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Hi Everyone !

As the semester draws to an end, we bring to you another issue of ping! .But before I begin I would like to thank each of you in the IIIT community for making ping! the success it has become. Your invaluable support and encouragement has given us the boldness to tackle and ask even the toughest questions and look at topics we generally don't dare to. This issue has been dedicated solely to such concerns, be it research or ragging, the grading policy followed or acknowledging failures. This issue will also cover the interview of the Graphics man in our institute Prof P.J. Narayanan (Dean R&D) who tell us a lot about the present scenario of research within the institute and as well the bigger picture.

We will also feature our regular updates on activities in IIIT. With all that said this issue and this semester will act as the last in many ways. This is the last semester for our dear seniors in the 4th year, dual degree included when they would get to study collectively or hang out together - after this, some would take off to their respective jobs while others would go on and pursue research - the thread of collective oneness/ collective activity will be broken leaving in its place only memories of what has been.

This was also their last Cultural Night, the last but one formal activity in IIIT. We bid farewell to you and wish that you achieve a lot of success on the foundations built within this institute. We will miss you guys! This also was the last semester when the current 3rd year students led their houses and also the last ping! for the 3rd year members of our team. Now has come the time when this baton will be passed on to our juniors who will make ping! their own baby. With all the nostalgic events cited, we also get ready to welcome our new juniors with full excitement. May they see IIIT as a "home away from home". This is what we should strive for.

Another point of thought is the legacy we create for them to follow. A Legacy of culture, freedom in thoughts and beliefs, the culture of our unlikely closeness with the faculty, the discipline and yeah, the research feel :) ... and many more. So with this we leave you with a question of "What do we want our juniors to take in as their first best impression ?" ...and also wish luck to the internship folks so that maximum convert it into PPOs :) and give loads of parties to their batchmates with the money earned :P . We would also like to congratulate the 2nd years for having decided upon their Felicity Coordinators and wish them luck and happy holidays :) .

With all the changes that the end of this academic year heralds, we hope that one thing remains constant - that ping! continues to be your mouthpiece and receive the support it always has had from you. Signing off !!

Happy Pinging !

A Day with Prof P J N (Dean— R & D)

Q1. We heard you are entering into new domains of research. Can you tell us your research agenda and what all disciplines you wish to explore in near future? How much of it is influenced by industry funding?

Ans : I am not really entering into any new domain in the near future. I started with Computer Vision and Computer Graphics. Currently I am working on GPU computing. In recent times GPU as a computing platform has aroused a lot of interest. General computing on GPU is being done in collaboration with people from the theory and algorithms group, here in IIIT-H. The fact is we really don't "plan" to get into newer research areas, it generally starts with a new problem and then grows further.

For your second part, the industry funding does not influence the choice of projects much. We do industry oriented work as well as projects of national interest, such as the Digital Heritage of India project, OCR project to name a few. Many colleges, including IITs are also a part of these projects.

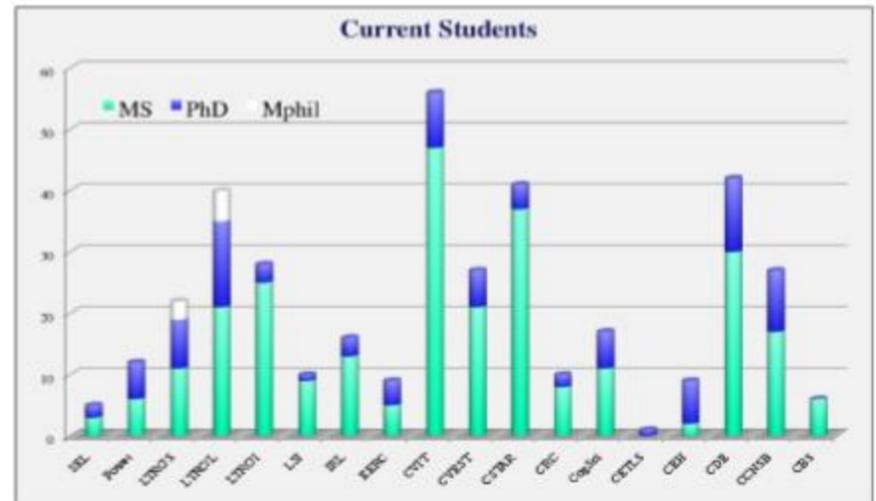
Q2. IIIT-Hyderabad prides itself as being a research institution. How does its research output compare to other 'traditional' universities like IITs in measurable, quantifiable terms?

Ans : It is really difficult to measure or compare our research output with other universities. There is no independent agency to do so. Numbers really do not have that much importance. But lacking other criteria, it is all we can have a look at.

