

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Nida Zia explores options while earning IU Kokomo degree

KOKOMO, Ind. — Nida Zia lost her heart to the people of Colombia, on a humanitarian trip to the South American country.

She now plans to use her Indiana University Kokomo education to help them, after she earns her Master of Arts in Liberal Studies (M.A.L.S.) at Commencement May 7.

“I want to give back to the people there, through teaching or a medical mission,” she said. “I grew up in Pakistan, which is also an underserved country, so I know the difference I could make there.”

Zia lived in Pakistan until she was 9. Her parents moved their family to Queens, New York, seeking better opportunities for their children. A job opportunity brought them to Kokomo three years later.

Zia, 22, enrolled at IU Kokomo planning to earn a bachelor’s degree in biology within three years, and then go straight to medical school. An English class with Associate Professor Eva White and a humanitarian trip with JR Pico, lecturer in Spanish, led her down another path.

“Dr. White made such an impression on me, and made me want to explore outside my chosen science field,” Zia said. “I thought this would be a different experience than being in a lab, and I wanted to try it. I was thinking about Colombia every day, and the M.A.L.S. teaching track seemed like a way I could add to my teaching skills and do something there.”

She is now finalizing her plans for next year, to either begin studies for her Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine degree, or to spend a year teaching in a Colombian school before entering her medical program.

White said no matter when Zia begins her studies, she would have unique preparation for her medical career.

“Nida’s intellectual curiosity, enthusiasm, and openness allow her to transcend the traditional divisions between the sciences and the humanities,” she said. “She will be one of those rare physicians who will look at her patients holistically, and who will be open to use all sorts of therapies to heal them, thanks to her multidisciplinary background.”

Zia chose the M.A.L.S. teaching track, which prepares graduates to be college instructors. She focused on science, completing a teaching assistantship with Ashley Duffitt, visiting lecturer in biology. She has presented lectures, graded papers, and assisted in labs, among other duties.

“I’ve learned that teaching is a lot of work,” she said. “I can’t imagine going out to teach without this kind of preparation.

She’s enjoyed teaching, and may combine her medical degree with her master’s to teach at a medical school.

Zia appreciates the support she’s received from her family to explore many career options. IU Kokomo has become their tradition, as her brother, Usman, and sister, Rabia, both graduated in 2010. Younger sister Maheen currently is a student in the informatics program.

“My parents immigrated here to give their children a better life, and these kinds of choices,” she said. “Everyone knows this is the land of opportunity. I will be curious to see where God leads me.”

Indiana University Kokomo serves north central Indiana.

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