universities of Sydney, New South Wales, Curtin University, National University of Singapore, Canterbury University (NZ) and the University of Dhaka. He served as a lecturer in Accounting at Dhaka University from 1973 to 1975, was a senate member of Dhaka University in 1974, and was the elected Vice President of Dhaka University Commerce Faculty Students' Association from 1972 to 1973.



He is a member of the institute of CA in Australia and also a fellow of CPA in Australia. He has a very strong track record of teaching, research and internationalization spanning over the last 25 years. He provided strategic leadership for departments, schools faculties and universities.

He developed strategic and operational plans with quantifiable goals for teaching, research and internationalization. He has an exceptional record of developing beneficial relationships between universities and the government, industry, professions, other stakeholders and the communities. In his various assignments professor Islam strengthened accountabilities, maintained effective budget and financial management, ensured effective performance management of staff developed and implemented ambitious student equity and access agenda and ensured compliance with all regulations including occupational health and safety and equal opportunity.

Professor Islam has published in national and international refereed journals and supervised a large number of higher degree dissertations. He has delivered keynote speeches and acted as session chair at international research conferences. Professor Islam has taught in multi-cultural environments in several countries.

Internationalization of the curriculum was part of his brief for the last 25 years. He has a wealth of experience in recruiting foreign staff and students, negotiating overseas programs, managing and teaching overseas teaching posts and teaching out overseas programs. He was in the international activities committee in all his last six assignments.

As a Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor, he had the responsibility to internationalize the curriculum, recruit overseas staff and achieve the optimum learning outcome in highly internationalized schools and faculties.

Interviewer: A common trend for Bangladeshis is to go abroad, as you did. What made you come back to Bangladesh, and why NSU?

Professor Atiqul Islam: I don't think it's the same. When I went to overseas, I went to do a Ph.D. with a scholarship. I had no intention to stay there, and I came back. I worked for seven months, but the problem was, they could not pay me any money at University of Dhaka.

So, I was forced to leave the country because I could not live any longer without the pay. That's the honest truth.

That's why I went to New Zealand as a visiting lecturer. Then, I heard that University of Dhaka had hired someone in my place. So, I was hurt.

So, I stayed back there for a while, and then I went to Australia. The rest is well known. The reason I came back to Bangladesh was because I always had a strong feeling for Bangladesh.

I always wanted to come and contribute in some way. Look, I got free education from this country. So, I had this sense of indebtedness.

So, I decided to spend some years in Bangladesh, trying to elevate at least one of the university's work place here. At this stage I thought that I had enough experience and knowledge to make a difference to whichever university I work for in Bangladesh, and I picked North South University because I have studied in a public university.

It was my honest belief that given the current culture in the public universities, I would be a misfit there. I would not be able to do much, because they are highly politicized. They have very strong stakeholder groups, etc. So, I started looking at the private sector universities.

Then, I found that North South was the university that had everything going for it. In the sense that this university had an infrastructure. It had a brand and this university has financial resources.

This university has intellectual resources among its staffs. So it was my belief that if I could introduce a good work culture here, with a good plan using systematic steps, then this university would rise up the fastest. That was the main reason.

That was the time for the university to take off, and I wanted to be the pilot during its takeoff.

Interviewer: Having held leadership positions in so many different universities must have given you a broad view about international education. Can you comment on that?

Professor Atiqul Islam: The phrase “International Education” has different meanings. Some emphasize one part to the exclusion of the other parts. But in my view, International Education is the internalization of the diversities of universities in three different regions in the world. Western universities are run in a particular culture. Then in the oriental ones: Japanese, Korean ones, Taiwanese ones, Chinese ones, Singaporean ones, they have a different philosophy; probably, different approaches in terms of tertiary education. Then we have got the traditional, Indian Sub-continental type of universities.

So, these are the three different approaches to university education. And they have different cultures within the universities, within the countries.