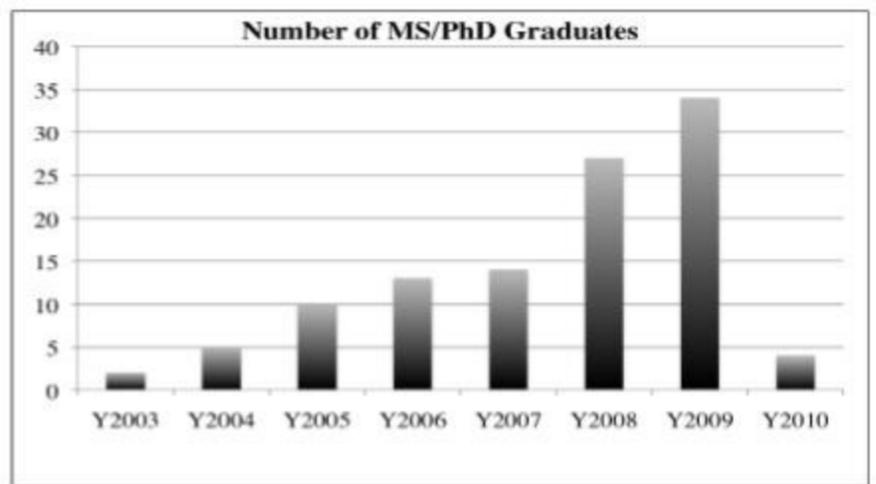
We have twice the number of publications per faculty compared to the IITs. Also the funding that IIIT gets is at par or even I may say better than that of the IITs. There are about 350 students currently doing their thesis work in the institute. This number may be at least double the nearest institute in our area. In a very short span of time we have 110 MS students and 3 PhD students who have already graduated from the institute. They all have good and well regarded publications. As of today, there are about 75 active PhD students in the institute. The institute's vision for 2012 is to admit 100 PhD students per year. Currently the national production of PhDs is about 70.

Q3. IIIT favors research so much, yet students when they publish papers in conferences are unable to go. Can you please cite what the Institute is planning in this regard?

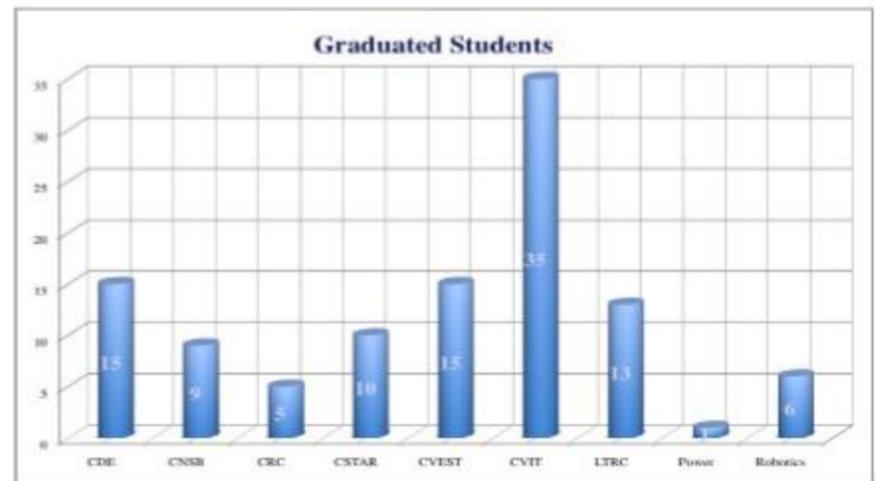
Ans : On the contrary, I believe that it is our students who are seen regularly in the International Conferences. About 25 to 30, if not more, students went last year to attend conferences. This number is increasing every year, I guess it will nearly double this year. A budget of Rs. 6 to 7 lacs is set aside every year for this purpose by the institute. We get



No. of Students currently working in different labs.(as of Jan '10)



Number of students graduated.(as of January 2010)



Lab wise break up of number of students graduated.(as of Jan '10)

funding for this purpose from companies like Microsoft, SAP etc as well as from projects.

Q4. What are views on internship (foreign and domestic)?

Ans : Internship should be such that it should blend in well with the research work being done by the student. Students have gone for internships to GE, Microsoft Research, Yahoo! etc and have benefited immensely. The work that they did their overlapped with their thesis work or other research activities here. It doesn't help doing a foreign internship just for the sake of it.



It should be something that helps you in your career goal. We have currently active collaborations with about 10 to 12 foreign universities like CMU, Oxford, Illinois etc.

Q5. What will your suggestion be to a student who does his MS here and wishes to pursue his doctoral program from some foreign university?

Ans : Very good! It is after all their choice. All I would like to say is that,

doing your PhD here is advantageous because you can extend the work you have already been doing. No matter where you pursue your PhD, the goal should be not to finish it early but to do a notable job. The advantage of doing a PhD at IIT-H should also be judged on this criteria.

Q6. Your views on giving recommendation to students:

Ans : There is no problem in giving out recommendations, but there must also be something to recommend. If a student has done BTP or other projects under me I have no problem in giving a recommendation. But, if a student comes to me, who has not worked with me, neither has he/she done any projects under me and it is just that I have taught him some courses. Then what do I write in the recommendation : done Computer System Organization under me, got good grades! I might not have relevant things to say in the recommendation.

Q7. There are nearly 18 students from UG2k4 batch in CVIT. Out of them not even 20% have not yet started writing thesis, while in other labs most of them are either graduated or on the lines of giving defense. Why is this difference?

Ans : 20%, I don't think is really true. Students have already been asked to write their thesis. I am not happy to see all the UG2k4 students, apart from Supreeth Achar who is pursuing further studies at CMU, still here in the institute. Last year the market position was bad and hence the placements were not up to the mark too. Thus, the UG2k4 students themselves were not eager to sit for the placements and leave at such a time. Some of them on their own prolonged their stay in the institute. There has been a history of students voluntarily taking 6, sometimes even 7 years to graduate from the dual degree program. We don't encourage this and we are actively working with the DD2K4 students to complete quickly.

