

Professor extolls positive attitude

By James Fitzroy

"The determined student will look for more work in order to understand; the student who wants only to get his piece of paper thinking of it as a passport to prosperity generally complains about the workload," said Assistant Professor of Computer Applications Dr. Mehdi Khosrowpour recently.

The professor seems genuinely concerned about what he sees as an overall lack of commitment by students to the learning experience available here at Capitol Campus.

He said that in his experience as a student and as an educator, "everywhere I've been I've found a core of complainers who don't see that their trouble is in their attitude. They choose to blame factors outside themselves--teachers, workload, administrators, what have you. All of this is just an excuse to escape personal responsibility for one's success or failure."

Khosrowpour is a man who cannot accept or understand a negative attitude. "Challenge is what life should be built around," he said.

He described the experience of a friend who studied computer programming at a university in Tehran as an example.

"The course assignment, of course, required the writing of programs. Simple enough, except the school had no computer equipment to test the program on. The students themselves then became the computers. By minute examination, they found their errors and corrected them."

This friend of Khosrowpour's had no problem integrating what he learned in this manner with actual equipment when he emigrated to America. Attitude and determination to accomplish set goals are what distinguishes the successful person, according to Khosrowpour.

He said he has "no sympathy for students who complain about lack of equipment or inadequate materials or excessive workload."

He believes many students make a mistake by comparing themselves to others.

"This is a danger for the individual. Other people may have a talent in an area where you may be weak and you may excel where someone else is lost," he noted.

"Don't compare yourselves to others. Look into yourself to know your strengths and weaknesses. Comparing is the first step towards failure--it can lead to self-dissappointment."

Khosrowpour's formula for

to me with whatever might be bothering them," he said, "not only in their schoolwork.

Teaching, to me, is a seven-day-a-week job."

He is aware that he could be earning substantially more working in private industry but he would miss the challenge he finds in the academic setting.

"I believe that educators are at the cutting edge of society, especially in the computer field," he pointed out.

"Innovation is necessary here. I

evaluation and self-motivation.

He came to the United States knowing that he would have obstacles to overcome before he would attain the goals he had already set for himself. He began alone in a new country with little command of the language and less of an idea of the nature of the culture he was becoming a part of. Characteristically, he wasted no time.

His student days were, for him, a dual learning experience, he said.

"I enjoyed learning about the culture just as much as I did my schoolwork," he emphasized. "To me, this was a culture I knew nothing about and here I was living in it! I felt I had to overcome what I perceived as a resistance in myself. I think that a move to a new culture brings on an automatic reaction of resistance in a person. This resistance to change is probably a very common phenomenon."

"My approach," he explained, "was to socialize with Americans, people brought up in this society. I saw when I first got to this country that if I mixed only with Iranians, I would be isolating myself from the culture in which I was going to be living for a number of years. My American friends helped me to discern the major aspects of this culture more readily."

"For anyone moving to a new society, what matters is how one manages that resistance. I think it's a matter of treating the new culture with respect for its own traditions and habits," Khosrowpour continued.

"My attitude was that it was a unique opportunity to learn another language and experience another culture that those born here weren't able to have."

"What I'm saying is that one has to be interested enough to take the time to learn the finer points of acceptable behavior in order to appreciate and be absorbed into the new culture. It's hard, I know. It took me a few months to get used to the idea that in America, it's alright to wear walking shorts in public. In Teheran that is not acceptable behavior."

He laughed and added, "And if I go back to Teheran, I won't dare to wear shorts."

"Going full circle, it comes back to attitude," he said, "if you don't have that positive attitude in all aspects of your life, you can make your own life miserable. The constant working towards the goal is what makes life interesting."



Photo by Jeffrey G. Shatzer

Dr. Mehdi Khosrowpour, Assistant Professor of Computer Applications

success is to adopt a positive attitude, set specific, realistic goals, and to then move towards them "like a horse wearing blinders."

His conversation frequently returns to his students and the attempts he has made to get his philosophy across. His eyes reflect his dismay because many do not understand his emphasis on goal-setting. He feels that they are missing "that tremendous satisfaction of achievement" that would spur them on to further successes.

Khosrowpour likes to get to know "the person within the student. I encourage them to come

would not have the opportunity in the private sector that is available to me as a teacher. Industry has a tendency to get static when things are going well. I wouldn't want to face the same situations day after day. I prefer the almost daily changes that occur in the classroom."

This process is a two-way street for Khosrowpour; it makes the academic life even more interesting for him. "Some days I feel as if I'm benefitting more than my students," he said, smiling. "The exchange of ideas, the searching for answers sometimes gives me insights into my field that I couldn't get anywhere else."

He is a man with an unshakable belief in the power of individual will. He knows that personal determination directed at a particular goal gets results. "Attitude is everything," he said. "Belief in one's abilities, yes, but your basic attitude toward adversity is what will ensure success."

Khosrowpour himself is the best example of the successful application of his kind of personal

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