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CAMPUS

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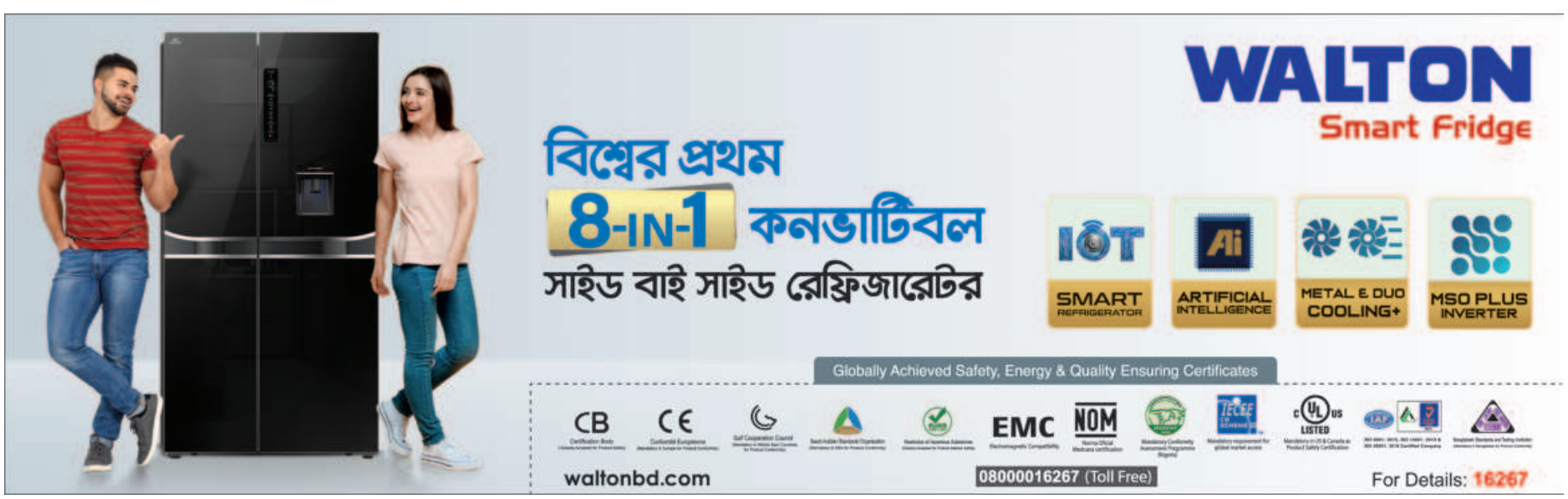
Navigating research as a university student