Q8. Why are dual students, being research students, made to sit with B Tech 4 years for their placements? Thereby in

a way creating the environment that Dual Degree is no different from B. Tech.

Ans : As I said earlier the last 12 months have not been the best time for placements. Last year, dual degree students on their own requested to sit with their B.Tech. counterparts for placement. We saw no reason to disallow this. There are separate personalized placements for the dual degree students. We, that is the student's faculty mentor, write letters and forward a student's profile to various companies. We want the companies to invite students, give a talk and interact with them. It has happened in the past with IBM, Rediff, Adobe etc. There is a placement wiki, every research student with one year of work has a profile there. It is accessible to the companies. We time and again ask companies to have a separate recruitment process for the research students. Dual degree students complain that companies end up asking algorithms and puzzles etc. in the interview, but we really can't help it. Companies have their own rules !!

Q9. We observed so many II year dual degree and Honors students so worried. They just don't know what to do which lab to choose and all. So, what is the reason for such a condition and what can be done to change this? Don't you think there must be some courses earlier in B.Tech for deciding the research stream for dual degree students? At the end of 4th semester they have to make their mind with not much time to look upon things.

Ans : There are enough courses, in fact more now, to decide for a particular stream. The curriculum has been very carefully restructured. I find that the current 2nd year students are very serious than most previous batches. The confusion may be because they are doing a lot of talk and also thinking hard themselves. This is actually a good sign, before they make their final choice.

Q10. Why are dual degree students not allowed to convert to 4 year?

Ans : There are complications, involving some legal issues too. There are some students who don't join the dual degree program, after they don't get into CSE/ECE. How are we to justify our stand to these students if we allow a conversion? Research is not something from out of the world. Everyone can do research in an area of interest. IIT-H goes out of its way to find such areas/problems which interests every student. It requires hard work and concentration. There is no option at IIT-H or later in life to say "I don't want to work hard".

Q11. Why is it the perception that people take more than 5-6 years to complete their MS? What can be done to change this, it is creating fears in the minds of junior Dual degree students and also when the word gets out people are a bit reluctant to join the college.

Ans : IIT is a relatively very young university. With time the situation will change, this time period is bound to reduce. The goal is that the work should be completed in 5 years.

Q12. The IIT brochure says DD is a 5 year course! yes/no ..we just want a one word answer.

Ans : Yes, but so does it say 4 years for the CSE/ECE program and depending on the student he/she might not complete CSE/ECE program also in 4 years.

Q13. How are you looking at research in the coming years with changing industry scenarios?

Ans : In today's time, when computation meets with a certain discipline such as linguistics, climate or drug design, then it poses real challenges. The easy problems have already been solved, designing stand alone computation systems is nothing new anymore. About 70 years ago, if you were to pick an engineering textbook then it would not be having a single equation but just a long description. In 1960's and 70's there was a paradigm shift and all that you can find now in the textbooks is just equations. Mathematics has blended in so well with engineering that, no longer do we separately perceive the mathematics part of it. This is what will happen to computation, it will be the language of other scientific theory in times to come.

If you are aware then the recent experiment such as the LHC are expensive and very difficult to conduct, these can be modeled computationally. To enable us to do such things we may require new OS's, new languages etc. Therein lies the real challenge.

Interests apart from research :

Listening to Indian Classical Music and reading Indian Literature.

Your favorite

Movie : I like serious movies, Charulata and Mahanagar are some of my favourites.

Sports : I like watching cricket. I don't watch IPL, it is too fast and boring.

Professor : Prof. Kannan Srinathan, he is very original.

Message to students

Be serious in all that you do. Don't do studies just for the sake of grades. Really get involved and become a master in your area of work. You need to do things seriously and for a sufficiently long period of time to leave a mark behind. You need to work hard to cross a certain threshold to be noted and you need perseverance for that. An illustration is that for a retired cricketer it is only the number of centuries or other notable achievements that anyone recollects. Make your work worthy of being noticed for its content.

Dean's List

Appreciation of one's talent and hard work not only acts as a sweet fruit of the latter, but also ensures better results in future. Following this view, the annual Dean's Academic and Research awards ceremony was recently held for students, to appreciate their performances in academic and research arenas. The Research category of awards was a new one, introduced this year itself to promote the research work being done by the students.

For the Dean's Academic awards, students from all the UG and PG batches, having a SGPA "fairly better than the average" were listed out in three categories, according to their SGPA. Similarly for the Dean's Research awards, students from UG as well as PG, who had got their research work published in noted science papers and forums, were selected. These students were invited by the Dean (academics) Dr. Kamal Karlapalem, and Dean (research) Dr. P.J. Narayanan, to a ceremony at the Guest House lawns on 27th March, 2010.

The award ceremony witnessed the presence of notary guests including the Dean(research)and Dean(academics), Director Dr. Rajeev Sangal, and many more faculty members. The ceremony started with a brief introduction of these awards by — Dr. Kamal Karlapalem, which was followed by a speech by the Director. Thereafter, mementos were given to the students by the faculty members. Mementos to UG1 students were given by the Director, followed by Dr. Kishore Kothapalli for UG2, Prof Anoop for UG3 and Prof Harjinder Singh for UG4. Finally, Dr. P.J. Narayanan gave away the research awards.

