Contribution to:
Initiating a dialog on improving our academic culture

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Preamble

This is to share some facts, perspectives and thoughts with colleagues, also in my capacity as a functionary.

Feedback will be appreciated
Extra-curricular activities

- Students Gymkhana activities under General Secretaries
  - Cultural, Sports and Academic (=STAB, see below)
    - Funded by Institute
    - Run throughout the semester
    - Cult and Sports mostly internal, with a few intercollegiate events
    - Cult flagship event: Performing Arts Festival (PAF)
    - Sports flagship event: Inter-IIT Sports Meet
    - S&T Activities Body more concerned with external Tech competitions
Extra-curricular (contd)

- **Independent Bodies**: Mood Indigo, TechFest, E-Cell
  - Sponsored externally
  - Mood Indigo and TechFest have specific windows of a few days
  - E-Cell has flagship event E-Summit in Feb. Other activities spread through the semesters are in the form of seminars and discussions.
Extra-curricular ( contd )

- **Too many events / activities?**
  - A vast and varied talent pool among students
  - Many are discovering newer talents
  - A substantial fraction have been class monitors, school captains and organisers during school
    - A skew in the ratio of leaders to participants
  - Need for having something for each type
  - Many events; but each student involved in only one or two category of events
Limiting distraction

- Attempts to limit number of hours of activities continue:
  - Only major events are Hostel based competitions
    - Reason: otherwise hostel image issue undermines content and elicits forced participation.
  - Club (=interest group) based (indep of hostel) activities have been mooted
    - -- Many talents, many niche clubs
  - Non-competitive and showcase type items to promote content rather than management
Limiting distraction

Specific Measures

• Independent Bodies festivals are restricted to windows of a few days
  – Strictly imposed since Autumn 2011, eliminating so called “pre-Mood-I” and “pre-TechFest” events occurring during semester
  • Zero sponsorship permitted under Gymkhana banner
Limiting distraction (contd)

Examples:
- “National Debate” needed sponsorship funds --> asked to consolidate with Mood Indigo and to be held strictly during Mood I dates
- Sports Leagues (clubs) for cricket, football, volleyball have been formed. Not permitted to take sponsorship (to prevent the marketing effort, and the distractions from sponsors)
- Funds and equipment provided for labor jobs during PAF's
An initiative for PG students

- Traditionally not involved either due to shortness of stay (Masters) or different age group (PhD)
- As of this year we are launching a scheme for every PG student to undertake a core Sports activity:
  - once a week for a minimum one semester (can continue on their own beyond that)
  - Fitness and recreational skills they should carry with them later in life.
Summary of Extra-curricular ...

- Essential to personality development
- Immense potential in the highly selected youth of IIT
- **Channel** for self-development
- “Curbing extra-curriculars should result in greater academic participation” cannot be a forgone conclusion ... see next section, new economy, new technologies
Student demotivation and remedies

- Compared to 1975, 1985, 1995, ... several significant *qualitative* differences due to new economy and new technologies
Economy : categories of UG students

- Academic bend of mind --> will go into R&D and academics ... probably 20%
- Regardless of academic potential will join job and entrepreneurship careers, most likely also acquiring a Management degree ... probably 40%
- The rest may end up going either way depending on opportunity
New economy, new technologies

• New economy needs technological inputs / innovation only at a very high level
  – IT is an exception, which is also where many students go

• Emphasis on inter-personal soft skills, team players with a core of Tech knowledge, with reduced emphasis on active knowledge

• Project based, result oriented and time bounded execution, with personal ownership dominates over tech content (The TechFest package)
New educational scenario

Some fragments of thoughts:

• May be fruitful to move towards
  - (i) direction (roadmap) based,
  - (ii) “case study” based, “hands on” transfer of knowledge

• As a package rather than as a list of topics “to be covered”
  - Does not require a live teacher continuously
  - Does require a congenial expert on demand
Conclusion

- Extra curriculars are being regulated to reduce managerial and showbiz initiative and increase core talent development
- Modern setting requires soft skills as importantly as technical knowledge
- The 20% keen on academics will continue to be happy with traditional delivery package
- Need to create the flexibility to match the diversity of needs for the larger majority