So, it's good to be able to bring in this reflection to Bangladesh. To assume what will be the approach in eastern universities, what will be the approach in western universities. What are the things that we can adopt in Bangladesh. In that sense I can readily visualize what one of the western universities has done in a particular situation, and the latter ones. When we are in the Indian Sub-continent in terms of tradition, what would work here and what would not.

The other side of internationalization is basically how you internationalize your curriculum. That is the starting point. Then, you need to have international student exchanges.

How you will be able to go and learn outside of your country. Your classroom should have students from more than one country, not just the local ones. Same goes for staff.

You have to hire your staff, who has overseas experience among the local people. At the same time you have to attract staff from other countries. So, it is the curriculum, it is the students, it is the staff that you have to internationalize.

Interviewer: During your tenure at NSU, what has been your biggest challenge?

Professor Atiqul Islam: I think if you look at events and situation post “Holey Artisan”, it was a challenge to safeguard the reputation of the university, in a way to save the university. It is not easy to face a challenge of that sort.

Then I faced the challenge of changing the work culture. Probably North South University has the best work culture in the country. But still, it is not the best that you can have. We need to improve it.

We have a problem of delegation. You cannot delegate work to someone and have peace of mind that it will be done in the required way. That is a problem.

The problem of system, once you initiate something, you put it on a track. You believe that you do not need to travel, but it does not happen here. You need to keep on pushing, pushing and pushing.

Otherwise, it stalls. So, it is not only inside the university, it also happens outside the university. It is not only the problem with the university, it is also a problem with other agencies and communities.

So, it does not automatically go step-by-step. The other problem is too much paperwork. Everything needs to be done by hard copy. Every piece of paper needs to be signed.

Why cannot only one person have all the control of these things? Why are we having two-three people for one task? We are having four-five people signing the same thing.

And the centralization that goes on in this university. I have to look at the absolute minute details and very small amounts.

I remember, one Department Chairmen sent me a reimbursement of BDT. 750 for laundering the lab coats. When those kind of things come to the Vice-Chancellor, sometimes it is hard to keep patience. So, the centralization, the Vice-Chancellor has to sign everything.

I do not think that leaves the Vice-Chancellor enough time to think creatively, and come up with plans and programs and even to do the outside liaising, as much as it is needed in this country. So, centralization is a big problem.

Interviewer: According to you, do you think that you have any advantages of being bi-cultural or bi-lingual. If yes, what are those?

Professor Atiqul Islam: When you work in different cultures, you know how to include internationalization in education. But, it is an advantage to know about systems as long as you realize that best solutions there cannot be imported here and applied. Because everything is culturally related.

You cannot simply ignore the cultural side. Let me give you an example. I have been trying to implement the system of academic performance management for the last two years. It has not been able to be resolved yet.

But it was so simple in the university where I worked in Australia. It is a fantastic idea, but it is very difficult to adopt it here. The difficulties are:

- Can you rely on the Supervisor to be fair on all the employees? Sometimes I have my doubts. So, that's the case whether you can have the assurance that all the employees will get an equal chance, and will be valued in a neutral, objective way.
- If you want to implement one of those systems, you will need three or four things coming together. And, here it is hard.

Interviewer: What advice do you have for NSU Faculty, Staff and Students?

Professor Atiquil Islam : For the faculties, they should know that teaching is their bread and butter. The student comes to university for a better job. So, teachers should add value to the student's behavior.

Teachers should make our students knowledgeable, professional, ethical and ready to be employed outside. Those are the things that are not just limited to curriculum, it goes far beyond. The faculties should also know that the only skill that is portable with them, is their research performance.

Publications, journals, articles, wherever they go, these go with them. That will be there with them, for the rest of their lives. In the academia, you must go and do a Ph.D, as early as you can.

You should know that publication is the name of the game. Either publish or perish, it's the same all around the world. Today or tomorrow, that wave will hit us. If a person is not publishing, that person is putting himself/herself at risk.