Dealing with the culture shock of moving abroad

Why making friends in university is more important than you think

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

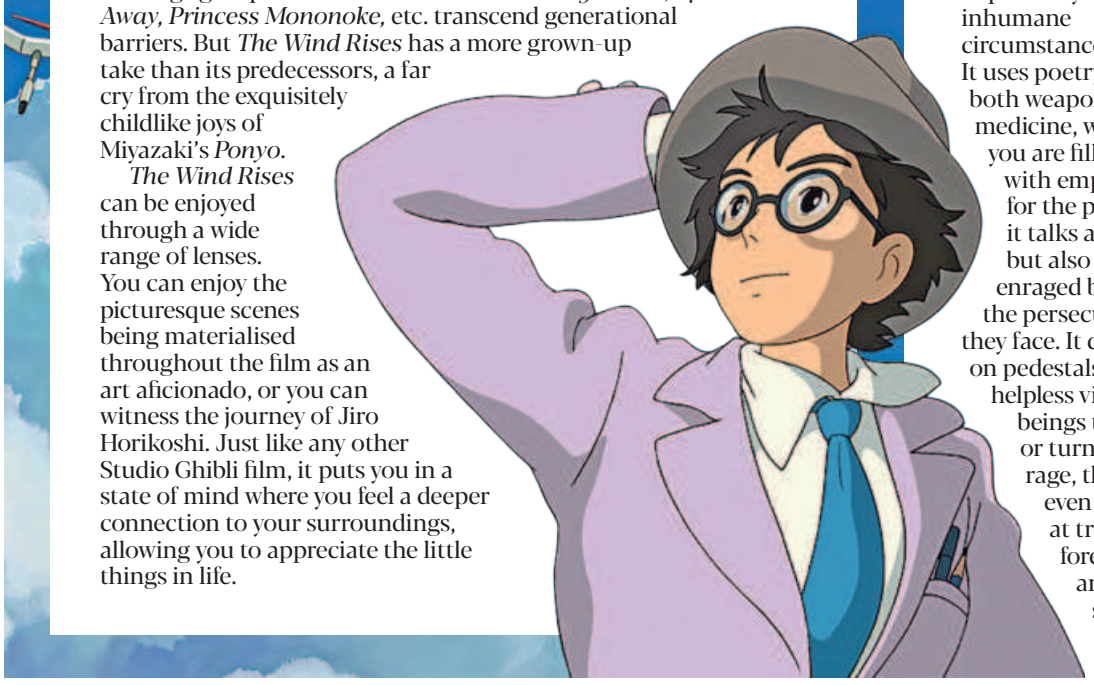


ANIME REVIEW

THE WIND RISES:
A heart-wrenching tale of love and war

Miyazaki's movies have consistently been appreciated by audiences of all age groups. His works like *Howl's Moving Castle, Spirited Away, Princess Mononoke,* etc. transcend generational barriers. But *The Wind Rises* has a more grown-up take than its predecessors, a far cry from the exquisitely childlike joys of Miyazaki's *Ponyo*.

The Wind Rises can be enjoyed through a wide range of lenses. You can enjoy the picturesque scenes being materialised throughout the film as an art aficionado, or you can witness the journey of Jiro Horikoshi. Just like any other Studio Ghibli film, it puts you in a state of mind where you feel a deeper connection to your surroundings, allowing you to appreciate the little things in life.



BOOK REVIEW

Rifqa:
A spellbinding account of persecution, courage, and survival

Rifqa is a book about human struggles in painfully inhumane circumstances. It uses poetry as both weapon and medicine, where you are filled with empathy for the people it talks about but also enraged by the persecution they face. It does not put any of its characters on pedestals nor does it patronise them as helpless victims. Instead, it presents human beings that are so often dehumanised or turned into statistics, in all their rage, their fear and their hope, without even trying to. It is a book that glares at trees but never loses sight of the forest. Its poetry never asks for anything but compels you to do something with grit and urgency that allows no room to turn a blind eye.

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LETTER

Dear Campus,
I think it's great that you are providing a platform for academics by and for the students. A useful way to utilise this strength would be course reviews by current students or fresh graduates.
Firstly, we don't really learn "how to learn" in our schools. Even then, university curricula are nothing like schools, which has caused immense amount of pain for me and others.
Secondly, when deciding what major to pick and where, most are not connected with students from a particular institution or major. Even if they did know someone, chances are they were students long ago. An up-to-date repository would help out a lot.

Keep up the good work,
M Muztoba Hasan Sinha
Department of Computer Science and Engineering
Dhaka University

RESPONSE

Dear Muztoba,
We relate to the pain of having to understand what studying method actually works for us, especially at university. This, coupled with the fact that we don't really get much freedom in deciding our majors, makes for a very confusing time. We hope that your suggestions can be implemented to make navigating these murky waters easier.

Best,
Campus

OPPORTUNITIES

InternshipatUNOPS (Communications)

UNOPS

ELIGIBILITY

Enrolled in, or have recently completed a Bachelor/Master's/Ph.D. in developmental studies, journalism, communications or related field.

An understanding of development, humanitarian or international affairs is preferred.

Knowledge of podcasting is an asset.

Basic knowledge of design and experience with design programmes is an asset.

Excellent English writing skills are required.

Visit jobs.unops.org/ to apply

DEADLINE: AUGUST 23, 2023

InternshipatBRAC International (HumanResources)

brac

ELIGIBILITY

Bachelor's/Master's degree (last semester) in Management/HRM or relevant field with a specialisation in HR.

Fluent speaking skills in English and Bangla. Advanced writing skills in English.

Sound communication skills.

Accustomed with using web-based meeting platforms.

Good listening, writing, and analytical skills

Visit brac.net/regular-internship to apply

DEADLINE: AUGUST 22, 2023

CORRIGENDUM

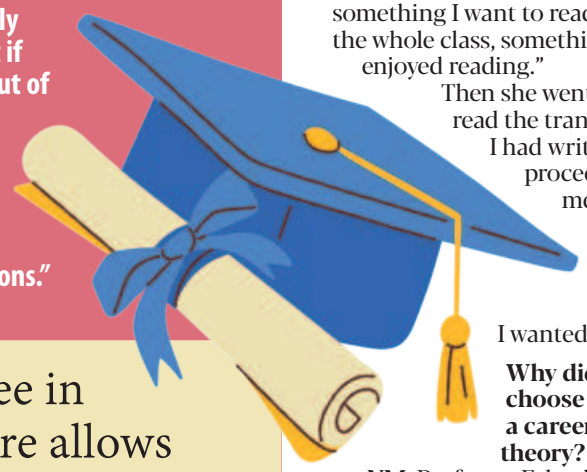
The title on the cover page of the August 10, 2023 issue of Campus was published as "Club is right for you?", whereas it should have been "Which university club is right for you?". We regret this printing error.

