

Dean's Diary

Exploring Extremes

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Dear Friends,

It is a pleasure and privilege to highlight the activities and achievements of the international and alumni relations (IAR) office in the last year. I am particularly delighted to know that this article will be published on the auspicious birthday of Swami Vivekananda (January 12), a global icon of Indian philosophy and Indianness in the true sense.

Building strong research and academic collaborations with international partners has been at the forefront of our international relations strategy. Towards this end, we now have two ongoing joint doctoral programs with two Australian Universities, namely Swinburne University of Technology (SUT) and Deakin University (DU). While the JDP with SUT was initiated in 2017, the JDP with Deakin U was established in 2021 only. To attract bright students to these two JDPs, the JDPs were advertised separately. We received close to 400 applications for each of these JDPs against the sanctioned strength of 20 positions in each, indicating an acceptance rate of less than 5%. In the coming academic year, we also plan to implement the JDP with National Tsinghua University (NTHU), Taiwan.

Recently we have signed an MoU with the National Institute of Materials Science (NIMS), Japan, one of the most renowned places globally for research in materials science and engineering, for collaboration on cutting-edge research, student, and faculty exchanges. We have also executed an MoU with Seoul National University (SNU), a top-ranking university in South Korea, for academic and research collaboration. An area of utmost importance for us is increasing the number of international students at IITH. We strongly believe that in addition to positively affecting the visibility and ranking, the growing number of international students adds to the ethnic and cultural diversity. Although the number of international students is increasing, supported by various scholarship programs of the Government of India, including ICCR, ASEAN, and EdCIL, the number is still rather small. To provide the much-needed fillip in this direction, we have for the first time introduced a dedicated scholarship program, "Fellowship for International Research Scholars in Technology (FIRST@IITH)," with an attractive fellowship and liberal contingency grants for international students interested in pursuing doctoral studies at IITH. We are hopeful that the FIRST program will be successful in achieving the stated goals in the future.

In parallel to the hard approach of offering attractive fellowships, we also focus on the soft approach to make IITH a destination of choice for international students. We have decided to celebrate a day of the year as International Students Day at IITH to enhance the mutual understanding of our culture, society, food, music, etc. We are committed to making IITH a home away from home for the international students.

Collaboration with Japanese academic/industry/R&D through JICA in the framework of the FRIENDSHIP project has been a cornerstone of our international relations. The successful implementation of the phase-1 project has been instrumental in getting phase-2 of the project sanctioned. The phase-2 will support IITH students to pursue doctoral studies at Japanese universities besides supporting IITH faculty for forging strong collaboration with Japanese academic and R&D institutions. The scholarship program under the FRIENDSHIP Phase-2 project for the academic year 2022-23 has just been announced.

IITH over the last decade had graduated about 4400 alumni across various streams. In any higher educational institution, alumni are one of the key stakeholders and have great interest in seeing their alma mater grow in stature. Engaging alumni with the alma mater has been very well done by many US and European universities. In India, many institutions have started Development offices to engage with alumni. IITH is one of the early institutions among the second generation IITs to start the Development office to work at the interface of the IAR and PCR offices. This office commenced its operations with one executive and a consultant.

Within 7 months, the office has progressed well in multiple areas. Having a detailed database of alumni is important to engage with alumni. We have about 3400 alumni records with contact details out of a total alumni strength of 4400.

The office has implemented salesforce CRM as the back-end database management system and campaign management tool. The office has also built a front-end giving platform -<https://giving.iith.ac.in/>, wherein alumni can contribute to their philanthropic interests very easily. Corporate Social Responsibility is another area, the development office has started to work on. Corporates spend 2 % of their profits on CSR-related projects that impact society.



"Strength doesn't come from physical capacity. It comes from an indomitable will"

-Mahatma Gandhi

IITH is positioning itself as a worthy institution, capable of utilizing the CSR funds for greater social impact. In the years to come, the Development office will play a critical role in the growth of IITH.

I want to convey my sincere thanks to the director, colleagues, and everyone involved for their continuous support and encouragement.

I wish safety to one and all in these trying and difficult pandemic times.