

I was born on September 20, 2001, in Ghazni, a province in Southeastern Afghanistan. I graduated from high school in 2019. In the fall of 2020, I began my studies at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul (“AUAF”). In addition to studying Law at AUAF, I also enrolled in an in-person French language course at Kabul University in 2020. In mid-2021, I won a scholarship at the Asian University for Women (“AUW”) in Bangladesh. I had limited means to afford additional education costs outside Afghanistan, so I started attending online classes at AUW and remained a student of the AUAF until the fall of the government in August 2021.

I fled Afghanistan in August 2021 due to the government collapse and Taliban takeover and boarded from Kabul to Saudi Arabia then Spain, and finally, to the U.S. I entered the United States on September 1, 2021. After arriving at Dulles Airport in Washington D.C., I flew to Fort McCoy in Wisconsin, where I remained until December 11, 2021. On December 11, 2021, I boarded Delaware. I stayed with a host family in Bear, Delaware until August 2022, and have now moved into my own apartment in Newark, Delaware.

It is about one year that I am studying the English Language at the English Language Institute (ELI) at the University of Delaware. Studying at the ELI is a new chapter of my life which is full of memories. Dr. Steven, who is the director of the ELI, and his colleagues helped me get the scholarship and continue my education in the U.S. I am thankful to Allah, U.S government, and University of Delaware for providing these opportunities. At the ELI, I have met a plethora of students from different countries, cultures, and backgrounds. ELI offers have offered me a variety of high-quality intensive English programs which helps me improve my

English. I could improve my listening, writing, reading, and speaking skills by taking several English classes.

Besides learning the English language at the ELI, I learned about U.S culture through cultural events, such as coffee hour, national festival, and painting classes. Coming to the U.S was a culture shock for me since there are a plethora of differences between Afghanistan's culture and U.S culture. However, participating in cultural events helped me adapt to a new culture and new life here. For instance, I met students from different countries during coffee hour and know about their cultures. Afghans have no charismas, thanksgiving, or Halloween, but in the U.S, these events are an important part of American culture. We celebrate these events at the ELI and have wonderful memories from these events. I really like gender equality in the United States because I have never felt it in Afghanistan.

As I mentioned before, there are gaps between Afghan and U.S cultures which was shocking for me. Same as I did not know much about U.S culture, I found out that other Americans also do not have information about Afghan Culture. I wish others to know about my culture, such as the New Year celebration, EID Celebration, and the history of Afghanistan. I feel bad when most think of Afghanistan as the house of terrorists because we are not terrorists, we are Afghans who are brave as lions. Afghanistan is a beautifully diverse country with different ethnicities, beautiful cities, and historical places which makes it unique.

Regardless of challenges, culture shocks, and changes in my life in the U.S, I am glad that I am safe here and have the opportunity to continue my education. Currently, I am an AT2 student at the ELI which is the last semester then I will join UD in spring 2023. I am so excited to start UD and study public policy. I hope to become a policy specialist and work for women's empowerment by designing effective national policies. I am determined to become an

independent and professionally successful woman in the United States who gives back to the community here, to my family, and to the people of Afghanistan.