



# *Sir Syed Excellence in Science Award*

*Annual Newsletter : Volume 2*

*December, 2010*

## *Editorial*

*"A man may die, nations may rise and fall, but the idea lives on."* - Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, founder of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

It is truly heartening that more than a century after the death of Sir Syed, his well-wishers have successfully kept his noble idea alive. In pursuit of upholding Sir Syed's dream and with the desire of doing something for their beloved AMU, some alumni in North America established the Sir Syed Excellence in Science Award (SSESA) in the year 2007. The major initiative of this award is to encourage and assist meritorious students at AMU to pursue higher studies in US/Europe and other international destinations of repute. Over the past few years, we have seen SSESA grow remarkably, and we have welcomed some brilliant and inspiring people to our tight knit community. Moreover, our faith in this program has been strengthened with the successful amalgamation of our awardees in spreading our mission further.

This annual newsletter will aim to layout the main features of the SSESA program, and highlight the accomplishments of our awardees in this past year. I hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter and come forward to contribute to SSESA's noble cause in whatever way you can. To contribute financially to this humble initiative, please send your check made payable to SSESA, to the contact information listed at the end of this newsletter, or pay online through a secure electronic channel on our website ([www.aaane.us/ssesa](http://www.aaane.us/ssesa)). To volunteer your precious time and expertise to mentor aspiring young students, please contact us at the email addresses at the end of this newsletter.

**-Beenish Zia & Rehan Baqri.**

## *Overview of SSESA*

SSESA is a semi-autonomous organization and was established in 2007 with the financial and logistical support of the Aligarh Alumni Association of New England. SSESA is a highly competitive award and 8-10 recipients are selected every year based on their academic merit after an intense screening mechanism.

The award pays for the GRE and TOEFL exam fees and the application fees of up to five universities, a total of about \$700 per student. Along with this monetary assistance, all the students are paired with an experienced mentor in their field of study who guides them throughout their application process. It is important to note that none of the students are handed any cash. The fees for exams and the application fees are paid online through the SSESA bank account directly from the US. This way it makes the online credit card international transaction much easier for students at AMU as well as this system also assures the donors that their donated funds were used in the noble cause they intended to contribute towards.

The criterion for awarding the SSESA award is based completely on a student's academic standing. The SSESA team has always strived to maintain a fair and unbiased judgment. The initial shortlist is based on the student's academic background, resume and statement of purpose, graded independently by experts in the field of study. The top 25 shortlisted students are invited to appear in a GRE-style written test and a personal interview. The interview panel itself is comprised of renowned academicians at AMU and elsewhere, personalities of impeccable academic credibility. Consistent with our stringent selection procedure, every year SSESA awardees are being successfully admitted to reputable international universities.

## ***SSESa awardees, 2010-11***

We are pleased to announce the 2010-2011 SSESa recipients. In alphabetical order of last name:

- **Syed Murtuza Abbas** (Engineering)
- **Abdullah Ahsan** (Engineering)
- **Amena Arif** (Biochemistry)
- **Musfira Jilani** (Engineering)
- **Supriya Jindal** (Biochemistry)
- **Najeeb P.K** (Physics)
- **Sayeed ur Rehman** (Biochemistry)
- **Asim Rizvi** (Biotechnology)

These candidates were selected from a global pool of applicants from the Faculties of Science, Life Science, Agricultural Science, Engineering and Medicine. Our interview panel for the year 2010-2011 comprised of Prof. Saleemuddin (Biotechnology), Dr. Suhail Sabir (Chemistry), Dr. Shahid Jameel (ICGEB, New Delhi), Prof. Wasi Haider (Physics), Dr. Qudsia Tahseen (Zoology) and Mr. Rihan Alvi (ZHCET). We thank them for their generous time and effort.

## ***Successful placements of SSESa recipients in 2010***

- **Mohsin Raza Khan** – PhD candidate in Bio- analytical chemistry program at *Georgia State University*.
- **Savita Singh** – PhD candidate in Biomedical Sciences at *Cleveland State University*.
- **Abdullah Ahsan** – MS candidate in Telecommunication Engineering at *University of Maryland*.
- **Syed Murtuza Abbas** – MS candidate in Structural Engineering at *University of Cincinnati*.
- **Ali Shoeb Moon** – MS candidate in Chemical Engineering at *Yeungnam University, South Korea*
- **Mustafa Ali Khan** – PhD candidate at *UAE University*.

## ***SSESa at FAAA convention***

SSESa, as an organization and as a collaborative team, was well represented at the Federation of Aligarh Alumni Associations at Chicago in July 2010. SSESa representatives included Mr. Ali Rizvi (Boston), Mr. Hasan Kamal (Atlanta), Dr. Saif Sheikh (Chicago) and Mr. Rehan Baqri (Michigan). The occasion became more special for the SSESa community when Mr. Asim Rizvi, SSESa recipient 2010, was able to join us. In his presentation, Mr. Rehan Baqri described the scope and mission of SSESa and encouraged FAAA member associations to come forward and support the efforts of SSESa. Mr. Asim Rizvi, in a special talk, also stressed the importance of mentoring programs like SSESa in guiding students like him. From the idea of spreading awareness about our program and generating support, the presence of SSESa at the FAAA convention was extremely successful and several member associations have expressed their desire to support our cause.