TEACHERS TALK

Exploring the world of literary theory

In conversation with Nazia Manzoor, Assistant Prof. of English at NSU

"Education is seen as an investment and this investment is supposed to give you returns. So, the truth of the matter is there is no guarantee that doing theory is going to yield an income. Generally speaking, the most common aspiration for those that love literature is to either become a writer or a teacher/professor. Those are solid dreams and it is absolutely possible that if you do this out of love, you will be able to make a career out of either one of those options."



A degree in literature allows at least two very basic, but useful, transferable skills:

- Effective communication: A literature degree allows students to communicate their ideas and concepts with clarity and precision, which can translate to a plethora of fields.
- Ability to think critically: Given how a literature degree is rooted in critical thinking, it further boosts analytical thinking in students, which can be useful in other fields as well.

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

When did you decide to go for an English major?

Nazia Manzoor: When I was in the first year of my college, I was pursuing science. However, I had soon reached a stage where I was quite unhappy with it. I loved my English, Bangla and Social Science classes.

In our first-year midterm exam, we had to translate excerpts from *The Gift of the Magi* by O. Henry. One day, my English teacher came to class and said, "There's something I want to read out to the whole class, something I really enjoyed reading."

Then she went on and read the translations I had written, as I proceeded to melt down in my seat. I decided then that this is who I wanted to be.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in literary theory?

NM: Professor Fakrul Alam of Dhaka University introduced literary theory to us in our second year (of undergrad). I remember that we all had the same question – what has theory got to do with literature?

Over the next two years, I found out that theory allows me to think even more critically. It allows me to have a more nuanced and sharpened perspective on things that traditionally went unchallenged.

For me, theory is a method through which I question things including the inequalities and injustices that exist in our world. And so, I cannot not do theory, because I refuse to accept the world as it is.

Can you tell us a little bit about your research interests and dissertation topic?

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

NM: Broadly speaking, postcolonial feminism. I am interested more specifically in Biopolitics and the Genres of the Human. I am also fascinated by affect, trauma, andmemory. I went into the PhD program knowing I was going to work on the over-representation of certain South Asian identities. I was troubled by the Western construct of the oppressed Muslim woman character who needs saving by white men from other brown men, the famous Spivakian quote.

The dissertation project began with a series of questions. When we think about political trauma, it often focuses on certain political events and not others. For instance, trauma and memory studies as a field begins with the Holocaust as the paradigmatic event. Two years later, the Indian partition happened, which was a bloodbath and the consequences of it are still very much present in our current world. The genre of the human has a similar hierarchy.

So, my question is, why is there a gradation in the hierarchy of trauma? Why do certain lives get prioritised over other lives?

That's where this investigation began, eventually the dissertation became about three things – the access to speech, the construct of political subjectivity, and the idea of being human.

What would you like prospective students of English literature to know before they begin their journey?

NM: University is the start of adulthood, and one sign of becoming an adult is you are responsible for yourself, for chalking out your own future.

Once you have a goal set, you work towards it. It is almost like pursuing music. Only after listening to classical music for countless hours, do you develop your ears. Quite similarly, after reading a lot of great works of art, your taste develops, and your writing improves, and you're able to produce new thought.

One advice I would like to give prospective students is to read in Bangla, or your own mother tongue. Having an expertise in a language other than English gives you an advantage that you may not be able to appreciate right now, but the more time you spend exploring English Literature, you will come to realise that your ability to see things from an alternative perspective will allow you to see through the gaps in the canon. It will make you a stronger scholar. Get to know your people, and this way you will know yourself.

Syeda Afrin Tarannum is a sub-editor at Campus.

CAREER

Shaping a Greener Future:

The Rising Influence of Sustainability Careers

SUMAIYA RASHID

In an era plagued by environmental issues, sustainability has emerged as a lucrative and satisfying professional path due to a growing awareness of the need for sustainable practices. Careers in sustainability provide a variety of options for people who are passionate about building a greener, more sustainable future, and have the potential to have a significant influence.

As the effects of climate change, resource depletion, and social inequity become more severe, the demand for sustainability experts grows. Jobs in this field combine a business's social, environmental, and economic facets.

