



# NEWSFLASH

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The fall semester is upon us, and here at NACA, we are gearing up for our upcoming fall activities. Stay tuned for the announcements regarding our activities. Additionally, we are in the process of reorganizing our committees, and we warmly welcome more volunteers to join us. If you are interested in contributing, please don't hesitate to reach out. You can choose to serve on any of the following committees: Membership Excellence, Institution and Partnership Development, Programs and Events, and Communications.

In this new edition, we are thrilled to present you with some fresh and exciting updates. This issue features a reflective piece by Neelam C Poudyal on his experience as a Fulbright Scholar in Nepal, shedding light on his ongoing research regarding the performance of the Bufferzone Program in Nepal. Alongside this, we continue to provide our regular features, including member spotlights, awards and updates, recent publications, and various announcements. Enjoy!

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# Research Highlights

## **Neelam C. Poudyal, Ph.D.**

Professor, School of Natural Resources

*University of Tennessee*

Fulbright U.S. Scholar to Nepal 2022-23

## ***Reflections on Fulbright Research in Nepal***

I had the honor of receiving a prestigious U.S. Fulbright Scholar fellowship, allowing me to briefly visit the Institute of Forestry, Pokhara campus as a visiting scholar. I pursued this opportunity to expand my research internationally, as my primary focus had been in the United States. Establishing global partnerships and conducting research abroad were crucial for advancing my

program, making this fellowship abroad vital for my progress.

This experience was rewarding in multiple ways and I believe it's worth sharing with the NACA community, especially those in the early stages of their academic careers and others seeking scholarly engagement in Nepal.



The core of my fellowship centered around evaluating Nepal's landmark policy in protected area management, specifically the Bufferzone Program. The aim was to improve the relationship between parks and local communities through sharing park income. After several months of mixed-method social science field research across six protected areas, we discovered that while the program has positively promoted conservation awareness, education, and park-people relationships, greater impact could be achieved if shared revenue was directed towards mitigating or alleviating wildlife damage, rather than funding development. My collaborators and I believe that this finding will contribute to the revision of Nepal's Bufferzone policy and the design of new benefit-sharing mechanisms for protected areas worldwide.

Beyond research, I engaged with students at my host institution, teaching a scientific writing module, and organizing a workshop for young faculty members on publishing in international journals. Sharing my experience and insights to enhance the capacity of students and young scholars in Nepal, particularly in academic writing and publication, was deeply fulfilling.

My fellowship trip marked the beginning of a long-term academic engagement in Nepal. Collaborating with scholars, faculty, and

graduate students at my host institution continues to be an ongoing endeavor. My time in Nepal, working on a research project aligned with my interests, reconnecting with peers, establishing new relationships with emerging institutions, and inspiring young students through sharing my story, all hold immense significance to me.

As a cultural ambassador for the U.S., I embraced my bilingual skills (English and Nepali) to engage in broader conversations about lifestyle, culture, and the environment. I interacted with young college students, teachers, and the general public, motivating them to aspire high and succeed in life by sharing my personal journey of becoming a university professor.

The Fulbright Commission in Nepal offers this fellowship annually, and I encourage members of the NACA community to pursue this esteemed opportunity. For prospective applicants, I recommend establishing partnerships in Nepal to develop a clear research or teaching plan that addresses emerging issues in the country, including but not limited to public health, climate change, food security, poverty, and disasters.

# Life Member

## **Krishna P. Paudel, Ph.D.**

Economic Research Service

*United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)*



Dr. Krishna P Paudel currently holds the Deputy Director for Research and Communications position within the Resource and Rural Economics Division at the USDA Economic Research Service (ERS). Krishna's expertise lies in the realm of environmental and resource economics, as well as international development economics. His current engagement entails a significant managerial role at the USDA ERS. He previously occupied the Gilbert Durbin Endowed Professorship of Agricultural Economics at Louisiana State University (LSU) for over two decades.

Krishna has served as the president of the Southern Agricultural Economics Association and held the role of Editor-in-Chief for the

Journal of Agricultural and Applied Economics. He received the Outstanding Nontenured Research Faculty in Humanities and Social Sciences award at LSU, the Alumni Award of Excellence from the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the University of Georgia, and the distinguished LSU-wide award in 2020 for Outstanding Advisor of a student club.

Krishna's research has garnered national recognition, particularly in the domains of the economics of water quality and quantity. His work has focused on elucidating the complex relationship between income and pollution through the framework of the environmental Kuznets curve. He has effectively demonstrated that not all water pollutants are equal, advocating for the application of semiparametric and nonparametric models in analyzing this intricate relationship.