About the staff, they should remember that their role is to facilitate students and staff. Whether you are talking about laboratories, classrooms, other facilities, the staff should be totally dedicated to the promotion of teaching and research here. Their work absolutely goes hand-in-hand with the academics.

About the students, they should learn. They should take responsibility for learning; teachers are there only to help them. The students must be interested to learn, they should read beyond the textbooks.

They should not read one textbook, they should not only rely on the lecturer's slides. So, read three-five different textbooks. Read widely outside your disciplinarian.

Because at the end, what counts is you not only being a professional person with some skills, but also being an analytical person. So, my advice to students is to try to understand things, do not just memorize and reproduce for the exam to get good marks. Good marks will not take you too far, but understanding will.

You must know, you must have good understanding and you must be able to apply the knowledge you acquire.

NSU Alumni Feature

Md. Shajedur Rahman Shawon came to NSU to pursue a Master's in Public Health (MPH) after completing his MBBS from Dhaka Medical College in 2011. He secured the first position in the admission test and was offered a scholarship from the university. The MPH program at NSU has a very flexible timetable, which allowed him to work for international public health organisations while studying for his MPH.

Mr. Rahman achieved a CGPA of 3.97 in his course. After finishing his studies at NSU, he got a scholarship from the Swedish government to study for an MSc at Karolinska Institute, which is one of the best medical universities in the world. With the knowledge and skills, he gathered from NSU, he excelled both at coursework and research and completed the course with distinction.

In the meantime, Md. Shajedur Rahman Shawon also did an internship at the University of Cambridge. In 2016, he got admitted into a PhD program at Oxford University with a full scholarship. He going to finish his PhD this year. His research focuses on how our body size in early life can determine our future risk of developing diseases like diabetes and breast cancer as adults. He has published several high impact papers from his research work. He also received advanced training in genetic epidemiology, big data science, and medical statistics.



Interviewer: Did you notice any difference in the way courses were taught at Dhaka Medical College and North South University?

Shajedur Rahman: Since my degrees from Dhaka Medical College and North South University are very different from each other, some features are not directly comparable. Having said that, I think the lectures at NSU were, in general, more interactive, which ensured active participation from the students in the lectures. The peer discussions and quizzes within lectures made us concentrate more on the topic and also helped us to learn more efficiently. At NSU, we had many group projects and individual assignments, and they helped us to internalize the learning materials critically, to apply the knowledge in real-life scenarios, and to become independent learners in the field.

Interviewer: How did it feel to be offered a full scholarship for your first position in your admission test at NSU?

Shajedur Rahman: The scholarship I received from NSU for standing first in the admission test implied two things: firstly, it recognized my talent and hard work; secondly, it helped me a lot financially. The scholarship gave me a sense

of accomplishment and encouraged me to strive for the best during the course.

Interviewer: Did you feel that NSU prepared you well for the work you did for those international public health organizations?

Shajedur Rahman: Yes, of course, 100%! I learned the ABCs of public health at NSU - from the basic subject knowledge to essential job skills to work in international public health organizations. The course also helped me to establish a strong professional network with fellow students, faculty members and guest lecturers; and I reckon this is very important to excel in any career.

Interviewer: With so many achievements so far, can you explain the source of your motivation?

Shajedur Rahman: I think the best kind of motivation is intrinsic - which come from within oneself. I always have the utmost passion for contributing to improving peoples' lives in Bangladesh and beyond. I chose to be a researcher because an excellent piece of research can save millions of lives around the globe.

This passion fuels me to do the hard work, to solve the complex problems, and most importantly, to stay focused when nothing seems to be working. The achievements are the byproducts of my relentless pursuit of excellence.

Interviewer: What advice would you give to the current and future NSU students?

