

Women in Aerospace

Rukmini (Rikhi) Roy '16

Rikhi Roy attended UWCSEA for four years, graduating in 2016, having developed a love for Math and Science and a great interest in aerospace.

In 2014, a couple of international events took place that had a profound impact on Rikhi. She says, "While I was in Grade 10, there was a surge in global terrorism and Malaysian Airlines plane MH370 went missing on a routine flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing and was never found. Although I could do nothing about the acts of terror that had occurred, I could direct my education toward trying to make a difference in the aerospace industry."

So Rikhi chose an IB package that included Higher Physics and Math and procured an internship between Grade 11 and 12 with a company that does non-destructive testing on faulty plane parts, using x-ray technology. Having cemented her interest in the aerospace field, Rikhi then applied to, and was accepted by Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) in the Aerospace Engineering program. Interestingly, one of the other features of Georgia Tech that drew her to it, was that they had a nationally competitive Indian classical dance team.

Managing a busy schedule was not new to Rikhi. At UWCSEA she had started and led for two years a dance group named 'Kahaani' which means 'story' in Sanskrit, showcasing dances from across India. She led Culturama (East Campus' version of Dover's UN Night) also for two years. She was a member of the MUN (Model United Nations) team in 9th grade and the IFP (Initiative for Peace) team in 11th grade, along with a number of other clubs and activities along the way. Again, at Georgia Tech Rikhi immersed herself in everything she could, becoming captain of the competitive dance team, a member of the Design Build Fly Club and the Aerospace Student Advisory Council, managing a wellness blog and carrying out research at the Experimental Aerodynamics and Concepts Lab. In addition, Rikhi continued to volunteer for UN Women Singapore as well.

During her third year at Georgia Tech, Rikhi became a Brooke Owens Fellowship recipient. The fellowship is designed, according to their website 'to serve both as an inspiration and a career boost to capable young women and other gender minorities who aspire to explore our sky and stars, ...' and it provided Rikhi with an internship at Bryce Space and Technology, working on Aerospace Analytics this past summer.

As part of her application for the fellowship, Rikhi had discussed the need to inspire girls interested in STEM subjects and aerospace, and encourage them to challenge these male-dominated industries. To turn words into action she decided to organise a conference to do just that. Ignoring the voices that told her it was too much to take on by herself, she went ahead and single-handedly organised a very successful event that took place in May 2019 in Singapore, attracting an audience of 70 young students from around the island, and featuring a number of high level female speakers from the aerospace industry including NASA, who skyped in one after the other from the US, as well as female UWCSEA alumni who had recently entered the industry and spoke about their experience, and local speakers from Microsoft and Women in Aviation.

Rikhi is currently in her final year of university studies. We look forward to hearing what she does next.



Photo top to bottom: Rikhi at Lockheed Martin in D.C in front of their Orion capsule mockup; Rikhi at a Future Space Leaders event; Rikhi meeting the previous NASA Chief Scientist Ellen Stofan and current Director of the Air and Space Museum; Women in Aerospace Conference that Rikhi organised in Singapore, held at UWCSEA East.