One Student’s Journey from Afghanistan

When Hashmat Baktash became interested in attending college in the Syracuse area, he explored his options before deciding that Bryant & Stratton would be his best choice to further his education. One might say that his process of learning about the college and considering the recommendations of others was a typical one for our students. Less typical is the fact that his journey to the Syracuse North campus began thousands of miles away, in Kabul, Afghanistan.

In 2005, the U.S. Army was seeking people who could interpret the two main languages of Afghanistan, Dari and Pashto, and advise military personnel on cultural matters. Hashmat applied for the job.

Rich in natural resources, and bordering six countries – Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, China, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan – Afghanistan has experienced more than its share of invasions and war. “Aside from some individuals who might work for the interest of other countries in the region, ordinary Afghans have always wanted peace and they still do!” Hashmat says.

“Afghan people are suffering from war and they have always been the victims,” he adds. “That’s why Afghan people are suffering from war and they have always been the victims,” he adds. “That’s why Afghans, alongside U.S. soldiers, have been fighting for the past 17 years, to counter insurgency and terrorism in the region.”

By aligning himself with the Americans, who were the primary target of groups like the Taliban, Hashmat found himself facing the constant threat of being attacked. “I have been to so many places in Afghanistan that are considered the most dangerous places in the world,” he says.

His job also required Hashmat to live in military bases, rather than in Kabul near family and friends. So when a National Public Radio (NPR) correspondent visited the team in late 2009 and offered Hashmat a job, he decided to accept the offer. In addition, he began to explore the possibility of immigrating to the United States. He learned that his service as a linguist for the U.S. military could qualify him for a special immigration visa.

Back in Kabul, he began to work for both NPR and the Los Angeles Times, covering news conferences, conducting one-on-one interviews, and writing feature stories that would interest listeners and readers in the United States. He also found time to freelance for other news organizations, such as Aljazeera English.

His new role didn’t shield him from danger, however. As a reporter expected to go to an incident scene, he knew there was always the
chance that a second bomb would detonate.

“Those situations made me think more in depth about my future and my family’s future,” Hashmat recalls. Kabul was his home, but it was also a place where “most of the time I would just wake up to the sound of explosions.”

By now it was 2014, and the visa process he had begun years before was still underway. Hashmat explains that it could be hard to tell who was a member of or sympathetic to the Taliban; as someone who had worked with American organizations, he felt himself increasingly at risk. “People working for the U.S. government or non-government organizations in Afghanistan have always been a target for the Taliban and other terrorist groups,” he explains.

Part of the visa process involved selecting a specific American destination in which to relocate. Hashmat chose Albany, since he had a friend already living there. Although he no longer had to wake up to the sound of explosions, he soon discovered that the life of a new immigrant in America comes with its own hardships. “When I got here I had to start from scratch,” he recalls.

His first job in America was in a warehouse, where he spent his shifts lifting heavy boxes and swiftly transporting them from place to place. After a year or so he was ready to find a job that was less physically grueling.

A friend was living in Queens, and suggested that Hashmat move to New York City and become a driver for Uber. That’s what Hashmat did for the next couple of years, except for the six months he spent back in Afghanistan working as a linguist.

Meanwhile, Hashmat was taking classes in political science through Hudson Valley Community College. Due to the fact that these were online classes, he was able to complete his coursework even when he was in Afghanistan.

When he returned to the United States, Hashmat was ready to make more changes in his life. He had been to Syracuse before, visiting friends, and liked the fact it was quieter and more affordable than New York City.

It wasn’t long after his move to Syracuse that Hashmat made the decision to return to school, this time to study networking, and learned about Bryant & Stratton. He based his decision to attend on the strength of our program here and the recommendations of friends.

“The whole American educational system is interesting and surprising for me because there is still an outdated curriculum in Afghanistan, which does not match the international standard,” Hashmat says, noting that college credits earned in Afghanistan are not accepted in other countries.

Despite everything, Hashmat remains optimistic and is determined to complete his education no matter what. “You have to put in the effort and the time in order to succeed,” he says. “These are the chances that a lot of people don’t get in their life.”

---

**When I got here I had to start from scratch.**

*Hashmat Baktash*

---

**Upcoming Events**

**February 12**
Award Ceremony

**February 18**
Presidents Day: Campus Closed

**February 25**
Blended Session I Ends
Online Session I Ends

**March 5**
Blended Session II Begins

**March 6**
Online Session II Begins
Inaugural Basketball Season Draws to a Close

After months of practices, travel, and games, the Syracuse North basketball team will end its season on Feb. 18. Coach Dan Frisina notes that basketball is somewhat unique in the world of college athletics, since it covers two semesters. After first arriving in Syracuse at the beginning of the fall semester, the players had their first official practice on September 22 and have been balancing the demands of school and basketball ever since.

As many of the players are from New York City, the break between the fall and winter semesters gave them an opportunity to return home and visit family and friends. However, as soon as they returned to Central New York, their busy schedule began again.

Luckily, according to Kobe Mansam and Brian Mitchell, everything they experienced in the fall semester has helped them this semester. “We’re communicating better, and we’re pushing each other to do better as a team,” Brian says.

