

"What I like most about the United States are the opportunities available as compared to India," says Sugandha Aggarwal, May 2014 Northwestern graduate. "In India if you get a basic education in accounting, you have to carry that for your whole life. You cannot change your career, even if you hate it."

Aggarwal has been in Alva for three years. She was attracted to Northwestern because of the nursing department's 100 percent passing rate on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

"I'm already a registered nurse in India and I want to go for my nurse practitioner license so for me the NCLEX rate was a main priority for coming to Northwestern. My father googled it and figured out that Northwestern was economically good for us as well."

Aggarwal says the most academically challenging part of coming from India was transitioning from a subjective learning style to an objective style. In India the primary examination of learning was done through written essays. When Aggarwal got to Northwestern, she soon realized much of her learning was examined based on multiple choice.

"In India we had all essays and when I got here I thought, 'I have been writing essays on this information, I know what I have learned and it will be easy for me to choose the right answer,' but it wasn't easy."

Another challenge Aggarwal faced was manner in which patient care was administered in India compared to the United States.

"If a patient comes in with pain, in India, you would try to understand what the problem is and why it is happening. In the United States you would decide what action needs to be taken first. It is more about priority," said Aggarwal. "Here in the United States it is critical thinking and in India it is theoretical thinking."



Class of 2014

While in India, Aggarwal took the NCLEX and did not pass it. She said it was a moment she felt like she couldn't go forward.

"My grandfather, having his traditional mentality, said 'That's enough, now she will get married and she will work here as a nurse,'" said Aggarwal. "That was a time when I really had to fight for this. It was my father who took my side. I probably wouldn't have made it here without him."

Aggarwal attributes her decision to pursue nursing to her father. He is a doctor and she wanted to follow the same career path. However, Aggarwal said she was not good at physics and she knew a nursing degree could get her into nurse practitioner school. Aggarwal also notes that in India, the nursing profession is not respected and that nurses are viewed as servants. This is another reason for her desire to advance to a nurse practitioner.

Aggarwal expresses her deepest gratitude to the Northwestern nursing department faculty. She says they have been a great support to her during her education at Northwestern. One particular faculty member, Mrs. Cynthia Martindale, holds a special place in Aggarwal's heart.

Sugandha Aggarwal

"For every student there is a phase when unnecessary stress comes into your heard. Mrs. Martindale was there for me. Her door was always open and she supported me, gave me good encouragement and showed me how to be a better nurse," said Aggarwal.

When asked about the benefits of scholarships, Aggarwal said it has been a huge stress reliever.

"Being 27-years-old, it gets a little difficult to ask for support from your family when you're not earning a penny because you are in school."

If she had the opportunity to sit down with her scholarship donor, Aggarwal says she would tell them how grateful she is and because of their donation she is able to make a better career and future for herself.

"If there was any way I could return to them what they have given to me -- not just in the rare form of money-- but in any form, I would be there standing next to them."