

An engineering student celebrates after receiving his diploma during graduation ceremonies at Purdue University in May 2009.

Campus Bonding

More Than Just Intellectual Growth

By ARJUN BHASIN

American education offers a range of experiences to Indian students.



Courtesy Arjun Bhasin

Arjun Bhasin at the Purdue University campus.

I am studying at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana and working really hard for my bachelor's degree in computer science. I hope you will learn some great things from my experience.

After you get into the university you really want to and complete all the visa procedures, what's next? Your new life, which is entirely different from what you have experienced so far. The education system is quite unlike what we have in India. The best part was that my professors took me as their friend and asked us to call them either by their first or last names. Once, one of my friends called his



Photographs courtesy Purdue University

professor “Sir” and he answered, “I love being called either by my first name or just call me the man with the chalk in his hand.” I had never expected a reply like this from a professor who holds a Ph.D. and is the best in his field. I then realized that we are not following a student-teacher relationship here. The professors can be your best friend and will work equally hard for your success.

I have learned to be more responsible now. I think most of you reading this have never paid utility bills, done laundry or a little bit of cooking on your own. Even I never did things like these. But living in the United States is more of a struggle in your student days as you have to do all these things by yourself unless you live in an on-campus dormitory that takes care of utilities and provides meals. You would still have to know how to operate a washing machine, though.

There are not always good things coming your way. The worst thing which I experienced was Indian students generally remaining confined to Indian groups and

never trying to mix much with the American students. In my opinion, you are there to grow as an individual and not just for your studies. So, just make the most of your experience, which will really help you achieve your professional and personal goals. If you are going for an undergraduate course, please live on campus in your freshman year so that you can really enjoy all the activities that take place.

Americans love to participate in sports. In India, when we meet our friends we gossip and roam around in malls. The American way of hanging out is to play some sports because they love being fit and healthy. You will love hitting the gym often and getting involved in sports, not just cricket.

I never thought I would be studying with about 400 students in a class. It was a great exposure for me. I made so many friends and enjoyed my stay. I always stayed in touch with my professors. The best part is the technology which I used there. I had never experienced such high

Internet speed and almost all my communication was through e-mail, whether it was with my professor, fellow students or counselor.

The education system in my university is more practical-based and the emphasis is on hands-on experience. I am always eager to learn and be part of every single thing which can help me grow. I was the only freshman who was selected in a team of three to visit a company and learn more about the corporate world and what we are really going to do after graduation. I never expected that I could get this opportunity in my first year. I would advise you all to keep looking for an

For more information:

United States-India Educational Foundation

<http://www.usief.org/in/>

Purdue University

<http://www.purdue.edu/>

Avoiding plagiarism

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/589/01/>



Above left: An aerial view of Memorial Mall at Purdue University.

Above: Students relax around Founders Park fountain.

Left: Fountain at the engineering school.

Left below: Purdue sign on State Street, West Lafayette, Indiana.

opportunity like this.

I can't end the discussion without talking about plagiarism. In India, if you show your assignments or any exam answers to your friend, you would be considered a great friend. But if you do this in the United States, it's almost like robbery. It's a very serious offence which could land you in big trouble. Even if you allow someone to copy your work you can be in very serious trouble, possibly even being kicked out of the university.

I hope you got some good points from this article which will help you get a feel of the U.S education system and what life in the United States is like.



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