Renewable energy, for example, offers potential in solar, wind, hydro, and geothermal power, accelerating the transition to sustainable energy sources. Conservationists aim to protect and restore ecosystems, save endangered species, and promote sustainable resource management. Environmental issues are also integrated into architecture, urban planning, and product creation by sustainable design professionals.

Adopting a continuous learning mentality allows students and professionals to remain adaptable and adapt to evolving trends and technology, allowing them to position themselves as field leaders.

Furthermore, sustainable agriculture experts concentrate on regenerative farming practices and food system resilience – addressing the interplay between food security and environmental sustainability.

Elsewhere, sustainable business consultants help businesses integrate sustainability into their operations, guiding them towards responsible practices and ethical decision-making. Environmental policy analysts help to establish rules and advocate for long-term policies at the national and international levels. Corporate sustainability managers execute methods to minimise carbon footprints, promote social responsibility, and increase stakeholder participation inside organisations.

On the other hand, sustainable transportation planners strive to create efficient and environmentally friendly transportation networks to reduce emissions and congestion. These are just a few instances of the numerous different professions available that allow one to make a real impact in the world.

Dr K Ayaz Rabbani, Associate Professor and Head of the Department of Environmental Science and Management at Independent University, Bangladesh, advises, "If you plan on working in the field of sustainability or the environment. You will require a few skills. To understand how nature works, you must first have a basic understanding of the environment, ecosystems, biologies, and chemistry in your ecosystem. Only then can you come up with answers."

This field requires more than just knowledge and abilities though. Collaboration and useful relationships can also be fostered via networking within sustainability networks and attending industry events. Participating in mentorship programmes and joining professional organisations dedicated to sustainability helps to advance one's career.

"There are some specific job skills or soft skills that are highly crucial in this area. Empathy is one of the most important. You must be highly aware of who is affected by environmental degradation and sustainability. This is a skill that should be taught in school, but it can also be cultivated at universities in terms of raising your empathy, as well as how to make crucial holistic adjustments," he continued.

Dr K Ayaz Rabbani also shares, "Students from the Department of Environment Sciences and Management usually go to the NGO sectors, such as Grameen and Brac, as well as projects funded by several UN and World Bank programmes related to the environment and sustainability."

"There is also a strong drive for environmentally friendly practices, particularly in the garment sector, but also in other industries. Entrepreneurship is the third area that I believe is expanding. There are those that are working on things like sustainable farming, agriculture, and sustainable agriculture, in addition to solar panels and ways to minimise water waste. The government is providing a lot of funding for this, as well as a lot of loans for green businesses," he adds.

As sustainability becomes more ingrained into the fabric of our society, the demand for sustainability specialists will rise. Whether through renewable energy, conservation, or sustainable urban design, sustainability professionals are at the forefront of building a greener future for all. Individuals can combine their passions with meaningful employment thanks to the adaptability of sustainability careers, which creates a harmonious balance between personal fulfilment and global influence.

References:
1. Harvard Business Review. (February 1, 2022). *How to Build a Career in Sustainability*
2. Nexford.org. (August 10, 2021). *Working towards a greener future: Careers in sustainability*

Sumaiya Rashid is a student at Independent University, Bangladesh.

