

Lessons in personal and professional growth from IUB alumnus Syed Moinuddin Ahmed

From IUB classrooms to chairing DBH Finance PLC, Syed Moinuddin Ahmed shares insights on growth, leadership, and the importance of hard work and continuous learning

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

Syed Moinuddin Ahmed, a finance professional with over two decades of experience, graduated from Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) in 2000 with a major in Finance and a minor in Accounting. He began his career in banking, spending 10 years across multiple institutions, before moving into insurance. Today, he chairs the board of DBH Finance PLC and serves as Additional Managing Director of Green Delta Insurance PLC, where he also oversees its healthcare subsidiary, GD Assist. Ahmed also holds an MBA in Finance and Banking from the University of Dhaka.

IUB played a crucial role in shaping Ahmed's professional journey. As one of Bangladesh's leading private universities, it has produced numerous leaders, and Ahmed considers himself fortunate to have been part of that community. Beyond academics, his time at IUB was defined by friendships and formative experiences that helped shape his decision-making and career success. More than just education, IUB provided him with a valuable life perspective, teaching students not only how to

choose the right career path but also how to continuously develop themselves for ongoing growth. These "golden days" remain a key foundation for his personal and professional development.

Nearly three decades after graduating, Ahmed still fondly recalls his time at IUB but reflects that he could have expanded his network beyond his close circle of friends. While he knew many students across batches, his actual friend group was limited. Today, he recognises the immense value of networking—not just within but beyond one's immediate circles—as a critical tool for navigating both organisational and personal growth.

If he could advise his younger self, it would be to focus more on building the right connections and making more friends, as effective networking plays a significant role in day-to-day success.

Interestingly, Ahmed admits that he was quite introverted during his school, college, and university days. He wasn't comfortable mixing with

new people or adapting quickly to new situations, describing it as "one of my biggest limitations" that he has worked hard to overcome throughout his career—and continues to work on daily.

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Syed Moinuddin Ahmed

Zahiduzzaman's journey

A testament to BRACU's promise to empower through the vision of an equitable future

ABIR HOSSAIN

Established over two decades ago, with a vision to produce pioneers across multiple fields, BRAC University (BRACU) has since transformed into one of the key players in the field of tertiary education in Bangladesh. The university has continued to set a standard of education that reflects its commitment to becoming a leading university of the Global South. To be able to continue to maintain the rigours they have set for themselves, BRACU builds on the values set by its supplemental organisations and combines them with its willingness to imagine an equitable future. The execution, of course, hinges on their ability to churn out future leaders who are equipped with the know-how and confidence to apply their skills into practice. With student centricity at the heart of their ethos, BRACU addresses all dimensions of education, integrating active learning with social and professional aspects of academia.

To that end, we sat down with BRACU alumnus Zahiduzzaman to have him talk about what role his alma mater played in shaping his identity and the lessons it imparted, which he continues to carry to this day. Having graduated from the Department of Computer Science and Engineering back in 2005, Zahid currently works at Grameenphone Ltd. as the Head of Digital Platform Payment and Partnership.

In the role that he now occupies, Zahid is responsible for driving digital transformation at Grameenphone by using the latest technologies and forming valuable

partnerships to improve customer experiences and help grow the business. It was the culmination of a major in Computer Science, coupled with a minor in Business Administration, that laid the technical groundwork for his expertise across tech and commerce. His time within the classroom, primarily in courses pertaining to the minor that he pursued, also granted him a clear understanding of the dynamic world of business.

Zahid also said that his time at the residential semester played a key role in developing other integral skills such as teamwork, empathy, and strategic thinking. The residential semester is a unique feature of the university, where students have to spend an entire semester at a campus in Savar to complete their general education courses.

"When I look back at my university days, I remember how BRACU started from humble beginnings. The quality of education, however, was always a priority. The discipline and values instilled by our teachers have stayed with me and shaped both my personal and professional life," he said. Zahid expanded further, stating that it taught him resilience, authenticity, and to strive for continuous improvement.

"BRAC University had a huge impact on me, teaching me to be resilient, to stay true to my values, and to always strive for growth in everything I do," he added.

Yet, it wasn't merely time within the classroom that he looked back at with fondness, but also the activities he engaged in beyond academics that he believed enhanced his development. Zahid particularly emphasised his involvement with BRACU's first ever cricket team and the values that it instilled in him. He was also delighted by the fact that the foundation that he and his teammates laid down has been built upon by students who have come after him.

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Zahiduzzaman

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Lighting the path: How two World University of Bangladesh alumni are shaping global industries

A CORRESPONDENT

The World University of Bangladesh (WUB) was founded with a mission to produce skilled professionals equipped to meet the evolving demands of the modern world. Guided by values such as innovation, industry relevance, integrity, and social responsibility, the university has built a reputation for blending academic rigour with practical application. Its programmes are designed not just to convey knowledge, but to inspire leadership, foster resilience, and prepare graduates for meaningful contributions in their chosen fields.



Jimmy Majumder

WUB's vision is deeply rooted in bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world problem solving. Through specialised faculties, dedicated mentorship, and opportunities for experiential learning, the university aims to nurture graduates who can adapt to diverse challenges, think critically, and create positive change, whether locally or globally.

Two of its alumni, Jimmy Majumder and Syed Ansar Ullah, carry these principles in strikingly different yet equally inspiring ways. Jimmy, a robotics engineer working in Japan's high-tech sector, and Ansar, a textile industry leader managing production for a global fashion brand, both demonstrate how WUB's foundation can launch graduates into careers that influence industries across continents.

From mechatronics classes to Japan's robotics frontier

When Jimmy Majumder entered WUB, he already had a hunger for innovation. But it was here that his vision sharpened into action. During his first year, he founded the Bangladesh Advance Robotics Research Center (BARRC), a platform through which he would lead over 30 robotics projects, train more than 10,000 students in person, and reach over one million learners online.

His academic achievements at WUB were matched by his resilience. Having left a public university's CSE programme, Jimmy juggled rigorous coursework with overnight shifts at a UK-based call centre for two years. These challenges, he recalls, "shaped me into a resilient, self-driven individual." It was in WUB's environment that he discovered his *ikigai* — his purpose — and developed his spirit and motivation to persevere.

In 2018, Jimmy graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering in Mechatronics and the Best Thesis Award. That same determination carried him to Japan on the prestigious MEXT Scholarship, where he earned a Master's degree in Robotics at the Kyushu Institute of Technology, receiving both the Excellent Thesis

Presentation Award and the honour of being the departmental representative for academic excellence.

Today, he is a Mid Level Senior Robotics Engineer at QibitTech in Tokyo, working alongside the Japanese government and leading corporations such as Sony, Kawasaki, and RIKEN. He is also a Venture and Innovation Strategist at Google for Startups Japan, integrating his entrepreneurial insights from BARRC with advanced engineering expertise to drive cross-sector innovation.

"Japan's robotics industry offers a glimpse into the future," Jimmy says. "In a country facing a labour shortage, robotics is not optional; it's a national imperative." His work spans factory automation, healthcare robotics, space robotics, and agriculture, areas where he draws daily on the interdisciplinary skills he built at WUB. The university, he reflects, was the torchbearer that lit his way through challenges: "What truly matters is that you follow the light with dedication, no matter how winding the path."

Engineering the future of fashion

Elsewhere, Syed Ansar Ullah's professional journey takes place on the bustling production floors of the textile industry. Graduating in 2013 with a degree in Textile Engineering, Ansar entered one of Bangladesh's most vital and competitive economic sectors.

Today, he is the Managing Director of Brannerson Apparel Ltd, the Bangladesh production facility for Oh Polly, a global women's high-fashion brand. His role requires him to oversee operations from yarn procurement to finished garments, ensuring that every stage meets the brand's exacting quality standards.

"The knowledge I gained at university helps me ensure product quality, streamline production, and make informed

decisions," Ansar says. The textile engineering curriculum at WUB equipped him with both the technical expertise and the industry perspective necessary for leadership in such a demanding field.

But managing a garment manufacturing facility in Bangladesh is no small feat. "The garment sector is profitable, but it comes

with daily challenges," he admits. His approach to these challenges is rooted in innovation — diversifying products, creating value-added offerings, and exploring efficiency-enhancing tools that keep his business competitive. This adaptability echoes WUB's emphasis on problem-solving and forward-thinking.

Ansar's time at WUB also included industrial tours to manufacturing plants, giving him early exposure to real-world production processes. These experiences proved invaluable once he entered the industry professionally, providing him with both technical insight and the confidence to lead.

Lessons carried beyond graduation

Though their careers are worlds apart, one navigating Japan's robotics revolution, the other steering Bangladesh's textile exports, Jimmy and Ansar share a common thread: the enduring influence of their alma mater.

For Jimmy, WUB's role was foundational not only in developing his technical proficiency in mechatronics, control systems, and embedded electronics but also in fostering his entrepreneurial drive. Founding BARRC during his first year allowed him to blend theory with application, a skill that continues to define his professional success.

For Ansar, the direct connection between his coursework and his current responsibilities is clear. "My studies in Textile Engineering gave

me a complete understanding of the process," he says. "The technical foundation I developed while at WUB is something I use every day." Both also emphasise the role of extracurricular engagement in shaping their capabilities. Jimmy's leadership in WUB's Mechatronics Club and Debate Club sharpened his communication and strategic thinking, while Ansar's industrial tours helped him bridge academic knowledge with practical insight.

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Lessons in personal and professional growth from IUB alumnus Syed Moinuddin Ahmed

FROM PAGE S1

Because of his introversion, he didn't participate in extracurricular activities during his time at IUB, something he now regrets. He believes that engaging in such activities would have added valuable skills and tools to face the challenges encountered later in life.

Today, Ahmed strongly encourages students to get involved beyond academics. "GPA is not everything," he emphasises. "It's how you prepare yourself, how you grow beyond the GPA. We are a product for the job market, and extracurricular activities help package yourself in a more attractive way." He urges students to find a passion in extracurricular pursuits and continue them even after their studies, believing this not only fosters maturity but also creates lasting positive impacts for their future.

Ahmed also reflects on the many valuable lessons he learned at IUB that went far beyond academics. He admits that, during his university days, he didn't fully grasp the meaning of the saying, "Life is not a bed of roses." With time, however, he came to understand its true significance. The curriculum, structure, and environment at IUB helped him learn two important principles early on: that there are no shortcuts in life and that hard work always pays off.

He explains, "You cannot expect great results if you only study before the exam. You may pass, but you won't achieve excellence. You must study in a disciplined and consistent manner to truly learn and succeed." He adds, "Hard work and sincerity are irreplaceable. If you focus on these, it leads to a disciplined life, and discipline is key to becoming a successful professional, no matter where you are in the world."

Ahmed urges aspiring professionals to adopt a long-term perspective, avoiding shortcuts in favour of sustainable efforts that yield meaningful outcomes.

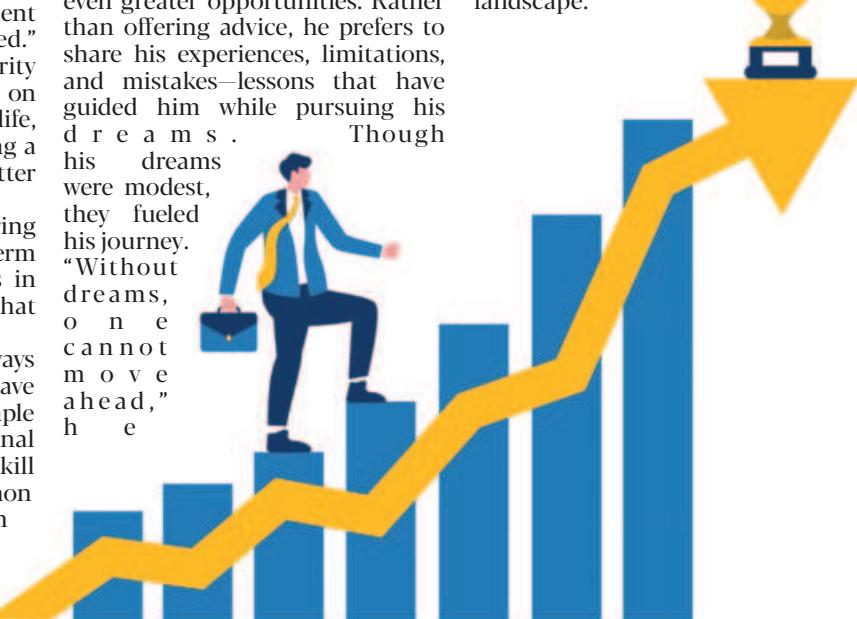
For Ahmed, success has always been rooted in simplicity. "I have always tried to have a simple approach to my life, be it personal or professional," he says. One skill he particularly values is common sense. "Nowadays, it is often seen that people are not using their common sense, but rather pursuing a different

route or different kinds of issue management. So, for me, I always try to stick to common sense and utilise that in my day-to-day role as a professional."

In recent years, Ahmed's work has become increasingly data-driven, a shift he sees as necessary in an era where change happens "at lightning speed." He reflects on how the skills once considered essential — analytical thinking, number crunching, and effective communication — are now complemented, and in some cases redefined, by technology. "While those are important, in today's world, it is technology that is making a whole lot of difference, and lately, AI is turning things really upside down. We need to align ourselves with evolving technology... so that we understand the situation more on a realistic front and also try to find a simpler solution to a complex task."

Ahmed also highlights the importance of staying current in a rapidly changing world, where technology plays a vital role. "Developing oneself and keeping up with global issues and market trends is essential," he notes. He encourages the younger generation to embrace their role as global citizens, confident and ready to explore opportunities beyond geographic borders.

