Meet a Board Member: Shakoor Afzal

Carolina Union Board of Directors member Shakoor Afzal is vice president of the UNC Muslim Students Association. Read more about his goals for the Carolina Union below!

Can you tell us about yourself?

I’m a junior studying Economics and with a minor in Statistics. My hometown is Apex, North Carolina, so I’m pretty local. I’m with the UNC Muslim Students Association and I’m also on UNC Bhangra Elite, which is a traditional collegiate dance team. So those are my main two involvements on campus.

How did you become involved with the Union Board?

Well, it kind of all linked with MSA. I came in as a freshman and applied as freshman representative, and now I’m serving as vice president. And one of the things that I talked about with my president was this opportunity that we had to have this seat on the board. And some of the things that we discussed, were, what exactly are we going to gain from this? And how exactly can we benefit? And how exactly can they benefit from our presence?

What are your priorities as a representative of MSA?

The biggest thing was just understanding that us representing a large minority on campus, there’s a voice that that needs to be represented. And that’s the responsibility that we take on ourselves. And we hold that dear to our heart. But some of the things that we did talk about specifically was our Muslim members and the needs that they have for the upcoming semester, specifically, for spring 2021. The holy month of Ramadan comes once a year, and usually because of the lunar calendar, it will shift back 20 or so days. And so before last year, it wasn’t really an issue for Muslims on campus to fast every day or to go for their daily nightly prayer, which happens every day for one month. And these types of things are really important, and they’re really emphasizing the religion. And luckily, we were able to have it during the summer after final exams. But this coming semester is going to be the first semester where we’ll have the entire month of Ramadan during the spring semester. I believe it's going to start somewhat in mid-April, and it will end around mid-May. So that's one of the things that we wanted to focus on is hoping that the Union could accommodate for the special circumstances and allow for us to utilize the Union’s resources to better help our
members, especially with the daily nightly prayers that we have on this special month. It's important that we have a special space or is there space so that those who are able to pray, have the opportunity to do so.

*How has your experience been working on the Board?*

It's been really eye opening. I really enjoy the fact that there are a lot of organizations that are a part of the Board meetings. One of the things I really benefit from is when we all take a moment to kind of just give our updates about what groups are doing. It kind of gives a way for to network our events, if need be, and reach out and ask for assistance in any ways that we need to promote our events to promote our daily agendas, or to honestly just give updates about what exactly our organizations or other organizations are, what our goals are, and what we are looking to attain. We're able to have that connection with other board members, where we're able to voice our opinion, our concerns, and share the things that we hear. So it's an important dialogue.

*How do you think the Board and the Carolina Union can help students?*

Well, I think it just comes down to what exactly the students are in need of and the resources that the Union can provide. I do feel like the Carolina Union is doing a great job and providing, you know, that sort of that sort of resource for people to reach out to and ask for help or advice, especially with, with how this year has been going. And I know, it's probably been very difficult providing resources and being like accommodating. So I appreciate the fact that I've been able to have the privilege of serving on the board this year.