



FORMAN CHRISTIAN COLLEGE
(A CHARTERED UNIVERSITY)

Rector's Update

The latest news and announcements from Dr. Jonathan Addleton

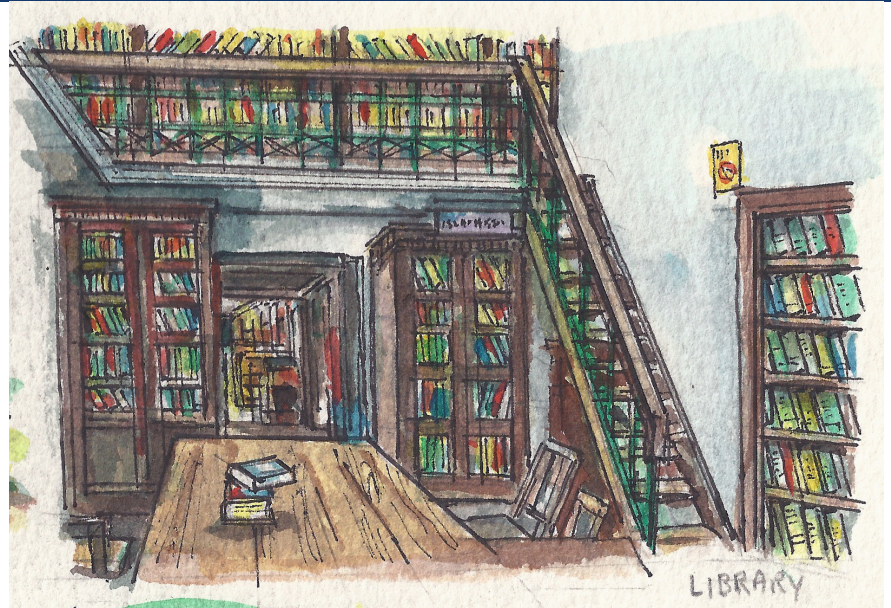
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Dear Fellow Formanite,

March marks the beginning of my sixth month in Pakistan and my fourth month as Rector at Forman Christian College (A Chartered University). Certainly, it has been a privilege to join the Forman community and now step into the routines and changing seasons of this amazing place.

Two recent events rank among the most important of my early tenure at Forman: (1) the on-line virtual Commencement for the Class of 2020 held on February 27, marking the graduation of nearly 900 Forman students receiving a mix of Baccalaureate (Hons), Masters and Ph.D. degrees; and (2) Founder's Day on March 3, especially notable this year because it commemorated the 200th anniversary of the birth of Charles W. Forman, the founder of Forman Christian College.

Students were understandably frustrated at not being able to celebrate on the campus with family and friends. However, the three-hour video prepared for the event was outstanding and featured speakers that would otherwise not have been present including Punjab Governor Mohammad Sarwar and former Rector Peter Armacost.

Graduating seniors also returned to campus the following week in pre-arranged smaller numbers to collect their diplomas and awards, many arriving in caps and gowns to take photographs and properly mark the occasion with some of their classmates. In my view, pictures of people with masks during the great pandemic of 2020-2021 will one day be viewed as historic and those wearing them will be admired for their resilience and fortitude.

Two Honorary degrees were conferred via video during the Commencement Ceremony, one to Forman alumni Dr. James Shera, (the first Pakistani to serve as Lord Mayor of Derby); and one to Ambassador Nafees Zakaria (Pakistan's former High Commissioner to the United Kingdom).

As a 1969 Forman graduate, Dr. Shera noted after the ceremony that FCCU was a "pivotal part of my life and played a huge role in constructing my personality"; he also commended Forman for its "dedicated and professional staff" and praised its "message of equality, fairness, and unity".

As for Ambassador Zakaria, he noted that "education and knowledge are not confined to any one religion," rather "knowledge is divine," highlighting Quaid-Azam's statement that "education is a matter of life" while also quoting Pakistan's founding father who once said that "Without education, it is complete darkness and with education it is light". In addition, Ambassador Zakaria paid tribute to past generations that had made institutions such as Forman possible, mentioning that as Pakistan's High Commissioner in the UK he had "hosted an unprecedented large number of British educationists and missionaries who devoted decades of their lives for imparting and spreading education in Pakistan".

This was my first Forman Commencement and I thought the proceedings were exceptional, starting with Registrar Dr. Nayer's opening statement and continuing through Vice Rector for Academic Affairs Dr. Trimble's closing prayer. Valedictory addresses by Ayesha Arshad (Postgraduate) and Mir Ahmad Jalal (Baccalaureate) were well delivered and well received. One new award offered this year was the Justice (R) Rao Muhammad Naem Hashim Khan Gold Medal for Human Resource Management, endowed only recently by Dr. Rao Raza Hashim in honor of his father.

Let me also congratulate every student who received an award as well as three special honors given to faculty and staff: Maryam Qasim Khan (Outstanding Teacher); Zamran Gill (Outstanding Customer Service, Administrative); and Haroon Rasheed (Outstanding Customer Service, Non-Administrative).

Founder's Day was marked by several events including the publication of an op-ed in "News International" on the legacy of Charles W. Forman; a small gathering at Forman's grave outside the Old City at Taxali Gate to lay flowers; and an evening Symposium led by Lahore historian and writer Fakir Aijazuddin and including participation by Professors Yaqoob Bangash, Farzand Masih, Sikandar Hayat, Arfa Syeda Zehra, and Tahir Masood. At least two of Forman's descendants -- one of them at least five generations removed from Charles W. Forman -- joined via Facebook and YouTube. From my perspective, it is remarkable that these Forman descendants still remain involved and interested, one having recently committed to funding scholarships for two female students at Forman pursuing environmental studies.



