

Meet the Prof: B.S. Sridhar

by Faculty Advocacy Committee - Wednesday, June 10, 2009

<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/2009/meet-the-prof-bs-sridhar/>

The following faculty Q&A was submitted by the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Faculty Advocacy Committee, a committee of the Faculty Senate. George Philips, professor of business administration, wrote the introduction.

How does one describe Dr. Sridhar? An exceptional teacher? An eloquent speaker? A great community organizer? Or a reservoir of boundless knowledge in fields as varied as strategic planning, literature, Indian classical music and social/political issues?

All these apply equally well. But what he does in his “spare” time gives a better picture: volunteering himself and organizing others to serve lunch at the Salvation Army; raising money for charitable causes; packing medical supplies for developing countries; organizing concerts by world-renowned musicians from India; directing, acting and singing in plays; conducting or emceeding wedding receptions; or cooking dinner for his numerous friends and relatives. It is a pleasure for me to profile Dr. Sridhar through answers he provided to our questions.

What is your background, and how did you find your way to UW Oshkosh?

I grew up in India and had a wonderful childhood. My parents were followers of Mahatma Gandhi, who valued education and culture. Learning and serving the community were values inculcated into us.

After eight years of executive experience as a human resources professional in India, I came to the Ohio State University to pursue my doctoral studies. As I was about to graduate, I was recruited by the then-chair Dr. Stan Sibley. Honestly, till then, I did not even know that a place called Oshkosh existed. In my mind, Oshkosh was a unique-sounding brand (like “swoosh”) that sold children’s clothing!

Why did you choose to go into your field?

I come from a long line of teachers. Prior to Indian independence from the British, my father founded several pre-primary and primary schools. Till his death, he continued to train teachers and mentored many others. I married my professor’s daughter. (Yes, I did graduate!) My father-in-law was a widely respected academic who was a renowned social scientist, and he founded the Labor Economics Society of India. Three of the five siblings in the family took to teaching. My wife is a teacher. So you can see that education was a primary mission for both families.

What is your favorite thing about UW Oshkosh?

Freedom I have in teaching young minds. I have had the opportunities to create several courses at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Even on a rare day when my spirits are down or I am afflicted with pain or any kind of physical ailment, the moment I stand before my students, I am lost in their world. It is

the best escape. That is the place I learn most. Hopefully, my students do, too!

What is the professional accomplishment of which you are most proud?

Honestly, I cannot single out a degree, a diploma, an award or an article that I claim as my most cherished accomplishment. Most of those are well hidden in my filing cabinet, either at home or in my office. The only time I list them is when some bureaucrat requires me to do so. I did not plan on showing up for my commencement to receive my Ph.D. but for some subtle family pressure. That was my first and last commencement as a student, though I have four degrees.

What leadership or service activities, including service to the community, are you involved in?

In the community, I have served as president of the Oshkosh Area United Way. I co-founded IndUS of Fox Valley and served as its president for six years. I have been a lead trainer for Leadership Oshkosh since 1990. In 1993, I founded Seva, a volunteer group that serves lunch at Salvation Army on every Saturday. I co-chair the World Services Committee of Appleton Rotary Club. I serve on several boards in the Fox Valley, including the one at Paine Art Center and Gardens and the Oshkosh Area United Way.

I have served the University in various capacities: the Faculty Senate; team leader; search committees for chancellor, vice chancellor and the deans; advising student clubs; and serving on a variety of committees at the team, college and University levels.

What is the most common misperception about what you do?

The public does not sufficiently realize the importance of a knowledge-creating and knowledge-disseminating institution in a society that is headed toward a knowledge economy.

There are several misperceptions: First, the society feels that it is entitled to service from teachers without having to pay equitably for it. Intellect is still greatly undervalued. The second misperception is that teachers have short work weeks and work for nine months a year.

Very few people realize that besides the demands of preparation and evaluation for classroom, scholarly and service activities consume a lot of time. With the advent of on-line technologies, it is rare when I am not responding to student questions late at night, even on a weekend or wherever I am in the world vacationing. With budget cuts and habitually taking teachers for granted, we may be losing a large number of great teachers to Wall Street and elsewhere.

Finally, the role of teachers is to inculcate in their students a spirit of inquiry and questioning. Seekers of knowledge should question everything, including the establishment. This often is in variance with the reigning ideology that causes the society to view intellectuals with suspicion. Society stops progressing when it stops questioning the reigning assumptions.

What is the most exciting project you are working on right now?

I have designed a travel study seminar that is aimed at bringing together small and medium-sized businesses in the New North area that would like to explore opportunities for expanding their business

with partners from India. Business participants would hire business students as interns during fall 2009.

Under expert guidance students would research, identify and screen potential business partners in India. In the fall semester, both business and student participants would also attend a number of pre-travel seminars to develop a good understanding of the economic, political and cultural dimensions of doing business with/in India. In January 2010, the participants undertake a two-week, guided-travel tour of India. For the businesses, the students and the University, this will be a win-win proposition.

How does what you research help you to be an effective teacher?

Whether my research is in organizational culture or leadership or strategy, the knowledge acquired and created finds direct use in the classroom by the way of examples. Students recognize the relevance and importance, and several abstract concepts come alive. This, in turn, excites their imagination. Almost in every class of MBAs enrolled in my Personal and Professional Skills course, there are a few who have been inspired to consider careers in the teaching profession.

Describe some ways your department serves northeastern Wisconsin.

Several of my colleagues from the Management and Human Resources Team have been sharing our expertise with a number of local nonprofit and for-profit organizations by providing training and consulting services.

For example, we offer a Human Resource Certification program that prepares entry-level Human Resource professionals. My colleagues and I have trained every Leadership Oshkosh participant since 1990. That number exceeds 600 alumni! Besides serving on the boards, we have advised and facilitated strategic planning, teambuilding, leadership development, and design and implementation of management processes and systems for a wide variety of organizations in the New North.

Tell us about your family.

My wife, Sandhya Sridhar, and I have been married for almost 35 years. Sandhya, like me, has a doctorate in business administration from Ohio State University; she teaches at Silver Lake College in their graduate program. Our daughter, Paayal, 22, is a senior at UW-Milwaukee and is majoring in sociology and communication. Our son, Sameer, 17, is a junior at Appleton North High School. We live with Lyka, a 12-year-old canine lady at our Grand Chute home.

What are your hobbies?

I grew up loving classical Indian music and the Beatles. Each year, I have been producing at least one cultural program featuring a mixture of classical and modern dances and music. They have resulted in a ballet, a play or several stand-alone productions. I love literature both in English and a few Indian languages like Kannada.

- [Read more faculty profiles.](#)

Faculty, staff and students are encouraged to contribute calendar items, campus announcements and

other good news to UW Oshkosh Today at uwot@uwosh.edu.