The award distribution was soon followed by a dinner party thrown by the Director, where the students not only enjoyed a variety of delicacies, but also had lots of discussions with the faculty members regarding their future plans.

The ceremony not only brought moments of pride and honour for the meritorious students, but also a promise to the faculty for better results in the future. As said by Prof. P.J. Narayanan "Next year, I want the merit list to be so long that this ceremony could be held in the Felicity ground!". Well, let us hope his wish gets fulfilled :-)

Parliament

As the academic year draws to a close, it is perhaps prudent to review the activities of the Student Parliament - the same Parliament we love to chastise for being so ineffective and yet have no clue of its structure.

Time we change that. Insiders informed this PING! correspondent that there has been a lot of discussion and debate regarding a massive structural overhaul of the Parliament. Since last year, Parliamentarians have been trying to put into effect a Constitution albeit without any conclusive results though an initial draft has been reviewed and further changes proposed. It is hoped that by the end of next semester, the new Parliament will have a Constitution in place. The review of the Parliament structure and proposals for a new one led to some very interesting and relevant observations - something which the student body at large should give thought to.

More on that later, though. Let us first go take a peek at what happens behind those open doors whose invitations to the general junta and sometimes, the Parliamentarians themselves, remain unanswered.

The structural changes were well on the way when the Core Council was formed at the beginning of the year - to deal with urgent matters when it is not possible to convene a meeting of the 100-odd strong Parliament. It consists of the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker, the Felicity co-ordinators, the Cultural Secretary, the Sports Secretary, the Campus life Secretary and

one member each from the academic council and the finance council. The academic council was also formed this year as it was felt that there was no proper **r e p r e s e n t a t i o n** of the students as far as academic-related issues are concerned. The academic council would serve as a bridge between the faculty and the students and try and figure out solutions to such problems as the 1st year's C Assignments.

The sundry issues discussed in the Parliament varied from crucial issues like the pressing matter of the summer room rent to the relatively trivial issue of washing plates in OBH mess. Though no changes have been made in the room rent yet, in the latter matter, the students have definitely emerged victorious! Another important issue which was brought to light was that students doing independent research need financial aid for attending conferences which is sadly lacking. The academic committee met with the Dean, Academics regarding this but we are still awaiting a response.

Let's see how long it takes for people to wake up in this 'research-oriented' college. The faculty's proposal that the students wear kurtas on the farewell ceremony was not met with approval. Given the informal nature of the affair, it was felt that a dress code should not be imposed though the faculty argues that the awards ceremony is held on the same day making it 'formal'. The question to be asked here is that, regardless of the nature of the affair, is it right to lay down more and more restrictions and at this rate, how far are we from a daily dress code?

The FSIS(es) held during the course of the year brought to light matters like lack of interest on the part of students in events like Independence Day, the music in the messes (which incidentally has stopped assailing our ears), lack of appreciation for TAs and the resultant decrease in enthusiasm towards work and of course, the ECE placements etc.

A little past the mid of the academic year, the Parliament saw the resignation of its Speaker, Ashwath Bharath with Supreet Acharya stepping up to the role of the Speaker and Abhinav Goel as the

Deputy-Speaker. Around this time, the first draft of the Constitution was also presented. Shantanu Shrivastava had been assigned this Leviathan task and after consulting the Constitutions of other institutions and much deliberation, the first draft saw the light of the day.

Hell broke loose in the Parliament as the Parliamentarians debated over this new structure of the Parliament and proposed fresh changes. Finally, another meeting and several raging debates later, a paradigm shift in the Parliament was proposed which most agreed with. Although it has neither been officially adopted nor made public(yet), it has been proposed that the new Parliament should consist of some 20 odd members who will be genuinely interested in working as Parliamentarians and not led astray from their role as Parliamentarians by a sense of exclusive loyalty towards 'the house' which is usually observed and is indeed the primary reason for the low turnout in the Parliament meetings (another issue discussed). This 20-odd body will be separate from the house structure which will run in parallel and the Cultural Secretary and Sports Secretary will be the links between the two. Such a structure of the Parliament hopes to ensure that those are in the Parliament genuinely want to work for it and are not members simply by virtue of holding a position in the house - a classic example of election vs. selection. While the current Parliament uses selection to choose its members (the houses reps are 'chosen' and not 'elected'), the new Parliament will combine the two to ensure that the Parliamentarians have the support of the students.

This academic year has seen several changes being implemented and several others being planned but the biggest change that we want to see in the Parliament is not in its structure but in its role - a change from a titular body to an empowered one.

Transparent Grading Policy

Ever since teaching started methods have been devised to measure a student's performance. Till recent they were marks, percentages and now when in college they are grades, SGPA and CGPA. Grades remove much of the competitive, stressful environment and provide a better mode of judging, thereby making its evaluation a very responsible and a critical event.