Syed Moinuddin Ahmed's journey highlights the power of persistence, continuous learning, and simplicity. His story underscores that success is not defined by shortcuts but by discipline, hard work, and the courage to step beyond comfort zones. As technology reshapes the world, his commitment to continuous growth serves as an inspiring guide for aspiring professionals navigating an ever-changing landscape.



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TWO SCHOLARS, ONE ALMA MATER

How Presidency University shaped these international academics

AZRA HUMAYRA

Presidency University has, over the years, built a reputation as a hub for cultivating bright, driven minds, individuals who leave its classrooms with academic credentials and the confidence, adaptability, and critical thinking skills needed to thrive in a rapidly changing world. Its rigorous academic programmes have produced graduates who stand out in their chosen fields.

Today, Presidency University alumni can be found across the globe, in research laboratories, corporate houses, lecture theatres, and entrepreneurial ventures. They are scientists, engineers, innovators, educators, and leaders who carry forward the values instilled in them during their formative years at the university. Whether it is breaking new ground in research, teaching the next generation of professionals, or developing solutions to some of the most pressing global challenges, they serve as living proof of the university's lasting commitment.

In this special feature, we turn the spotlight on two such Presidency University alumni whose journeys encapsulate perseverance, ambition, and the power of education. Their paths, from the lecture halls of Dhaka to international classrooms and research centres, demonstrate how far determination and the right educational foundation can take a person.

Dr Md Badiuzzaman

When Dr Md Badiuzzaman speaks about his time at Presidency University, it is with the measured thoughtfulness of someone who knows precisely how each step formed his life. A 2012 graduate of Presidency University's Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE) department, he is now a full-time lecturer at the Sydney Metropolitan Institute of Technology and a casual lecturer at King's Own Institute – both respected providers of higher education in Australia.

His journey, however, began much earlier. "I have a diverse academic background that started with a diploma in Computer Engineering, where I focused heavily on



Dr Md Badiuzzaman

programming, digital electronics, and microprocessors," he recalls. This early technical grounding sparked his interest in microcontrollers and robotics, leading him to pursue his EEE degree.

What made this pursuit all the more significant was the fact that Badiuzzaman was self-financing his education. Since 2005, he had been working alongside his studies, supported in part by a 55 percent tuition scholarship from Presidency University.

From 2005 to 2020, he wore many hats in the academic sector in Bangladesh: an instructor, Head of Department, and later Executive Director at the Mangrove Institute of Science and Technology. In 2017, he spearheaded the founding of Imperial College of Engineering under Rajshahi University. Along the way, he completed a Master of Engineering (by research) in Industrial Engineering and Management from Khulna



M A Hasanath

University of Engineering & Technology (KUET), which ignited his ambition for doctoral research.

That ambition paid off in 2021, when he was awarded the prestigious Scientia PhD Scholarship at the University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney), one of Australia's top research universities. Completing his PhD in late 2024, he also gained teaching and research experience at UNSW and other institutions.

"A university education does more than just impart knowledge; it sets a direction," Badiuzzaman reflects. For him, Presidency University's state-of-the-art laboratory facilities were central to his growth. His enthusiasm for hands-on learning, particularly in microprocessors and machine labs, found fertile ground there.

Equally important was the mentorship he received. He speaks warmly of faculty

members such as Dr Shahidul Hasan and Dr Tapan Chakraborty, as well as several younger faculty members who inspired him with their own scholarship journeys. Their guidance not only shaped his academic thinking but also showed him what was possible beyond Bangladesh's borders.

Beside academics, Badiuzzaman helped establish the ECE Club at Presidency University, participated in industrial tours, and volunteered at university events. These experiences, he says, honed his interpersonal and communication skills.

Outside the job market, Badiuzzaman believes that his engineering degrees have given him a rare blend of theoretical understanding and practical skill. "As society moves toward an AI-driven and tech-centric future, we still need residual technical skills and hands-on capabilities," he notes. His own journey, from technician roles to more advanced, often leadership positions, proves the point.

When it comes to advice, his words are direct. "My advice is to dream big, but more importantly, act on those dreams," he says. "Many people have aspirations, but few develop action plans and demonstrate the consistency required to realise them. Be less of an overthinker and more of a doer or persistent trier. That approach has worked for me and can work for others too."

M A Hasanath

For M A Hasanath, the path from Presidency University's Civil Engineering classrooms to the cutting-edge research facilities of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Hyderabad has been marked by intellectual curiosity, determination, and commitment to addressing real-world problems through engineering innovation. It is a journey that has taken him from foundational lessons in structural design to pioneering work in environmental sustainability, one that reflects both his personal drive and the solid academic grounding he received at Presidency University.

At every stage, Hasanath has combined technical expertise with a sense of purpose,

seeking solutions that not only advance his field but also contribute to the well-being of communities and the planet.

A 2015 graduate in Civil Engineering with a specialisation in structural engineering, Hasanath is now pursuing his PhD in Environmental Engineering at IIT Hyderabad. His research—developing sustainable technologies for industrial wastewater treatment and valorising byproducts—aims to advance the principles of a circular economy.

Alongside his doctoral work, he serves as a research scholar and teaching assistant in the Department of Civil Engineering at IIT Hyderabad. His dedication has already earned him recognition on the global stage, with presentations at international conferences in Greece, Germany, and India, and a Best Research Poster Award from the International Water Association (IWA) in Germany.

Before receiving a fully funded scholarship to IIT, Hasanath completed his master's at Dhaka University of Engineering & Technology (DUET), began his PhD at Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET), and contributed to academic institutions and engineering consultancies in Bangladesh. Each step added to his expertise and global perspective.

"My years at Presidency University were truly transformative," Hasanath says. The university provided not only a solid engineering foundation but also sparked his passion for research. He credits the environment, inspiring faculty, and peer group for expanding his horizons.

Hasanath mentions that his presentation and public speaking skills were first nurtured during term project presentations at Presidency University. "This is where I truly learnt the value of resilience, intellectual curiosity, and effective communication," he reflects. Hands-on laboratory and sessional courses, under the guidance of some of Bangladesh's most respected professors, gave him the confidence to teach and mentor others.

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A testament to BRACU's promise to empower through the vision of an equitable future

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"During my time at BRAC University, I was part of the first-ever cricket team. Playing sports taught me a lot about handling emotions, teamwork, and ethics—lessons that have served me well in my career. It's inspiring to see that our legacy continues, as the new campus is now equipped with even more sports facilities, offering students a wider range of opportunities to develop both their athletic abilities and team spirit," Zahid continued.

Alongside his athletic endeavours, he also affirmed that BRACU has imparted some very important life lessons, expanding on the values that he mentioned earlier in the conversation. In fact, it was through the time he spent at university that Zahid learned the significance and thus, the practice of self-acceptance, which was backed by the lesson of humility. In addition, the institution also reinforced the value of constantly working on oneself. With self-acceptance, humility, and diligence in his arsenal, Zahid has been able to utilise these skills in both his personal and professional life, underpinning just how vital they are. He further explained that these skills not only helped shape his

career but also aided in his personal interactions as well as community work.

As for the time he spent within the classroom, Zahid recalled that BRACU gave him and his classmates the opportunity to explore an array of different subjects, through which he was able to unearth his inclination for technology and business. "It was during my electrical engineering studies that I realised I was passionate about combining technology with business. This epiphany helped me find a career path that blends both of these areas, leading me to where I am today in a technology-driven business," he explained.

In between the wisdom that he has garnered throughout his time at BRAC University and then at Grameenphone, Zahid shared some advice for his younger self. He said that he would urge himself to get involved in the professional world earlier in his career, as well as take on real-world challenges. Additionally, he reiterated focusing on building skills as early as possible.

When asked to share some advice for the current group of students at BRACU, Zahid directed them to dream big. While he didn't quite specify the magnitude of

the aspirations themselves, he did mention striving for goals that might even seem like they're out of reach. What was particularly endearing about the advice that he had to share with the current students was how much overlap there was with the words he had for himself. It almost felt as though he saw a bit of himself, even amongst his juniors.

"Take on challenges, focus on developing your skills, and keep up with the latest trends and technologies," he concluded.

While the sincerity that Zahid portrayed is in itself a testament to the skills, lessons, and values that BRACU strives to instil in all its students, it also showcased the reverence and respect that he held for his alma mater. This is something that cannot simply be accommodated and realised with education alone. To foster such an attitude amongst students, institutions must extend the same grace towards their pupils and give them the space to flesh out who they already are and wish to be further down the line. It is only through the empowerment of communities and thus, individuals who belong there, that we can begin to envision an equitable shift for all.

Lighting the path: How two World University of Bangladesh alumni are shaping global industries

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Advice for the Next Generation

As accomplished alumni, both Jimmy and Ansar feel a responsibility to guide current WUB students. Their advice, while shaped by different industries, converges on the importance of self-direction and continuous growth.

Jimmy's message is one of resilience and ownership: "Your success is shaped not by where you start, but by how far you're willing to go. Own your growth, seek mentors, build your skills, and keep following the light that your university has handed you."

Ansar's counsel is more tactical but equally visionary: "Prepare early. Ask yourself what skills or knowledge can set you apart. Taking initiative now will place you in a

strong position later in your career."

Both perspectives reinforce a key WUB value that learning is a lifelong process, and that graduates must be proactive in seeking opportunities beyond the classroom.

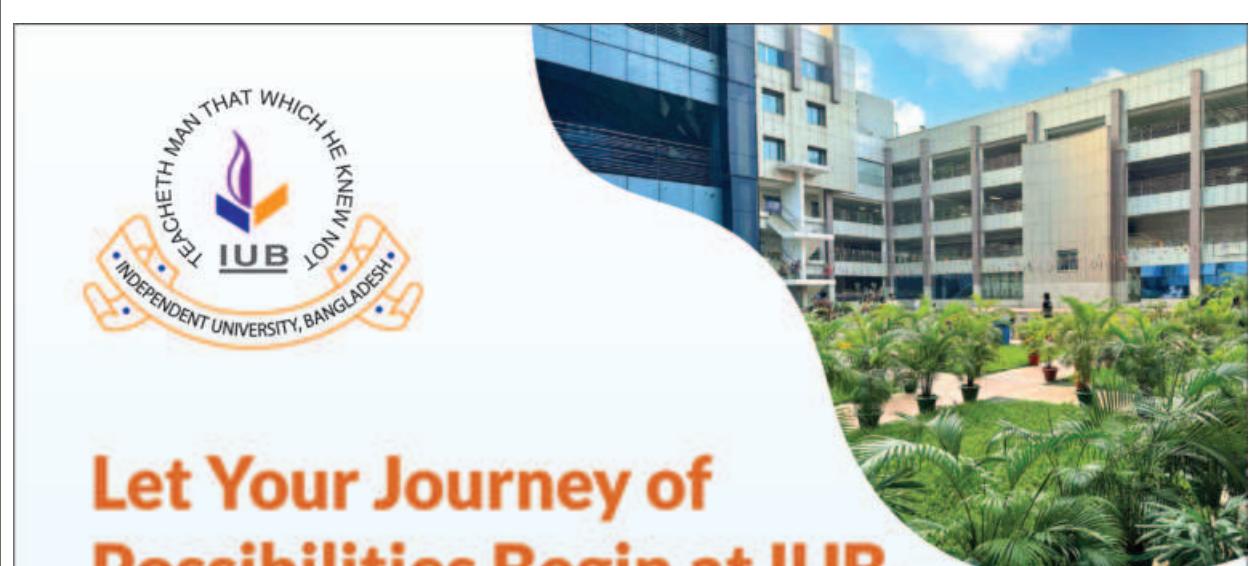
A testament to WUB's mission

Jimmy Majumder and Syed Ansar Ullah represent two distinct outcomes of a shared educational philosophy. One applies robotics to solve global labour and technological challenges; the other drives innovation and quality in one of Bangladesh's most vital export industries. Both have built careers on the pillars of technical mastery, adaptability, and visionary leadership, qualities WUB strives to instil in every graduate.

Their journeys illustrate that while WUB's classrooms, labs, and industrial tours are the starting

points, the real measure of its success lies in how its alumni carry forward the university's mission. Whether in the futuristic corridors of Japan's innovation hubs or the dynamic production floors of Bangladesh's garment sector, the influence of WUB's values is unmistakable.

As the university continues to evolve, investing in advanced facilities, industry partnerships, and global collaborations, it can look to alumni like Jimmy and Ansar as living proof of what is possible when education is coupled with purpose. Their careers are not just personal achievements but contributions to the broader narrative of Bangladesh's role in the global economy and technological progress.



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Wearing many hats, chasing big dreams

In conversation with EWU alumna Syeda Anisa Murshed

Syeda Anisa Murshed is no stranger to wearing many hats and wearing them well. A proud two-time graduate of East West University (EWU), she first earned her BBA in Marketing in 2013 and later returned for her EMBA in 2023. Today, she serves as General Manager, Digital Assets and Communications at bKash Limited, where she leads strategies that shape the brand presence of one of Bangladesh's most recognised fintech companies.

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

In this interview, Anisa reflects on her time at East West University, which remains a cherished chapter. She recalls the camaraderie of sharing notes, spontaneous food trips with friends, and the warmth of faculty members who still remembered her years later when she returned for her master's. She also shares heartfelt advice for EWU juniors chasing big dreams, from conquering fear and embracing diverse interests to mastering people skills, persuasive communication, and holding on to personal passions.

Her journey is proof that with resilience, adaptability, and curiosity, it's possible to excel both in your career and beyond.

The Daily Star (TDS): Please tell us a little bit about your career trajectory and how you got to where you are right now?

