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Interview with Nimish Adhia

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Todd Kumler

Name: Nimish Adhia

Hometown: Ahmedabad, India

Major(s) at IWU: Economics

Current Study: PhD Program in Economics

Current School: University of Illinois at Chicago

Expected Graduation: 2009 (yeah, I know!)

What did you do in the year between graduating from IWU and entering graduate school?

I went back to India and worked for my Dad, who is a motivational speaker and runs a book company that publishes motivational books in Indian languages. My dad put me in charge of his office, where, ironically, the employees were suffering from low motivation and productivity. I tried to get them to do things the "American way" - like use a lot of post-it notes, play music in the background and automate phone call answering. At first, they were suspicious; but as soon as they realized how fun this was, they took to it. I knew I had been successful in my job when I received computer-generated birthday wishes from the office a few months ago.

What type of work did you do for The Center for Civil Society?

In the summer of 2004, I interned at CCS, a New-Delhi based think tank promoting free market and libertarian approaches to public policy in India. The Center does this by documenting the success of free-market initiatives and by highlighting the wastes and follies of government activities. As a research intern there, one of my projects was to study the experiences of certain countries (U.K., South Africa, Chile, etc.) that have privatized some of their public utilities (like water, electricity, etc). I found that privatization worked well in these places, decreasing the costs and increasing the supply for consumers. My other project involved investigating the functioning of various college entrance exam coaching classes run by the Indian government (how they recruit students, how

they coach them, their success rate, etc). I still haven't figured it out.

Did you enjoy working for The Center for Civil Society?

Looking back at it, yes. But at the time, I was very frustrated with having to visit government offices everyday in a decrepit public transport system under a scorching sun (115° F is the norm in summer in New Delhi), and with trying to wean out information from uncooperative bureaucrats. I had been spoiled by my four years in America - air-conditioned facilities, 24-7 water and electric supply and the fact that most information could be availed on the computer at the click of a mouse. However, I relished the fact that I was doing something meaningful, not just a toy project, that was going to inform the policy debate in my country.

What do you like/dislike about being a graduate student?

Graduate studies allow me to study my subject at a depth not possible as an undergraduate, which I enjoy. But, the narrow focus that such intensity entails comes at the expense of a multi-disciplinary, well-rounded approach to looking at things, which I gained from my liberal arts education at IWU. I feel that this narrow focus is a handicap when you are trying to understand something as complex as human society itself.

Do you have a job as a Teaching Assistant or Research Assistant? If yes, do you enjoy it?

Yes, I work as a teaching assistant for a large intro class of 300 students (Imagine, IWU students!). The class breaks up into small groups once a week, and my job is to lead discussions in such a group (besides grading, monitoring, tutoring, etc). Being in such a position of leadership forces me to clarify to myself

topics about which I am fuzzy. You can get through your graduate school classes (even get an A) without understanding certain topics 100%, but when trying to get through to a bunch of uninterested undergraduates, you have to know the concepts inside out.

How does the work in a graduate program differ from undergraduate work?

As an undergraduate, one is expected to understand the economic phenomenon merely intuitively, which makes studying Economics fun and stimulating. Math is used only to the extent it supports intuition. However, in graduate school, the math becomes all important - it is assumed that the intuition will follow from knowing the math. This regimen of equations and proofs sometimes kills the "feel good" factor in Economics.

What field(s) of Economics are you specializing in?

Not decided yet, but International Economics and Economic Development seem to be top contenders.

Following graduation, what career do you intend to pursue?

Definitely teaching. For me it is very satisfying to see a student understand the allocative efficiency of prices or the law of comparative advantage.

Do you have any advice for current IWU students who wish to pursue a Ph.D. in Economics?

Yes, quit your Econ major and switch to a Math major. Life will be easier in grad school.

In the 2003 Park Place Economist, you said you hope to take over Dr. Seeborg's job. Do you still plan to do this?

Sure. Though I may be able to take over his job, I don't know if I'll ever be able to take his place.

Anything else?

Keep up the good work with PPE. And I would like to see a center spread of Greenspan in the next issue.

Alumni Notes

Jennifer C. Dawson

Junaid Ahmed, '96, moved back to Bangladesh after graduation, where he spent 3 years working for a development agency raising funds for microcredit, education projects, and natural disasters. Currently, he is a radio journalist, producing programs in current affairs. He just completed a part-time Masters in International Relations. Junaid and his wife have a son, born in 2003.

Sabeen Ali, '01, worked as an economic consultant for Ernst & Young LLP in New York City from graduation until April 2003, when she became Development Program Coordinator for the Council of Foreign Relations. Sabeen has just learned that she has been accepted into the Masters in Public Administration/International Development Program at the Kennedy School, Harvard University. She will begin in fall 2005.

Awo Osei-Anto, '03, has worked since graduation in

Human Resources Outsourcing in the Health and Group Benefits department of Hewitt Associates in Chicago. Awo has recently been accepted into the Masters in Public Policy program at the Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago. Her interest is in health care consulting. She will begin in fall 2005.

Jeff Blend, '93, is an Environmental Economist for the Montana Department of Environmental Quality. He has completed both a Masters in Economics and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Economics at Michigan State University. Jeff's career advice for students studying Economics is to "not be afraid to think outside of the box in terms of how you can apply your skills."

Jesse Boyle, '96, has recently left his corporate job and transitioned into an entrepreneurial phase of his career. He founded and is the CEO of a million dollar entertainment company that is currently building