

America- A dream destination!

Still today I feel like I am in a dream when I roam around the streets thinking about my imagination of the United States what I had previously. And, I talk with myself; the journey of life is unbelievable and full of surprises. I hail from a middle-class family in the small town of Nepal. It is the dream coming true for me to study in the US. Because I am the only one who is pursuing a doctorate in my whole family and I do not have any close relatives in the United States. Coming to UD and studying engineering with wonderful colleagues and highly knowledgeable professors has opened a whole new path for me.

Before arriving here, I saw the American lifestyle in TV series and movies. I was very excited at that time to know more about American culture and life. Though I already spent around three months here, I still possess some fraction of that level of excitement. Back then, I was busy with the regular duties of my job and never thought that I will join UD this year itself. I was pretty sure that I will get admission to the US. I just applied to UD and started focusing on my job. I was extremely happy when I got an acceptance letter in my mail. I first told to my mother and she was so delighted. Then, I started planning to come to the US. There were lots of emotions and ecstasies going on inside the head. Random questions were popping up in my mind like: What will I eat? How much difficult will it be for adjustment? Will my stipend be enough for me? What will be my research study? Can I cope with the US education system? When will I return home after reaching there? How hard will it be to get a doctorate? My parents and my undergraduate friends boosted up my morale. From one corner of my doubtful mind, it was like somebody saying to me you can easily adapt to the US system and you can achieve your dream.

After landing at Philadelphia International Airport, various feelings were going on inside my mind. People with different facial complexions and tones are chatting with each other. There were some random questions in my head like: Where are these people traveling from here? Is there anyone who is traveling to UD? I felt a bit lonely and waiting for my senior whom I contacted earlier in advance through some connections. I got out of the airport. While traveling what I noticed was roads in the US are broader in comparison to my home country. Other than that I did not observe anything significant up to that point. After settling here, I noticed many differences in this place compared to my hometown. The major difference is transport. Public transport is not that convenient compared to my home country though there are UD bus shuttle and dart bus services. I love cars on the road. It may be because I am a mechanical engineer. People here mostly commute by car. In my home country, people mostly travel in motorbikes and public vehicles. Shopping is not easier here beside online. Supermarket stores and complexes are a good choice for procuring all necessary stuff. But, they are not so convenient considering locations if you do not have your car which is one of the problems I faced during my initial days at UD.

Professors and staffs are friendlier and receptive here at UD. I love department gatherings from time to time and OISS coffee hour every Friday at UD because these interactions are most fruitful in sharing emotions, ideas, and plans. I am captivated by the beauty of university. Also, when the colors of leaves change in fall then I do not have words to describe its heavenliness. I acclimatized to this ambiance very quickly than I had anticipated. Still, I have a question in my mind, Will this charm of campus stay with me forever throughout my doctoral journey? And a quick answer pops up it certainly will. Diversity is one of the important aspects and I will say strength of UD. This is one major difference I saw along with teaching methodology compared to

my home country's institutions. I participated in various programs of Graduate Student Organizations which broadens my outlook of different countries and groups. I am so glad that I made some close friends from different countries: India, Srilanka, Bangladesh, Taiwan, Iran, and France. My apartment roommate is Indian and we talk a lot about studies, foods, culture, and celebrations. I always love the mix. The lifestyle of people is different in comparison to my home country. People are more conservative, superstitious, and strictly bound by religion in my home country.

I went to watch a soccer match in the university stadium. I cannot characterize the emotions while cheering for Blue Hens. By accepting an invitation, I went to dine with some of my American colleagues and their food tastes are different than mine. They are funny and easygoing. I tried my best to share my place, food, and culture with them. I am not sure how much they can absorb from my words.

I will recommend incoming international students to come here and learn with enjoyment. I came to know there are plethoras of opportunities waiting for international students after their graduation. There were many doubts on my mind before arriving at UD and I am getting positive answers to most of those questions though all of them are not answered yet. I am happy, strong, and more independent than before. Finally, I feel like I am part of a large UD family that allows me to embrace my identity as an international student and help me achieve my American dream. To sum up, I think studying in UD is one of the best decisions that I have ever made in my life.