Christ University twinning student learns independence on way to degree

By: Jerry Malec

Tushar Gadhok carried India’s flag in WMU’s Parade of Nations 2012
When Tushar Gadhok arrived in fall 2012 from New Delhi, India at Western Michigan University as a junior, he took his motto “One life … Make it large!” directly to heart.

“I wanted to move out of my parent’s home and head out on my own way in life,” said Gadhok, who is currently a senior majoring in food and consumer package goods marketing in the Haworth College of Business. “I was kind of like a newborn lamb going out of the field into the forest.”

During his freshman year at Christ University in Bangalore, India, the ambitious student researched the possibility of earning academic credit toward a bachelor’s degree at a university in the United States. He discovered what he calls a “golden opportunity” to move totally out of his comfort zone by studying abroad through WMU’s Transnational Education, or twinning, program offered in collaboration with Christ University since 1997.

“I’m very outgoing and I like meeting new people,” Gadhok said. “It helped that I knew English well because I have been learning and conversing since a very young age. Eventually, I got to the point that I was speaking English much better than my mother language of Hindi. I also speak Punjabi, along with a little sprinkling of French.”

As he explored the twinning program further, he discovered that the requirements for admission to WMU were tougher than most schools, which attracted the highly motivated student. “I needed a minimum of C in every subject and a 2.5 GPA to qualify for admission into WMU’s program,” he said. “Many universities in other countries only required a D grade in all subjects. I figured; why not go for the best that the twinning program has to offer?”

In addition to his studies, Gadhok is also involved in two business fraternities—Delta Sigma Pi, ranked in the Top 5 business fraternities in U.S, and the Sigma Phi Omega, which is a food marketing fraternity. Both hold weekly meetings for what he refers to as “like-minded business people.”

Gadhok also keeps busy as a member of the Haworth College of Business’ Student Leadership Advisory Board. Membership is open only to business students who’ve attained a minimum 3.0 GPA. Since joining the board in February 2013, he’s had his hand in a number of events and activities, including volunteering at WMU’s Career Day and the business college’s Senior Send-off. He believes these experiences are helping to groom him for professional life after graduation.

The independence Gadhok enjoys at WMU also makes college life a bit more challenging here than it would have been for him in India, where his family would have likely helped him keep a roof over his head and be well fed.

“For many college students in India, you don’t have to worry about money for groceries and other expenditures because your parents will always take care of that for you,” said Gadhok, who lives in an apartment off campus. “I have a roommate and I have to help clean and do the grocery shopping. In India, it isn’t easy for people to get into college, though there’s a college on just about every corner. But, the better your grades are and the better off your
family is financially, the better your chances of attending a good quality university.”

When asked why he is focusing on food marketing, his answer is simple: “I like food and food is everywhere,” said Gadhok, who plans to graduate with his bachelor’s degree in food and consumer package goods marketing. “The major gives you a vital array of scope in the marketing field, including merchandising, retail and sales knowledge that translates into any business setting. The food and consumer package goods sector is the largest in the world. Once you know how to handle that, the smaller ones will be pretty easy to manage.”

Kalamazoo’s small-town charm suits Gadhok well even though he was raised in a large city. He admits living in the area in winter has challenges he’s not familiar with—bitter cold weather and snow. One day, when the mercury fell into the single digits, he called his parents to talk about the weather in Kalamazoo.

“It was zero degrees Fahrenheit outdoors, or minus 18 Celsius,” he said, with a laugh. “My parents asked me how the weather was, and when I told them it was minus 18, they couldn’t believe it. They said ‘WHAT? Are you sure that there’s a minus sign next to the temperature?’ I had to send them a picture of the current temperature as it was appearing on my phone to prove it.”

An important lesson Gadhok has learned at WMU is how to strike a balance between studying and relaxing. He said he has learned much from meeting new people and trying new activities when he’s not busy with course work. He plans to apply all the experiences he gains at WMU toward securing a satisfying career in the food marketing world.

“Preparing for a career is like playing a game of chess, he said. “You try to anticipate every possible outcome, and if there is even a possibility for something to go after and I think I can do it, I go for it!”