Syeda Anisa Murshed (S): My career started at Unilever Bangladesh (staring from internship through campus recruitment) where I worked with 20+ brands in roles like Activation, Brand Management over a span of 8 years. Later, I joined e-commerce, Daraz Alibaba as the Head of Offline Marketing and Media and shortly after joined the Fintech industry at bKash Limited. Besides my profession, I am a bead artist and hold a Guinness World Record for the Longest Thread of Beads Made by an Individual in One Hour.

TDS: Can you tell us about the skills you have to utilise in your current role? How would you say your university helped you develop or learn these skills?

S: In my current role, I rely on a wide



Syeda Anisa Murshed

range of leadership and strategic skills. A significant part of my work involves staying agile in a fast-changing digital landscape, navigating daily challenges with focus, and using data to guide informed decision-making. I also place great emphasis on mentoring and supporting my team, helping them grow both professionally and personally. These responsibilities demand more than just experience; they require the ability to think ahead, adapt quickly, and lead with clarity and purpose. While my university years didn't include formal leadership positions, they provided a strong

intellectual foundation that shaped my approach to problem-solving, critical thinking, and adaptability, skills I draw on every single day.

TDS: When you recall your university days, what are some of the things that you fondly look back at?

S: When I think back to my university days, what stands out most are the simple yet meaningful moments: spending time with friends on campus, exchanging class notes, and our regular trips to nearby food stalls and restaurants. Those everyday routines created memories that have stayed with

me. Returning to pursue my master's quite a few years after completing my undergraduate degree was a special experience in itself. What touched me most was discovering that so many of my faculty members still remembered me after all that time. It was a heartwarming reminder of the lasting relationships, sense of community, and deep impact that East West University had on me.

TDS: How did your time at East West University shape you as a person?

S: East West University played a truly foundational role in shaping who I am today, both as a professional and as a person. It equipped me with the confidence to face career challenges head-on and instilled in me the mindset to keep pushing forward, even when things don't go as planned. That resilience—staying grounded, adapting to changing circumstances, and refusing to give up—has been invaluable in navigating the inevitable ups and downs of professional life. The lessons I carried from my time at EWU have served as a steady anchor, guiding me through moments of uncertainty and helping me grow with each new challenge.

TDS: What advice would you give to your current juniors at East West University who are chasing big dreams?

S: If I could give one piece of advice to my juniors at East West University who are chasing big dreams, it would be to look beyond just your coursework and grades.

First and foremost, conquer your fears. Don't be afraid of not understanding things right away. Most of the time, it's much simpler

than it first appears. The faster you get comfortable with uncertainty, the quicker you'll learn.

Second, remember that your interests are valid. If you're into social media or design, know that these skills can truly pay off when used strategically. Look at all the ways promotion happens now—reels, community groups, short videos, long-form content. The possibilities are endless. Don't stop at managing one Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, TikTok, or YouTube page. Challenge yourself to learn how to manage a hundred. That versatility will set you apart.

Next, learn how to manage people. This is one of the most underrated but essential skills you'll ever develop. And it's not just about colleagues in a future job; it's about understanding how to work with family, friends, faculty members, and peers. Get involved in clubs, events, and other extracurricular activities. They're the perfect training ground for learning collaboration and leadership.

Another big one is to learn how to convince people. Whether you're pitching an idea in class, speaking at a club event, or competing in a contest, you're essentially selling your vision. This is a skill you must grow, because opportunities often go to the person who can communicate ideas with clarity and confidence.

And finally, never let go of your passion. Work will be a big part of your life, but it shouldn't be your whole identity. Keep pursuing the hobbies and interests that make you interesting as a person. That spark will carry you far, in both your career and your relationships.

Khaled Bin Saifullah's journey from Uttara University to Google

Khaled Bin Saifullah, an alumnus of Uttara University, pursued his undergraduate studies in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE). He is currently serving as a test engineer at Google for the Google Wallet division.

TAZRIN RASHID PRITHA

He had completed his Diploma in Electrical Engineering from Cumilla Polytechnic Institute before joining Uttara university, which remains one of the few institutions that accommodate students from Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB) curriculum to attend mainstream university classes.

The Daily Star sat down with Khaled, who had worked in an array of organisations like Wells Fargo, Johnson & Johnson, and Cigna, for an interview where he walked us through the milestones and moments that shaped his path to Google.

The Daily Star (TDS): As a test engineer at Google, can you tell us about the skills you have to utilise in your current role?

Khaled Bin Saifullah (K): Google is a dynamic workplace, and as a test engineer, I need to constantly apply a blend of technical and interpersonal skills to get things done. On the technical side, I work regularly with Java and Python, developing and testing solutions that ensure users enjoy a seamless experience with our apps.

Equally important are my communication skills. I have to collaborate in cross-functional teams, often with people from diverse professional and cultural backgrounds. Emotional intelligence plays a big role here. Whether it's resolving a conflict or aligning different perspectives, I make it a point to place myself in others' shoes to find the most effective solution.

Credit goes to my university for preparing me so well for this environment. Coming from a polytechnic background, I had no prior exposure to certain topics that might seem basic to others. From carrying myself professionally to learning how to prepare PowerPoint presentations, my university provided a supportive environment where I could develop these essential skills from scratch. I also did not have much scope to work in a group setting before I had joined university. Such experiences teach you the tolerance to work with someone who may not see eye to eye with you while holding your grounds strong and communicate your perspective patiently. Unfortunately,

many educational institutions in Bangladesh still fall short in grooming their students, producing graduates who may be academically capable but struggle to showcase their potential in the job market.

TDS: Was there a particular course or project that helped you discover your passion or current career path?

K: My Bachelor's was in EEE, but I eventually switched gears and built a career in software engineering. But it's not what it seems like; I genuinely enjoyed studying EEE. The programme involved a lot of math, including calculus, differential equations, linear algebra, and probability. At the time, I didn't realise how valuable that foundation would be later.

When I started self-learning coding, I noticed how some concepts naturally clicked because of that background. Things like logic building, problem decomposition, and understanding algorithms felt much more intuitive. My teachers played a huge role in helping me develop strong fundamentals that could be applied in multiple domains. I also had the opportunity to collaborate with one of my professors on a confidential government project, and I believe highlighting that experience was instrumental in getting shortlisted at Google.

TDS: How has your degree helped you outside of your job—in everyday life, problem-solving, or community work?

K: My degree has helped me far beyond the scope of my job, especially in developing critical thinking. It taught me how to break down complex problems into smaller, manageable parts, whether that's troubleshooting an everyday issue or making an important personal decision. I have learned to approach situations from different perspectives, weigh the pros and cons, and make informed choices instead of acting on impulse. I have felt that when I apply this approach to my personal life, not just for engineering decisions, it leads to little room for regret.

TDS: When you recall your university days, what are some of the things that you fondly look back at?



Khaled Bin Saifullah

K: When I think back to my university days, the library is one of the first places that comes to mind. I really enjoyed the quiet, focused environment. It was a space where I could immerse myself in my studies, discover new books, and explore topics beyond my coursework. It became almost a second home during exam season.

And then there were the tea stall moments with friends right outside university—those unplanned breaks that turned into hours of conversation, laughter, and sometimes even heated debates. People underestimate how much you can actually learn from your peers in an informal setting. Not everything has to be about learning either. I had developed fulfilling connections at my university which

hope will last a lifetime. My friends gave me a sense of contentment and peace. Looking back, these very simple moments are what I cherish the most.

TDS: How did your time at university shape you as a person?

K: It has taught me the value of discipline in a way that has stayed with me ever since. Balancing classes, assignments, and self-learning required me to structure my days and stick to a routine. I learned to set clear goals, prioritise tasks, and hold myself accountable for meeting deadlines. That discipline extended beyond academics. It shaped how I approach challenges, manage my time, and follow through on commitments.

Even now, in both my personal

and professional life, that structured mindset helps me stay focused and consistent, no matter how busy or unpredictable things get. Without discipline, there's a high risk of falling into the procrastination loop, that is spending a lot of time 'working' but barely getting anything done.

TDS: What advice would you give to your current juniors at Uttara University who are chasing big dreams?

K: Stay adaptable and keep an open mind, because the path to your goals is rarely a straight line. Learn to listen as much as you speak, and surround yourself with people who challenge your thinking. When setbacks come, treat them as lessons rather than roadblocks. Most importantly, take ownership of your growth—no one else will chase your dreams for you. To turn those dreams into reality, you need an actionable plan and the discipline to use your time as efficiently as possible.

Looking back at my university days, I had most of my classes in the afternoon, so I used my mornings to complete assigned readings and explore topics that sparked my curiosity. Those quiet morning hours became my most productive time, and it's when I taught myself a great deal about coding.

TDS: If you could go back and give one piece of advice to your university self, what would it be?

K: I would tell myself to worry less about having everything figured out and focus more on exploring. University is one of the few times in life when you can experiment, take risks, and learn from mistakes without the weight of too many responsibilities. Once you are an adult with a family to support, you can't simply hop around and test different fields to find your true calling.

Thus, I would advise my younger self not to hold back from trying something just because it feels unfamiliar. The lessons you gain from those experiences often matter as much as the degree itself. Now that I am in the workforce, I can say with confidence that CGPA doesn't matter nearly as much as real experience does. So, take that leap of faith!

Tazrin is a Contributing Writer at The Daily Star.



STAMFORD GRADUATE SUMIT CHAKRABORTY ON LEARNING AND CAREER GROWTH

Sumit Chakraborty's professional journey exemplifies how a solid educational foundation combined with practical experience can lead to a rewarding career.

In his current role, Sumit is responsible for formulating and executing brand marketing plans, including marketing campaigns and product launches. He is also involved in strategic trade marketing, market analysis, R&D, new product development, and cross-functional team collaborations.

FAISAL BIN IQBAL
An alumnus of Stamford University Bangladesh, Sumit Chakraborty completed his Bachelor's degree in Business Administration in 2008 and later earned his MBA in 2015. Currently, he serves as Assistant General Manager (Marketing) at Igloo Ice Cream, a concern of Abdul Monem Limited. His story offers insight into the invaluable role a university plays in developing skills, character, and dreams.

Sumit's career started shortly after graduation when he joined Akij Food & Beverage Limited (AFBL) as an intern. After completing his internship, he was offered a position as Assistant Marketing Officer. Over nearly six years, he progressed to Senior Brand Executive before leaving AFBL in 2014. Since then, he has been with Igloo Ice Cream, where he is now Assistant General Manager (AGM Marketing).

In his current role, Sumit is responsible for formulating and executing brand marketing plans, including marketing campaigns and product launches. He is also involved in strategic trade marketing, market analysis, R&D, new product development, and cross-functional team collaborations.

Reflecting on his university experience, Sumit says, "The curriculum provided a strong foundation in core subjects like Marketing, Management, and Finance. The group projects associated with each course helped me enhance my analytical thinking capabilities and understand the value of teamwork."

Sumit recalls the Stamford University Siddeswari campus as "vibrant from



Sumit Chakraborty

dawn to dusk". Unlike many private university campuses at the time, Stamford had playgrounds, multiple open areas, and even a swimming pool. The campus was lively year-round, especially because of the Film & Media department, which hosted cultural activities and cinema exhibitions. "Altogether, it was a colorful and lively

place throughout the year."

Being part of such a lively institution had a strong impact on Sumit's personal and professional life. He explains, "I had the chance to interact with classmates from different parts of Bangladesh, which was a new experience for me. Since I was born and raised in Dhaka, I hadn't been

exposed to people from other regions and cultures before. This helped me become more open-minded and better at adapting to different values and beliefs, something that proved very important in my professional life later on."

He adds that class presentations, group projects, and working with diverse peers helped him grow more confident and flexible. Sumit was also actively involved in extracurriculars during his time at Stamford. He was part of the Stamford Debate Forum (SDF), which helped him develop critical thinking, public speaking skills, and the ability to structure his thoughts clearly under pressure. He notes that debate also boosted his confidence and taught him to view issues from multiple perspectives, something that has been incredibly valuable to him in times of professional decision-making.

Sumit also was a founding member of the Stamford Puja Committee in 2006, organising one of the first large-scale Saraswati Puja celebrations at a private university. "The experience taught me leadership, event planning, and how to work as part of a team to bring together a diverse group of people for a common cause."

Sumit highlights several courses that sparked his passion and shaped his career path, including Introduction to Business, Business Communication, and Brand Management. He says, "I believe it wasn't just the course content, but also the teachers who made these classes so engaging."

He fondly remembers his instructors as well. "Introduction to Business was the first course of my BBA journey, and it was taught by Mushfiqur Rahman

sir, whose charismatic teaching style made a lasting impression. The Business Communication course was led by Ishrat Jahan Tania ma'am, who was extremely cordial and supportive towards students. And last but not least, Brand Management was taught by Nazmul Huq sir, whose classes were rich with real-world examples and diverse perspectives."

Sumit stresses the importance of experiences beyond academics. "During my bachelor years, I took several initiatives, including organising events and trying things I wasn't familiar with. These experiences helped me become more confident in sharing my ideas and also improved my communication skills. They played a significant role in developing my leadership and interpersonal abilities."

When asked what advice he would give to current Stamford students chasing big dreams, Sumit shares, "Theoretical knowledge is necessary for building basic skills. However, you should always think outside the box in order to chase bigger dreams."

"Get out of your comfort zone as staying within it will surely hinder your pursuit of goals," he continues. "Try to build a positive reputation in your workplace. Avoid criticising others. Instead, appreciate their work."

Sumit Chakraborty's journey from the Stamford University Bangladesh campus to his corporate role at a renowned company highlights the enduring value of a strong education combined with active engagement and continuous learning. His reflections serve as an inspiration for current students and young professionals striving to make their mark.

