

Summary of the brainstorming session on Academic Culture
23 January 2013

(Based on notes by Nutan Limaye and Varsha Apte)

Attendees:

Madhu Vinjamur
Raja Mohanty
C P Narayan
R B Sunoj
Shiv Prasad
Viren Sethi
Ali Contractor
Varsha Apte
N Ballal
A Sanyal
HN
S Biswas
Swati Patankar
Sahana Murthy
Uday Khedker
Sridhar Iyer
N Rangaraj
Vivek Pandey (PhD scholar 3rd year MEMS)
Milind Sohoni
Nutan Limaye
Ishan Srivastava (Gsec Acad Affairs (UG))
S Patwardhan
DMD

Introductory remarks

The goal for this activity is to go beyond individual efforts.
For that we need better understanding of reality.
The main focus of the first session is "us" the faculty, what our
perceptions are. We should take key decisions in this session so that
action is sustained and gets broad participation. For that we must reach out
to all faculty, and also interact with students and the administration
where necessary.

a) Extra-curricular activities

Uday (presentation):

More options available for students however the time is limited. Many "officially-blessed" activities. A holistic approach needed to account for time spent by students in acads+activities+placement+TA work. This may be primarily a scheduling problem. Schedule should be made which accounts for all this time.

Discussion:

Milind: Extra-curricular activities should be systematic endeavours towards betterment of self. However, typically students are spectators /consumers and not generators. Viren Sethi(?) mentioned that there is a lot of peer-pressure to participate in various activities which weak students succumb to. They are not good at those activities plus lose out on academics. Ballal mentioned that extra-curricular activities often put more pressure on students than the academic activities.

b) Effective teaching

Sahana (Presentation):

We (the faculty at IITB) + available research can together become our knowledge base. To tap on this, make small videos/documentations of teaching methods that worked and create a database, organise workshops for new faculty with follow ups (as opposed to one shot workshops) and explain the effective teaching methods well-known in the education literature.

Discussion:

DMD and Madhu talked about their experiences while teaching large classes -- dividing the class into small groups worked. Also fixed seating places in large classes worked. Sridhar talked about his experience. The idea of "muddy points" worked. Organizing demos not very effective, instead ask students to predict and then demonstrate. Varsha mentioned that she tried "focus groups"-- fixed places for few students every class. Sunoj mentioned that using FaceBook to connect with students worked for him. Varsha mentioned that her experiment with use of piazza was a success. The idea of giving time in and out of class hours and making interactions informal emerged. Also, monitoring each others

classes, question papers was suggested. HN suggested mentoring of new faculty. Creating a brochure (effective teaching 101) for new faculty was suggested. The idea that take help from the institute but also be ready to "do it ourselves" also emerged.

C. Large classes:

Patwardhan (presentation):

- Institute level mandate exists to split classes
- Splitting should be applied uniformly across departments
- Issues like grade compatibility across instructors need to be tackled

Discussion:

Common grading should be performed across split classes.

(Complete details of discussion were not noted)

Postscript:

The issue of student demotivation could not be discussed due to lack of time. Hence it was suggested that we have a second session to discuss it.

DMD mentioned that we would also have to decide on a plan for initiating sustainable activity on various aspects of the academic culture and outlined a possible plan.