



11th June, 2021

'We have a vision to be among the best and are working towards it'

IIT Bhubaneswar director R V Rajakumar tells Hemanta Pradhan about the manner in which the institute held exams despite the pandemic and how it intends to emerge as the best.

How do you manage to complete the courses and exams amid the pandemic?

We have been very keen and working on offering education without compromising on standards during the pandemic at IIT Bhubaneswar. Through commensurate and proactive planning and very innovative technological developments and execution, we could do many challenging things like successfully switching to online education with zero gaps and creating a unique method of conducting a pen and paper based examination via online with invigilation by our faculty. We successfully did this to evaluate our students, including those who passed out last year in May as well as conducted partial laboratory practice with demonstrations online by our faculty.

Also, due to proper planning, we could create our academic calendar as usual and stick to it without any need to change our academic regulations or shortening the semester. Our students have been earning their grades with full performance evaluation like any other year, during the pandemic.

IIT has been placed in the 251-300 band in THE Asia University rankings and 701-750 in QS world rankings...

About five years back, we came up with this vision of the institute to be among the global cream as early as possible. We have been working on all the fundamental



aspects and realizing the same by setting new standards in teaching-learning, recruitment of top class faculty and roping in foreign faculty to teach a fraction of our courses. We are also conducting research of social relevance and significance, creating world class infrastructure and ambience to gain significant successes on all fronts.

Frankly, we have not done anything to improve our institutional rank by any ranking system. Whatever rank has been obtained has been done by default and as a by-product of working towards realizing the vision. For example, you may tend to give over importance to research publications than research itself and at times at the cost of teaching for a better rank by a system. That way, one can have short-time gains, but certainly cannot become top class by adopting such mechanisms. We need to continue the good work we have been doing towards rising the standard of education and research to be nothing short of the best and further enhance our efforts towards internationalisation.

How did you manage to con-

duct laboratory classes for first year UG students in the absence of physical classes?

From the beginning of the academic year we have been doing part of laboratory practice by an innovative and unique online method with a teacher conducting the experiment, demonstrating the same to students and they taking the measurements, online. Though, this way we managed to complete the practicals, the institute brought senior students to the campus in batches and conducted laboratory classes. However, due to the second wave of Covid, laboratory practice of freshers had to be postponed. It will be done soon. The institute also conducted yoga and extra curricular activities by innovative online methods.



Has the pandemic affected your campus placement?

Absolutely, not. So far we have already placed 85% of UG students, which is better than last year.

What are the pandemic-induced

changes that you intend to continue with?

Education with students present in the campus has its own advantages and we shall revert back to it as soon as the situation permits. However, teaching by faculty from across the globe will continue. Our method of conducting pen and paper examination, which is as effective as conventional examination, may continue for our admissions. These apart, online meetings and webinars which proved to be very effective, will continue.