How to connect and communicate with alumni for guidance and opportunities

A CORRESPONDENT

Alumni networks can be a treasure trove of wisdom, mentorship, and career opportunities. Whether you're a student exploring your next steps or a professional seeking industry insights, building genuine connections with alumni can open doors you didn't even know existed. If you approach your alumni in the right ways, they may offer a world of insight through valuable experiences you have yet to experience yourself, but with shared context.

Here are a few practical ways to connect with alumni and communicate effectively for guidance and opportunities.

Start with your university's alumni database

Many institutions maintain online alumni directories or platforms where you can search by industry, graduation year, or location. If that is not available to you, you may reach out to administrative staff, or even senior faculty members who would be able to connect you with people with similar majors, career trajectories or even research interests.

The biggest advantage of going through this route is that most people that the university or faculty members connect you with are usually alumni who like to keep an active relationship with their alma mater, and are interested in helping out their fellow juniors. Thus, the conversation will probably not end

with an awkward, "Hi!" and "... Umm, hello?" exchange.

It is also important to make sure that you are very clear in letting the other person know clearly and at the very beginning what exactly you are looking to gain from this conversation. Let them know how you have acquired their contact and specifically tell them why you've reached out. This allows for the conversation to begin in good faith.

Leverage LinkedIn for alumni search

LinkedIn, with all of its pitfalls, is actually great for this kind of networking. LinkedIn even has an "Alumni" feature, which is one of the most powerful tools you will find at your disposal. Not only does it let you explore profiles of alumni, it also lets you filter those profiles based on: where they live, where they work, what they do, what they studied, what they are skilled at, and exactly how you are connected.

Here's how you can use it: Go to your university's LinkedIn page, click on "Alumni", and search by job title, company, or location. This particular feature is specifically great if you are looking for a job in a particular field or company, as it increases your chances of getting a referral.

Instead of

applying online, filter alumni by company, role, location, field of study, skills, or mutual connections.

Browse profiles, then reach out via LinkedIn with a personalised note or an email stating all the necessary information they would require for context. Request brief informational interviews or even a quick chat over the phone or through a video call. This method can be more effective than job boards for landing interviews and discovering opportunities through shared connections.

Attend alumni events and join alumni groups on social media

From career fairs to homecoming weekends, alumni gatherings are perfect for building face-to-face connections. While these events may not be the perfect place to open up your resume and ask for particular pointers regarding specific advice you may be seeking, it is still a great way to meet alumni and build a long-term relationship. Meeting them in person humanises you and allows the people you are seeking out to be invested in your endeavours.

Remember not to rush people into offering you advice or immediately barrage them with a series of career-related questions. Begin by introducing yourself, ask open-ended questions, try to get to know them better, and be a good listener – you might be surprised by how much you will learn already.

SEE PAGE S6



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A glimpse at Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology's mission of forging pioneers in the creative industry



Shamim Azad Shaion



Sohel Rana

The urge to create is an innate one. Some opt for the paintbrush while others choose the pencil. Regardless of what utensil one wields, they are united by their overwhelming need to express themselves. As one of the first complete design educational institutions in Bangladesh, Shanto-Mariam University of Creative Technology (SMUCT) has carved out a space to house some of the brightest creative minds of the country – helping students foster their talent, find promising opportunities within the industry, and shape their career trajectory.

ABIR HOSSAIN

Offering a range of degrees across a wide spectrum of mediums, with their flagship programme in Design and Technology, SMUCT has churned out some incredibly talented designers ever since its inception in 2003, most of whom are breaking new ground and contributing significantly in their respective industries. As a testament to the standards that the university has set, we sat down with two of SMUCT's alumni, Md Shamim Azad Shaion and Sohel Rana, and discussed how their careers have taken shape and what role their alma mater played in dictating its outcome.

Md Shamim Azad Shaion's journey towards finding the true value of weaving fashion with narrative

Md Shamim Azad Shaion, an alumnus of SMUCT with a Bachelor's in Apparel Manufacturing Management and Technology as well as a Master's in Fashion Design and Technology, has been working at Aarong as a Senior Design Manager for the past 13 years, leading the design for men's traditional and casual wear.

"In my role, I rely on a blend of creative thinking and leadership. From trend forecasting and concept development to fabric selection, technical detailing, and managing a design team, each part of the process demands both vision and coordination," he explained when asked about the skills required in his current role. Shamim, however, did underpin that it was SMUCT that laid the groundwork for his inclination to weave stories through fashion.

"It didn't just teach me the technical side of apparel and design, it taught me how to think like a designer. The environment pushed me to think creatively, handle pressure, and bring ideas to life, which are now part of my daily work. It was more than education; it was the beginning of finding my voice in fashion," he said.

Shamim also added that the lessons that were imparted weren't merely confined to design but could also be extended to many facets of one's life. "I was lucky to be guided by both local and foreign teachers, all of whom helped shape who I am today. They didn't just teach me how to become a designer, they also emphasised the need to become a better human. I still remember one of our faculty members telling us that it is

honesty and purpose that must dictate who we are before we sell any of our designs," he recalled.

One particular memory that Shamim looked back at was when students from across the university came together to organise a flood relief campaign in Utara back in 2004. He also reminisced about a fashion show in a mobile van that students put together as well as picnics and late nights filled with fabric, sketches, and laughter.

As an institution that seeks to embolden individuals through the sheer force of creativity, SMUCT also offers spaces outside its classroom for its students to flourish.

"One of the most meaningful experiences that I took part in was planning a fashion show for an indigenous community. It reminded me that fashion can also be a vehicle for showcasing identity, culture, and heritage. Taking part in exhibitions, cultural events, and student-led creative projects allowed me to develop important skills such as collaboration, communication, and leadership in a real-life context. I learned that creativity is more powerful when anchored to people, culture, and values," he said.

As for the dynamic within the classroom, Shamim iterated that there were a number of courses that impacted him, specifically courses in Surface Design, Elements of Design, and Fundamental of Design. "These classes allowed me to find my sense of patterns, textures, and shapes. Amongst all my courses, however, Design 101 pushed me the most. It changed the way I think about design by teaching me that it's a problem to solve. More importantly, it is about taking that problem and turning it into an interesting story that makes one's design better," he reflected.

When asked to share some advice for the current batch students at SMUCT, Shamim urged them to chase their dreams and to not rush the journey. "Every sketch, every mistake, every long night is shaping you into the designer you're meant to become," he asserted. "Follow fashion forecasts and analyse global trends, not to copy it but rather to understand where the world is heading."

He also emphasised that in the professional world, designers tend to be defined by their first product, which reframes the importance of being able to present one self.

In between the reflection and

reminiscing, Shamim also spared some words for his younger self. While this act of grace may, at first sight, simply appear to be conversation with oneself, it reinforced just how much wisdom SMUCT and his professional life has instilled within Shamim.

"Embrace your journey. After all, it's your story that's unfolding. Keep it real, stay inquisitive, and be bold enough to be a trendsetter. Dream big, and explore ways to learn that excite you," he concluded.

Tracing Sohel Rana's steps to building a solid foundation

Sohel Rana, also a graduate of SMUCT with a Bachelor's in Graphic Design and Multimedia, currently working as the Head of Department at PR VFX, explained that he has to utilise a range of skills on a daily basis. These include crafting new ideas, managing projects, solving problems, and communicating with clients, amongst other demands. Naturally, it was SMUCT that played a vital role in developing these abilities.

"The university's hands-on design assignments, access to creative tools, and guidance from experienced faculty members helped me build a solid creative foundation and prepared me for real-world challenges in the creative industry," he said.

Sohel also stressed that his time at the university shaped him both in a professional and personal capacity. Not only did it help him grow in areas like creativity, self-discipline, and communication but also reinforced the values of collaboration and continuous improvement.

Nonetheless, it isn't just these lessons that he continues to carry with him but also the memories that he has created. "Some of the things I cherish the most are collaborating with friends on group projects, learning from inspiring faculty members, and participating in campus exhibitions

and design contests," explained Sohel. "These experiences made my time at university enjoyable, while also helping me foster skills that I rely on today. The friendships and lessons from that time continue to have a positive impact on both my personal and professional life."

Alongside academics, SMUCT also allowed Sohel to delve deeper and explore his creativity by offering a range of intriguing extracurricular activities. He recalled participating in exhibitions, cultural events, and inter-university creative competitions. The benefits such integral interactions offer are vast. One of which included improving his presentation skills and thus, the ability to showcase his own work. The extracurricular activities also gave him the opportunity to engage with students from other departments and institutions, which in turn, broadened his perspective and enhanced his creative thinking.

Within the classroom, there were courses that were offered which had a major impact on his artistic expression. In particular, he referred to a 3D animation project, which focused on storytelling through animation, that influenced him.

"I created a TV channel programme's 3D intro animation. From modelling and animation to texturing and final rendering, I was involved throughout the process. It was challenging, but also the first time I felt completely immersed. I enjoyed telling a story through movement and solving technical problems creatively," he explained.

In fact, it was through this course that Sohel realised how much he resonated with animation and narratives. In many ways, the course was perhaps the most important factor in shaping his aspirations.

The opportunities that SMUCT offers are vast and varied. The culmination of its effects are

manyfold. Current students and alumni alike are not merely talented in their respective fields but also embody values that the institution has instilled in them. Sohel emphasised that it was the environment, in particular, that taught him how to manage pressure, adapt to feedback, and stay committed to long-term goals – attributes that are of significant importance in any area.

To reiterate the knowledge that SMUCT has imparted, Sohel spared a few words for the current student body.

"My sincere advice is to stay focused, stay curious, and keep creating. University life is the perfect time to explore, experiment, and make mistakes. Don't be afraid to step outside your comfort zone. Take your classes seriously, but also engage in extracurricular activities, personal projects, and internships," he asserted.

"Stay updated with industry trends, build a strong portfolio, and learn to take constructive criticism positively. And most importantly, believe in your abilities, even when the road gets tough. Success doesn't happen overnight – it's the result of consistent effort, passion, and perseverance. Keep dreaming, keep doing, and never stop learning – your journey has just begun."

He also said that if he could give one piece of advice to his former self it would be to believe in himself more and explore new ideas. "I used to doubt whether I was good enough or creative enough. I have now realised that confidence grows through experience, and the only way to find your strengths is by trying. I would encourage myself to speak up more in class, take on side projects, and not be afraid of failing, because every mistake is a chance to learn and improve," he concluded.

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How to connect and communicate with alumni for guidance and opportunities

FROM PAGE 55

Begin by introducing yourself, ask open-ended questions, try to get to know them better, and be a good listener – you might be surprised by how much you will learn already. Beginning a conversation by speaking about a recent update to your university campus or shared course instructors may be a great way to break the ice.

Social media groups or communities are also a great way to present yourself as an active member of the community. These informal spaces often share job postings, mentorship opportunities, and industry news – all of which you can benefit from. Interacting with posts in an informative and helpful way, sharing useful articles and taking the time to congratulate members on achievements are a few simple ways to help prove to other alumni

members that you are open to building a relationship in the long run, and aren't just trying to gain opportunities yourself.

Follow up without being pushy and stay connected

One of the biggest mistakes is going silent after the first conversation, or following up only when you need something. Send an occasional update about your progress, congratulate them on recent achievements, or share relevant resources. While there obviously is a limit to how much you should reach out, it is important that you don't completely vanish after one good conversation, or once you're done asking for advice.

It is also extremely crucial to follow proper etiquette, as a sloppy email or text may undermine your credibility immediately. Begin by extending

a short greeting with genuine concern for their well-being, make your intentions clear, and keep the first email (of a thread) or text (in a conversation) brief. Being professional is crucial, but people appreciate it if you also carry a warm tone.

The strongest alumni relationships aren't purely transactional. Celebrate their milestones, engage with their posts, and keep in touch even when you're not job hunting or seeking advice. People are more inclined to help those they know and like, so nurture the relationship long-term.

Connecting with alumni is not about extracting favours – it's about building genuine, mutually beneficial relationships. Start with curiosity, respect their time, and offer value whenever you can. Over time, these connections can evolve into mentorships, collaborations, and even lifelong friendships.



ISU ALUMNI MAKING THEIR MARK IN DIVERSE PROFESSIONAL FIELDS



Hasib Hossain Ankon



Md Rafsan Jani

In the dynamic arena of higher education, International Standard University (ISU) stands as a beacon of excellence, dedicated to shaping the minds of future leaders and professionals. With a steadfast commitment to academic rigour and holistic development, ISU has consistently produced graduates who not only excel in their chosen fields but also embody the values of leadership, resilience, and community spirit.

AZRA HUMAYRA

Today, we dive into the inspiring journeys of two such distinguished ISU alumni, whose successes are a testament to ISU's profound impact.

Hasib Hossain Ankon

Graduating in 2024 with a major in Marketing, Hasib Hossain Ankon is currently pursuing an MBA at ISU, a clear indication of his enduring trust in the institution. His professional trajectory has seen him transition from clothes merchandising, after completing a supply chain major, to his current pivotal role in service quality and complaints management at bKash Limited.

Hasib's journey is particularly inspiring given his humble beginnings. "I come from a rural area, so I knew very little about these things," he candidly shares, referring to the complexities of the corporate world. He credits ISU entirely for equipping him with the essential skills for his current demanding role. "Everything I know—presentation, reporting, communication, relationship building, etc.—I learnt from ISU."

He elaborates on how his improved presentation skills, honed at ISU, were instrumental in his ability to present distinct bKash services and present the content in front of management.