Many might say "**Grades don't matter much, it's the knowledge**". This statement is often taken in the wrong sense as "**Grades don't matter at all, its all about the knowledge**". Indeed knowledge can never be overpowered as its all stored in the best Supercomputer of the world "the human brain". But here we would like to bring something to your notice, if you observe the present scenario some of the top companies like Amazon, Qualcomm, Google went for CGPA shortlisting for the interview rounds in the internship recruitment process. Apart from that even in IIT the TA (Teaching Assistant) recruitment process weightage is given to the CGPA and grade as they are one of the options. Another example can be the competitive exams for Graduation studies such as CAT, GRE, GMAT etc give quantifiable weightage to all your deeds in College and sometimes before.

All these and many more can cite that Grades and CGPA have some amount of influence on the process. We here clarify that, we don't question the recruitment process of TAs but are attempting to establish the fact that "**Grades do matter, mostly in the cases when an unknown individual tries to understand how the other has fared in a course.**"

Since they play some role and are a judging method, they call for responsible handling with transparency. Grading in IIT, in some cases has landed not so according to the criteria stated at the start of course or done with some discontinuity. Criteria can change and there is very less objection to it as no one knows the proceedings of the course. But discontinuity sometimes leads to the loss of faith of students in the grading policy stated. This discontinuity can arise due to several

reasons; incoherency between the marks according to stated policy and the grades secured by students, unexplainable methods of grading used by the Faculty in-charge etc and keeping them all secretive. This abstractness has baffled many students in the past and does still now.

IIT is home to so many logical souls and since the time has also come, we should attempt a step in this direction of further transparency in a logical manner. After all it's the age of RTI where all the information however it may be, even unnecessary, is available on the go. And this information by far is one of the most crucial information about a student's life. It has place everywhere and the logic of "when an unknown individual tries to understand how the other has fared" fits very well in this scenario. It's the only parameter, though your achievements can be one of it. But we need all the equipment within our arsenal in this shrewd competitive world.

Now apart from transparency, question can also be raised on the grading criteria if found unreasonable. But we leave this as an open question as it heavily depends on the acceptance levels of both the sides ie Faculty in-charge and students enrolled. We hope that the higher echelons of IIT are reading this and take steps accordingly in a positive direction in a logical and justifiable manner.

In the end we would like to present a mail sent to students of UG2K8 regarding their grading policy of the course on Humanities. This report cites the fact that there has been some effort from the Faculty side and we would like to encourage it more.

Hi all,

Today many students mailed to us mentioning that they are not satisfied with their grades. It seemed that most of them are not satisfied not because they got a low grade, but because their friends, who, they felt, got almost the same marks as them, got a higher grade. So this mail is to clarify these misunderstandings.

The weightage for exams/assgns in this course is as follows:

Midsem 1: 15%

Midsem 2: 15%

Assgns: 30%

On applying the above criteria over your performance, the highest and lowest marks (calculated per 100) are 87.425 and 41.925 respectively. So the difference between them is roughly 46 marks.

So please observe that the whole class of 146 students fell within this interval of 46 marks which means the difference between two consecutive students (when they are ordered by marks) is around 0.3 marks. This is the reason why many students felt their friends, with almost the same marks as them, got a higher grade than them. It shows that everyone of you have worked equally hard which made the grading job for us extremely tough. Finally we came up with the following grading scheme:

> 73.28 A
> 65.97 A-
> 60.57 B
> 52.12 B-
> 47.83 C
> 40 C-

These are the initial grades. After this, we have enhanced the grade by one if the student gets minimum 'B-' in the project (if any), and if it is higher than his initial grade.

Finally, grades were flattened by considering students' blog content. Blogs of students in the lower 1 point range of a grade were considered and if found insightful, grade was enhanced by one.

So the final distribution of grades is as follows:

No. of 'A' grades : 28

No. of 'A-' grades : 41

No. of 'B' grades: 42

No. of 'B-' grades: 27

No. of 'C' grades: 4

No. of 'C-' grades: 4

Even now, if some students are NOT SATISFIED with their grades, then

please come and meet me at 3:30pm tomorrow in CEH (Center for Exact Humanities).

Please note that tomorrow is the last day for you to discuss with us regarding your grades. By day after tomorrow morning, we will send the updated grades to the academic office, and no more changes will be made after that

Placements 2009/2010

After months of toiling hard, students in the final year of their courses sat down for something which are considered quite significant in their life as engineering students – placements. They began in December and are still continuing. IIT is a research institute, as such the administration stresses upon research more than placements, but most of the students have a desire of attaining financial independence and to work in the industry, as such placement is an important aspect in the life of a student. Keeping this in mind many steps were taken to improve from last year which was marred by global recession.

With the efforts of the student community, the administration and the faculty the condition improved this year both in terms of average package and the number of companies which came for placements.

Some of the significant features were that many companies took more students than targeted. A lot of companies praised the standard of the students here, like Goldman-Sachs, which was impressed by the technical abilities of the students and Microsoft, which praised the level of preparation the students had put in. Direct-I was impressed with our course curriculum. The other highlight was the arrival of IBM- IRL and Credit-Suisse, which are not in our regular list. Both these firms provided high packages to the students they selected. Many ECE students got jobs in the core sector, however the overall condition wasn't really impressive and far behind the CSE students. This year a lot of effort was put by the student community to improve the scenario of ECE placements; positive results were definitely seen but more

needs to be done. Similarly the placements of MS by research students were not up to the mark. Some of the requests made by the students' community in this regard are that the institute should try to get them research jobs, the institute should invite research labs and that the faculty should invite companies suited for their needs instead of depending entirely on the placement office.