Although not technically part of "Founder's Day," at the end of the week I hosted a dozen members of the Forman Alumni Association Board, the first time that this group has gathered in person in more than a year. Attendees included Mr. Shaukat Tarin, former Finance Minister; Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani, former Chief Justice of the Pakistan Supreme Court; and Dr. Akhtar Sohail Chughtai, CEO of Chughtai Labs. From my perspective, it was inspiring to hear each person speak nostalgically about their time at Forman and the impact that Forman had on their subsequent life and career.

Outreach in recent weeks includes meetings with Governor of Punjab Mohammad Sarwar who praised the work of Forman and Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhury Perwaiz Elahi, a Forman alumnus who has strongly supported Forman. I also met with an incoming college student who arrived with his father, having been awarded a Forman scholarship. He grew up in a small village in the Salt Range and mentioned that several students from his village had attended Forman over the years.

Some students and faculty might have seen a dozen new 125cc Honda motorcycles on campus, replacing much older ones that are used by security staff as well as our buildings crew. One Forman tradition I appreciate is the short prayer service held when new vehicles arrive and keys are issued, a prayer that affirms the purposes for which the vehicles are intended while seeking safety for those who drive and ride them.



We continue to "weather the storms" of the Covid-19 pandemic. A combination of blended and online approaches is going well thanks to the skill and dedication of faculty and the patience and fortitude of students. At the same time, we are mindful that Lahore is now viewed as the "center of the storm" amidst renewed concerns over Covid-19 which, among other things, recently resulted in game cancellations involving Pakistan's Cricket Super League at nearby Gaddafi Stadium. That said, we are hopeful that the effects of Covid-19 will begin to diminish later this year, especially as vaccines become more available.

Reports issued by Forman's Quality Enhancement Cell (QEC) are always informative, containing important data needed to help shape future policies and approaches. One recent report analyzed the entering class for Fall 2020 at both the university and college level and will likely be of broader interest, given challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Most indicators point in a positive direction including in terms of the number of applicants; academic quality of applicants; and the number of students admitted who ultimately enroll.

A total of 7,504 applications were received for all FCCU programs (Intermediate, Baccalaureate (Hons), Postgraduate, and PharmD) in Fall 2020, an increase of more than 740 over fall 2019. Some 4,259 of these applicants were offered admission, making gaining admission at Forman (57 percent) even more competitive than it was in the previous year (69 percent). Some 2,388 of these admitted students enrolled, a higher proportion (67 percent) compared to fall 2019 (59 percent). Fifty percent of the newly registered university students were female, a slight increase over last year's number of 47 percent. Thirteen percent of all registered university students were considered a minority, as were nine percent of all college students.



Focusing specifically on college (Intermediate) admissions, 1,136 responded to the survey, representing 70 percent of the first-year class of 1,608. Parents influenced the decision to enroll for 95 percent of the students, nearly two-thirds of whom first heard about Forman through family and friends. "Top Five" services offered by Forman deemed to be "important" or "very important" include clean water, a suitable place for prayer, campus security, library, and sports. In terms of linguistic diversity, many students claim to speak a provincial or regional language including Punjabi (77 percent), Seraiki (6 percent), Pushto (5 percent), Balochi (2 percent), or Sindhi (2 percent). Knowledge of a number of other regional languages are also represented in first-year college classrooms including Brahui, Balti, Burushaski, Hindko, Kashmiri, Mewati, Pahari, and Shina.

Other interesting "factoids" highlighted in the survey of the first-year college (Intermediate) students indicate that Forman was the "first choice" institution for 83 percent of the applicants. Almost all applicants had previously attended English medium schools. Some 73 percent arrived believing they were well prepared in English but only 45 percent made the same claim about their preparedness in IT. Career areas of interest include engineering (36 percent), medicine (30 percent), military (13 percent), accountancy (11 percent), and computer science (10 percent). As for the occupation of their fathers, leading fields included business (47 percent), salaried employment in a private company or institution (14 percent), and government (11 percent). In terms of moral inclinations, 73 percent believed that it is "never justified" to take a bribe; 60 percent felt the same way about telling a lie and 56 percent believe it is always wrong to cheat on a test.

The response rate for university freshman was slightly lower but more than two-thirds of the entering freshman did fill out the survey, 92 percent of whom had attended an English medium school and 62 percent of whom had applied to other educational institutions besides Forman, the Lahore School of Economics (15 percent), NUES-FAST (13 percent), Punjab University (12 percent) and the National University of Sciences and Technology (12 percent) being the other institutions mentioned most often as alternate possibilities. Some 63 percent of the respondents ranked FCCU as their "first choice" institution, compared with 59 percent the previous year. Services deemed important for Forman include campus security (99 percent), academic advising (98 percent), clean drinking water (98 percent), career and personal counseling (97 percent), and assistance in developing English language skills (97 percent).

Nine out of ten entering university freshmen felt prepared to take on the academic task of writing notes from a textbook but less than half believed they were ready to take on the task of writing a research paper using citations. Some 63 percent mentioned "liberal" as the phrase coming to mind when thinking about FCCU, followed by "social" (62 percent) and career-oriented (53 percent). Almost 70 percent felt confident about their career plans, an increase of 7 percent over the previous year. In terms of moral inclinations, 81 percent believed it is "never justified" to take a bribe; 48 percent felt the same way about telling a lie; and 62 percent believe it is always wrong to cheat on a test.



As winter gives way to spring, I wish everyone associated with Forman every good wish in the weeks ahead. I should also mention that I will be in the US for most of March, having embarked on this trip at the conclusion of my first six months in Lahore for outreach related to Forman as well as to visit family. I will remain vitally involved in Forman through zoom and look forward to my return right after Easter, again entering into life on this remarkable campus.

Dr. Jonathan Addleton
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