Beyond the classroom, Hasib's university experience was rich with personal growth and cherished memories. Despite humorously describing himself as "a backbencher", he fondly recalls his undergraduate life as a period of profound connection. "My undergrad life was short, but I have to

say, everyone was like my family. It felt as though the teachers were the guardians and we were their children," he says.

Hasib reminisces about great memories with the teachers and of the classroom, specifically mentioning his enjoyment of marketing classes and his high regard for Dr Monirul Hasan Masum, whom he affectionately calls 'the marketing boss'.

Hasib's involvement in extracurricular activities played a crucial role in his holistic development. He served as the vice president of the ISU Business Club and was also a former brand ambassador for the university. These roles provided him with invaluable opportunities for professional growth. "Because of my affiliation with the club, I had the opportunity to network with different corporations and companies," he explains.

His responsibilities as a brand ambassador included attending numerous seminars and conducting programmes, experiences that further refined his capabilities. "I am grateful to my university because they taught me how to communicate and build relationships. I also learnt how to organise programmes, create the budget, and conduct the programme," he shares.

As a member of ISU's second batch, Hasib faced the unique challenge of having fewer seniors to guide him. This experience has shaped his valuable advice for current juniors. He stresses the importance of early career planning, saying, "You need to decide which sector you want to get into, for example, marketing, finance, or supply chain."

He further advises students to actively seek out job circulars online, identify required skills, and proactively build those competencies.

Md Rafsan Jani

Md Rafsan Jani, a proud alumnus of ISU's Department of Textile Engineering, exemplifies the university's pioneering spirit. As a student from the very first batch of Textile Engineering, graduating in 2023, Rafsan's journey is particularly significant. He is currently making significant contributions as a junior dyeing technician in the research and development section of The Civil Engineer's Wash Limited (TCEWL), part of the Standard MHI Group.

Rafsan highlights a critical aspect of ISU's educational philosophy: its strong connection to industry. He acknowledges the stark difference between academic and industrial environments. However, he found his transition seamless, largely due to ISU's unique advantage—its mother concern, Standard Group. This affiliation provided important practical exposure.

"Every semester we went on field visits to different factories. Whenever we asked for field visits, we got the opportunity to go on-site visits," he shares. This hands-on approach, he asserts, was crucial. "The university always provided guidelines to get more in touch with the practical side of things. The hands-on approach helped us understand the theoretical aspects of textile engineering."

This direct industry immersion is a cornerstone of ISU's curriculum, ensuring graduates are not just theoretically sound but also practically adept and ready for the challenges of the workplace.

Rafsan's recollections of his time at ISU are filled with warmth and

gratitude. As part of the inaugural textile engineering batch, the students shared a unique bond with the teachers. "I vividly remember how the Vice-Chancellor of ISU spent time with the students to keep us from being bored due to the absence of seniors," says Rafsan. "I cherish the strong affinity for the teachers. I always felt totally at home and could freely communicate with our professors, and they would give us guidance."

The small class size of the first batch further strengthened the student-teacher relationship, creating an environment where personal development was paramount.

Beyond academic and professional skills, ISU instilled a sense of social responsibility. Rafsan recounts how, during a natural calamity, the teachers stepped up to help the distressed without being asked. This act of selfless service taught him how to be with the people and help them, demonstrating the university's commitment to nurturing compassionate and socially conscious individuals.

Extracurricular activities were central to Rafsan's university experience. As a student of the first batch, he was instrumental in establishing the Textile Club, serving as its vice president. This club became a platform for students to engage in competitive tasks with other universities and to develop skills. He particularly highlights the power of networking fostered through these activities. "The collaboration among different university students has led to developing skills that later helped me in my workplace. One of the most important perks of the Textile Club was networking. Through the collaboration, speaking with different

students, teachers, and many others, we created a network," he mentions.

Rafsan also reflects on the invaluable leadership qualities he cultivated at ISU. "My teachers, batch mentors, Raisul Hoque, who is the head of the Public Relations at ISU, and the Vice-Chancellor always told me that I had leadership qualities. They always asked me to plan programmes."

These early encouragements and opportunities translated directly into his professional life, where he now applies and continues to grow his leadership skills.

"My university taught me that to get something, you have to work incredibly hard," Rafsan continues. "They taught me how important discipline is. We cannot achieve much without efforts and patience; I believe that I have internalised this, and I am applying this in my work."

Rafsan also goes on to offer thoughtful advice to his juniors, urging them to focus on creating meaningful relationships and to have good bonding with the alumni.

The narratives of Hasib and Rafsan paint a compelling picture of ISU as a transformative institution. Both alumni attest to how the university equipped them with specific, actionable skills directly applicable to their professional roles. The recurring theme of teachers acting as guardians and the strong bonds among students and faculty creates a nurturing space where students feel comfortable to learn, grow, and even overcome personal challenges.

The stories of Hasib Hossain Ankon and Md Rafsan Jani serve as powerful reminders of how a university can impact the personal and professional lives of its students.

Two scholars, one alma mater How Presidency University shaped these international academics

FROM PAGE S3

Hasanath is quick to highlight the role of alumni connections in academic life. "They form bridges between generations of scholars, opening doors to mentorship, collaboration, and lifelong learning," he says. Whether through exchanging ideas with senior alumni or encouraging current students, these relationships have been an enduring source of professional growth.

He lives by the saying of internationally known public speaker, networker, entrepreneur, and marketing expert Porter Gale, "Your network is your net worth"—a principle that has shaped his academic journey as much as any textbook.

When asked about influences, Hasanath doesn't point to a single mentor but to several, including Dr Farzana, Dr Hussainuzzaman, Dr Ataur Rahman, and Dr Nazmul Islam among others. He recounts a vivid moment from a Transportation Engineering class, when Dr Farzana challenged the students to solve a real-world problem. Hasanath's group worked into the evening and produced a workable solution, which Dr Farzana later showcased to the entire class as an exemplary approach. "That recognition gave me the confidence to believe that innovation starts with curiosity and teamwork.



It sparked my determination to contribute meaningfully to civil and environmental engineering," says Hasanath.

At Presidency University, Hasanath learnt that perseverance, teamwork, and integrity are as crucial as technical skill. The diverse community taught him to value different perspectives, an asset in tackling global challenges. "Above all, I learnt that growth is a lifelong journey, and every setback is simply an opportunity to learn and improve," he says.

His advice to current students mirrors his own path: "Be bold in your aspirations and unwavering in your commitment. Use your time

wisely to explore, experiment, and discover what truly excites you. Have faith in yourself, be consistent, nurture your passion, and stay open to learning. The rewards will exceed your imagination."

A shared legacy

Though their fields may differ, both Dr Md Badiuzzaman and M A Hasanath are united by a shared foundation: the ethos of Presidency University. Their stories demonstrate that Presidency University is far more than a place to earn a degree. It is a vibrant training ground where ambition is nurtured, skills are sharpened, and a global perspective takes root.

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A 10-cent story

How Md Tauhid Bin Abdus Salam, Managing Director of Classical Handmade Products BD Ltd., an alumnus of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT) and Stanford University Graduate School of Business (SEED), turned jute into crafts, creating thousands of jobs and reshaping Bangladesh's jute sector. Tauhid has been honoured as a Commercially Important Person (CIP) and received multiple National and Presidential awards.

"Jute can only survive by getting a higher price from the export market. How to do that? Change the way we do jute business. It should be an input for industries where we can obtain a better price by modifying its properties, making it more fashionable, colourfast, softer, more comfortable, and sustainable. We cannot get a good price without telling the sustainability stories of jute."

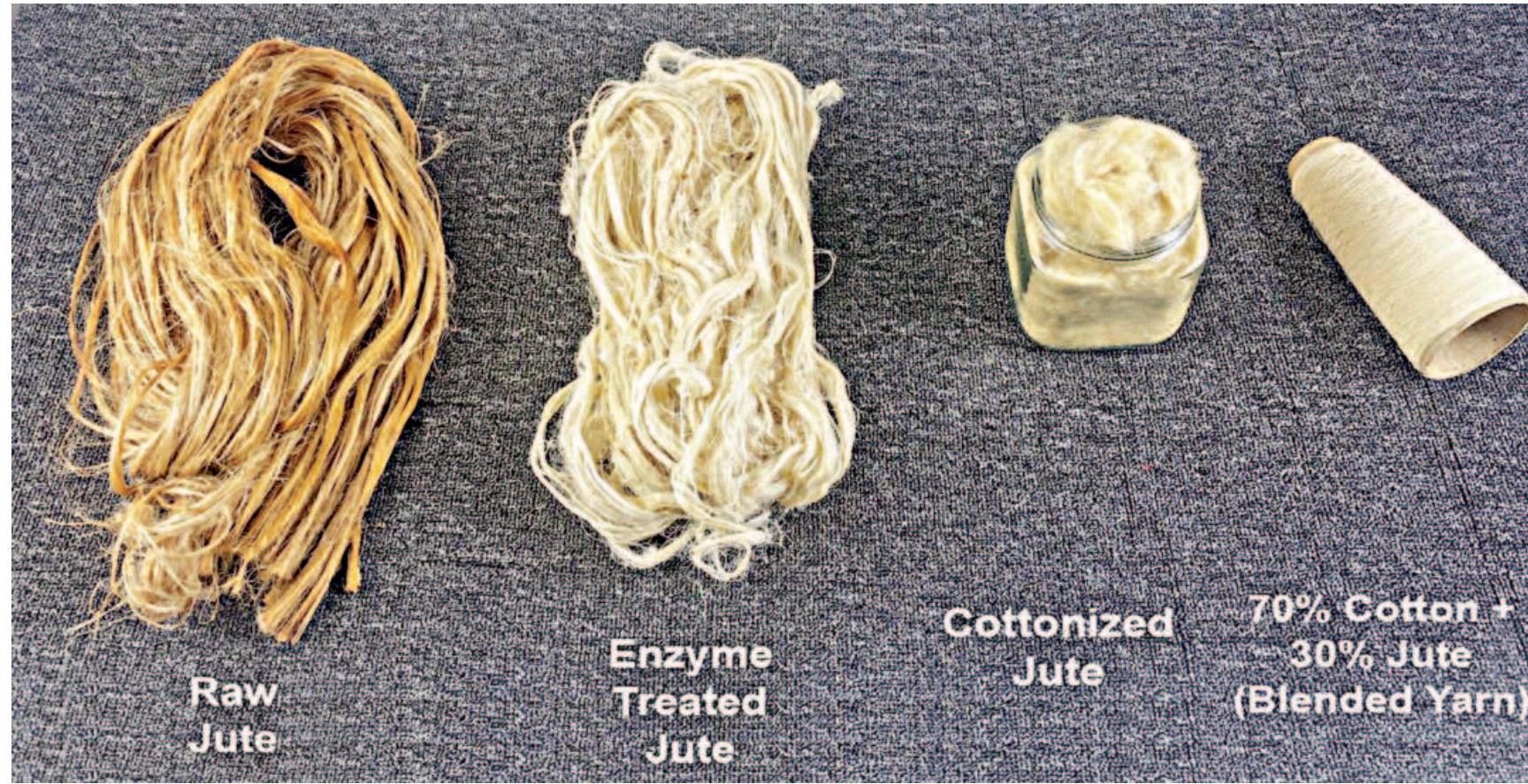
A CORRESPONDENT

"I only had Tk 8—around 10 cents—left in my wallet, which wasn't even enough for me to return from Gulshan to my small 10x14 feet office in Motijheel. I had to walk to the Nabisco Bus Stop, where the fare to my office was exactly Tk 8. As I boarded the bus, my factory manager called and said, 'Tomorrow, we will need Tk 1.4 million'. I assured him that we would arrange it, which we did, just as planned," said Md Tauhid Bin Abdus Salam, an alumnus of BGMEA University of Fashion & Technology (BUFT), and currently, the Managing Director of Classical Handmade Products BD Ltd. (CHP), recalling a day 17 years ago.

Back then, there were no Tk 1,000 notes, and every Tk 500 bill he invested mattered. Like many Bangladeshi entrepreneurs, Tauhid learned early that cash flow management is both an art and a survival skill.

"As a student, I received only Tk 30 a day," he said. "The round trip from Motijheel to BUFT cost Tk 28, leaving me with just Tk 2 in savings, which was hardly enough to start a company, especially back when a single mobile phone call cost Tk 4 per minute."

Y e t ,
Tauhid



Md Tauhid Bin Abdus Salam

refused to see obstacles as roadblocks. With a clear vision and unshakable resolve, he turned challenges into stepping stones on the path to entrepreneurial success.

Choosing a different path

"I was fortunate to be admitted to BUFT," continued Tauhid. "My childhood friend, Faiyad, and I spotted a two-page newspaper advertisement for BUFT's admission intake. The admission form cost Tk 400—the same amount of money my father had given me to buy a medical college admission form. I then convinced my father that the ready-made garment (RMG) sector, with over 5,000 factories, was struggling due to a lack of qualified professionals. I wanted to be a 'doctor' in this industry, where the field was wide open for innovative ideas."

Tauhid feels blessed to have found professors who saw his potential.

"At BUFT, Prof. Md Mahbubul

Haque gave me my first job as a part-time lecturer, allowing me to earn around USD 10 per hour for working 60 hours a month," said Tauhid. "That income helped me save up around USD 20,000—enough seed capital for my first venture."

Rita Madam—BUFT's former registrar—recommended me to a Dutch company, opening new doors. Leadership coach Quazi M Ahmed taught me that leadership, when done right, can transform companies, sectors, and even nations," added Tauhid. "Guidance from these leaders helped shape the entrepreneurial journey I was about to go on."

