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Tiger Tracks News

Business studies
and career options for
Hampden-Sydney students

Navin Thukkaram explained how the power of hard work and self-belief, characterized by his motto, "know your outcome going in," had served his father and himself, and would do the same for participants in the Tiger Track for Banking & Finance.

Private Equity Pro and Venture Investor Navin Thukkaram Visits Hampden-Sydney

"Know your outcome going in."

Such was the key piece of advice that Navin Thukkaram, an established private equity professional who is now backing Silicon Valley start-up Qwiki, shared with Hampden-Sydney College students on Thursday, March 17, 2011 at the Tiger Track for Banking & Finance Spring Dinner. Thukkaram, a graduate of Princeton and Harvard Business School, dined with students on the Tiger Track for Banking & Finance before stepping to the lectern to share professional and personal wisdom gleaned from his life and his father's life.

Thukkaram's father, a native of India, grew up yearning to escape from the poverty of his homeland. After years of rigorous study, he obtained an engineering degree and an entry-level position as an engineer in the sweltering hot region of South India. One day a combination of heat and neglect caused a machine to break down and motivated the young engineer to write the manufacturer of the machine with a request for a job in the manufacturer's headquarters in Holland. After several weeks of silence, the manufacturer replied with an unsatisfactory "maybe." Undeterred, Thukkaram's father liquidated his family's entire savings and borrowed a sizeable loan from a bank just to buy a one-way plane ticket to Holland. Knowing his outcome from the beginning, Thukkaram's father confidently strode into the manufacturer's headquarters as a volunteer and through a mix of determination, self-confidence, creativity, and luck, retired from the same firm many years later as an accomplished engineer with an distinguished international record of service.

After sharing the inspiring story of his father, Thukkaram explained how knowing his outcome before striving towards a goal served him. As a youth, Thukkaram was a talented golfer who dreamed of playing at the collegiate level. After countless hours on the driving range and the links (not to mention in the library), Thukkaram secured a spot on Princeton's golf team. Though he was a steady contributor to the golf team, Thukkaram knew his golf career would not move from Princeton to the PGA. Rather, he set his sights on Wall Street. A notoriously tough work environment, Wall Street only hires the highest performing and most driven students. For every college student who successfully lands on Wall Street, many more fail. Despite the long odds, Thukkaram, as he counseled Hampden-Sydney students to do, "knew his outcome going in." When he narrowly missed several job opportunities, Thukkaram remained resolute in his goal to work on Wall Street. Finally, after nearly 100 interviews, Thukkaram secured a job towards the end of his final year at Princeton. Once on Wall Street, Thukkaram never looked back.

As Thukkaram concluded, he summarized how the power of hard work and self-belief, characterized by his motto, "know your outcome going in," had served his father and himself, and would do the same for participants in the Tiger Track for Banking & Finance.

