

REVOLUTIONIZING SRI LANKAN HIGHER EDUCATION

PROF CHAMINDA RATHNAYAKE
DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR

How would you describe your journey with the NSBM Green University?

As a pioneer member of the team, I am so happy to say that I've been part of this journey since the very first step: the establishment of NSBM City Campus. As a well established permanent employee of another institute, I, and few others took a massive risk by joining a very new organization to turn a budding concept into reality. Accepting an academic position at NSBM, which was only a concept at that time, was one of the biggest risks and accomplishments of my life. Seeing that our dream to build a brand new university has come to

fruition, I am more than happy and proud of my decision.

In Sri Lanka, many students do not get the opportunity to pursue higher education due to limited resources. We are a team of government employees who've taken up the challenge of solving this problem sans financial assistance from the government. Our journey has been a focused effort towards the enrichment of higher education levels in Sri Lanka. "NSBM Green University" is our solution to the students who are willing to pursue higher education in their motherland. The conception, implementation, and development of this iconic State organization is a process that I reminisce with great pride.

“THE CITY CAMPUS WAS THE FIRST STEP TAKEN TO INITIATE THE NATIONAL SCHOOL OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT AS A NOTEWORTHY INSTITUTE IN THE VAST ARENA OF HIGHER EDUCATION. THE CAMPUS AT NUGEGODA WAS ESTABLISHED FORESEEING THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES UNDER THE VISIONARY LEADERSHIP OF OUR VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF. E.A. WEERASINGHE. WE MANAGED TO DESIGN DEGREE PROGRAMMES, SECURE PARTNERSHIPS, STRENGTHEN FINANCES, AND DEVELOP A BRAND NAME FOR OURSELVES, ALL WHILE CONTINUING WITH THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF GREEN UNIVERSITY TOWN AT HOMAGAMA, THANKS TO THE FORETHOUGHT OF OUR LEADER”



How would you describe the transformation of NSBM from a City Campus to the Green University it is today?

The City Campus was the first step taken to initiate the National School of Business Management as a noteworthy institute in the vast arena of higher education. The campus at Nugegoda was established foreseeing the challenges and opportunities under the visionary leadership of our Vice-Chancellor, Prof. E.A. Weerasinghe. We managed

to design degree programmes, secure partnerships, strengthen finances, and develop a brand name for ourselves, all while continuing with the constructions of Green University Town at Homagama, thanks to the forethought of our leader.

The transition from the Nugegoda City Campus to NSBM Green University Town was a grand event to behold. The opening was graced by the then President, Prime Minister, distinguished delegates, including foreigners, parents and students. We

made sure that our students got accustomed to the pleasant surroundings of the calm and serene area by providing them with the best facilities. The birth of the NSBM Green University brought about the dawn of a new era for higher education while benchmarking and setting standards that were never seen before.

Where would you place the NSBM Green University in the Sri Lankan higher education landscape?

At the moment, we are a higher educational institute on par with the facilities provided at well-renowned international universities. We cater to the needs of the 21st century generation while retaining the values and standards of higher education in Sri Lanka. In short, NSBM provides an international university experience with local values.

How would you describe your experience in managing over 10 000 youth, and what have you identified as the main challenges in this process?

The students of the 21st century are one of the best generations; we are aware of and respect them and their culture. We put in an extra effort to understand our students' feelings, so I personally don't find "managing" to be a difficult task.

We enjoy mingling with our students, and we are also very passionate about our jobs. There is one speciality of the staff at NSBM Green University; both academics and non-academics take an active part in guiding our young students. The top management has an effective mechanism running to ensure that all guidelines are adhered to. The team at NSBM acts as one single entity; quite like a car's engine, I would say. Each and every cog of the "engine" plays an integral role in assuring the smooth management of the organization. This strong team ethos at NSBM stems from the close-knit community and the passion and hard work of each and every individual.

NSBM Green University has gained unparalleled success within a short period of time. What do you see as the key strengths behind this success?



Any organization should have two main strengths: managerial and financial. We at NSBM have perfectly aligned ourselves with these strengths through the dedication of our valued staff.

Just as we make sure that our academic programmes and services in high quality, we also make sure to maintain our financial stability. The strength we gain through both these sectors allows us to take new decisions and expand our horizons; Phase 2 of the NSBM Green University is one such initiative.

What are the major developments, events that we can look forward to in the future?

Apart from the ongoing constructions related to the proposed Phase 2 of NSBM, we plan to further enrich the academic and research sectors of the university. We are and will encourage and guide

both our academics and students to conduct more practical and applied research. With the development of new postgraduate and doctoral degree programmes, the establishment of new faculties, and the addition of new staff members, we hope to see a significant advancement in the academic field. We hope to see some bright NSBM alumni joining the academic staff as well.

We will make sure that we are well-positioned in the academic field in the future, and I am sure that NSBM will become a force to recognise in the years to come, as our students lead the country towards success.

How do you describe the management system that we implemented during the pandemic situation?

That's a good question. Regardless of the time, incident or its magnitude, we have always made sure to take prompt action. In life as well as in organisations sometimes the issue is not the problem; but how we face it. We at NSBM made sure to overcome the hardships caused by the pandemic by handling it in the most appropriate manner. We continued our university in an online manner while adapting new technologies when needed. Further, we worked hard and turned the threat into an opportunity. In fact, a larger number of students registered at our institute during the past year than in the pre-pandemic situation. I would say that the secret to our success lies in our ability to stay on track amidst all the hardships. We were able to continuously conduct lectures while prioritizing the health of both our staff and students. Even the pandemic affecting the entire world has not been able to undermine our progress.

**By Kasun Dissanayake
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