

Take your next step to connect to us. Email us if you have an interesting story to share related to career.



facebook.com/  
thedaily.nextstep

Email: nextstep@thedaily.net

The Daily Star

DHAKA, FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2015

e-mail: nextstep@thedaily.net

# NEXT STEP

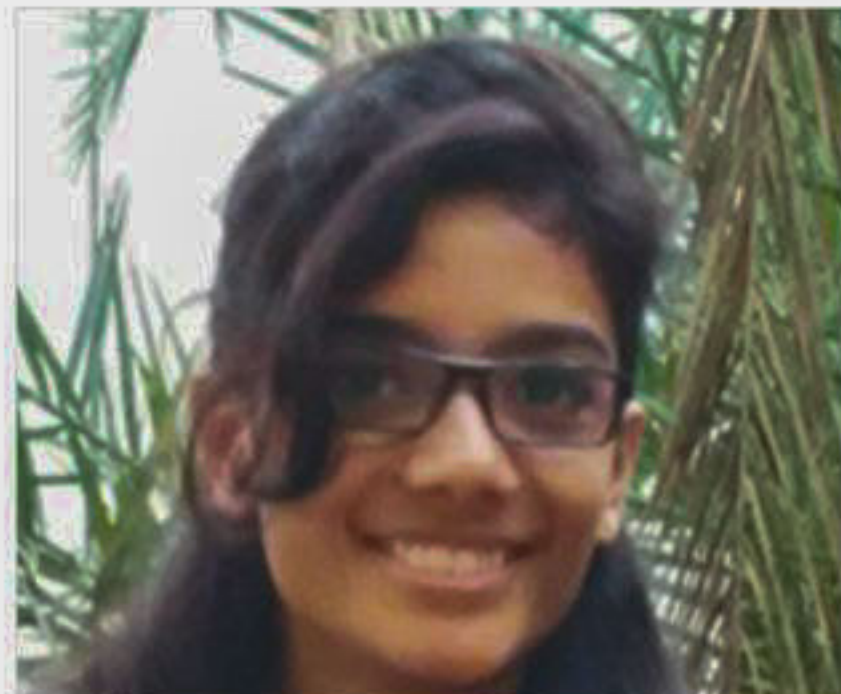
## ENGINEERING LEADERS?

*It's no secret that there exists a certain air of cockiness about a public university student, an attitude that some would readily call arrogant if not elitist.*

*The perception of a university matters, especially in the job market where prospective employers often tend to judge graduates based on their institution, at least initially. While that shouldn't exactly be the norm for obvious reasons, it is the prevalent process. We set out to find if a university like BUET actually equips its graduates with the necessary skills, or whether the claims that they stock the best and brightest students are full of hot air.*

It's a hot, humid night. BUET students crowd around the auditorium in a flurry of activity, hanging up Chinese lanterns and banners in preparation for the Mechanical Festival. As robotic as that sounds, tensions are high, yet there is an anticipatory buzz in the work. I almost feel guilty for taking four pairs of hand away from the work, but we're trying to get to the root of things here.

Mithila Dutta Roy and Fariha Musharrat Noshin are typical first year students. Excited, nervous and full of



Getting into BUET was definitely an accomplishment because everyone kept saying it would be very difficult, and I didn't feel at the time that I was good enough.

– Mithila Datta Roy

energy at the same time, their faces contort into apprehension when asked to sit for an interview. By contrast, Saif al-din Abdullah and Sayera Sun-um Nusaka, final year students, are relaxed and easy going: they have survived most of BUET and are on their way to graduating, so an interview is the least of their worries.

Public university students make a big deal out of entering university on account of the insane competition they have to face in the admissions process; when you're fighting for a single seat with about a thousand other students, if and when you finally get in, it is bound to fill you with a sense of pride. The first years, Mithila and Fariha, are no different.

"Getting into BUET was definitely an accomplishment because everyone kept saying it would be very difficult, and I didn't feel at the time that I was good

enough. When I got in, it came as a huge shock and it hit home that I had done it, I managed to get into BUET" says Mithila.

Sitting at a rickety table with these four BUET students, I had a flashback to the time I went through a similar experience, how getting into Dhaka University made me expect so much from a university that was so difficult to get into. Similar to my experience, there is a wide gulf between what a university like BUET offers on the surface and what it actually gives you.

As far as living accommodations go, being a female engineering student living in a dorm in Dhaka can be pretty tough. Fariha takes it pretty positively though, saying it's fun and inclusive and convenient to be close to campus and have friends around.

There are the obvious downsides, as Mithila points out. "There were several cases of theft reported on campus, and although the authorities are usually slow in reacting, they are taking the latest incidents quite seriously. The girls living on campus face a problem of decreased



It's fun, inclusive and convenient to be close to campus and have friends around.

