

Interview with Megha Mohan
Class of 2008 student (first class)

Interested in science and geophysics, TAMUQ program was the best opportunity. Difficult decision: could've studied abroad, this would be the 'first batch' of students. More opportunities as a 'first graduate', more recognition as an individual, its historic to graduate first.

Six were selected to go with HH SM to visit College Station, got to travel with SM to attend, got to attend world wide conferences, first competitions, worked in the library in the first year, in Cornell building.

Library had 4-5 shelves, 3 weeks to put up the books before the students started, had to catalog the books. Now know where books are, familiar with collection. Setting up the system.

First experiences

First to get Aggie ring. Realization that graduation is close. September 2006, as part of a ceremony. Ring is from Association of Former Students. A representative opens the box, and student opens the box and puts it on.

Developing traditions

Traditional dinner of faculty, staff and students at end of each spring semester: Arabic food and coffee. Smaller dinner at end of December, big dinner at end of spring. TAMUQ has muster, have own yells, don't just have Aggie yells, have Arab yells. There is yell practice, with Arabic drum.

Student orientation

Don't have 'camp' but do have three days of events, with students helping out with new incoming freshman. Partner freshman with students in other years.

Traveling to CS with HH SM

Six students: different disciplines, cultures, countries. Had to write an essay. Chosen by essay, and GPA. Flew in Sheikha Mozah's plane and stopped over in Paris. Attended functions with Board of Regents, Deans of Colleges, drove around College Station. Met Dr. Robert Gates, then President of TAMU, now US Secretary of Defense.

Didn't get to choose courses. Had to do physics in one semester, when in CS its spread over two years. Very intense. But the teacher wrote the book, and was really great. Remembers students because the class is so small. One of the advantages, not like assembly line.

Now some classes are in lecture halls. Not for first class. Technology: Class of 2008 were guinea pigs, had to try the technology and it didn't always work.

Taking ethics by distance education. Class taking place at 7pm, IT wasn't always there. It was tough.

No matter how hard it is, sometimes we didn't get information so easily. The class hadn't been taught before, and nobody knew how. The students had to put in a lot more effort. The faculty also. Faculty all take their job really serious. Never seen a laid-back faculty at TAMUQ.

Didn't have seniors, and no one to depend on. Just had to do it. That helps in internships. Now freshman can ask other students. Class of 2008 had to find everything out themselves. Enjoy studying, especially petroleum. Can have fun, but not a lot of distractions. Freshman year is either your best or your worst year. Must learn very quickly how to manage time. Most TAMUQ students are fairly serious, and the environment (Doha) helps. People like to do their job well. Even now, see very serious freshman.

Multicultural student population

Came from international school, but TAMUQ started with strong Qatari student body. Hadn't been exposed to Qataris before very much. Also from surrounding countries and Arab states. Multinational can be very challenging, expressing ideas with people for whom English is not the native language. People are very motivated, a combination of student drive, curriculum, and faculty. Students have had to jump up to the level required, particularly to the complexity of English in the curriculum. Probably 90% of the students are not native English speakers, so to be able to communicate effectively is incredible.

Presenting at a conference

Paper on rock stresses at the reservoir level, at the regional level, and how that affects drilling. Getting data is difficult, it's proprietary. Data isn't always available, its not published usually in Qatar. Want to look at an understudied area, but areas that need to be studied. Presenting at conference makes one realize that there are "a lot of smart people out there." Like research, but also want to work in industry.

Internships

First was at Schlumberge, a field internship. Worked on the tools, then went to the rigs - the land rigs. Realized that time is of the essence. Need to work efficiently. Came back and took a drilling course, saw a lot of the processes that were happening on the rig. Regardless of time, maintaining quality on the job is essential. Also need safety. In course work, need to have quality, and be done properly.

Second internship at RasGas. Aggies are respected in the oil industry. Every third or fourth guy in the oil industry is an Aggie. It means being the best at what is being done.

Graduating

Will be leaving a supportive and comfortable environment. People are eager to help each other. Its like leaving a home. People have been mentors as well as teachers.

Have learned out to look for things independently, have developed a basic toolkit, have skills, ability to communicate. Can do presentations better than students from other universities. Good practice for the business world.

Impressions

Interactions with other students who come from very different cultural backgrounds. Some students have trouble bridging. A&M is very conservative. Good preparation for working in this region. Can think on your feet. Being an Aggie is an honor.

Qataris know Texas history as well as everyone else. Education and cross-cultural training. The program bridges the two cultures, and with so many international situations happening, its good for students from so many countries have more understanding.

Future

More competition for places in the programs (getting accepted), jobs. More opportunities for community services, exchange programs, even more projects within the courses offered.