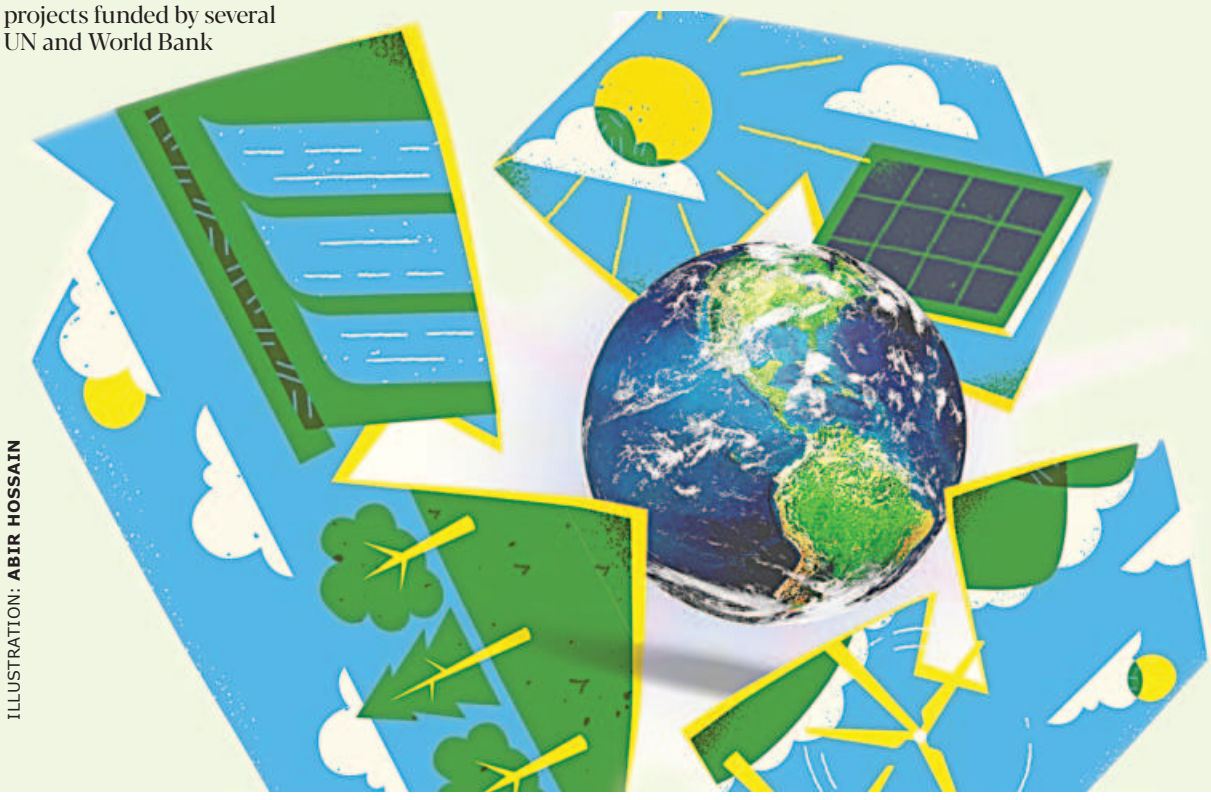


ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

EDU GUIDE

Navigating research as a university student

AZMIN AZRAN

ILLUSTRATION: FAISAL BIN IQBAL

For undergrad students, research work is one of the most challenging things they can face. However, those with experience can attest that it can also be one of the most gratifying experiences.

As an undergrad, your involvement in research mostly depends on the guidance you receive from your faculty members. University professors maintain the dual responsibility of being teachers as well as researchers, extending opportunities for their students to learn about academic research, who then get to contribute to research themselves.

In many universities, a thesis may appear as an option for final year undergrad students as part of their course curriculum. This is a brilliant way for students to dip their toes into the world of research.

For students with a major where a thesis is not offered as part of the course curriculum, a bit more initiative is required. Having a good rapport with professors, being aware of their research interests, and aligning your own interests and knowledge base with them can give teachers an indication of your seriousness.

> Research is not mandatory, not even for STEM students. Those who are inclined will pursue it, and others won't. But the technical knowledge gained from it will help students no matter what career they pursue.

As a student, it's important to understand that research is a significant commitment for both the student and the teacher, so building a solid background of field-specific knowledge is mandatory before jumping in. For this reason, it's advisable to wait until the second half of one's undergraduate journey to start pursuing this, as it ensures no one's time and efforts are wasted.

We reached out to Upama Kabir, Professor of Computer Science and Engineering at Dhaka University, to find out her opinion on how important it is for students to delve into research.

"Research is not mandatory, not even for STEM students. Those who are inclined will pursue it, and others won't. But the technical knowledge gained from it will help students no matter what career they pursue," she said.

"In engineering departments across the country, there is a misconception among students that in their fourth year, they must do a thesis. It's actually quite difficult for fourth year students with the pressure of their coursework to do fully concentrated research. Instead, focusing on projects that can showcase all that they have learned from their undergrad education would be a better option," she went on to add.

The level of interest in research among undergrad students varies from discipline to discipline. While STEM students expect to conduct research and spend considerable time in the lab or writing research papers, business students may be less inclined to do so because of differing goals at the onset of their university lives.

But according to Hamida Mosharraf Moniea, Lecturer at the Department of Management, North South University, that need not be the case.

"It is true that many business students may not initially consider pursuing a career in academic research. However, it is important to recognise the vast scope and exciting possibilities that academic research offers in the field of business studies. Through research, individuals have the opportunity to delve deep into these subjects, explore new ideas, and contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the field," she said.

When making the decision to pursue academic research, students need to go through a period of self-reflection to ascertain if they are the right fit for the rigourous undertaking.