Another sector which requires improvement is the placements of the M.Tech students. Despite their degree being technically higher, they are still lagging in placements as compared to the B-Tech students. Another aspect pointed out by a student was that their fees are significantly higher in comparison to a B.Tech student, but at the end of their course in terms of average package, they lag behind B.Tech students.

Some sincere steps are required to be taken here. Here perhaps the active members of the M.Tech student community and the student community in general should come up with ideas so that the condition of future batches improves.

Pun Unintended !



Cultural Updates

With the end of this semester, again comes the cultural season to add to the flavours of fun and rejoice. The season was to witness three events of which two have already found their place. The inter house skit competition, that saw not only nukkad natak but also other drama adding to the variety. Last year's runner up Aakash were the winners this time. Vayu house was this year's runner up with agni taking the third place. Pankaj Anthwal of Prithvi and Rini Bhatt from Agni were acknowledged for their performances and were declared the best actors.

The singing competition was held over a span of 2 days :

Day one had the solo performances in which many known as well new voices enthralled everyone. Sravanthi Reddy bagged the 1st position in Folk/Classical category for Prithvi house whereas Agni's Priyam Parashar won in the western category.

Group singing competition was held on the following day in which various groups from different houses performed. It was not just the singing but also instruments that added to the rhythmic and soulful atmosphere (Well surely there were few exceptions to it :P). As last time, this year also Prithvi House was able to get an extra edge over the others by bagging the 1st position in both Folk and Western categories.

As it is said "It is with the audience to decide the fate of a performance", Akash House group that sung 'Rock on' truly deserves a mention for it not only made everyone realise that the performer should enjoy his performance but actually turned out to be the most entertaining performance.

Students performing at the Inter-House Singing Comptt



WBPL

Guess the reason for the sad faces on some of the guys during their evening walks in the past month? Well, they had lost their territory (read, the BB court) to the girls ...it was time for the WBPL. The IIIT-H Womens Basketball Premier League, a one of a kind initiative was being held for the first time in the institute.

The 15 minute three on three half court affair started on the 24th of March with participation from all the batches including both UG and PG. The spirit was high with most players just beginning to get the hang of the game. As the tournament progressed, the enthusiasm levels reached a peak, with more aggression, more cat-fights for the ball, more baskets, more fouls, more cheers and larger crowds with WBPL becoming the favourite topic of the week.

As days passed, the tournament became a competitive race between the coaches as well whose tips and tactics on the nuances of basketball play constituted an important part of the game strategies. The environment was clearly vibrating with the energy of basketball with more and more games ending with discussions on Harshita's "pattuko", Aakanksha's graceful lay-ups and Nitya's defence. Shubhangi's sports spirit and Mehak's and Manasi's phenomenal progress had become inspiration for all the budding players. Nobody missed the echoes of 'keep harassing', 'defend tight' and 'watch your man' which resounded throughout the evenings.

WBPL officially ended on 29th March but the spirit of celebration, togetherness and sports-mania that it roused amongst the players and coaches is sure to last forever. (Some of the new players have now started analyzing NBA videos on youtube !!). But perhaps the biggest achievement of WBPL is the new bonds of friendship developed among virtual strangers in the campus.



Cult Night

As the cultural year came to an end with the cult-night, we saw a plethora of amazing solo and group dances by all the houses. The crowd was no less jubilant, always enthusiastic about the great as well as less than great performances. With many "waving Flags", Aakash house made a clean sweep this cult-night, getting away with a whopping 480 points in their kitty.

The event wise results were as follows: Aakash's Madhulika was the winner in solo, classical category. Agni's Ruchit bagged the 1st position in solo, western genre. The Group classical category was won by Vidit & Group of Aakash house, whereas the western category was won by Kalyan & Group again from Aakash house. A satisfied crowd left the ground and the performances ended with the winners taking the stage to celebrate. The Final House Cultural Rankings for this session were as follows: Prithvi House once again led with 1160 points. Following was Aakash House with 1130 points. Agni House with 790 points bagged the third position and Vayu house was next with 730 points. The effort it took to pull together such a show round the year was truly appreciated by one and all. With the crowd and talent ever growing in IIIT, the performances this year were truly magical. We can only imagine the enthralling cultural sessions, the future holds, with this level of creativity blossoming in the houses.



PEN STAND

ragging--;

This is a typical first day senior-junior interaction at IIIT-H.

SENIOR: Intro?

Junior: blah blah ...

SENIOR: Rank?

Junior: 1879

SENIOR: Branch?

JUNIOR: CSD.

[A crooked smile appears on the senior's face and the junior is wondering – "What was funny about that?". God forbid if he says it was his first choice and he could as well have got CSE, the senior would act like he committed suicide or something.]

Then the senior blurts out all the clichés he has known on the topic like "Call your parents and tell them you are here for a long time now", "what do you think happens during MS... research is not a piece of cake", "you'll take at least take 6-7 years...".

This happens around 30-40 times in the first week and the junior is pretty much convinced that he is doomed, with no hope of rescue.

Now the senior doesn't actually wish any such thing for the junior. He just does it for fun. This has been the trend at IIIT-H on how to tease the dual degree freshers during the interaction period. It happened with me, and to some extent I did it too with my juniors in the past couple of years. Having done it I know that none of us intend to demoralize our juniors in any way.

