



NAME

BADRI GHIMIRE

FROM

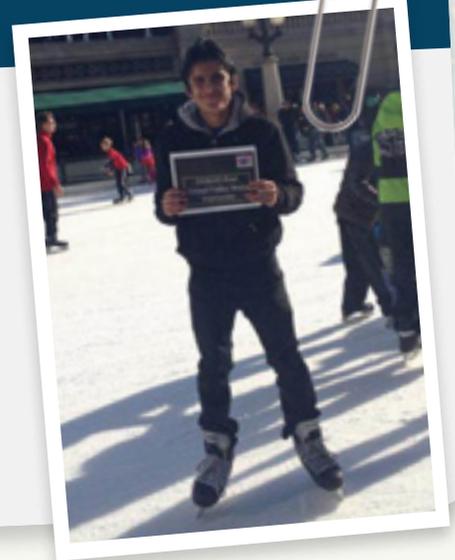
NEPAL

TO

GRAND VALLEY, MI

PROGRAM

GLOBAL UNDERGRADUATE EXCHANGE
PROGRAM - GRAND VALLEY STATE
UNIVERSITY



More than a Language

“It was wonderful. I had never had that experience before, being in an environment surrounded by so many people who were hearing. It was a great education for me.”

Badri Ghimire was born Deaf and grew up with three siblings who were also Deaf. His mother raised the kids on her own and always encouraged them to pursue their passion.

Badri’s passion is accounting and math, but he never thought he would have a chance to put that interest to work, especially in the United States (U.S.). Badri was accepted to the Global UGRAD program at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, a program sponsored by the U.S. Department of State’s, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

During his program, he had the chance to obtain an accounting internship at the Mercantile Bank of Michigan. This was the high point of his program. He enjoyed working with figures and ensuring all of the transactions matched and were in order.

Growing up in Nepal, Badri had gone to a school for Deaf children and youth. He primarily learned Nepali and Nepalese Sign Language. His school provided basic English skills, but they did not offer further opportunities to advance in the language. Once he felt his interest in learning a higher level of English, he decided to teach himself. He also learned basic ASL on his own before arriving to the U.S.

When he first started attending classes at Grand Valley, he was shocked to discover he was the only Deaf student in the classroom.

“I wondered, ‘How am I going to communicate with people?’ I didn’t know ASL [American Sign Language]. But there were many international students and they helped me out.”

Badri had support from three interpreters, but they all used ASL and signed very quickly. Initially he was frustrated, but over time he and his interpreters made things work.

“It took practice, a lot of repetition, patience, and being willing to make the communication work. I’m glad I had my English background, which provided me an added benefit when we got stuck.”

At Grand Valley, Badri studied ASL, English composition, math, accounting, civics, and history. His biggest boost in learning ASL, he says, was a trip he took during his winter break to Rochester, New York, to visit his brother, who is also Deaf. Rochester has a large Deaf community, and Badri was thrown into the middle of it.

“Everybody signed so quickly—it was like being back home in Nepal. I picked up ASL very quickly. It was a very accessible environment.”

Badri also visited New York City, where he experienced more aspects of U.S. culture, and discovered some welcome familiarity—Indian restaurants.

“Indian culture and Nepalese culture are very similar and so is the food. I was very excited to get real, authentic Indian food in the United States.”





Badri integrated into his community as much as he could during his time at Grand Valley. He volunteered with a community art project and also joined a Deaf Club for students who wanted to learn about Deaf culture and ASL. Often when his friends in the club texted or spoke to him in English, Badri would teach them how to communicate the concept using ASL.

“Even though they were hearing and I was Deaf, we were all learning about the American Deaf experience. It was a struggle at first, but over time I developed friendships with people in the group, and we were able to progress together. It was a reciprocal, beneficial community.”

Badri knows that changes need to be made at high levels of Nepali government in order to change public perceptions of Deaf people. He is part of a group that is advocating to have Nepali sign language recognized as a national language.

“We have lots of room for improvement in Nepal, especially for people who are Deaf, who want to be successful and can be successful. Education is the number one need. They can see me as a role model now. I worked in a bank at the same level as my hearing peers. I can share that with the Deaf community.”

There are no interpreting services in colleges in Nepal, except for one that only offers Education as a major for Deaf students. Therefore, Badri hopes to return to the United States and attend Gallaudet University in Washington D.C., a university for Deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing students, or Rochester Institute of Technology to pursue his degree in Business to get a career in banking or finance.

“I want to finish the work that started with my world changing experience in Michigan.”



Global UGrad

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