



## Pakistani Fellows Transform a US Campus

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By Lisa Inks

[Education](#), [International Education](#), [Youth](#), [Asia](#), [Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan \(Global UGRAD in Pakistan\)](#)

July 5, 2011

Two Pakistani fellows made a major impact at [Endicott College](#) in the small town of Beverly, Massachusetts, where up until their visit some students knew their country only in terms of the Taliban or its ongoing conflict with India.

Hammad and Humayun, fellows of the [Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan](#), arrived at the anxious campus this spring for a semester-long chance to study with Americans at a premiere institution. It was not long before they made an unforgettable impression and changed the way the campus community thought about Pakistan.

“I had considered Pakistan to be Middle Eastern, but they corrected me about it being an Asian country,” said Joe Albert, a junior who became good friends with the fellows. “I was also surprised to see how beautiful it was from the photos they showed.”

Hammad’s experience talking to American students like Joe reflects some of the bigger shifts in mindset he saw at Endicott. “All they knew of Pakistan was about the Taliban or, in case of political science students, the bad relations between Pakistan and India. I changed this perception of people by showing them some other sides of the picture,” said Hammad.

The fellows did not always see eye to eye on international relations and politics. Where the two fellows disagreed, they showed American students a more textured, nuanced version of Pakistan, said [Michael Kilburn](#), Cross-Cultural Skills Coordinator at the college. This gave students a chance to see multiple perspectives on US involvement in the “War Against Terror,” rather than one view.

In daily life, the fellows’ actions spoke loudly. From collaborating on dinners with host families to volunteering on and off campus, the pair left an indelible imprint on the community.

“They were like global engagement rock stars,” said [April Burriss](#), Dean of the Endicott School of International Education. “Any trepidation we might have had was wiped away.”

Burriss emphasized the value of people-to-people contact for diplomacy and said their presence on campus was transformative. “We are all the better for having hosted them this semester and we can never be aloof or disconnected about issues related to their homeland,” she said.

Meanwhile, back in Pakistan, the two fellows are sharing their positive view of Endicott, Beverly, and the US with their home communities. Hammad, a youth trainer, incorporated intercultural harmony into his training sessions since returning. “If I can change mindsets of those people who don’t think like me,” Hammad said, “then it is much easier to change the perspectives of those who are part of what I am.”

And bringing the mindsets of both Americans and Pakistanis a little closer together is one leap forward on the path to mutual understanding.

*The [Global Undergraduate Exchange Program in Pakistan](#) is a program of the [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) of the U.S. Department of State, and implemented by IREX.*