Asrar Chowdhury, Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University, gives an insightful pointer, "The foundation of research is the ability to ask the five questions of rhetoric: Who, What, When, Where and Why- and then How? The art of research is to patiently go through the above, again and again, to gain clarity. Undergraduates who want to pursue research need to be clear about the technicality and the art of research before committing themselves to what is essentially a journey."

Azmin Azran is the editor of Campus.

How to read a research paper

Start by reading the title, abstract and introduction of the paper at hand. See when it was published; recent research is of vital importance. Note any headings and key terms. And skip to the conclusions.

Skim through the references as well to get an idea on other related works. This phase is all about getting the essence of the concepts the author/s have worked on. By the end, you should know if this is the right paper for you and if you want to dive into the details.

Next, it is time to read with greater discretion, paying attention to the diagrams, figures and such. Move on to the methods and results. To know more about the background of the paper, go over unread references. This helps to discover what has or has not previously worked.

Take notes of special points. Add comments. Expect to encounter new mechanisms and peculiar terminology. You can always pass severely detailed work and return later. This step can take as long as you need and will drain the most out of you. So, at this stage it is wise to take a break.

After completion, you'll be able to summarise the paper more or less. Many even consider ditching the paper at this point and moving on to another.

Once you are done, now ponder upon the work. Deeply. Look over the notes you took. Can the study be repeated? What has it been trying to find? Were the findings well-supported by evidence? How big was the sample size? Are there any factors in play? What are the limitations of the experiments? And so on.

NOTICE BOARD

CIU Job Fair 2023: Bridging the gap between students and employers

The Career Planning and Placement Counselling Office of Chittagong Independent University (CIU) successfully organised the much-anticipated event, CIU Job Fair 2023, at the university's campus.

The objective of the job fair was to bridge the gap between aspiring professionals and potential employers, facilitating meaningful connections and opportunities for career development.

The fair was inaugurated by the honourable VC of CIU, Dr. Mahfuzul Hoque Chowdhury who visited the stalls and talked to the representatives of the participating organisations, and thanked them for their collaboration and support towards empowering the future workforce.

Prof Dr. Syed Manzur Quader, the Convener of the CIU Job Fair Committee 2023; Sarker Kamrul Mamun, Member Secretary; Dr. Mir Mohammed Nurul Absar, Professor of CIU Business School, along with the Deans of the four schools, the registrar, and other prominent members were present at the event.

A total of 23 renowned national and multinational companies from diverse industries participated in the fair.

Cultivating creativity: Inside the dynamic clubs of Uttara University's English department

The Department of English of Uttara University (UU) serves as a vibrant hub of artistic and intellectual pursuits. Various clubs have emerged within this department, each dedicated to enhancing the student experience and enriching their literature and arts journey.

The Cultural Club bridges Bangladesh's traditional customs with students' contemporary sensibilities. The Drama Club presents mesmerising performances of Shakespeare's classics like *Macbeth* and *King Lear*. These renditions delve into human complexities, nurturing language skills and presentation confidence.

For visual storytelling enthusiasts, the Photography Club offers a canvas to immortalise moments and memories. Through workshops, contests, and exhibitions, the club cultivates artistic vision and unleashes members' creative potential.

Beyond creative outlets, these club activities forge a cohesive bond among students, faculty, and staff, encouraging interdisciplinary interactions and cultivating a sense of belonging within the department.

NSU hosts discussion on "Bangabandhu in Photography: Pavel Rahman"

The Media, Communication and Journalism (MCJ) program at North South University (NSU) orchestrated a thought-provoking discussion today, delving into the theme "Bangabandhu in Photography: Pavel Rahman". The event was crafted to delve into the profound connection between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and pivotal moments in the nation's history.

The programme was graced by the presence of NSU VC Prof. Atiqul Islam as the Chief Guest. The stage was illuminated by Ekushey Padak award-winning photographer Pavel Rahman, who was the Keynote Speaker. Rahman's compelling insights and rich experiences held the audience spellbound.

Under the presence of Prof. Dr Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Chair of the Department of Political Science and Sociology; Dr Md. Towfique E Elahi, Assistant Prof. MCJ; and Dr S.M Rezwan Ul Alam, Associate Prof., MCJ, the discussion unfolded seamlessly.

Dr Tawfiq, the discussion's presenter, skilfully steered the conversation. Meanwhile, Dr Shariful Islam Imshiat, Assistant Prof., MCJ, meticulously unveiled the life and artistic journey of Pavel Rahman.