A conscious return to Bangladesh

Before starting his company, Tauhid had already secured US permanent residency—a pathway to a stable and comfortable life abroad. However, he chose not to settle in the US, having identified far greater opportunities in Bangladesh. He recognised the potential to serve a niche market and contribute meaningfully to the country's economy. This decision, rooted in a commitment to creating impact at home rather than pursuing personal comfort overseas, became the moral foundation of his entrepreneurial journey.

From RMG to jute

Tauhid's entrepreneurial venture began in 2008, when he established Classical Handmade Products BD Ltd. (CHP), starting a business producing rugs from cotton knit clips.

In its early days, CHP focused on

building a steady market presence,

driven by Tauhid's belief in sustainable

craftsmanship and financial discipline.

It was after the company's formation

that Tauhid met Mahmudul Huq, the

former Deputy Managing Director

of Janata Jute Mills. Mahmud's deep knowledge of the jute sector and strategic insights inspired Tauhid to explore jute as a core material for CHP's product line. Their discussions—often centred on balancing innovation with profitability—helped guide CHP's gradual expansion from cotton-based products into high-value jute crafts.

Fueled by a shared passion for preserving traditional craftsmanship, CHP began a journey that would blend artistry with heritage. Its skill in crafting exquisitely designed, handmade pieces soon won the admiration of loyal customers, each creation telling its own story of culture and care.

Today, CHP has expanded beyond Bangladesh's borders, building a strong presence in multiple countries, including robust markets in Europe and the US. Serving discerning international home decor buyers, the company offers an extensive range of jute-based products—each reflecting unmatched quality, sustainable values, and a timeless elegance that endures.

Classical Handmade Products BD Ltd. has also created 6,700 direct and

indirect employment opportunities.

In the broader jute sector, about 500,000 people are directly employed, and an additional 1 to 1.5 million people work in related areas, like farming, transportation, and marketing. The jute industry contributes approximately 1.4 percent to Bangladesh's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), as per figures from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), Bangladesh Jute Board, and Bangladesh Jute Research Institute (BJRI).

Tauhid's vision for the jute sector going forward

According to Tauhid, the jute sector in Bangladesh needs a drastic transformation. His vision for this sector includes:

1. The use of good-quality seeds.

2. Genetically-modified seeds for different weather and seasons for multiple crops. That way, other desirable properties can be included in the crop.

3. No more water retting—a process of extracting jute fibres by submerging harvested jute stalks in water to decompose the surrounding tissues.

4. Buying green jute harvests from fields at a competitive price.

5. The jute stick should be separated by machine from green jute and collected in coils.

6. Enzyme treatments in big pools should treat the jute coil. Separating fibres will be faster and cheaper.

7. The processing cost should be around the same cost as buying jute fibres from farmers.

8. We have to create a culture where the farmers should not do anything manual for retting. They should sell the jute from the fields as green crops. That should be the input for the jute industry. That is how cash subsidies in jute can be continued after 2026. Jute can be considered an agricultural input, not a processed commodity for industry.

9. Any wet processing, like bleaching, colouring, and cottonisation, should be done at a time. That way, the main cost of drying is incurred only once. This is the only way we can be competitive.

10. We need to change the culture of jute harvesting and the buying process, which is very difficult but not impossible.

11. We have to find a way to keep the jute price stable by taking responsibility from the farmers, who are facing challenges of high labour costs and a lack of a mechanised production process.

"Jute won't survive on twine and

coarse fabric alone," said Tauhid. "It must enter the fashion and home textiles sector."

"To introduce jute in the fashion industry, we have to introduce innovation. Jute is hairy, its colour is boring, its colourfastness and washability are poor, as the shrinkage percentage is high, and it develops a smell after washing. It also develops mildew if there is higher moisture content. Perspiration and breathability are poor, which is why it is very warm. CHP solves all the above problems by enzyme wash, shortening the fibre into cotton length and using the right blending ratio," added Tauhid.

"Jute can only survive by getting a higher price from the export market. How to do that? Change the way we do jute business. It should be an input for industries where we can obtain a better price by modifying its properties, making it more fashionable, colourfast, softer, more comfortable, and sustainable. We cannot get a good price without telling the sustainability stories of jute. By polluting water, we also cannot claim sustainability," continued Tauhid. "Jute can be transformed into a sustainable material for the fashion and home textile industry. It is our own raw material—no need to import and no extra carbon footprint. This also means we are saving foreign currency, saving lead time, and reducing the trade deficit. At the end of the day, we will be able to save 1 percent of cotton imports in Bangladesh by replacing it with jute. That is my dream as a BUFTian. Let's do it!"

A grateful journey

"Beyond the accolades, what matters most is that we are building livelihoods, innovating for sustainability, and keeping alive a dream that began with just USD 20,000 in my pocket," said Tauhid.

FROM CLASSROOMS TO CAREERS the power of alumni networks

SHAMS RASHID TONMOY

University life can be tough. But life after graduation can feel even tougher. Those juggling family responsibilities often find that the part-time jobs they relied on during university are no longer enough to cover the bills. With no more lectures filling your days, you suddenly have those precious daylight hours free, with hours you now need to dedicate to something you have been dreading: finding a full-time job.

Fresh out of university, landing a role in your chosen field can seem like a tall order. So, what's a graduate to do? While job sites are an obvious option, the best way to uncover real opportunities is often through personal contacts. The question is: where do you find those contacts? One of the most effective, yet often overlooked, answers lies in alumni networks.

Alumni networks are best described as groups of people who studied at the same institution, brought together by that one shared experience. You can find them everywhere: from official university-run alumni associations to informal

Facebook groups, Messenger chats, or WhatsApp circles. And they can be invaluable for getting your foot in the door.

I recently saw this first-hand. Just a few days ago, a graduate from my school posted in our alumni chat group, saying how he was struggling financially while living abroad and was looking for a remote role. Within an hour, another alumnus from a different year replied, asking him to send over his CV. That person happened to run their own startup and was currently hiring. The fact that such a connection could happen so quickly shows the power of these networks. In today's job market, where employers can take weeks (or more commonly, never) to respond, having a direct channel like that is priceless.

It's not just me saying this. Monica Parker-James, Associate Dean of Career and Alumni Engagement at Boston University Questrom School of Business, stated in the university blog site: "Networking has always been an essential career development skill. In an uncertain job market, it is especially important to form relationships with other professionals



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

who understand your strengths and can help you to make connections." Alumni networks, the official blog post adds, are "some of the most valuable relationship assets we as professionals can access".

Compared to job-seeking platforms like LinkedIn, alumni groups often have a more personal touch. Even if you don't know everyone in the network, you're

likely to have mutual contacts who can vouch for you. On social media, finding those mutual friends is easy, which makes introductions far more natural. On a job platform, you're often just another CV in a pile. In an alumni group, you can directly ask for a recommendation, and because you share a history, you're far more likely to get one.

That recommendation can make

all the difference. If you're applying to a company where an alumnus works, their referral can boost your chances enormously. This is just as true if you're aiming for academia. A reference from even a first-year lecturer in your field can carry significant weight, and there are often plenty of early-career academics in alumni networks, given the current demand for teaching roles.

Now, some worry it might look like 'begging' to ask old classmates or seniors for help. To be honest, that's a false notion. Many of the people you're reaching out to have done the same themselves at some point. As a 2024 article in The Times put it: "Don't be sniffy about networking—it can reap dividends." In other words, this isn't about pride; it's about making the most of opportunities.

The value of alumni connections isn't limited to universities either. A 2024 report by the World Economic Forum found that companies with strong alumni programmes benefit when it comes to recruitment, collaboration, and innovation, especially as former employees return with new skills and fresh ideas.

This shows just how much staying connected can matter, no matter the stage of your career.

So, how do you get involved? Ideally, start while you're still at university by maintaining relationships with classmates, seniors, and club supervisors. Once you've graduated, seek out official alumni associations or online groups for your institution. Participate in events, contribute to discussions, and offer help to others when you can. An article on the matter by international job platform Indeed advises that networking is a two-way process; the more you give, the more you'll get back.

Digital tools have also made it easier than ever to stay in touch. Where alumni events used to be annual reunions, they now extend into continuous online engagement. From quick job tips to life advice, you never know when a casual Messenger conversation could turn into your next big opportunity.

For fresh graduates stepping into an uncertain job market, alumni networks aren't just a nice-to-have. They're a lifeline. Be sure to depend on them when you can.



The role of AIUB in building leaders at HOME AND ABROAD



Asif Parvez



Jahid Shohel

American International University-Bangladesh (AIUB) has long been a leading institution dedicated to nurturing talented professionals in technology, management, and other fields. With a strong focus on practical learning and industry readiness, AIUB has empowered many graduates to excel in Bangladesh and across the globe.

FAISAL BIN IQBAL

This article highlights success stories of two AIUB alumni: Jahid Shohel and Asif Parvez.

Jahid Shohel

Jahid Shohel graduated from AIUB in 2002 with a bachelor's degree in Computer Science. Today, he leads software engineering efforts at Disney Streaming, the platform behind Disney+, ESPN+, and Hulu. "Right now, I am working as lead software engineering at Disney Streaming. The role is based in Disney's Manhattan office in New York," he shares.

With nearly 20 years in the tech industry, Jahid has worked with a mix of large and small companies including Sony Mobile, Qlik, IKEA, and Disney. Over the years, he has held roles from software engineer to lead architect. His recent move from Sweden to the United States was driven by family reasons, and it came with the challenge of finding a role that aligned with both his expertise and personal values.

"When I was looking for opportunities, I got an offer from America's largest bank for an architect role with a good pay package. Even though I was unemployed at that time, I decided to decline the offer because that conflicts with my religious values," Jahid recalls. Instead, he focused on companies where he could contribute meaningfully without compromising his principles.

"Disney is a company that creates dreams for kids. Disney has very good work-life balance and does not conflict with my moral and religious values, so I decided to look for opportunities in Disney. After consecutive seven interview rounds, I finally landed my current role."

Of course, adjusting to life abroad was not without its difficulties. Jahid highlights how cultural differences in upbringing required significant adaptation. "The way kids are brought up in Bangladesh is different in western countries. Like many others, I got used to spoon feeding everywhere, from household chores to how to study a subject. It took some time for me to get used to those changes."

But the biggest challenge, he says, was reclaiming self-confidence. "Being born in a third world country, where rules are

made to be broken, everyday listening 'you can't!', 'you are a failure!', 'not for you!' – all these destroys our confidence. And it's very tough to get back that confidence, especially when you are on your own."

Two key influences helped him regain his faith in himself: his religious beliefs and his mother's words. "God said, appreciate and keep trying, I will give you more," Jahid explains. "And my Mom always used to say, 'If others can, then you can. Don't underestimate yourself.'"

Working for The Walt Disney Company fills Jahid with pride. "The Walt Disney is a company that is focused to create better everyday life for people, especially for kids. Creating magical memories that people will carry rest of their life. And I think, that is awesome! It's worth being part of that happy-moment creation."

At Disney Streaming, Jahid's work impacts roughly 183 million users globally. His team focuses on building systems that are highly available, fault-tolerant, and deliver results with minimal delay. They develop complex algorithms to find the best route to digital content, balancing many factors such as user location, IP prefixes, ASN, and account sharing.

"My team is responsible for finding best possible route to digital content. Developing algorithms to find best path considering many parameters is a complex problem to solve," Jahid explains. "During my bachelor education in AIUB I was first introduced to programming. From building blocks to becoming a computer software professional, all it took to my bachelor's degree."

"AIUB was not that big when I was student," Jahid adds. "But I was lucky enough to have good teachers who taught me well to become what I am today."

Jahid's commitment to learning and growth extends beyond formal education. He was active in extracurricular activities throughout his schooling and university life. "During school life I was involved with scouting, later in the university I participated in different programming contests."

Even in his professional career, Jahid contributes by hosting training sessions and managing programming communities that sometimes include

hundreds of thousands of members.

To current university students chasing ambitious dreams, Jahid offers heartfelt advice: "If others can, then you can. Don't underestimate yourself, don't give up. Winners never quit, quitters never win. Let you be the only one who decides what you are, a winner or a quitter."

He acknowledges that making mistakes is inevitable. "Making mistake is part of every process, so don't let mistakes stop you. Founder of IKEA Ingvar Kamprad said, 'Only those who are asleep makes no mistakes'. So, don't worry about making mistakes, just don't make dumb mistakes."

Finally, Jahid encourages persistence and courage, "Dream big and be stubborn about achieving your dreams. Remember, as Walt Disney said: All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them."

Asif Parvez
Asif Parvez currently serves as the Registrar of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB). With over 26 years of experience spanning academic leadership, administration, and teaching, Parvez's journey is a testament to dedication and strategic growth in the education sector.

Holding Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Management Information Systems (MIS) and Management Science from AIUB, he has previously held leadership positions including Deputy Registrar and Deputy Controller of Examinations at AIUB, alongside teaching as an Associate Professor.

In a recent conversation, Parvez shared his perspectives on managing the dual responsibilities of academic leadership, the skills crucial for such roles, and advice for future academic leaders.

Handling both academic and

administrative duties requires a fine balance. Parvez explains, "Managing both academic and administrative tasks as a registrar requires a structured approach and strong multitasking abilities." He emphasises the importance of clear communication and collaboration among various departments to ensure institutional policies support overarching goals.

"Leveraging technology for record-keeping and workflow automation helps maintain efficiency," he adds. "Most importantly, I focus on creating a student-centred environment while upholding academic integrity and supporting faculty and staff in their roles."

When asked about how university students can prepare for leadership roles in academia, Parvez advises proactive involvement. "Aspiring academic leaders should actively engage in both academic and extracurricular activities during their university years," he suggests. He recommends gaining leadership experience through student organisations, academic committees, and internships in university administration. Developing interpersonal, organisational, and problem-solving skills early on can build a strong foundation for future roles.

