

Education

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SMART INDIA HACKATHON

Uday Salunkhe, Group Director, Welingkar Institute

The idea of a hackathon (such as the Smart India Hackathon) hinges on integrating the otherwise scattered talent into a purposive scheme. The latest episode, SIH 2019 (to be held on March 2-3) will engage around 1 lakh students.

PANDIT DEENDAYAL PETROLEUM UNIVERSITY, GANDHINAGAR

Autonomy of private university, accountability of a public

How PDPU is emerging as a role-model in the private university space

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THE KNOWLEDGE CORRIDOR is a 3-km stretch of new road off the Ahmedabad-Gandhinagar highway. Dotting the area are low-rise residential schemes and sprawling campuses of some top-ranking public and private academic institutes, including the Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University (PDPU), the sole private university in Gujarat to be accorded autonomous status by UGC some months ago. A member of the Association of Indian Universities, PDPU was accredited with Grade A by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council in March 2018.

Though still not a 'deemed university', PDPU is fast emerging as a viable alternative to the aspirational IITs and NITs. What will come as a shot in the arm is fresh investment of ₹150 crore that RIL's chairman and president of PDPU Board of Governors Mukesh Ambani committed at Vibrant Gujarat 2019 "to make it even



stronger and an institution of international repute." An example of successful PPP in the education space, PDPU has big names in the corporate space queued up for collaborations. Top of the list is the upcoming Centre of Excellence in Automobile, a skill development centre being set up with an investment of ₹150 crore by Maruti Suzuki, in collaboration with the

Bendigo Kangan Institute with the support of Gujarat government.

Quips C Gopalkrishnan, director general, PDPU, and director of the School of Petroleum Management, "Our USP is we have the fleet-footedness and autonomy of a private university, along with the accountability of a public university."

Ranked 55th in India and first in



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—C GOPALKRISHNAN,
DIRECTOR GENERAL, PDPU

Gujarat by NIRF, PDPU is also recipient of Scientific & Industrial Research Organisation (SIRO) recognition by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research. With over 5,000 students, PDPU is on a roll post the grant of autonomous status armed with the freedom to start new courses, off-campus centres, skilling courses, research parks and new academic programmes. The

new status will give it freedom to hire foreign faculty, enrol foreign students, give incentive-based emoluments to faculty, enter into academic collaborations and run open distance learning programmes, all without the normally-associated cumbersome approvals. Spread over 100 acres, the campus houses four schools: School of Petroleum Management (SPM), School of Petroleum Technology, School of Liberal Studies and School of Technology.

SPM was first established as the Institute of Petroleum Management (IPMG) in 2006 by Gujarat Energy Research and Management Institute (GERMI). In 2007, when PDPU was established by GERMI, IPMG became a part of PDPU and changed its name to SPM, the trailblazer in the PDPU stable of specialised schools.

Over the years, PDPU has metamorphosed into a diversified university with national and global visibility. "At the time the institute was set up, the goal was to create skilled manpower and know-how in the oil and gas sector. Back then, Canada was among the main hubs for such specialised skills," Gopalkrishnan recalls.

With growing clamour for options for students, "it was only natural to give PDPU the look and feel of a complete academic environment and we have done that with the School of Technology and School of Liberal Studies," adds Nigam Dave, director, School of Liberal Studies. Between them, the four schools offer niche as well as general interest programmes, covering UG, PG and doctoral studies in management, humanities and engineering. The School of Petroleum Technology offers BTech, MTech and PhD in upstream and downstream petroleum engineering, as also MTech in nuclear technology, and MTech and PhD in solar engineering. The

School of Technology focuses on tech education and research. But it's the School of Liberal Studies that is making waves.

Established in 2009, it offers UG honours degrees in humanities, management, science and commerce. It also offers MA in English, public policy & administration and international relations, as well as PhD in the same areas. At the helm since its inception, Dave recalls, "Setting up of this school was to move beyond the opaque world of disciplines. Our attempt is offering students an opportunity to explore a palette of academic disciplines, rather than a specific rubric of courses that train them for defined career paths." The student exchange as well as semester-abroad programmes and affiliations with leading global universities provide students global exposure and networking. "The attempt is internationalisation of our students and faculty. The generous travel grant that PDPU provides is an initiative that few, if any, rivals provide. We even have a global citizenship course," Dave asserts. "If this opens up job opportunities overseas, we view it as a brain gain, not a brain drain."

Adds Pradeep Malik, head of the Media Studies team at PDPU, "Our UG students acquire critical thinking abilities and broad-based knowledge, which empowers them crucial life skills."

PDPU is also nurturing start-up initiatives through the Innovation & Incubation Centre. Currently incubating about 40 start-ups, the Centre has hit the bull's eye with Saarthi, a device that assists the blind and visually-impaired.

With so much going for it, PDPU is emerging as a role-model in the private university space.

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