What goes on in the senior's mind is to just exaggerate the whole "Research is difficult" part and scare the junior (temporarily) for fun. He is largely unaware of the impact it has on the junior. Sure if later any junior comes to the senior's room and asks for his honest opinion he'd say "Don't worry dude. I was just joking... research can be fun, I'm sure you'd enjoy it." But this hardly ever happens.

The junior, new to this place, believes what he hears from his seniors (and why wouldn't he?). He is convinced that he has made a really bad decision and is going to have a hard time doing research. This I would term as the "default setting" that happens quite unknowingly within the first few weeks. This gap between the intentions of the senior and the effect it has on the juniors is quite dangerous. To some extent we simply brainwash the junior of all the enthusiasm with which he had joined the college.

All this might not be making any sense and you might say "Big deal, he'll anyway get to know the truth in a semester or two". True, but will he ever look at it in a way he would have if he'd not have been told those things? I don't think so. He'll always think of it as a burden or something which he'll have to go through to "get out of the college with a degree". You can talk to any dual degree first year or second year student on this topic and with very high probability you'll hear something like "I know sir, I'm done for. I have no idea how will I get out of here in 5 or even 6 years." Why is he talking like that? He has no idea what research is going to be like and he already thinks that he's not going to like it or do it properly. Yes you're right; this is not *his* opinion. This is some senior's opinion (who, by the way, himself has little or no idea about research) which he has accepted as his own.

Not that this is the only "pearl of wisdom" that we give, there are lots like: "Oh, that prof doesn't teach well... don't attend his classes", "Tutorials? There is no point in attending them ...", "yeah that course is not going to help in your placements, you can bunk its classes" (I actually got all of these in my first year!). But I chose to write about the dual-degree one because it is the most popular and undisputedly the most damaging one. All I want is we prefix all these sentences with "I think" or "in my opinion" instead of professing them as such.

Now one might argue that a senior might say whatever he wishes, the fresher should be wise enough to decide whether to believe him. Agreed, and in

some rare cases it actually might happen that a well-motivated fresher doesn't get affected. But my point is why test his wisdom the very first day he arrives.

There are a lot of uncertainties in a fresher's mind and he seeks most of the "real" answers from his seniors ('cause you know what the typical fresher thinks -- *profs live in a utopian world*) and I think our answers can play a crucial role in shaping his view about the college, his degree and many other things. I think it is our responsibility to introduce him to the college in a way that makes his stay here the most fruitful (all the interaction fun is secondary, and rather insignificant).

I felt hurt when in the last ping! interview Prof. Govindarajulu said - "...For all this indiscipline, seniors are to be held responsible for they haven't groomed the juniors well enough." My instant reaction after reading it was "Why is he blaming the seniors?" Then I pondered over it and finally I realized that he was right! We as seniors, do have a responsibility to groom our juniors. Let alone *grooming* them, we are only making it worse for them in this case by having them believe that the dual-degree programme is a mess and demotivating them. And all this for what? Just to appall them by these "revelations" and have some fun.

I am not blaming anyone here. It has just become a trend and somehow I came to understand its ill effects. I just want that every one of us strike this one form of fun off the long list that we have. There are a variety of other ways to pull their leg: asking them to act, dance, sing and lots of other methods that I'll refrain from mentioning here :) (of course, all of this only as long as he's "comfortable"). Just spare this one.

This is soon going to be put to test with a new batch arriving after the summers. I hope this time our interactions with them will only boost their confidence and spirit even further.

Manan Nayak



PEN STAND

A LETTER FROM 2070

My Dear Forefathers, I'm Avi, writing this letter to you all, from a time and place, you'll feel hard to live in. But you should know about us and our lives. This is the year – 2070. I've just turned 55, but my appearance says I'm 85. I suffer from serious kidney problems, because I don't get to drink enough water. I remember my childhood, when I was 5, everything was different then. There were lots of trees in the parks, houses with beautiful and green gardens, and I could enjoy having a half-hour shower.

Now, we use towels with mineral-oil to clean our skins. I remember, there were SAVE WATER advertisements, warnings and talks. But, nobody cared. We thought water would last forever, but we were wrong! Now, all the rivers, lakes and dams are either empty or contaminated.

Unemployment has reached dramatic proportions since industry is standing still. Desalination plants are major industries here with salary in terms of drinkable water, being everybody's requisite. The food is over 80% synthetic.

People are killing people for jerrycans of water. There is negligible sight of natural vegetation out there, only smoke and dirt prevails here. The outside appearance of the population is horrible, with wrinkled faces, emaciated bodies, sores caused by ultraviolet-radiation which is no more blocked by once existing ozone layer. People here look twice their age and life expectancy is reduced to 35 years.

Water can no more be produced, we're somehow maintaining the degrading oxygen for which

we are charged by the government. We get 137 cubic meters of oxygen per person per day. Those who cannot pay, are expelled from these "ventilated" zones that run artificial lungs using solar-power. The air is not at all good, but at least we can breathe. New babies are now born with deficiencies, mutations and deformities. There are still some countries left with green zones crossed by rivers, but are heavily guarded. It seldom rains here, when it happens, it's mostly acid-rain.