The support of the Bryant & Stratton community has been “a big help,” Kobe says. Brian concurs, saying that students and staff “give us 100% support.” In particular, both Kobe and Brian have appreciated the presence of Bryant & Stratton fans at home games.

The travel necessitated by away games has been another challenge for the team. Recently, they drove four hours to reach Vermont, only to play for an hour and a half before driving back for another four hours.

While Kobe was already familiar with the Syracuse region, having attended Cayuga Community College, Brian was taken aback by one of Central New York’s defining characteristics: “What took me by surprise was how much snow there is.”

Once the season concludes, the players will be able to give their coursework their undivided attention. “I want to stay on top of my grades and finish the year out strong,”

Since the majority of the players live in the dorms at the James Street campus, they will be returning home in April rather than staying for the spring semester. A few short months after that, it will be time to return to campus and get ready for a new season of basketball.

“Wins or losses aside, they’ve made the season enjoyable because they’re really good guys,” Dan says. “I was lucky.”

Basketball players from Syracuse North’s first-ever team listen to the direction of Coach Dan Frisina at a recent game held at Onondaga Community College.
What You Need To Know About ABG

What is ABG?

Alpha Beta Gamma (ABG) is an International Business Honor Society for students who attend two-year colleges. It is also a service organization, with chapters required to do at least two community outreach activities every semester. (These could be donations of time, money or products.) The group holds numerous fundraisers throughout the semester to prepare for these outreach opportunities. Membership is open to eligible students from all associate degree programs at the Syracuse North campus.

Am I eligible?

Participation in ABG meetings and events/fundraisers is open to anyone. However, in order to be eligible for ABG membership, a student must have completed 15 or more college credit hours. In addition, he or she must be of good moral character, possess recognized qualities of citizenship, and maintain a 3.0 GPA in his or her program major courses, as well as a 3.0 cumulative GPA.

How do I become a member?

Students seeking ABG membership must pay a one-time fee of $64 (cash, check or money order payable to Alpha Beta Gamma - Mu Alpha Chapter); this includes lifetime ABG membership ($39) and the satin stole ($25), which is presented at the induction ceremony and worn at graduation. Regardless of when the fee is paid, students do not obtain ABG membership until they participate in the induction ceremony.

When are induction ceremonies held?

Ceremonies are usually held twice a year, once in the winter semester (January-April) and again in the fall semester (September-December). Ceremonies are typically held during Week 11 of the semester and take place in the event rooms (112/113/115).

What are my responsibilities as a member?

ABG member responsibilities are two-fold. First is scholarship. Inducted members must consistently maintain 3.0 cumulative GPAs. Second is participation. Inducted members are required to attend at least 50% of all weekly meetings and at least one of the fundraisers.

What if I can’t meet these requirements?

Per national ABG standards, if inducted members fail to uphold the academic standards, they enter a one-semester probationary period. If, at the end of that semester, they are still not meeting these standards, their names are removed from the national ABG database and their membership is revoked.

Think ABG might be for you?

You're always welcome to sit in on an ABG meeting. The group meets Tuesdays at noon (day students) and 5 PM (evening students) in room 103. Meetings are usually about a half-hour in length. You can also email Palma Savinelli, ABG's Syracuse North Advisor, at pdsavinelli@bryantstratton.edu for more information.
When applying for employment opportunities, it is imperative that you include a resume (as well as a cover letter and reference page). Tailoring your resume and cover letter to the position in which you are applying is necessary to increase your chances of being considered for the position. There are sample tips and resumes available in the career center but we wanted to share with you a pictorial on some things to keep in mind. Please see Chris or Kristine in Career Services with questions.

What is a Resume?

Think of a resume as a marketing piece or advertisement that will entice employers to want to learn more about you. Everything you put on your resume should add power; if it does not add power, remove it.

Content Do’s

- Create your resume in a Word Document.
- Contact information: professional e-mail, current address and phone number.
- Stick to one font that is professional, classic and easy to read. Font size should be no less than 11.
- Be moderate with bold, italics and line and bullets.
- Formatting is important. Organize your resume appropriately. Preferred resume is 1 page.
- Proofread for grammatical and spelling errors.
- Use numerical form of numbers where applicable so they stand out to an employer.
- Customize your resume to the specific position you are applying for.

Content Don’ts

- Do not use a resume template or tables to create your resume.
- No typos or grammatical errors.
- Not necessary to list high school if you are enrolled in college.
- Do not include references on your resume. You will have a separate reference page.
- Do not use proprietary acronyms or jargon.
- Do not exceed 4-6 bullets per section.
- Skip the personal interests.
- It is expected you will be able to provide reference upon request- leave it out.
All proceeds go to:

**Things of My Very Own, Inc.**

Things of My Very Own provides crisis intervention services to children impacted by extensive abuse and/or neglect. Services are also available to children who are, solely due to lack of items necessary for sustainability, at risk of a Child Protective Services Intervention. The organization’s goal is to keep children together with non-abusive family members, and out of the foster care system, whenever possible.

**ABG’s Sweets for your Sweetie Valentine Candy/Bake Sale**

2/12 & 2/13
12PM & 5PM
IN FRONT OF STUDENT LOUNGE