

From the Mountains of Afghanistan to Miami and Beyond

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Zaman Rashid graduated in May with a Master of Science in Management Studies degree.



Zaman Rashid has vivid memories of his childhood as a sickly Afghan boy. He can still hear the rain falling as he slept alone in the night, curled up outdoors with no bed of his own. He can still smell the dead bodies he encountered while looking for a spot to relieve himself during one of his many 16-hour bus trips to Kabul, the nation’s capital, desperately searching for a doctor to fix his congenital sinus tumor. He can still see the Taliban wielding AK-47s as they considered whether to let his bus continue toward the plane that would bring him to North Carolina for lifesaving surgery.

Today, over an iced mocha latte at a Coral Gables Starbucks, Rashid celebrates his newly conferred Master of Science in Management Studies degree from the School of Business Administration and reflects on how far he’s come. “I graduated from one of the world’s top schools!” he marvels. “How many students from my high school graduated from an American university with a master’s degree? One! That’s me!”

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MS, Management Studies '17

One of his proudest moments, other than the May 11 graduation that brought his North Carolina family to town, is being named to the “Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities” list after Linda Neider, a professor of management at the School, nominated him for the honor. “It meant the world to me,” Rashid says. “The entire program has great respect for her, and she chose me!”

A job awaits Rashid in North Carolina as a senior analyst for Torrent Consulting, the technology consulting firm where worked before entering the master’s program. Born the seventh of nine children in a temporary camp near the border of Afghanistan and Iran in 1991, Rashid spend much of his childhood traveling from Farrah, Afghanistan in search of lifesaving surgery for his congenital sinus tumor. Thanks to an organization where he’s now a grateful volunteer, his break came in 2007 when he crossed the globe to Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. What had been planned as a six-week trip lasted four months, during which he stayed with a local family. “The world is a very dangerous and mean place, especially when you’re alone,” Rashid says. “It’s also full of good people, and I’ve been blessed encountering so many good people. That’s how I’ve made it this far.”

When he returned to Afghanistan with a new lease on life, Rashid was determined to make a difference there by helping his country’s children. “There was a fire in my heart; it wouldn’t let me rest,” he says. He returned to North Carolina in 2010 to learn English at a community college, with the family he now calls his own taking him in rent-free. Next, he headed to Pfeiffer University, where he excelled and found creative ways to earn money. “I joined the Division II swimming team and got a scholarship!” he says. “It kicked my butt. It took two minutes to swim my first lap, and by the end of the year I swam it in 31 seconds. I was the last to arrive, but I beat my own time.”

After working for a year at Torrent Consulting, Rashid headed to the University of Miami for his master’s. While he says he did face discrimination trying to lease an apartment off-campus (a predicament he solved by pretending his name was Simon and bringing a check for a deposit with him), he immediately fell in love with the University and its diversity. “I didn’t feel any prejudice on campus. As challenging as the year was, it was one of the best years of my life. I’d love to come back for another degree.”

But Rashid still holds the same ultimate goal: to help the kids back home. “There are more than 2 million orphans in Afghanistan, and I want those children to have a house, love and education,” he says. He launched a nonprofit, Supporting Education – Achieving Dreams (SE-AD), that he says has sponsored education for 20 Afghan kids, with the goal of bringing one to the U.S. for a master’s degree. Further, he wants to start a business – one that runs Afghan busses equipped with restrooms and air conditioning – to fund another nonprofit, this one to build home-based orphanages around the world. He’s heading to a business plan competition in Orlando in search of investors. “Because I struggled as a child, I work hard and use every opportunity I have,” Rashid says. “You don’t have to be the smartest guy in the world. If you work for it and focus, you can do anything.”

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