When my son asks me to talk about my youth, I tell him about the green fields, the beauty of the flowers, the rain, how pleasant was to swim and fish in the rivers and dams, to drink all the water we could, and how healthy people were. Then he asks, "Dad, why there is no water?" Then, I feel a lump in my throat. I feel really guilty, because I belong to the generation who contributed to the destruction of environment and seriously ignored all those warnings! Now, our children are paying the price.

I strongly believe, that shortly, life on earth would disappear as this destruction of nature has now reached an irreversible stage. Almost all of the fauna diversity disappeared a decade ago. I saw the beautiful tiger only in photos that my Dad used to have.

There are no more forests left in this world. This is all about us, your future! I wish I could do something to make people of my past realize the issue that appeared then at that time.

For the better of the planet and lives of our loved ones.

With Regards,
Avi

Alumni Corner



Many of you must be pondering over the possibility of some exciting career options after passing out from IIIT-H. We have come up with the idea of presenting you various exciting dimensions and career options our alumni have pursued.

Mr Tarun Nayak (IPS)

is a 2002 batch passout (in 2006). He is B Tech from IIIT and joined Deloitte when he started but his passion to serve his nation and the desire to be a person who leaves behind a mark in the society drove him into one of the toughest (mental) exams in India, the UPSC Union Public Service Commission Exams i.e. Civil Services Examination.

Here we discuss with him certain aspects of the life he has chosen, the whys, whens etc.

We also seek advice from him on the hows and whats of an area where no IIITian has been before - The Civil Services.

Q. Why should I pursue a career in Civil Services?

Ans : The job is recession free and thus, offers job security to the person. Moreover, it provides you a fixed career growth.

Q. What can I possibly contribute through this job?

Ans: The scope of the contribution that can be made to the society through such a job is, in fact, one of the biggest reasons to opt for Civil services. Everyone contributes to country but a Civil Service has a relatively huge span of contribution. As compared to any private job which has a very limited contribution, your job will directly affect the lives of 2-5 lakh people minimum. This in turn offers a 'Social status' which most of us are aware of. In addition to all these plus points, there are new challenges everyday and you won't get bored.

Q. Which Examination is required to be taken by an aspirant and what pattern does it follow ?

Ans: There is an exam called Civil Services Examination conducted by UPSC every year. It has 3 stages viz Preliminary exam, Main exam and Interview (also called Personality test) held in May, Oct and Mar/Apr respectively. General studies is a compulsory subject and you have to choose an optional from the list of subjects given for pre-lims and 2 optionals in mains. Prelims are of qualifying nature but marks of mains (Max. 2000) and interview (Max. 300) added together makes the final merit.

Moreover there seems to be change in this pattern from next year which will be clear in due course of time.

Q. How should I go about choosing the optional subjects?

As of now, Computer Science is not available as an optional subject. You must choose your optional subject on the basis of your interest. Some other noteworthy points while choosing your optional subjects are given:

- 1) Assuming one year of preparation and one year between prelims and interview its very difficult to sustain interest in a subject if your reasons for selection were 'less course syllabus', 'marking patterns' etc.
- 2) The questions asked are analytical (analysis based) in nature so you should have good understanding of the concepts.

Another possible reason for subject selection includes its relatedness to General studies. For example, General Administration and Geography are more or less related to General Studies. So you may have to study somewhat less. Though the primary reason for your selection must be your interest.

Tarun was comfortable and interested in geography since school days so he opted for that.

Q. Can you give some suggestions about the required Study Material and Coaching ?

Ans: Study material is widely available but always choose good ones and stick to them.

Coaching helps in figuring out 'Where to start' and 'How to start' as you are new to this field . It stabilizes and gives momentum to studies. Coaching is given by experienced people and there are many things which are not in books but are known to them.

Over the time majority of good coaching centres have concentrated in Delhi. Selecting city and coaching also depends on what subject do you want to study. Hyderabad also has good coaching institutes for anthropology and political sciences.

Q. How can I start my preparations in college?

Ans: You must be practical and know how to manage whatever time is available. You should develop a deep thinking about any current issue which you come across. Reading of Civil services oriented magazines can be done. If you don't have a basic grasp of concepts then reading of NCERT is suggested. If you are comfortable with them, then NCERT need not be focussed upon.

Please refer to the facebook page(http://www.facebook.com/pages/Hyderabad/IIIT-Hyderabad/137298213716?v=app_2373072738&ref=ts#/topic.php?uid=137298213716&topic=13154) where people can ask their doubts. They will be answered by Tarun and our other alumni who have cleared UPSC.

AGONY AUNT

- 1) The bread in OBH GF mess is very very bad. - A job for the Messcom people .
- 2) Yuktahaar now has brown rice instead of White. Its good we are following the principles of good nutrition but isn't this compromising the taste? . - A job for the Messcom people
- 3) Spam filters in Squirrel Mail are very bad - A job for the SysAdmins .

PING RECOMMENDS

Put yourself in gear and get set to learn "How to train your Dragon". The movie by the makers of Shrek. has an over 8 rating on imdb . Its animated .

If need for some midnight snacks arise, don't stop yourself and indulge in faluda near DLF building.

Poll Results

Do you think JV should be made optional ?

Yes (88 %)

No (9%)

No Idea (3%)

Total Votes—131

Pun Unintended !



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