Parvez identifies key skills necessary in his current role: effective communication, organizational management, conflict resolution, and strategic planning. Reflecting on his education, he credits AIUB for playing a significant role in shaping these competencies. "The continuous curriculum updates equipped me with technical and analytical abilities, while collaborative projects, presentations, and group activities enhanced my communication and teamwork skills," he shares. "Participating in various

campus activities and academic committees also gave me a deeper understanding of how universities operate, which has been invaluable in my professional life."

Extracurricular engagement was an important part of Parvez's university experience. He recalls, "Engaging in student clubs and university events provided opportunities to build leadership skills, network with peers, and develop a sense of responsibility beyond the classroom. These experiences helped me become more adaptable, improved my time management, and fostered a sense of community engagement, which are important in my current administrative and academic responsibilities."

A pivotal moment in Parvez's career path emerged during his undergraduate days when he worked as a student assistant in the registration department. "It sparked my interest in academic administration, especially those that involved real-life problem-solving related to organizational management," he says. His active participation in academic operations and administrative roles further nurtured his inclination toward higher education management.

Reflecting on his journey, Parvez offers advice he would give his younger self: "Embrace every opportunity for learning—both inside and outside the classroom. It's important not to underestimate the value of networking, participating in diverse activities, and seeking mentorship." He underscores the importance of building relationships, being proactive in personal development, and welcoming new experiences. "Every challenge faced and lesson learned during university can become a steppingstone for future growth," he concludes.

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Faisal Kabir's first steps in UIU led him to the world of AI and healthcare

FROM PAGE S10

If he could offer advice to his university self, Kabir would stress building problem-solving abilities, taking part in programming contests, and engaging in hands-on projects. He would also encourage joining student organisations for the networking and leadership opportunities they provide.

Now based in the United States as a tenure-track Assistant Professor in the Computer Science department at PSU Harrisburg, Kabir's work spans teaching, research, and service. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in AI, ML, natural language processing, and related areas. His research addresses data science, explainable AI, large language models, and their applications in healthcare and interdisciplinary contexts.

In 2025, Kabir and Sara Imanpour, Assistant Professor of Health Administration at Penn State Harrisburg, received \$100,000 through the AIM-AHEAD Program

for Artificial Intelligence Readiness (PAIR), funded by the NIH. The award will support the creation of an AI Health Research Lab aimed at improving healthcare access and outcomes.

The PAIR program is designed to enhance AI readiness at institutions across the country, focusing on training, improved grant writing skills, and fostering collaboration. For Kabir, the grant represents an important step toward a vision of using AI not just for automation but for making healthcare more equitable, accessible, and human-centered.

The lab will also mentor undergraduate and graduate students, giving them practical experience in applying AI to health-focused research. This, in many ways, mirrors Kabir's own experience at UIU, learning in an environment that valued both technical skill and collaborative exploration.

Even with the NIH grant and his position in the U.S., Kabir's

journey can be traced back to UIU – to the teachers who encouraged him, the clubs he helped build, the leadership roles he took on, and the thesis project that introduced him to AI.

Those years didn't just prepare him for a career; they shaped the values that still guide him – collaboration, service, and a belief in using technology for social good. In many ways, the AI Health Research Lab at PSU Harrisburg is an extension of the same principles he practiced at UIU: combining technical expertise with human-centered goals, and creating opportunities for others to learn and contribute.

From being a first-batch undergraduate at a young university in Dhaka to becoming a principal investigator on a federally funded U.S. research project, Kabir's path demonstrates the enduring impact of a strong academic foundation paired with active engagement in one's community.



FROM IUBAT TO INDUSTRY

Nafis Rahman's Journey in Engineering and Leadership

A CORRESPONDENT

When Nafis Rahman walked across the stage in 2009 to collect his B.Sc. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering from the International University of Business Agriculture and Technology (IUBAT), he carried more than just a degree; he carried the quiet confidence of someone ready to build, innovate, and lead.

Today, as CEO and Director of Stark Inc. & Astonafa Engineering Ltd., Nafis stands at the helm of a family-run enterprise that delivers MEP and EHS contracting, industrial service solutions, and professional sound systems to both local and international clients.

In this interview, Nafis reflects on his journey from being a student leader at IUBAT to managing a company with international connections. He discusses how his university experiences influenced his approach to leadership, the skills he uses in business, and the role of timing and adaptability in professional growth.

The Daily Star (TDS): Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

Nafis Rahman (N): I graduated from IUBAT in 2009 with a B.Sc. in Electrical and Electronics Engineering. Currently, I serve as CEO and Director at Stark Inc. & Astonafa Engineering Ltd., a family-owned concern specialising in MEP and EHS contracting, building and industrial service solutions, and professional sound systems. I also work as a technical and sourcing lead for both international and local architecture firms, such as Cogent Design and Developments Ltd.

In addition, I represent the Bangladesh office for several multinational brands, including Advanced (UK), FirePro (Cyprus), Weartek (Australia), Safety Joggers (Australia), and Sound Manufacturing Company (Spain & China), along with other IoT-based automation companies and

entities linked to building and industrial solutions.

I am a member of several professional organisations such as IEB (The Institution of Engineers, Bangladesh), IEEE (Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers – Asia), and NFPA (National Fire Protection Association). I am also affiliated with local business associations including ESSAB (Electronics Safety and Security Association of Bangladesh) and FEBOAB (Fire Equipment Business Owners Association of Bangladesh).

Beyond my professional roles, I am engaged in community service as the Immediate Past President (IPP) of the Rotary Club of Sher-E-Bangla Nagar.

TDS: Could you tell us a bit about your career journey and how you reached your current position?



Nafis Rahman

I remember the friendly campus atmosphere, the supportive faculty, and the camaraderie among classmates. Group study sessions before exams, meeting project deadlines together, and spending countless hours in the EEE labs are experiences I truly cherish. I also served as Vice President of the IUBAT Gold Club and President of the Department of EEE Association, which made my university life even more fulfilling.

N: After graduating, I started my career at Navana Interlinks, a reputed engineering and construction firm, where I worked for about 1.5 years as an Executive Engineer. During that time, I gradually specialised in MEP and EHS systems, working on diverse projects in the power, construction, and safety sectors, both in Bangladesh and in collaboration with international partners. Over the years, I built a strong network of

clients and suppliers, which helped me establish myself as a trusted consultant and technical lead. My career path has been shaped by continuous learning, hands on experience, and the willingness to take on challenging roles.

TDS: What skills do you rely on most in your current role? How did your university experience help you develop them?

N: My work demands a mix of technical and soft skills—project coordination, technical evaluations, safety compliance assessments, client communication, and international sourcing. Hands-on training from various manufacturers has made me highly capable in installation and commissioning work.

IUBAT played a vital role in building my technical foundation, problem solving ability, and critical thinking skills. The project work, lab sessions, and presentations during my studies sharpened both my technical expertise and communication abilities, which are indispensable in my field today.

TDS: Looking back on your university years, what are some of your fondest memories?

N: I remember the friendly campus atmosphere, the supportive faculty, and the camaraderie among classmates. Group study sessions before exams, meeting project deadlines together, and spending countless hours in the EEE labs are experiences I truly cherish. I also served as Vice President of the IUBAT Gold Club and President of the Department of EEE Association, which made my university life even more fulfilling. IUBAT was more than a place of learning; it was where lifelong friendships were formed.

TDS: In what ways did your time at IUBAT shape who you are today?

N: My time at IUBAT helped me develop discipline, resilience, and confidence. It taught me how to balance academics with real-life responsibilities and take ownership of my own growth. The diversity within the classroom and exposure to multidisciplinary perspectives broadened my understanding of engineering and its role in society.

TDS: Were you involved in extracurricular activities during your studies? How did they contribute to your growth?

N: Yes, I actively participated in technical seminars, industrial visits, and student forums, especially as the President of the EEE Association student body. I also helped organise departmental events and group projects. These activities honed my leadership, event management, and teamwork skills—abilities I apply daily in my career. They made me a more confident communicator and effective collaborator.

TDS: Beyond academics, what important lessons did you learn at IUBAT?

N: IUBAT taught me the value of time management, integrity, and continuous self-improvement. I learned that no goal is too big if you remain committed and keep learning. I also came to appreciate diversity and teamwork—qualities that are vital in any professional setting.

TDS: What advice would you give to current IUBAT students pursuing big ambitions?

N: Stay focused, but remain curious. Build a strong technical foundation, but don't underestimate the value of communication, networking, and hands-on experience. Don't hesitate to explore different career paths early on; you may discover your true passion that way.

Above all, remain humble, keep asking questions, and never stop learning. Dreams are real, but they require daily effort to become reality.

I believe success rests on two pillars: luck and labour. You can work tirelessly and still not see immediate results because hard work (labour) is in your hands, but results (luck) come only when the timing is right. So, work hard but be patient. Trust that every achievement has its season.

Always be grateful to your parents; their blessings are silent prayers that can move mountains. If you honour them, your success will shine brighter. And never forget to seek guidance from the Almighty. His wisdom never fails those who ask sincerely.

Faisal Kabir's first steps in UIU led him to the world of AI and healthcare

SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

In the early 2000s, United International University (UIU) was new—a campus finding its identity, a community still taking shape. Among the students who walked through its doors as part of the one of the very first batches in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) was Md Faisal Kabir.

For Kabir, those first years at UIU were more than just an academic experience; they were the foundation of a journey that would take him from late-night coding sessions in Dhaka to a tenure-track faculty position in the United States, and now to leading a project funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a part of the US Department of Health and Human Services, to harness Artificial Intelligence (AI) for improving healthcare access.

Kabir earned his BSc in CSE from UIU in 2005. Six years later, he completed his MSc in CSE at the same university, part of which was conducted at the University of Bradford, UK, under the European Union's eLink Scholarship in 2010.

He recalls the problem-solving skills and up-to-date curriculum at UIU as being pivotal, not only in supporting his later research but also in helping him complete his Ph.D. in Computer Science from North Dakota State University (NDSU) in 2020.

His memories of those early UIU days are still vivid: group projects that required collaboration and creativity, coding through the night, the camaraderie of friends learning together, and experiences outside the classroom—sports events, study tours, and promotional programs that showcased UIU to a wider audience.

One aspect that stood out to him was the strong connection between students and faculty. It was a relationship that would



Faisal Kabir

shape how he approached teaching later in life.

While computer science was evolving rapidly, it was an undergraduate thesis in AI, supervised by Dr Chowdhury Mofizur Rahman that proved decisive for Kabir's future.

AI research was still emerging in Bangladesh at the time, but under Dr Rahman's mentorship, Kabir developed a solid understanding of core concepts and research methods. This early exposure was instrumental in steering his career toward AI and machine learning (ML), areas that now define his research portfolio.

The connection between that thesis and his present work is direct. The NIH grant he leads today, to establish an AI health research lab, builds on knowledge first developed in those formative UIU years.

After completing his undergraduate degree, Kabir joined UIU as a lecturer in the CSE department in 2006 and later became an assistant professor, serving until 2014.

Those eight years allowed him to carry forward the student-centered environment he had once benefited from. His approach to teaching emphasised mentorship, accessibility, and the same collaborative spirit that had shaped his own education.

Kabir's time at UIU wasn't

confined to the classroom. He was one of the founders of the UIU Computer Club, an initiative that grew into one of the university's most active student organisations. Later, he served as its moderator, guiding its technical and academic programs.

His involvement extended to the UIU Social Services Club, where he helped organise outreach activities such as winter clothing drives for underserved communities. One particularly memorable effort took him to northern Bangladesh to distribute warm clothes—a moment that blended teamwork with social impact.

Kabir also took part in awareness campaigns like smoking cessation drives, which strengthened his leadership, communication, and organisational skills. His commitment to public health advocacy earned him the Young Leadership Award at the World Conference on Tobacco or Health in Taiwan in 2007, followed by participation in the summer program at Johns Hopkins University's Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2009.

These experiences created a pattern of engagement and service that continued in later stages of his life. During his Ph.D. studies at NDSU, he served as a Global Outreach Ambassador and Graduate School Senator in the student government. Today, he continues this commitment as Chair of the IEEE Susquehanna Section's Computer Society Chapter.

Kabir sees his degree in computer science as something that extends far beyond his professional role. The analytical thinking and problem-solving skills developed at UIU have proven useful in everyday life and community work. They have also given him the confidence to contribute meaningfully to social initiatives.

SEE PAGE S9



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Staying connected with your university alumni in the age of social media

A CORRESPONDENT

University is more than a collection of lectures, assignments, and exams. It's a chapter in life filled with friendships, shared struggles, and a sense of belonging to a community that extends far beyond graduation day.

When you toss that cap into the air, your official role as a student may end, but your relationship with the people

even imagined. In the past, staying in touch meant attending occasional reunions, subscribing to printed newsletters, or exchanging the odd letter with former classmates. Now, a few taps on a phone can open doors to a world of opportunities, conversations, and collaborations.

Social media has transformed alumni connections from sporadic exchanges into ongoing, dynamic relationships

widespread use these days, you can follow each other's journeys, celebrate milestones, and provide encouragement even when you haven't shared a room in years.

A photo posted on Instagram, a career update on LinkedIn, or a Facebook post about a personal achievement can spark a conversation that keeps the bond alive.

For students still in university, following alumni on social media is like having a window into possible futures.

You can see how people who once sat in the same lecture halls have navigated life after graduation. Their posts might show career changes, entrepreneurial ventures, further studies, or even the challenges they've faced along the way. These glimpses can offer inspiration, help you understand the many directions your degree can take you, and even give you a realistic picture of the hurdles you might encounter. Unlike formal career advice sessions, social media allows you to observe authentic, unfiltered experiences over time.

