

*Purva Choudhary, California State University, Northridge (CSUN), Master of Science in Computer Science*



Life works in mysterious ways. Just when you think you have it all figured out, it throws you a curveball. At the start of 2020, I had a career plan ready for the next two years (or at least I thought I had!). A four-month research opportunity in Denmark followed by a master's degree at California State University Northridge (CSUN), all seemed far too perfect. Rightly so, three months into the year, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the entire world and international travel was banned. I was stuck in India trying to figure out what my future would be like next! That's when my university offered me the option to start my master's program online from India and I happily grabbed on to the opportunity.

The initial six months of my program were spent in India where I attended classes online with a 12.30-hour time difference. But despite such a big difference, I was able to connect with students from CSUN by taking part in the various activities that were organized by the university. One such forum was the Coffee Hour organized by the International Student Association at CSUN. Here I got to meet other international students

studying at CSUN and form friendships from thousands of miles away.

Thankfully, that time got over and soon I was preparing to move to California in January 2021. Once I reached the campus, I have had many opportunities to enhance my personal and professional skills. I got selected in the Teaching Assistant Fellowship program through which I get to attend weekly sessions on effective and inclusive teaching methodologies. I am also an active member and work as the treasurer for the International Student Organization (ISA) at CSUN. I frequently host the weekly Coffee hour meetings in which all international students have fun interactions, play games, and get to know each other better.

I regularly take part in various CSUN Hackathons and coding clubs where I get to share my knowledge as well as learn from my peers. You can see me hanging around on the campus all day long, working on my jobs, enjoying with my friends on the lush green lawns, hogging on the sandwiches at Burger King on hectic days, working in the library till late in the night, or relaxing after a tough day at work in the luxurious massage chairs. My love for my university campus is evident from the fact that I always find a reason to linger around on the campus all day long!

When I am not on campus, I am roaming around the beautiful city of Los Angeles, going on hikes, and visiting some of the most beautiful beaches around. As I am halfway through my master's journey, I realize that I have truly been blessed with this life-changing opportunity. During this journey, not only have I achieved academic excellence but also grown as a person from these experiences and exposure. I am and always will be a proud Matador!

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