

## International Student and Scholar Spotlight

**Name:** Nadeesha Mawella  
**Year at K-State:** 4th year PhD student  
**Major:** Statistics  
**Home Country:** Sri Lanka

**What was it like coming to K-State? How did you decide to come here?**

It was very exciting and great. It was my first time traveling outside my country and it was hard to leave my family. But when I arrived here, from the first day, I loved the calm and quiet environment in Kansas. When I visited the university, I was attracted by the old architecture and it reminded me the Harry Potter movie.



I decided to come here because I wanted to do graduate studies. I have been passionate about Statistics since I was in college back in Sri Lanka and set as my goal to become a statistician. I graduated with a Bachelors' degree in Statistics & Operations Research from the University of Peradeniya, Sri Lanka and I wanted to continue my studies to do something to this world from what I learned. Specially, I wanted to contribute for projects which

are in favor of humans. I was attracted by the fact that, as a statistician I can contribute to projects across a wide variety of disciplines. So I decided to do graduate studies in Statistics. Because of the great reputation of the Statistics program in K-State I decided to apply to K-State and I got accepted.

**What has your experience been like so far?**

It's been really great. I love K-State and Manhattan. People are very nice and friendly. The professors are also very friendly and helpful. I love teaching and working as a teaching assistant. Majority of my students are Business majors, usually a combination of juniors, sophomores and seniors. I love to help them to understand Statistics which most of them think as a difficult subject. I love to teach them to see how Statistics can be applied in their field.

**What were some big differences when you first arrived (social, academic, weather, etc.)? Was there anything that was really surprising?**

**When I first arrived, I was surprised by the calm and quiet environment. Because I thought it would be a busy environment. It was an amazing experience to see snow for the first time. Because in my country we have a tropical weather throughout the year. I like to see the changes in seasons which I don't see in my country. College students in my country usually don't do part time jobs and they only do studies. But here most of the students do jobs while they are in college and I know some of my students do two jobs, it is surprising me sometimes that how they manage their time to do academic work and their jobs.**

**Was K-State what you expected? Was Manhattan what you expected?**

**K-State was the first university I applied for graduate studies and I was lucky enough to get selected. Before I heard from K-State I got an acceptance letter from another US university but I waited until I get the response from K-State because I really wanted to enter to the graduate program here. K-State has been what I expected, I could continue to learn more about Statistics and improve knowledge, I could participate for the JSM conference which is one of the largest statistical events in the world and I could present my research.**

**I think Manhattan is an ideal college town. I like Tuttle creek lake and Konza Prairie. My favorite thing is to see trees cover with so many flowers and tiny flower buds in Spring. I also like pillsbury crossing.**

**Is classroom culture a lot different here?**

**Yes I see some differences. In my country we can't keep a 'cheat sheet' during the exams, we need to memorize all the formulas and equations. The exams were always closed book exams and we never had take-home exams. In college, we get a study break, it is one week break before the exam week. But here the syllabus has scheduled to continue until the exam week. I think in US, college professors are more connected with students during the lecture. Students ask questions during the lecture. I think in here professors are more in a friend zone with students and students sometimes call the senior professors by their name. I guess the professors are fine with that but compared to my country it is different.**

**What do you like about being at K-State?**

**I like the feeling of purple proud and the student atmosphere. I like the great bond between football and K-State which makes it as a one big purple family. Everyone here is so connected. I like the university traditions like 'Wabash Cannonball' and 'Willie' the wildcat, I've taken pictures with him at several events. I also like Call Hall ice-cream.**

**What kinds of things are you involved in on campus?**

**I am involved in the Sri Lankan students' association and I served as the treasurer in last year. We won the award for Best Multicultural Organization and award for the best exhibition stall at the cultural exhibition. I also participated for the Sri Lankan dance item in the talent show and the international fashion show. I am also involved in the Stat Club and served as the treasurer. I participate for the K-State Open House to represent Department of Statistics.**

**What do you do for fun in Manhattan?**

**Graduate studies keep me busy, but on weekends, sometimes I go to Tuttle creek park with friends, sometimes we do barbecue parties. I prepare meals with my husband and invite friends for dinner at our apartment or we go out for dinner, specially for Chinese and Thai restaurants. We like spicy food but it is hard to find spicy food restaurants here. We have a good american friend John, he invites us for dinner and for special events like thanksgiving and Christmas, we go there and have fun. Sometimes we go to see fairs and other events around Manhattan.**

**If you could have known one thing before moving here, what would it be?**

**Probably I should have known that there is no shop to buy Sri Lankan spices in Manhattan.**

**Do you have any advice for incoming international students?**

**I would say, Don't be afraid that you are far away from home, if you involved with the community and with on-campus activities you won't feel alone. Don't walk away, don't be distracted, if you get involved eventually you would find good friends.**

**What would you like others to know about being an international student at K-State?**

**Being an international student is a challenge. But K-State provides a good support and also great opportunities for international students to share their cultural values and traditions with other students. Every year, there will be a week full of events including cultural exhibition and talent show. Also there are workshops organized by International Student Services to help international students to adjust to US culture. As an international student I don't feel like I am isolated in K-State, most of the time I feel like I am accepted as a member in one big purple family.**

**Would you mind sharing a phrase from your native language and what it means?**

**I like to share a phrase my father used to say in my childhood, that is**

**“දැන ඉගෙන ගන්නම නමයි කෙනෙකුගෙ වත්කම - ගුණ තුවණ දැක්කම මිබට සලකයි ලොවේ ඔක්කොම”**

**that means - “ The greatest wealth of a person is the right knowledge, when the world see the wisdom along with qualities, it will treat you well wherever you go.”**