For graduates, the alumni connection takes on an added layer of significance. Staying in touch with former classmates and professors can open the door to collaborations, job opportunities, or partnerships. Social media isn't just a place for casual updates; it's also a professional networking tool.

A former computer lab partner might post about needing a new team member for a project. An old debate club friend might share a call for speakers at a conference. A senior alumnus might recommend your skills to a recruiter simply because they saw your recent post about a completed certification.

Maintaining these connections online means being visible in the spaces where opportunities are shared.

University alumni associations have also adapted to the digital era. Many now maintain active social media pages or private groups where members can post job openings, announce events,

or share resources. These online spaces often have a welcoming and inclusive tone, making it easier for recent graduates to engage without feeling like outsiders.

Participating in these digital communities can help you stay in the loop about developments at your university and give you a sense of belonging long after your student ID stops working at your campus gates.

That said, staying connected doesn't mean passively scrolling through updates. The most meaningful alumni relationships are built through active engagement. Commenting on someone's achievement, congratulating them, or even sending a direct message can make a difference.

These small acts of acknowledgment show that you value the connection and encourage reciprocity. Over time, you'll find that the network becomes more than a list of names and turns into a living web of mutual support.

Social media also allows for the rediscovery of connections that may have faded over time. You might stumble upon the profile of a lab partner you haven't spoken to in a decade and find out you share a new common interest. These rediscovered relationships can lead to fresh collaborations or simply rekindle a friendship.

Unlike the limited contact lists of the past, today's platforms make it possible to reconnect at any point, regardless of how much time has passed.

There's also a more personal, emotional side to staying connected with your university alumni online. Seeing familiar faces in your feed, even if you don't interact daily, can evoke a comforting sense of continuity. Life after graduation can be full of changes, be it moving to a different city, starting a new job, adjusting to different responsibilities, and so on. Familiar connections can act as reminders of where you came from. They can also

be sources of empathy, since your alumni peers have gone through similar transitions.

Of course, the ease of staying connected through social media comes with the responsibility of maintaining a positive and respectful presence. Your alumni network is a space where your personal and professional worlds intersect.

The way you present yourself online can shape how you're remembered and the kind of opportunities that might come your way. Thoughtful sharing, respectful interactions, and genuine interest in others go a long way in nurturing strong alumni bonds.

The digital age also offers creative ways to keep alumni relationships vibrant. Virtual reunions via video conferencing, collaborative online projects, or even simple group chats can keep the conversation going beyond public posts.

Many universities host webinars where alumni share expertise with current students, and participating in these events can help you contribute meaningfully to your community while also staying visible within it.

In the end, staying connected with your university alumni in the age of social media is about more than nostalgia. It's about building a support system that grows with you, adapts to new challenges, and celebrates your successes. It's about giving and receiving help, sharing knowledge, and remembering that your university years are the start of a lifelong community.

Social media enables alumni networks to operate virtually. The friendships and professional ties that might once have faded after graduation can now thrive indefinitely, as long as you make the effort to engage. For students, these connections can provide a roadmap for the future; for graduates, they can offer a bridge to new possibilities.

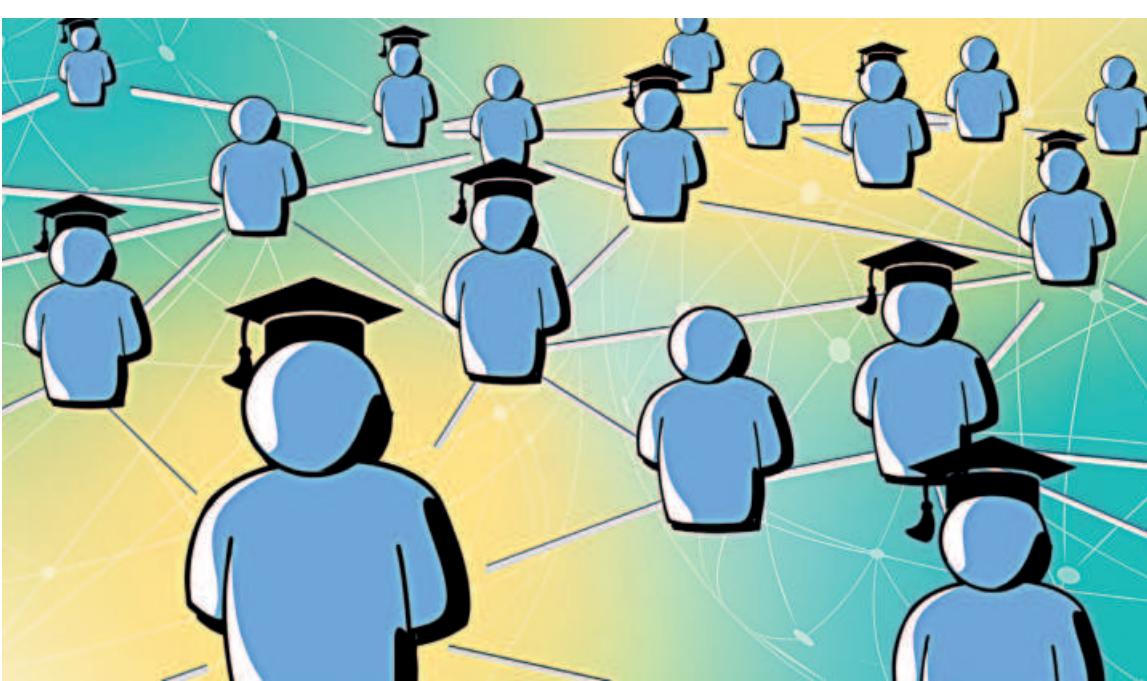


ILLUSTRATION: ABIR HOSSAIN

and the institution that shaped you doesn't have to fade. In fact, in the age of social media, it's easier than ever to stay connected with your university alumni, and doing so can enrich both your personal and professional life in ways you might not expect.

The concept of alumni networks has existed for generations, long before Facebook, LinkedIn, or Instagram were

that thrive in real time. One of the most obvious benefits of staying connected through social media is how it bridges geographical divides.

Your classmates or seniors may have spread across continents, pursuing careers, research, or personal ventures in entirely different time zones. Without digital platforms, those distances could feel like barriers. But thanks to their

Setting up your LinkedIn profile as a university student

A CORRESPONDENT

LinkedIn is a professional social media platform and a valuable tool for building your personal brand. Many people begin this process after graduating from university. However, because it takes time to establish a strong presence, it's wise to start working on your LinkedIn profile early in your university journey.

With that in mind, here are some practical tips to help you create a strong LinkedIn profile as a university student.

Think of an interesting headline

Your LinkedIn headline appears right under your name at the top of your profile. In up to 220 characters, you can describe what you do, where you study, or your professional interests. This short description also appears next to your name in search results, so it should catch the reader's attention.

As a student, a good headline might be "Studying Computer Engineering at XYZ University" or "XYZ University Bachelor of Computer Engineering '27," with "27" showing your graduation year. You can make it stronger by adding your interests or career goals, such as "XYZ University Bachelor of Computer Engineering '27 | Data Science Enthusiast."

Although the headline limit is 220 characters, try to keep it under 90 characters so it's fully visible in search results.

The "About" section should elaborate on the headline

Your "About" section should be engaging but not overly long. You have a limit of 2,600 characters (around 400-600 words), but aim for about 300-350 words to

keep it focused and readable.

Start with a brief introduction,

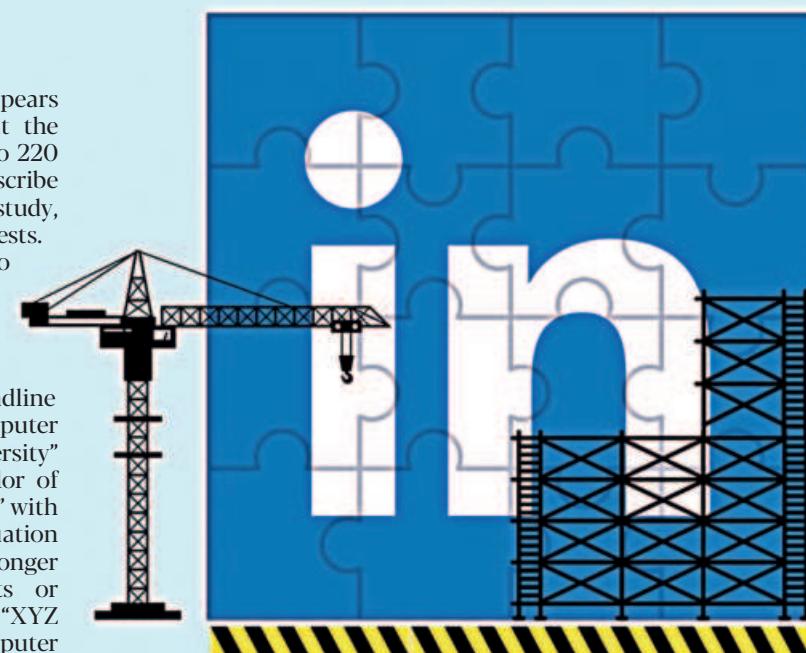
then share details about the degree you're pursuing. After that, explain your ambitions, like what kind of career you want, the steps you're taking to reach that goal, and any relevant experiences or achievements.

Once you've covered

your academic and career information, include a couple of sentences about your hobbies or personal interests to give your profile a well-rounded touch.

In your early university years, you may not have conference or journal papers yet, but you will likely have written research papers or reports for your courses. You can add those too, along with links. If they aren't published online, upload them to Google Drive and share the link in your profile.

Be sure to include a short summary of each paper or report, along with the purpose



You can also highlight up to five skills in this section. Choose them carefully, as the skills you select can improve your visibility in LinkedIn search results.

Arranging your "Publications" section

As a student, this section is a great place to showcase your academic publications. If you've been published elsewhere, such

behind writing it, so readers can quickly understand its value.

As you move through university, you'll have new achievements to add to your LinkedIn profile, such as completed courses, publications, internships, or jobs. You may also need to update details in your headline or "About" section if your goals or interests change.

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Your responsibility as an alum

A CORRESPONDENT

Graduating from a university is a transformative experience. And, as you throw your graduation cap into the air, it marks the end of your student life. But for those who have walked that path, graduation is not just an ending. Rather, it is the beginning of a new, lifelong responsibility, one that extends beyond personal career success.

As alumni, we carry a unique opportunity—and duty—to guide, mentor, and support the next generation of professionals and leaders emerging from our alma mater.

Universities shape more than academic achievement; they cultivate ambition, resilience, and critical thinking. But the transition from student to professional is anything but easy.

Be it understanding industry expectations or balancing personal and professional goals, academic settings can't prepare their graduates for everything. Thus comes the need for guidance from university alumni who can play a pivotal role in the transition of new or upcoming graduates.

Mentorship is one of the most effective ways alumni can contribute. A mentor's guidance provides context that no syllabus or career guide can offer. It is not about handing out answers, but about fostering confidence and judgment in those starting their professional journeys.

A simple conversation about challenges faced in the first year of work, or how to approach a critical project, can provide clarity

and reassurance to a junior navigating their own path. Moreover, mentorship creates a ripple effect: advice and support offered by one alumnus can empower a junior to, in turn, help others, perpetuating a culture of guidance and mutual growth.

Beyond mentorship, alumni can also open doors by providing access to professional networks. Connections are invaluable in any field, and often it is these relationships that help graduates transition from classroom learning to meaningful work experiences.

Alumni who introduce juniors to colleagues, recommend them for internships, or facilitate professional opportunities are not just helping individuals. They are strengthening the reputation and influence of the university community as a whole. By actively participating in this network, alumni ensure that their alma mater continues to produce not just competent professionals, but leaders capable of driving innovation and ethical practice.

Sharing practical knowledge is equally important. Many alumni underestimate the value of the insights they have gained simply by living through the ups and downs of a career. Discussing failures and lessons learned can be as instructive as sharing successes.

When alumni reveal the challenges they faced in their early careers, be it the missed opportunities or the mistakes that became

turning points, they provide invaluable lessons that cannot be taught in classrooms. This transparency encourages juniors to approach their own careers with resilience, strategic thinking, and the understanding that setbacks are often stepping stones rather than dead ends.

Alumni involvement also extends to fostering a culture of social responsibility and ethical leadership. Universities are more than academic

institutions; they are communities that produce future leaders in business, government, healthcare, technology, and countless other sectors. By demonstrating ethical decision-making, community involvement, and a commitment to lifelong learning, alumni provide a living example for juniors to emulate.

Engaging with juniors does not always require formal programs or structured events. Sometimes, casual interactions carry the most weight. Conversations over coffee, sharing industry news, or even a thoughtful email response to a question can leave a lasting impression. The key is approachability. Alumni who are willing to listen and engage genuinely send a clear message that your success matters, but so does the success of those who follow.

Finally, giving back as an alum is about sustaining a cycle of support. Universities thrive when alumni remain actively involved in the community. Workshops, guest lectures, and volunteering opportunities are all meaningful ways to contribute. But beyond material contributions, it is the time, attention, and wisdom shared that leave the most profound impact.

Being an alumnus isn't about having another title; it is a responsibility. The success of future professionals is intertwined with the guidance and support of those who have come before. This responsibility is not merely about giving back. Rather, it is about shaping the leaders who will, in turn, shape industries, communities, and societies.

The path from student to professional is never walked alone. Alumni who recognise their role as guides, mentors, and leaders help illuminate that path. They provide the insight and encouragement needed to navigate the complexities of modern careers.



PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

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