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**SUPRATEEK
SARKER, PHD**

MBA '89

ROLLS-ROYCE
COMMONWEALTH
COMMERCE
PROFESSOR;
UNIVERSITY OF
VIRGINIA

CROZET,
VIRGINIA



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A SCHOLAR'S CALLING



CERTIFICATES, MEMENTOS AND OTHER memorabilia fill nearly every space of Suprateek Sarker's office on the campus of the University of Virginia (UVA) – memories and commendations of a prolific career as an academic and leading voice in the area of Information Systems.

Occupying a place of prominence on his desk is a 2024 addition: a statuette of a bear, the inaugural Dean's Award given by the Hankamer School of Business. The award recognizes alumni, donors and friends of HSB who go above and beyond to support and represent the

mission of the Business School, which Sarker does in spades.

Sarker, PhD, serves as the Rolls-Royce Commonwealth Commerce Professor of Information Technology at the McIntire School of Commerce at UVA. His career has taken him around the world as a researcher, guest lecturer and scholar, but it is Baylor and HSB that he describes as being his foundational bedrock.

Sarker earned his bachelor's degree in Computer Science and Engineering from Jadavpur University in India before deciding to pursue additional

STORY BY
Russell Rankin

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Nick Cline

DEAN'S AWARD

education in the United States. He chose Baylor, sight unseen.

"It's been a wonderful journey," Sarker said. "I came to the U.S. in 1988 – right off the boat, if you will, to Waco."

Sarker recalls arriving in Dallas and needing a quarter for the payphone to call the shuttle to take him to Waco, but "I didn't even have a quarter, just a few hundred-dollar notes," he said. "All the little things which you have to deal with when you are in a country for the first time by yourself. It was an experience that is a lot of fun to recall."

Sarker's first experiences at Baylor – the strangeness of Texas notwithstanding – confirmed he had made the right decision.

"There were many students and faculty who embraced me – a person who was an international student, very different from themselves," Sarker said. "One of the most remarkable things about Baylor is that the professors I had were among the most caring and among those who were mentors and have remained mentors. I think that is one of the most striking aspects of what Baylor was and what Baylor continues to be."

Sarker enrolled in the Master of Business Administration (MBA) Program at HSB, a 16-month program that proved to be foundational for the rest of his career.

"Baylor faculty were very compassionate, very caring and they knew how to take care of us intellectually, as well as care for us as human beings who were away from their world as international students," Sarker said. "This was a new world we were trying to get used to."

Sarker committed to survive being in the U.S. and dreamed of thriving. His original plan was to become a consultant following his MBA degree. "When I came to Baylor, I had no idea I would become a professor," he said. "Academia just happened as I navigated the U.S. educational system and eventually pursued a PhD."

Sarker began his teaching career at George Washington University before spending 14 years at Washington State University. In the years since, he has served as a visiting scholar at institutions around the globe, including Finland, Denmark, U.K., Switzerland, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Taiwan, Vietnam and China.

In addition to teaching, Sarker serves as the editor-in-chief of *Information Systems Research*, one of the top two journals followed by those in the information systems discipline in business.

"It's a very big honor," Sarker said. "There's a pretty elaborate search process to be selected as editor so it is a huge honor and a huge responsibility."

During his career, and especially during his 12 years at UVA's McIntire School of Commerce, Sarker said he has carried forward the caring, student-centric approach he received at HSB.

"Teaching is sacred," he said. "It is something very important for us at McIntire, just like teaching and mentoring was something that was taken very seriously at Baylor."

"There are many other excellent schools in the world, but some of them see teaching as a necessary evil, or

constraint," he said. "Of course, you need to do research, but teaching is something that is very central to our mission. Baylor set this tone because I encountered exceptionally good teachers, instructors and professors who were dedicated to teaching and mentoring."

In a way, Sarker teaches with a commitment to paying forward ideas and values mined from the foundation of care and nurture he received at Baylor.

"In the end, why did we become professors? I think it would be to make a difference," he said. "Scholars make a difference by making an impact in students' lives; making an impact by creating knowledge that becomes a foundation for other scholars, or creating knowledge that companies can use to become better companies."

Sarker's journey of research, teaching and discovery has come a long way since first arriving in Dallas without a quarter for a payphone, to 35 years later being honored with the first HSB Dean's Award in recognition of a career of leadership and ambassadorship for Hankamer.

"I never sought to be a leader in my field," he said. "I was just trying to survive. And then suddenly, some good things happened."

"So many people – at Baylor and beyond – helped me navigate and find myself and succeed," he said. "This has been some journey and I have been very fortunate, so I must carry the label of leader with great humility and responsibility. I hope to be a good ambassador for Baylor and continue to live up to the values that Baylor exemplifies." ■