Krishna has been an integral part of NACA, serving as its Treasurer (2021-2023) and chairing the NACA conference committee in 2022. He believes that NACA unites scholars across diverse disciplines and offers a unique platform for the professional development of NACA members in the US and advance constructive partnership in Nepal—a dual mission that bridges geographic boundaries.

# Member Spotlight

## **Pradeep Sapkota, Ph.D.**

Department of Accounting, G. Brint Ryan College of Business  
*University of North Texas*



Dr. Pradeep Sapkota, Assistant Professor of Accounting at University of North Texas (UNT), holds a Ph.D. in Accounting from Louisiana State University. He also earned a Master of Accountancy and a Graduate Certificate in Taxation from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock, along with a BBA featuring dual majors in Accounting and Finance from Southern Arkansas University. Prior to entering academia, Pradeep accrued five years of experience as a Controller/Finance and Technology Manager, in addition to two years in public accounting. He maintains an active CPA license in Arkansas and hails from Chitwan, Nepal.

At UNT, Pradeep teaches federal taxation and provides guidance to doctoral candidates in archival research. His research pursuits and existing publications revolve around corporate taxation, auditing, financial statement characteristics, and data analytics. He serves as an academic advisor for the Professional Accounting Student Society and Nepali Student Association at UNT. He also contributes to two academic journal advisory boards and holds various roles, including Chair of the Technology Committee for the American Taxation Association. He recently received the 2022 Beta Alpha Psi Outstanding Accounting Faculty Award. Outside of academia, he enjoys traveling, spending quality time with his wife and two-year-old daughter, cycling, and playing/watching soccer and playing Xbox.

Pradeep joined NACA in 2020 as a member of the Institutional Affairs Committee, and he currently serves as its Treasurer. He joined NACA mainly to network with other Nepali in different disciplines, and appreciates the mentorship received from fellow NACA members.

# Member Spotlight

## **Abha Karki Rajbhandari, Ph.D.**

Department of Psychiatry and Neuroscience  
*The Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai*



Dr. Abha Karki Rajbhandari is an Assistant Professor of Psychiatry and Neuroscience at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai (ISMMS). Her lab at ISMMS is dedicated to understanding how the brain and body interact through the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems, regulating cognitive processes associated with fear in stressful situations relevant to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which is among the emerging threats in our dynamic world. Dr. Rajbhandari's research aims to develop novel therapeutic approaches for PTSD and metabolic functions.

Dr. Rajbhandari earned her Ph.D. in Neuroscience from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and her research has received grant support from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases and Department of Defense. She has been recognized with several prestigious awards, including the Brain and Behavior Research Foundation award for young investigators, the Friedman Brain Institute Pilot grant, the Whitehall Foundation grant, and the Akira Arimura Foundation grant for Young Investigators.

Dr. Rajbhandari actively participates in NACA events, where she has shared her research at the Biomedical Sciences and Technology Seminar. NACA has allowed her to connect with other Nepali researchers working in similar areas of study. It has also helped her to network with other Nepali researchers and learn about their work. As a stress researcher and female from Nepal, she is aware of disparities and inequalities faced by people of different backgrounds in academia, especially the challenges faced by underrepresented minorities in academia. Outside of her lab work, she teaches Yoga practices for stress regulation.

# Recent Publications



Neupane, H., **Paudel, K. P.**, He, Q. (2023). Impact of cooperative membership on market performance of Nepali goat farmers. *Annals of Public and Cooperative Economics*, 94: 805-830. DOI: 0.1111/apce.12445 <https://doi.org/10.1111/apce.12445>

This study highlights the potential benefits of promoting cooperative membership and marketing through cooperatives, as these efforts can help farmers improve the returns on their agricultural investments.



Maharjan, A., McDowell, G., Pandey, A., Pasakhala, B., **Shrestha, M.**, & Wang, X. (2023). Cryospheric change, adaptation, and sustainable development in the mountain societies of the Hindu Kush Himalaya. In ICIMOD (P. Wester, S. Chaudhary, N. Chettri, M. Jackson, A. Maharjan, S. Nepal & J. F. Steiner [Eds.]), *Water, ice, society, and ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya: An outlook* (pp. 165–217). ICIMOD. <https://doi.org/10.53055/ICIMOD.1033>

This Chapter 5 of an assessment report on the state of water, ice, society and ecosystems in the Hindu Kush Himalaya region takes a stock of the social intersections of cryospheric changes in the region. Among other contributions, this chapter maps out for the first time the linkages between glacier and glacier melting with water, ecosystems, and society in the region.

