

“If it were not for the upgrading program, I would not be here.”



Mustafa fled to Canada from Iraq with his older brother when he was fifteen. “I had to escape to a better country for a better life,” he says. Their parents had already lost one son and only wished safety for their remaining boys.

On top of school work and adjusting to a new home, Mustafa worked to send money to his family back in Iraq. He’d worked alongside his father as a mechanic; so, once he finished high school, he immediately transitioned into a career in that field.

Since providing for himself and his family were his primary concerns, Mustafa didn’t have the chance to pursue postsecondary education. He enjoyed his work as a mechanic; but, over time, it proved not to be enough.

“I realized something was missing from my life,” he explains. A father himself to one son with another on the way, he started to weigh the pros and cons of going back to school.

Mustafa contacted the Georgian College Academic and Career Preparation (ACP) office in Owen Sound to discuss his goals for the future.

“It was a challenging decision since you must think about the financial situation, time, and effort to put towards school,” Mustafa says.

Ultimately, he made the choice to upgrade his skills and education and find a balance between school, work and family.

“He always spoke about how much he loved his family,” one of his professors recalls. “He was so proud of them and wanted to be a good role model for his son. He always discussed the importance of integrity and demonstrated it.”

“During the academic preparation, I faced many challenges in my life as well,” Mustafa remembers, including surgery and the loss of his father. “If it were not for the upgrading staff, who motivated me to continue my career preparation, I would not be here,” he admits.

Mustafa completed his Academic and Career Entrance (ACE) requirements and is currently studying Power Engineering Technology, making use of both his prior experience and the skills he developed through ACE to build a better life for himself and his family.

“Now, I can proudly say, I am a father and a mechanic, but I can also be an engineering student,” he says. “If it were not for the upgrading program, I would not be here. Thank you for the opportunity.”