– Fariha Musharrat Noshin

mobility as well."

Sayera Sun-um, the fourth year student, chimes in to share her extensive experience of BUET. "I was psyched and excited at first, but I realized later how difficult it is to survive four or more years in BUET. It's an intimidating place if you can't keep up with course-work and that takes its toll. If you do cope though, it'll give you a new-found confidence in yourself, and you will have earned it

through hard work. Nothing beats that feeling."

Not only are these three girls part of a larger group of women who are surviving the rigorous, near-impossible standards that BUET imposes, they are all eschewing social stereotypes that try to dictate what a girl can and cannot do. When asked why they got into engineering, Mithila replies that her family wanted her to go into the medical sciences till she insisted she wanted to go to BUET, while Fariha wanted to study engineering because she



I was psyched and excited at first, but I realised later how difficult it is to survive four or more years in BUET.

– Sayera Sun-um Nusaka

grew up watching Transformers and the anime fascinated her enough to instil a love for machines. Both Mithila and Fariha are planning to focus on Automotive Engineering in the future.

Hearing their optimistic plans, the fourth year duo can't help but reflect on how difficult it is to hold on to your dreams in BUET. For a discipline as hands on as mechanical engineering, all four agree that BUET's lab facilities are not up to the standard and there is no way to include the latest advancements in engineering other than in theory in class, setting aside the fact that damaged and worn out equipment rarely gets replaced. "It ties our hands behind our backs because we can't compete with the rest of the world. BUET is the best in Bangladesh, we can't be happy with just that. We need to find a way to compete on a global level" says Saif.

When asked what steps BUET could take to fund better lab facilities, and Sayera brought up an issue that is plaguing most public universities.

"Universities abroad charge high fees and alumni make generous donations. While we at BUET get our fair share of donations, for some reason the funds are not really allocated efficiently. There is no scope for raising tuition fees, I think need-based scholarships should be given out instead of subsidising everyone, at least till the facilities improve."

The three young women are definitely breaking social traditions into pieces because they are 100% engineers and they don't give a damn if society looks down on them for getting their hands dirty at the machine shop. They're not fazed by the prospect of working in a field largely dominated by men, and believe their enthusiasm and abilities will shine through wherever they are. Would they do it any differently if they were given the option? Not a chance.

Is the BUET hype valid, then? Well, the



BUET is the best in Bangladesh, we can't be happy with just that.

We need to find a way to compete on a global level.

– Saif al-din Abdullah

people certainly live up to the purported brilliance. Saif, Fariha, Mithila and Sayera are just a small sampling of the brilliant minds that BUET houses, and given a little more support from the administration in terms of faculty and facilities, they can actually conquer almost anything.

SHAER REAZ

## Mechanical engineering: What to look out for

*Mechanical engineers participate in the planning and manufacturing of new products by performing engineering duties and developing, designing and testing mechanical devices.*