Shajedur Rahman: I have seen many people fail in their life because either they are not confident enough to perform at the highest professional level, or they are overconfident and complacent - they stopped learning new things. To find the right balance between being a top performer and having a beginner's mindset is the key to life-long success and growth. My advice to the current NSU students is to develop a growth mindset which will enable them to feel confident with the knowledge and skills NSU provides them while they should also identify and work on their limitations continuously.

International Student Feature

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf a very ambitious young women from Somaliland and a living example of modesty. Originally, she was born and grew up in Somaliland, the northern part of Somalia which announced its independence from Somalia by early 1991, which unfortunately hasn't been recognized yet. So, basically, she is Somali but not from Somalia. She loves reading, cooking, and poetry. In today's world, where everyone is addicted to becoming famous, she likes to stay modest in every way possible.

Interviewer: What made you choose NSU?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: Barely two years ago, I was working as a nurse in the Hargaisa Group Hospital, which is a public hospital located in the capital city of Somaliland. It was my first job right after I finished my Bachelor's degree in Nutrition & Food Science. Then one day I decided to upgrade my career and I knew that I had to go outside of the country.

I decided Bangladesh because I was previously in touch with a close friend of mine, which actually was in Bangladesh at that time; she was an NSUer and she always told me good things about this country and how people are very peaceful and generous. But before I came to Bangladesh I did some background research about private universities, and that was when I found out that NSU is the most prestigious university in this country. I was fortunate enough to get my dream program, "MPH".

After that I decided to apply and got admitted for Spring 2018. As an international student I never feel like that I am different than other students. NSU has been just like home to me, I will always be grateful to my faculty members and my colleagues for their kindness and endless hospitality.



Interviewer: Can you share some early stories when you first came to Bangladesh or NSU?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: Well living in Dhaka is always exciting because when you're a foreigner you attract so many people's attention. Besides, I find it amazing that when local people gossip in Bangladesh, they look straight in your eyes and talk about you all day long while you're watching. It's funny actually and at the same time very awkward. I noticed also that getting lost in Dhaka is like being in a desert. I mean, when you ask people for directions, they give you different directions and of course none of them is saying the right place.

Interviewer: As an international student, do you see cultural diversity in NSU? If yes, can you illustrate it a bit?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: I am living in a garden full of different flowers, which means my campus has different cultures which is so interesting really and it is my passion to see those. The best thing is that it they are increasing gradually. Even though we have different cultures, we are all the same at end of the day. Because every person is really interesting and wants to share his or her culture and learn yours, so that is what make us one big multicultural family.

And the most memorable moments which sticks my mind are when we are sharing history, cultural background, songs and dance, indigenous food and the way of living. It encourages me to have a lot of friends and visit their homelands.

Interviewer: Where do you see yourself in the future?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: Despite my long interest in MPH, I didn't have a clear vision before about public health, but thanks to NSU now I can say that I clearly have good experience in public health, especially my major in reproductive and child health. I always had one dream for myself which is to help my people, and now I feel that my dream will finally come true. As an MPH graduate, I believe I have so much to contribute to my community especially the safety of motherhood and children as well as doing more research in different social contexts.

Interviewer: Anything you wish to tell the future applicants of NSU?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: An obvious and undoubted fact is that NSU is a highly-rated university with many scholars from national and international backgrounds. In addition, I would love to mention how NSU students from different clubs perform and show their activities in the most authentic way, like partying, dancing, and singing to insure that wherever you are from you will never feel bored. Leaving the campus with a big smile on your face every day, because NSU is a home of socialization and diversity and the driving force of navigating life in many ways.

Interviewer: What will be your contribution to NSU after completion of your degree?

Ra'fa Mohamed Yusuf: After finishing my Master of Public Health and go back home, I will be back as soon as possible In-Sha-Allah I will establish an NSU Somali alumni chapter and play the role of figurehead NSU student in Somaliland and build up solid connections between national universities and NSU departments especially in the major areas like research, masters degrees, postgraduate programs, trainings, and knowledge or experience sharing.