

York University: Entrepreneur hopes to see a 'needs-blind' educational system in Canada

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Jha believes that Canadian universities can do a better job of attracting international students. Unlike Ivy League universities in the United States, Canadian institutions are not always on the list of students overseas when they choose to study abroad, he notes. A former graduate student in the School of Computer & System Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) in New Delhi, Jha would like to see increased ties between India and Canada, which he hopes will lead to more individuals travelling between the two countries to work and study.

Jha has established the Aditya Jha Award for Jawaharlal Nehru University Academic Exchange Program at York University. The \$25,000-endowment fund, established through the York University Foundation with support from the Ontario Trust for Student Support program, will enable one York student to travel to JNU each year under the newly created exchange program. The gift comes during York to the Power of 50 campaign, the largest fundraising campaign in the University's history, which is linked to York's 50th anniversary.

"We are grateful to Aditya Jha for supporting the creation of opportunities for students to interact with other cultures through living and studying abroad," says Sheila Embleton, vice-president academic at York University. "As more people move around the world in their careers, it will become increasingly important for us to encourage internationalization at York."

Although born in Nepal, Jha was raised and educated in India, and considers it home. He believes that attending JNU was one of the best things to ever happen to him. He found the school to be the most political university in the eastern hemisphere, a place where students had a voice to truly effect change on and off campus. Jha remains impressed with the calibre of the faculty and curriculum at JNU, and believes it is a real coup for York University to have formed a partnership with this world-class institution.

"Mr. Aditya Jha's gift is a wonderful example of an individual initiative that will go a long way in fostering and cementing institutional bonds," says Vijaya Rao, associate professor, JNU.

After departing JNU, Jha covered the territory of Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia while working in the telecommunications industry. He then migrated to Canada with his wife and enjoyed a successful career with Bell

Canada. He co-founded the software company Isopia Inc., which was sold to Sun Microsystems in 2001, then went on to co-found another software company, Osellus Inc., headquartered in Toronto, where he currently serves as chief operating officer.

In 2001, Jha founded a private charitable organization called the POA Educational Foundation, to be involved in projects that reflect his interest in promoting education, nurturing entrepreneurship and strengthening civil society and governance. These interests became the three pillars of the POA Educational Foundation's mission, and currently guide its many charitable endeavours in the community.

Jha believes education played a pivotal role in his accomplishments to date. "Education reflected what made a difference in my life," says Jha. "I decided that I would like to support educational activities, and subsequently, I moved into nurturing entrepreneurship."

Looking forward, Jha hopes that his activities will encourage a shift in mindsets when it comes to philanthropy. He thinks that many people believe they are losing something when they are called upon to give, instead of realizing that they are in fact being given a wonderful opportunity to experience joy and to do something meaningful for causes about which they are most passionate.

He also hopes that Canada will one day achieve an educational system that is "needs blind", where no talented and ambitious student should be denied access to education as a result of financial limitations. When students who have received aid go on to achieve great things, he hopes that they too will "pay it forward" to create an endless cycle of giving.

Submitted by Earleen Dover, communications officer, York University Foundation.

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