

global PERSPECTIVES

ROCHISSHIL VARMA

Rochishhil Varma realized early on after becoming a Spartan that he wanted to be an advocate for international students at MSU. So, from his freshman year until his graduation, he was involved in student organizations, including the undergraduate student government body ASMSU and the International Student Association (ISA).

Varma, who graduated in December 2024 with a Bachelor's in applied engineering sciences, said his time at MSU has been a fulfilling experience.

"I guess it's been a good journey starting off with no in-person connection -- it was just me and my laptop," Varma said, "and then signing off as the president of ISA and making some changes that I found significant."

Varma's Spartan journey began during the Fall 2020 semester remotely, from Oman. He said he was looking for ways to get involved on campus, when he found out about a position to be a treasurer for ASMSU.

"My friends shared an Instagram post and they were like, Hey, do you want to join? I was like, yeah, sure, why not?" he said. "And it worked out in my favor and I became the new treasurer."

One of the challenges that Varma faced was the 9-hour time difference between his home in Oman and Michigan. He would have meetings at 1:30 or 2 a.m.



"Everyone else in [the meeting] was super excited and super energetic," Varma said. "And all of us -- I think there were three other people who were also from Asia -- we were all in the same time zone and we were all tired because it was later than midnight for us."

"But it was fun because, again, I formed so many friendships. It was a good experience overall, very diverse."

During his Freshman year, Varma also joined the Undergraduate International Indian Student Association (UIISA). He said that he was looking for people he could celebrate festivals, such as Holi and Diwali with, and that the organization was fairly new.



"[UIISA] was primarily the founder, Alex's, friend group, and I sort of became a new part," he said. "I think when I first came on campus, the first people who I met or whose apartment I went to was that whole friend group."

"So, it was fun for me because I had anticipated that when I first joined Michigan State, I would have to make friends all over again. I wouldn't know anyone, but having them was comfortable. Even though the place was new, it didn't feel strange because I was like, 'Okay, I have someone at some point or other helping me out with something with other.'"

Varma said that he is passionate about UIISA and wants to create a sense of group affinity.

"When we come to MSU, I feel like most people -- especially international students -- they don't have someone to call if there's an emergency," Varma said. "So, at UIISA, we try to provide that structure that, 'Hey, we are the seniors, you're a freshman; you can call us whenever you want and we'll be there to help you.'"

Varma also joined the International Student Association (ISA), which is the reason, he said, he calls the International Center his home, in his sophomore year as the vice president. In the 2023-24 school year, he was the ISA president.

"When the university advertises to us, they say, 'Hey, you'll get to meet people from all across the globe,'" Varma said. "And at ISA, I actually saw that happening -- there are people from Europe, there are people from Africa, there are people from other parts of the world. And actually getting to see where our views align, where our views don't align, what other cultures look like and things like that."

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"So, I would say ISA is the reason why I call the International Center my home; it's the main reason why I'm so attached to, or I will be so attached even when I graduate [from] MSU."

For Varma, getting to meet various people from different backgrounds and countries has shaped his attachment toward MSU.

"When I first came in, I was trying to understand how everyone is so passionate about the Spartan identity," Varma said. "I feel like as the years went forward -- as I became a freshman to sophomore, sophomore to junior and so on -- I realized that while we naturally come into MSU with the 'Spartan' tag, it's the experiences; it's the people we meet; it's the things that we do that increases our attachment to this place, and makes MSU our home away from home."

By: Ayushya Gautam