UAPorganises Club Fair, Spring 2023

The Directorate of Students' Welfare (DSW), University of Asia Pacific (UAP) organised its flagship event "Club Fair" for the Spring 2023 semester where fifteen central clubs along with the Socio Counseling Centre of UAP exhibited their accomplishments and activities before the newly admitted students and arrived guests at the UAP Plaza on August 10. The club fair is organised at the beginning of every semester to motivate the freshers in co-curricular activities and to familiarise them with the activities of various clubs of the university.

Dr M. Alauddin, Chairman, Board of Trustees of UAP, and UAP VC Prof. Dr Qumrul Ahsan jointly inaugurated the fair, while nationally acclaimed actor Fazlur Rahman Babu was present as a Special Guest in the closing ceremony. Among others, Prof. Dr Md. Sultan Mahmud, Pro-VC, UAP; Prof. Dr Munshi Mahbubur Rahman, Treasurer-in-charge; Takad Ahmed Chowdhury, Director, DSW; advisers of different clubs and faculty members of UAP attended the fair.

Inauguration of bicycle popularisation programme at Daffodil University

Daffodil International University (DIU) has recently adopted a new program to encourage and accustom the university's nearly 22,000 students and 3,000 faculty-staff to use bicycles as pollution-free vehicles. 'RFL Bike', a subsidiary of PRAN-RFL Group, is supporting the program by providing free 100 cycles.

Dr Masudur Rahman, Chairman, SME Foundation was present in the program as the Chief Guest while Dr Md. Sabur Khan, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, DIU was present as the Guest of Honour in the opening ceremony of the bicycle popularisation programme. DIU VC Prof. Dr M. Lutfar Rahman presided over the program.

Md. Mushtak Chowdhury, Chief Operating Officer (COO) of 'Pran Bike' was present as the Special Guest in the event. The program was addressed by Md. Sharful Islam, Head of Marketing, RFL, RMILL & Bike and Abu Taher Khan, Project Director of Industrial Innovation Center (IIC) of DIU.

After the inauguration ceremony, the students of DIU participated in a colorful bicycle rally organised on the campus.

OPINION

Facultyevaluation should be a must in all universities

AZRA HUMAYRA

Universities and colleges conduct faculty evaluations to gather feedback from students to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the faculty members and to ensure the delivery of quality education. The students are ensured anonymity in order to fill out evaluation forms according to their experiences after each semester or term. Feedback presented in a summarised report can then help teachers make appropriate improvements in their teaching methodologies and approach.

All universities in Bangladesh, whether public or private, should adopt faculty evaluations as standard practice. Dhaka University has recently implemented faculty evaluation, viewed as a significant step for its students' benefit. This gives the university a valuable opportunity to involve the students in the decision-making process by ensuring their satisfaction. This may pave the way for other public universities because faculty evaluation is still a foreign concept to the majority of public university students.

Due to the absence of transparency and a culture of fear, students often feel hesitant to express their concerns about the quality of education and treatment they receive. Faculty evaluations are conducted confidentially and the students can remain anonymous so they can evaluate the quality of the education they are receiving without the fear of being singled out by a teacher for leaving negative remarks.

ILLUSTRATION: **ABIR HOSSAIN**

Even as a standard practice, in some private universities, faculty evaluations have a limited impact on decision-making, and there are concerns about confidentiality when teachers warn students about the potential consequences of negative feedback. Therefore, the students are weary of the potential aftermath and give inaccurate feedback which ultimately defeats the purpose of faculty evaluations.

The primary purpose of attending a university is to acquire quality education from knowledgeable teachers, whose influence may extend to all facets of a student's life. The boundary between taking online courses and enrolling in a university becomes blurry if the latter does not offer excellent schooling. The value of a traditional university education is found in its dedication to providing top-notch instruction, scholarly resources, and a welcoming learning environment. However, if the institution doesn't fulfil these criteria, the advantages of going to a traditional university can be reduced.

Today, one-way evaluation is an antiquated technique to get the best education, hence faculty evaluation should be a staple in any university. The students' participation in conducting responsible evaluations will assist the university in fostering an enabling atmosphere for learning.

Azra Humayra is a student at Dhaka University.

PHOTO: **ORCHID CHAKMA**

Why making friends in university is more important than you think

RAFID KHANDAKER

University is what you make of it. You are provided freedom you haven't been given before, from choosing your own classes and timings to even having to live alone, away from family. Despite this, we as humans never stop being social creatures, and our need for community and support never fades. In fact, one could argue that it actually increases, due to the fact that along with the increase in freedom, there is also an increase in responsibility. To be suddenly thrust into the real world is an isolating and daunting experience for many, and we start to realise the importance of having people around us that we can lean on.

