

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 (starting 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 I

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.