

NAU's First Canadian Graduate Earns New Career and Pays it Forward

Maverick Way Bulletin, July 7, 2016

Kalpna Pathak wasn't looking for a new career and going back to college was the furthest thing from her mind.

In 2009, however, a bad fall while working in public service for the Canadian Government, changed all that. After five surgeries and extensive rehabilitation, she was referred to triOS College in Canada as part of its labor force re-entry program. She completed the Community Service Worker Diploma program, excelling.

"Although I was not planning to go back to college, I loved every minute," said Kalpna. "The more I learn, the more I want to keep learning."

Community service was also a good fit.

"I spent the past nine years in public service," she explained. "I like helping people."

Due to her exceptional work as a diploma-seeking student, Uzma Bhatti, the Campus Director at triOS, hand-picked Kalpna to take advantage of a new collaboration with NAU: An online diploma-to-degree completion opportunity.

Kalpna was the first to take advantage of this new opportunity, transferring the credits she secured to earn her triOS diploma toward a NAU Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Community Service Work.

"I was so honored to be chosen for such an incredible opportunity," said Kalpna. "I couldn't pass it up."



Kalpna Pathak, second from left, celebrates her NAU degree with Dr. Robert Paxton, NAU President of Strategic Initiatives and External Relations; Frank Gerencser, CEO, triOS; and Uzma Bhatti, Mississauga Campus Director, triOS.



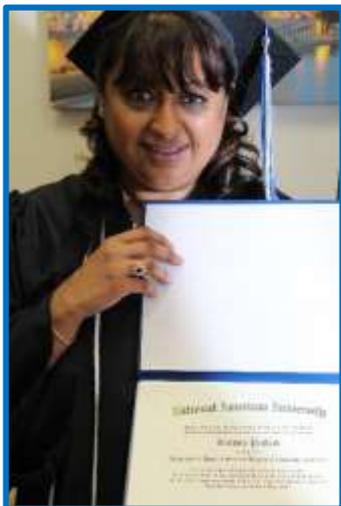
Kalpna with her husband and daughter on graduation day.

Still, she was apprehensive. The online learning environment was new for Kalpna, plus she was now working full time for the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

"It was challenging," said Kalpna. "I was highly motivated, but I knew that to succeed, I needed to be very disciplined. My days were structured around work and school. Everything had to be balanced. My husband and daughter were so supportive, helping out around the house and giving me the time and space I needed to complete this goal. I am very grateful to them both."

She also credits the support she received from triOS and National American University.

“This experience was so positive and motivating,” she said. “Everyone took such a personal interest in my success. It was not just about the program or the process. The support for my well-being and the completion of my degree was personal.”



Kalpna graduated in May 2016 with two competing job offers and a third to follow shortly thereafter.

“At first, I had job offers from triOS College and from the Canadian Government for a contract position as a refugee Settlement Worker,” she said. “Then, I was offered a full time position with D+H Financial working with the Ontario Student Assistance Program as a client service representative.”

“triOS helped me so much and has a great mission, and the opportunity to work as a settlement worker also touched my heart,” she said. “Ultimately, however, the D+H Financial position was my best opportunity. For many years, I’ve been working under contract. To have a full-time position is so much more secure, and because I’ll be helping students reach their educational goals, the position also relates to my degree.”

Still, Kalpna couldn’t turn her back on the plight of refugees, with whom she could empathize. When she was young, her parents and three siblings were driven out of East Africa by its then-dictator.

“In addition to my employment, I’ll be volunteering as a settlement worker, helping new Syrian refugees find housing and employment. Like the Syrian refugees that I’ll be helping, my parents had to start all over in a new country.”

“I am very happy to do both and to work in the service industry,” says Kalpna.

“My time at NAU has been amazing. It has changed my life.”