That's where friends come in. Now that we cannot rely on our parents, we are forced to go out into the world and find others for mutual support. It can be daunting task, especially for those of us who are more introverted. However, it's important to realise that we're all in the same boat, and everyone else needs friends just as much as you do. That's why it's imperative that you make the effort to get out of your shell and find likeminded people. This is easier than you might think, given how diverse student bodies usually are at universities. And once you do, prepare to make some of the most wonderful memories that you'll cherish for the rest of your life.

The benefits of having friends don't just stop there. There are more practical benefits as well, such as having study buddies, regular course-mates and of course, building a strong network. The importance of networking at university cannot be understated, as it might help you land jobs and opportunities you otherwise wouldn't, giving you a head-start in your career as well as setting you up for future collaboration. Some of the best ways to network is getting involved in on-campus extracurricular activities, such as joining clubs, becoming teaching assistants and research assistants, joining sports teams, etc.

> You are provided freedoms you haven't been before, from choosing your own classes and timings to even having to live alone, away from family.

University life is one of the most confusing yet transformative times a person can go through. Through all the chaos, it is our loved ones who offer us rays of sunshine to guide our path, and allow us to become our best selves through all the troubles and tribulations. You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with, so they can influence the trajectory of your education, career, and life. So be sure to choose them wisely.

Rafid is a student at North South University.

STUDY ABROAD

NAVIGATING CULTURE SHOCK
when moving abroad

MRITTIKA ANAN RAHMAN

Living in a different country from the one I was raised in is the most out-of-context I've ever felt. Suddenly my social or familial background, which formed a big part of my identity, did not apply to my new situation anymore. I was left to carve out a new identity for myself.

A cultural relativist approach here will allow you to understand and even appreciate that life works differently in different places. You might be thrown off by how people can talk both in very straightforward or coded language. This can mean someone sending you an elaborately structured 500-word email which mentions everything else on planet Earth other than the one word they're trying to tell you - 'no', or a friend simply handing you back the food you took over to their place after eating because there's no one else who wants to finish it.

Every time you're thinking in your head "That's not how we would communicate back home", remind yourself you're not home, and part of this experience is going to make you a more resilient person who knows how to communicate with people from very different places.

Remember that you will feel isolated, you will feel homesick but know that it takes time for a new place to feel like home. Make an effort to mix with people, attend university events, explore places around you and do as much as you can to seek out connections and good experiences. It's up to you to ground yourself in your new surroundings.

Try your best to have a support system in place. This can mean making new friends, being in touch with a local diaspora community or international student organisation or seeking out relatives or mutual friends from back home who are close by. This can help absorb your culture shock by giving you the chance to occasionally disappear into the kind of gathering you're used to from back home. Every campus usually has resources for supporting international students, so make sure to check out what is available to you.

While it is important to try to make connections in your new country, remember you still have people rooting for you back home who you didn't lose just because you moved to a new time zone. Make time to connect with your family and friends from back home by video calling, starting a Netflix watch party, or just texting them updates from your day. You'll learn that these are your most solid connections no matter where you go.

Moving abroad may look easy because everyone else around you are doing it. But the truth is, just because an experience is common doesn't make it easy. I don't say this discouragingly. Leaving home is a complex experience which enriches your life in many ways. It's just important to keep our expectations realistic, be prepared to work hard and know that your new life won't be like life at home.

At times it may feel like it's you against the world but remind yourself that you're on a journey that will better yourself in the long run. The moment you get good grades at the end of the semester or earn money for yourself in this brand new place, much of your struggles will feel validated. After all, your life isn't meant to be easy; it's meant to be well-lived.

Mrittika is a graduate student at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

Study abroad Myth bustingfor parents

Misconceptions amongst elders when it comes to foreign universities are abundant, resulting from a lack of proper knowledge and awareness. This can lead to contention at home, as the two generations have different opinions on applications. Let's debunk some of these myths.

The higher the rank, the better
This superficial obsession with a few big-name universities is illogical, since rankings don't always reflect reality. Applicants should choose institutions that align with their interests instead of being fixated on rankings.

ECAs don't matter
Many parents believe that getting accepted to a foreign university is solely determined by grades on your report card. However, most foreign universities look for students who have well-rounded profiles. Admissions officers want applicants who stand out from their peers and pursue passions outside of the classroom as well.

Top universities bear all the costs for the most talented students
Scholarships are usually merit-based, awarded to applicants with the best profiles each year. However, not all universities offer scholarships. On the other hand, need-based aid is only provided to applicants whose annual family income is lower than the university's decided threshold.