*Mr. Rehan Baqri  
presenting at the  
FAAA convention in  
Chicago.*



---

*"I was ecstatic when I received the scholarship letter from SSESa. This scholarship has given me a more realistic chance of achieving my goal of a research career. I am thankful to the SSESa team members and donors for supporting me and I am very happy to have received admission in Georgia State University"*

***Mohsin Raza Khan***

---

## ***SSESA Outreach and Community Service Initiative***

Early in our scholarship program, we realized that along with hand-picking some meritorious students from AMU, it is also our duty to educate more students about the higher education options in the US/Europe and how they can best avail these options. For the past 3 years, we have been organizing lectures and seminars at the AMU campus, delivered by members and well-wishers of SSESA. It is our sincere belief that such interactive sessions will spread awareness and encourage more AMU students to explore education/career options outside of India. Following is a brief update of our outreach and community service initiative:

**Dr. Saif Sheikh** (Chicago) visited AMU in July 2010 and interacted with over 200 students from the Department of Chemistry, Biochemistry, Engineering College, Sir Syed Hall and MM Hall. He presented tips on resume writing, preparing strong applications and discussed the importance of maintaining ethical standards in academic settings. These multiple sessions were made possible by the tireless efforts of an esteemed member of our Advisory Board, **Dr. Suhail Sabir** (D/o Chemistry, AMU). Dr. Sheikh also gave a motivational talk to students at S.T.S High School (Minto Circle), which was enthusiastically received by high school students and teachers, often an ignored age group in our society.

**Dr. Shahid Jameel** (ICGEB) and **Dr. Ashraf Khan** (University of Massachusetts Medical School), guest lecturers at the Summer University program at AMU, gave presentations to students on behalf of SSESA. These presentations were designed to spread awareness of education opportunities abroad and enlighten students on how

to avail the assistance of SSESA.

**Mr. Ali Rizvi** (Boston) visited AMU in June 2010 and interacted with SSESA awardees and potential applicants over three sessions, spanning over 4 hours. It was an informal discussion on higher education in USA in general, the role of SSESA and its mentors and the expectations that we have from students.

**Mr. Adil Masood** (University of Ghent, Belgium) visited AMU in March 2010 and gave a presentation on behalf of SSESA. Mr. Masood is a successful SSESA awardee from the 2007 batch and his talk featured tips on applying to, and navigating a PhD in the European system of education. This event brought double cheer to the SSESA fraternity as not only was his talk greatly appreciated by students from the Science and Life Science faculties, but also the fact that Adil was our first SSESA awardee to go back to AMU as our ambassador. This has reinvigorated our belief that our humble program is truly on its way to identifying and mentoring future leaders of our community.



*Mr. Ali Rizvi met with SSESA awardees during his visit to AMU*

---

*“The whole experience was great, but the best part was the question and answer session. I was highly impressed by their awareness and intelligent points they raised. Shah Nawaz, Zulqar and Sarmad deserve special acknowledgements for arranging the logistics for the seminars”*  
- **Dr. Saif Sheikh**

---



*Dr. Saif Sheikh interacting with students at the Department of Chemistry, AMU*

**All donations to SSESa are tax-exempt**  
Tax ID: 54-2098920

Make **Checks** payable to: SSESa  
Addressed to:  
Dr. Syed Mohsin Alvi  
2012 Windsor Ridge Drive  
Westborough, MA 01581

---

***For more information and  
online donations visit us at:***

**<http://www.aaane.us/ssesa>**

---

***Become a member on Facebook  
(follow link on our website):***

**[Sir Syed Excellence in Science Award](#)**

- To network with students and mentors
- To share opportunities/openings
- To share information on GRE/TOEFL

**Contacts:**

[rehan.baqri@gmail.com](mailto:rehan.baqri@gmail.com)  
[shaida.andrabi@hotmail.com](mailto:shaida.andrabi@hotmail.com)  
[saif.sheikh@gmail.com](mailto:saif.sheikh@gmail.com)  
[alirizvi@aol.com](mailto:alirizvi@aol.com)  
[khanahm@gmail.com](mailto:khanahm@gmail.com)

**Acknowledgements**

Aligarh Alumni Associations of New England, Atlanta, Birmingham, Houston,  
Michigan\*, Tri State New York\* and Upstate New York\*  
Indian Muslim Relief & Charities (IMRC)  
Aligarh Education Endowment Fund (AEEF)\*  
All individual donors, awardees and applicants

(\* pledged support for 2011)

***The SSESa Team, 2010 – 2011***

**Executive Committee**

Mr. Rehan Baqri, East Lansing (Chair)  
Dr. Shaida Andrabi, Kashmir  
Mr. Ali Rizvi, Boston  
Dr. Saif Sheikh, Chicago

**Operational Team**

Dr. Arshan Khan, Los Angeles (Senior Advisor)  
Ms. Beenish Zia, Portland  
Mr. Mohsin Raza Khan, Atlanta

**Advisory Board**

Dr. M. Saleemuddin , Aligarh Muslim University  
Dr. Suhail Sabir, Aligarh Muslim University  
Dr. Shahid Jameel, ICGEB, New Delhi  
Dr. Qudsia Tahseen, Aligarh Muslim University  
Dr. Mohammad Azam, Cincinnati  
Dr. Rashid Bhat, Boston  
Dr. Tahir Hussain, Houston  
Dr. Arshad Rahman, Rochester  
Dr. Arshad Siddiqui, Boston  
Dr. Shakir Hussain, Youngstown