

In Our Own Voices: Safia Haji '19

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"In Our Own Voices" is a photo and story gallery celebrating diversity and the voices that make the [UNH Manchester](#) community a wonderful place to live, learn and grow. Their stories are our story—and we are proud to tell it. Safia Haji '19, who recently earned her bachelor's degree in [English teaching](#), shares her story below.

I am a proud Somali-Bantu woman who came to the United States as a refugee, after the civil war made living in Somalia too dangerous for my family. In my culture, women

are often expected to marry soon after high school and stay home with their children. I have always placed great value on my education and knew from a young age that I wanted to pursue higher education, even though women are typically not expected or encouraged to attend college.

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As the oldest of nine children, I had an enormous amount of responsibility growing up. My dad always loved the idea of having a daughter with a college degree, though many people told us that I would have to drop out once I had children. I was inspired to prove them wrong and show that you can have a family and still pursue a college degree; the two don't have to be mutually exclusive. Looking ahead, I am so thankful for my two beautiful young children who have inspired me during the hardest times over the past four years.

I am Safia: mother, wife, Somali-Bantu—and soon-to-be UNH Manchester graduate.

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IN OUR OWN VOICES



University of New Hampshire

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