

Rector's Letter to Alumni

15 September 2009

Dear alumni,

Soon, we will be celebrating Eid-ul-Fitr and I greet you on this occasion of festivities after the holy month of Ramzan, a month of Allah's blessings. A very happy Eid Mubarak to all of you!

As Rector of the University, I am also taking the opportunity to address you directly for the first time to update you about the developments that have taken place over the past nine years after the charter was granted to the University on July 1, 2000.

The National University of Computer and Emerging Sciences (NUCES) as you all know is the brainchild of the Foundation for Advancement of Science and Technology (FAST) established in 1980 as a private non-profit organization. Started off with 35 students in 1985 at Karachi, FAST Institute of Computer Science (ICS) was the pioneering institution in computer science education in the country. The highly successful FAST ICS initiative at Karachi was followed by similar institutes at Lahore in 1990 and Islamabad in 1996. Peshawar campus was established in 2001.

The University is a multi-campus institution under the provision of its charter and except for Balochistan, it has geographical coverage in the other three provinces of Pakistan. It is national in character and takes students purely on merit from all over Pakistan which *inter alia* helps promote national integration.

The University has progressed remarkably well in terms of expanded enrolment, diversification of degree programs and development of physical facilities at all the four campuses to accommodate the expanding academic activities. From a single mono discipline degree programme in 2000, it has grown into 11 degree programmes from Bachelor to Ph.D. The University offers 4 year degree programmes in Computer Science, Electrical Engg (with specialization in Telecom Engg, Computer Engg), and Business Administration; 2 Year Master degree programmes in Computer Science, Software Project Management, Telecom Engg, Mathematics, and Business Administration; and Ph.D in Computer Science and Mathematics. Its Ph.D programme is entirely funded by the Higher Education Commission. Already two students in Computer Science have been awarded Ph.D degree. The number of students has gradually increased from 1342 in 2000 to more than 7000 in Fall 2009. The faculty has also progressively increased from 37 to 280. Academically, the University was declared as category 'A' University (highest category) after visitation by the Higher Education Commission and is entitled to HEC funding.

From rented buildings initially, the University now owns its own purpose-built 14.5 acre campus at Islamabad, 12.5 acre campus at Lahore, 6.25 acres campus at Karachi and 4 acre campus at Peshawar.

The University has highly qualified faculty and an impressive talent pool in Computer Science, Telecom Engg, Business Administration, Mathematics, and supporting disciplines. The University admits only talented students who are selected through a keenly contested national competition. The confidence of the public in the University is reflected in the competition among the students for a place in the University; and each place is contested by top class candidates.

There are no quota seats in any category and the University does not compromise on merit; that is its biggest source of strength. This year the University received a record number of 14,000 applicants for admission which reflects public confidence in the quality and efficacy of the system.

The University has maintained its financial viability by strict financial discipline and academic credibility by focusing on merit alone. Its total dependence, however, on tuition fee is not going to be able to withstand the pressure for increased funds if the university has the ambition to develop a vigorous research program and develop into a high quality academic institution internationally. Higher education in Pakistan is becoming expensive with the passage of each year and unless funding sources are diversified, the survival, growth and development in this sector will remain elusive. The University follows the proverbial edict of 'living within its own means' but the expensiveness of higher education needs diversified sources of funding, which we believe would need an urgent attention of the management as well as the alumni.

A total of 5000 students have so far graduated from the University since 2000 and a large number of them are working overseas. It is heartening to note that most of our graduates are well placed in their professional careers. I would like to appeal, especially to those of you who are financially well placed to help the needy students who have been admitted to the university. As you know the university strives to ensure that any student who gets admission to the university on merit shall not have to leave his/her education merely because of financial constraints. The University currently spends around Rs 50 million annually to support the education of the needy but meritorious students. It would be encouraging if the alumni also share the burden of poor students and of the University. We would welcome the establishment of an 'Alumni Fund' for the needy students by the Alumni Association, to supplement the efforts of the University. We would also welcome if any of the alumni can spare time to teach courses or give special lectures at the university, at their convenience.

The University is maintaining FAST Alumni Network (FAN) <http://nu.edu.pk/fan/default.aspx> and is now regularly publishing monthly Newsletter available on our website for keeping you abreast with the latest developments. I would appreciate if you also contribute regularly by sharing with us your achievements because your achievements are our achievements.

The University is going to complete 10 years of its existence next year and I would welcome your ideas how well to celebrate this occasion.

We would like to publish a Directory of alumni and would welcome if any one of you volunteers to assist us in this exercise.

With best wishes for a happy Eid and exciting and rewarding careers,

Yours sincerely

Dr Amir Muhammed

Rector