# Awards and Updates

**Dr. Udaya Wagle**, the Founding President of NACA and a member of the Advisory Council, has changed his job from the Western Michigan University to the Northern Arizona University, beginning July 2023 as Professor and MPA Program Director in the Department of Politics and International Affairs.

**Dr. Rocky Talchabhadel** has a new appointment from August 2023 as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Jackson State University. He has also been awarded the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure or CDRI Fellow (2023-24) for a project entitled *Urban cooling to mitigate heat exposure in Nepalese cities: Geo-spatial assessment of green roof, urban parks and wetlands*. His work seeks to identify urban heat island (UHI) spatial heterogeneity and assess the performance of existing measures (e.g., urban parks, white/green roof, and wetlands). It utilizes earth observations along with available demographic and topological datasets to develop machine learning models to predict UHI intensity.

**Dr. Buddhi R. Gyawali**, Professor of geospatial applications and environment at Kentucky State University (KSU), and a NACA life member recently obtained 1.5 million dollars grant from USDA/NIFA as a share of his collaboration with other three HBCUs on the 10-million dollars grant for four years titled *Generating and Sustaining the Next Generation of the Food, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Human Sciences (FANH) Workforce Development*". This grant at KSU will support 10 graduate and 20 undergraduate students with stipends, instate tuition waiver and opportunities for international travel and experiential education and research learning in multiple countries. For more information, please visit the [KYSU News website](#).

**Resham Thapa** completed his Ph.D. degree in Soil Sciences in summer 2023 at University of Wyoming. He just started a new position as a Research Scientist at the School of Energy Resources (SER), University of Wyoming. Read about his research on [coal-derived soil amendmen](#)



# Events and Announcements



Application open for the 2024-25 Competition

**The Fulbright U.S. Scholar Program in Nepal**

This program offers opportunities for U.S. citizens to teach, research and carry out professional projects in Nepal to advance their professional and academic interests, promote mutual understanding, and collaborate with Nepali partners.

Check out the details at

<https://usefnepal.org/fulbright/for-us-citizens/>

**Application deadline:** September 15, 2023 (11:59 PM PST)

# Nepal Corner

## **Tribhuvan University proposes to reduce Bachelor's degree to three-years program**

A written proposal has been submitted to the TU Academic Council and it would replace the current four-year graduation model

<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/four-year-bachelor-s-program-has-added-burden-on-graduate-students/?categoryId=81>

Also see **Dr. Alok Bohara's** commentary: <https://substack.com/@nepalunplugged/notice/c-22301166>

## **Struggle to obtain TU equivalences for foreign degrees in the news, again**

Experts warn of brain drain as Nepali students struggle to obtain equivalence certificates.

<https://myrepublica.nagariknetwork.com/news/nepali-students-struggling-to-get-tu-equivalence-of-foreign-degrees-resulting-in-brain-drain-warn-experts/>

Also read an op-ed by **Aastha Dahal**, who earlier had shared in Nepali media her ordeals to get equivalence of her MPhil and PhD degrees a foreign university

<https://www.nepalitimes.com/opinion/guest-editorial/false-equivalence-in-nepal-academia>

## **Progress in establishing Nepal University**

The bill to establish Nepal University has been presented in the House of Representatives after being endorsed by the National Assembly.

<https://kathmandupost.com/national/2023/07/19/bill-tabled-in-house-to-set-up-nepal-university>

## **Op-Ed: A Belated Obituary of *Kailash* by Dr. Pratyoush Onta**

*Kailash - A Journal of Himalayan Studies* was launched in 1973, and it brought together scholars from both the West and the Himalaya to publish full-length research articles and commentaries. The journal faced many challenges throughout its existence but finally stopped publishing in 2000.

<https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2023/08/17/a-belated-obituary-of-kailash>

## **Plural histories of higher education in Nepal**

From TU, TC and the Colombo Plan to the current state, higher education histories of Nepal are complicated. Another insightful op-ed by Dr. Onta

<https://kathmandupost.com/columns/2023/08/03/plural-histories-of-higher-education>

NACA invites you to submit your accomplishments, updates, or any sharable news (e.g., grants, awards, publications, new job, promotion, fieldwork experience). Our members want to hear about other members, and the Newsflash has been a valuable tool to our mission: Engage, Network, and Collaborate.

For feedback or comments, email us at [info@nepaliacademics.org](mailto:info@nepaliacademics.org).

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