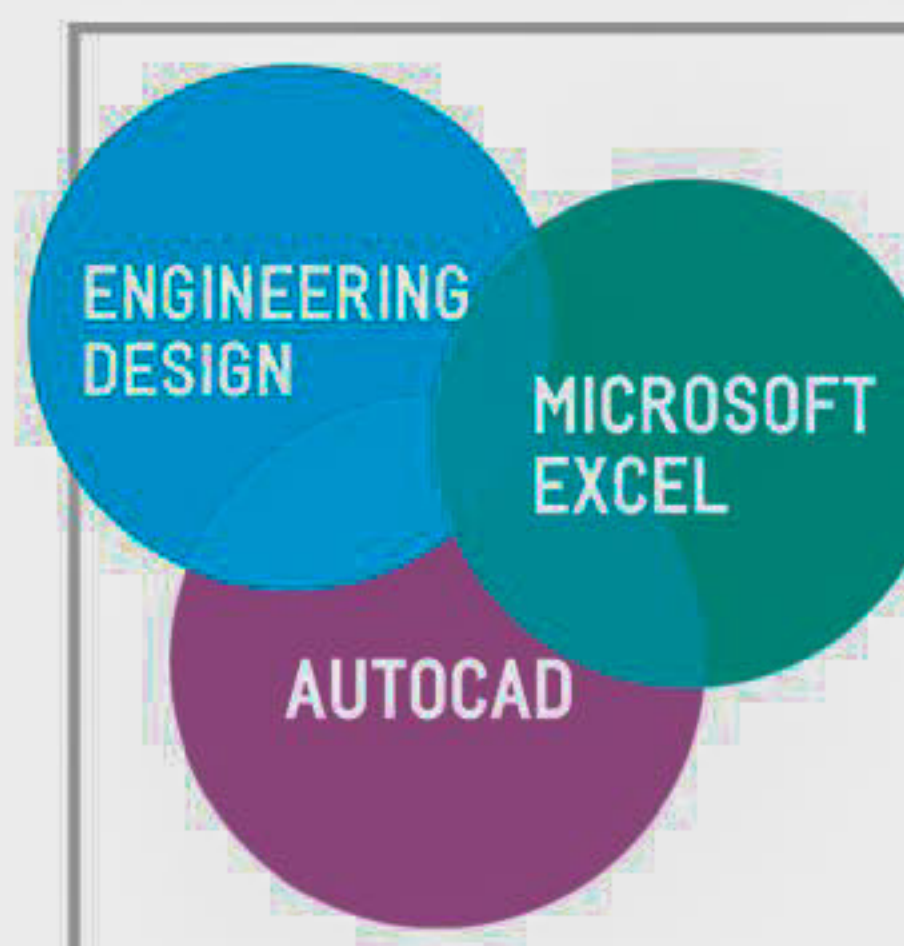


### Fitting the JD

Mechanical engineers work with other team members to create new product designs that meet customer needs and relevant government codes and regulations. They create these designs using established engineering practices and relevant technological tools. They research designs and make recommendations based on appearance, safety, budget, and function, and estimate the time and cost needed to complete projects.

Mechanical engineers may be responsible for creating prototypes and product tests and creating reports to provide the relevant data to management. They also communicate with other departments as needed for a given project. Other areas of responsibility may include helping to determine requirements for manufacturing equipment and working with a team to manage assigned portions of a project.

Mechanical engineers usually report to project managers and work in an office, but it may often be necessary to travel to manufacturing sites or to customer offices. The job may also require frequent lifting or bending, and work hours may vary.



### Popular skills

Mechanical engineers must be skilled in the use of Microsoft Office, AutoCAD, and other software or technology as relevant to the specific position. They use technical problem-solving and communication skills and must be adept at project management, teamwork, and adhering to standard engineering procedures.

### Getting in

Job requirements include either a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering, a master of science in engineering, or a related degree. The EIT exam, membership in a professional society and specific industry-related certifications may also be encouraged or required.

### Annual salaries worldwide

USA: \$48,816 - \$94,662  
Australia: \$39,810 - \$93,557  
Canada: \$36,903 - \$78,716  
UK: \$30,763 - \$70,543  
Netherlands: \$27,513 - \$73,800  
Germany: \$26,620 - \$79,097  
South Africa: \$13,153 - \$56,142  
UAE: \$9,725 - \$94,211  
Malaysia: \$7,762 - \$38,210  
Bangladesh: \$4,629 - \$12,344

Collected from: PayScale



### PRESS RELEASE

## BRACU Alumni Association General Elections '15

The BRAC University Alumni Association (AABRACU) has witnessed a truly remarkable General Election in 2015. Riding the current wave of technological revolution and leveraging online opportunities, AABRACU members elected their newest Executive Committee over a revolutionary and freshly designed online polling system! Alumni across 29 countries registered as voters and cast their votes through the online portal to elect the 10 new faces they wanted to see represent them for the next term.

Months of planning to design an effective, secure and easy-to-use online voting system paid off. Of course there were lessons learned on how to make the system more effective, but the upside is the system will be BRAC University's very own and that means the opportunity to leverage it to stay connected with its alumni and to enhance connectivity among them.

An exemplary process was used to define the nomination criteria for the elections. Recommendations from senior alumni and the departing Executive Committee members were sought. Furthermore an ad-hoc Alumni Working Committee was formed to guide the norms and ensure an all-inclusive, free and fair election. An Election Commission consisting of BRAC University staff, i.e. relevant functional heads and staff with appropriate expertise was formed – ensuring that the spirit of the elections were acceptable and fair.

26 candidates contested for 10 positions in the General Elections. Clearly defined and well accepted campaign guidelines meant that there was a congenial yet competitive environment for every candidate to demonstrate their credentials. Social media played a substantial role in these campaigns as specific official pages, websites and groups were bombarded with manifestos and inspirational messages! Emails and SMS were also leveraged in the campaigns, which speaks highly of the level of engagement from the candidates.

Finally on 24 and 25 April the elections took place with the Office of Career Services, Alumni Relations (OCSAR) and the Election Commission declaring results in a ceremony held at BRAC University on the 26 April. The 10 new faces of AABRACU Executive Committee have been elected and their journey to take the organisation across frontiers has begun. The manner, methods and discipline with which the election occurred were undoubtedly challenging. However this was certainly the very embodiment of precise vision, planning and execution of a completely new and effective electoral system that ensured a successful election. The stage is set and the Executive Committee is ready – one can only hope that the next leap for AABRACU will be one of effective proportions.

STAWB PETER HALDER