

## Widening Horizons of IIT Delhi

*51<sup>st</sup> Foundation Day: 27<sup>th</sup> January 2010*



Browsing the hostel notice board, I read the theme for the Foundation Day, “WIDENING HORIZONS of IIT Delhi” and then turned to think a little about it. I turned back to read it once again, but this time it appeared to me as “WIDENING the horizons of IIT Delhi”.

I am Nishant Ranka, a final year student of Electrical Engineering. I welcome you all geniuses and all geniuses who make geniuses to a very warm evening. In the next few minutes, I'll talk about both the things, i.e. about how IITD is such a dynamic organization – the way it has grown in last 4 years, from a student's perspective and about how I believe that we can keep this growth fuelled while continually widening its scope.

It's amazing to see the activities in my IIT – IIT Delhi at a new high. There is a revived enthusiasm in all the boards: for example - whenever there is a major educational event in Delhi – there is a BSW trip going to it, when it's time for UG registration – AIC steps forward and takes the charge. Library and Reading Room have undergone a major makeover and so have the eating joints. I still remember the days of my first year when the net speed was so slow that seniors would click a link on their computers and talk to us in the meanwhile – compare the speed today! On my very recent visit to the Robotics club I was amazed to see the level of streamlined work – it was so different from my 1<sup>st</sup> year when the club was new. The club is now an inspiration for the student bodies, just like SPIC MACAY. It is a quintessential example of what we can do with sheer desire to do it. The important take home lesson for me was we can **DO**. In last one week, I met 4 great personalities – Nicholas Burns, Tom Wheeler, Charles M Vest and Peter Chan – all due to the fantastic initiatives like the Institute Lecture Series, the Bharti Lecture Series and those of our Entrepreneurship Development Cell.

We all invariably fall prey to criticism – don't we? It's so easy after all. It's so easy to criticize that we always forget the hard work done and the several positive changes that have been made. And when I see all these things I realize how much of hard work must have gone into every single thing.

I recently read the Toyota Way – and the book hit me hard. Someone asked me – what did you find so fascinating about the book? I said, “The Toyota Culture”. What makes Toyota the no. 1 manufacturing company, is in my opinion - its culture...And this is what I see happening today – seeding of the IIT Culture of the new decade, of the new century, of the new India. And my dear friends this is what we have to enrich – You and I.

Last month, I was talking with a UK based journalist, and invariably I showed her the microcontroller circuit I had built for my BTP. She looked at it intensely and told me that I could've soldered it in a better way. I said er, OK, but if I may ask how you know?” She told that she studied from Oxford where they had several such interest groups, like the embedded interest group where they used to meet up and discuss such things.

Consider for a second – wouldn't it be great if we would have astronomy, electronics, car designing, aero modeling, high energy physics, Rubik's Cube and other such clubs in IIT Delhi...so that when a student comes to IIT Delhi – he is not only stupefied by the amazing

cultural activities of IIT Delhi, but also get a glimpse of its technical potential. Wouldn't that be a good way to expand our boundaries?

There is always a great buzz about Jobs. The great Day 1 Job stories do round in every nook and cranny of each and every hostel, and to the least I've repeated MY Job story 100 times. But I have never heard any such buzz about the stories of brilliant people who go for their MS and PhDs. Isn't there a need for some form of information which gives the profile of these several people who have gone for their post graduate education. Wouldn't that give students a realistic picture from early on – just like we have about the best jobs? Wouldn't that be a step forward?

These are just 2 ideas, but there are several others as well. However, the important question before us is that how do we make it happen? As you all know, 'Great ideas which are not implemented are but a waste'...And that brings me back to the point of culture

The initiatives MUST come from the students, because after all...they are the group for which these activities are meant for. Let me go back to my school days – invariably my whole class used to love 2 subjects – History and English. Were these subjects any better than others – No. Then why? We passed the class – and got a new History teacher and slowly History again became boring. Students didn't love the course – they loved the teacher. And students try to emulate teachers they love. Thus when we talk about the cultural change, I believe that it HAS to come from the students but those with the experience, authority, knowledge and with the bigger picture need to walk hand in hand with the students to change things until this 'dream culture' become a part of their DNA.

I would rather say that the mission in front of us is 2 faceted. While on one hand there is a great need to have dedicated teams with focused vision and mission to take the current activities to insurmountable heights, on the other hand we continuously need to be open minded and initiative taking to increase the width of our activities.

And thus there cannot be a better occasion for me to urge you all to continue trying indefatigably, just as you're doing now – to bring about a lasting cultural change and to broaden the excellence of IIT Delhi in all directions.

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