

Clip: 1 of 2

INVALUABLE LESSONS

B-schools Offer the Right Course for Special Talents



CARE THAT SHOWS Sai Prasad Vishwanathan at the ISB convocation ceremony in 2011. ISB did away with stairs in one of its entrances, built a new washroom, gave him a battery-powered wheelchair and brought down the height of the dais on his graduating day.

India's top B-schools go all out to meet the needs of differently-abled students

DEVINA SENGUPTA & ANUMEHA CHATURVEDI
MUMBAI | NEW DELHI

He often mixes up 'who' with 'how'. And, when asked for directions, he needs to look at the hand with which he eats to point towards the right direction. Apoorv Agarwal is dyslexic and has just made it to Indian Institute of Management, Raipur, acknowledging his disability for the first time during his interview there.

"Because of high content of lead in my blood, language comprehension gets affected, but I will manage because I need to be an example for my sister," says Agarwal. His sister too suffers from the disorder.

Sai Prasad Vishwanathan wheelchaired his way into ISB in 2010 and was hired by Deloitte on the first day of placements. He was operated unsuccessfully for a birth condition of additional growth in his spinal cord. Subsequent injuries as a child rendered him disabled.

Seventy three such students with disabilities are now on campuses at a handful of IIMs ET spoke to for this story. There

are more such heroes — with visual, locomotive, hearing and learning disorders — all defying life's cruel blows to make it to the IIMs. Some of them were chosen in general quota — in some cases at the insistence of the candidate. (There is a 3% disability quota in IIMs.)

ISB did away with stairs in one of its four entrance gates enabling Vishwanathan to take the wheelchair, put a ramp around his accommodation, gave him a seat closest to the door, built a new washroom, gave him a battery-powered wheelchair that cost them ₹1 lakh, and brought down the height of the stage on his graduating day.

"It touched me when ISB started making changes because it was the right thing to do and not because they could foresee numbers of students like me going up in future," says Vishwanathan. "Reservation is not the answer. What we need is the right infrastructure that can make life easy."

IIM Calcutta is planning a centre for specially-abled students.

Newer IIMs Not Far Behind ▶▶ 17

New IIMs Catch Up

» From Page 1

With 26 such students now on the IIM Calcutta campus this year (batch 2015 and 2016), it is an urgent need. IIM Kozhikode set up an audit committee last month to make infrastructural changes to cater to those with special needs.

"The institute is built on a hill, so we are reviewing the entire space," said Debashis Chatterjee, dean of IIM-K. The B-school has 20 such students in the campus this year. "There was difficulty in getting qualified DA students in the past. Now, the awareness has increased. This year we could fill up 10 seats out of the 12 in the DA category," he added. The B-school has also admitted meritorious students with special needs in the general category.

In 2010, IIM Bangalore installed a lift with features such as voice announcement, accessible control panel for easy access to classrooms and offices on higher floors. They installed Braille in computers and bought motorised chairs for those with locomotive disorders. "Professors give me notes a day before the lecture and when there are many equations solved on the board, volunteers from other class sit with me and explain what is being written," says C Gaurav. He is blind and made it to the 2016 batch at IIM Bangalore. IIM-B appoints readers, note-takers, scribes and tutors as and when required for the 27 such students on the campus now. Newer IIMs aren't far behind. IIM Raipur, for example, gives all visually-im-

paired students larger hostel rooms, which they have to share with two other roommates who do not face similar needs. "This call was taken to ensure that even if one room mate is not there, we are not alone," says Yogesh Gupta (24) from the 2015 batch.

Gupta became blind in 2005 and found it difficult to learn Braille. He relies on speech software to understand notes. Gupta wants to make a career in marketing in logistics industry, for a shipping giant like Maersk Line. An internship with Transport Corporation of India this year has boosted his confidence. His classmate Piyush Rakheja wants a career in finance and absence of sight holds no barrier for this commerce graduate from Kolkata.

Recruiters are also doing their bit. Vodafone just recruited two management trainees with special needs from campuses out of a total of 110 management trainees. "We have not yet hired students with special needs and it hasn't come up in our hiring discussions, but we will look out for such students closely and will be delighted to hire them," says Sachin Nandgaonkar, partner, and head of recruitments for Boston Consulting Group in India. "Recruitments of the specially-abled tie in with our policy on inclusion, and students are assessed on a variety of factors, including marks and capabilities," says P Thiruvengadam, senior director, human capital, Deloitte.

Meanwhile, Vishwanathan will be leaving for a US stint with Deloitte next month.

Clip: 1 of 2

RIGHT COURSE FOR THE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

They Came not on Their Own & Still Conquered IIMs



CARE THAT SHOWS Sai Prasad Vishwanathan at the ISB convocation ceremony in 2011. ISB did away with stairs in one of its entrances, built a new washroom, gave him a battery-powered wheelchair and brought down the height of the dais on his graduating day

India's top business schools go the extra mile to help students with special needs

SAI PRASAD VISHWANATHANAN

DEVINA SENGUPTA & ANUMEHA CHATURVEDI
MUMBAI | NEW DELHI

He often mixes up 'who' with 'how'. And, when asked for directions, he needs to look at the hand with which he eats to point towards the right direction. Apoorv Agarwal is dyslexic and has just made it to Indian Institute of Management, Raipur, acknowledging his disability for the first time during his interview there.

"Because of high content of lead in my blood, language comprehension gets affected, but I will manage because I need to be an example for my sister," says Agarwal. His sister too suffers from the disorder.

Sai Prasad Vishwanathanan wheel-chaired his way into Indian School of Business, Bangalore, in 2010 and was hired by Deloitte. He was operated unsuccessfully for a birth condition of additional growth in spinal cord. Subsequent injuries during childhood rendered him disabled.

Seventy-three such students with disabilities are now on campuses at a handful of IIMs ET spoke to for this story. There are

more such heroes—with visual, locomotive, hearing and learning disorders—all defying life's cruel blows to make it to the IIMs. Some of them were chosen in general quota—in some cases at the insistence of the candidate—though 3% of the seats are reserved for the disabled in IIMs.

ISB did away with stairs in one of its four entrance gates enabling Vishwanathan to take the wheelchair; put a ramp around his accommodation, built a new washroom, gave him a battery-powered wheelchair that cost them ₹1 lakh, and brought down the height of the stage on his graduating day.

IIM-Calcutta has opened a centre for the differently abled while IIM-Bangalore and IIM-Kozhikode are making campuses more accessible

"It touched me when ISB started making changes because it was the right thing to do and not because they could foresee numbers of students like me going up in future," says Vishwanathan.

"It touched me when ISB started making changes because it was the right thing to do"

CGAURAV, IIM-BANGALORE

"Professors give me notes a day before the lecture and... volunteers explain what is being written"

New IIMs Not Far Behind ►► 11

Newer IIMs Not Far Behind

►► From Page 1

"Reservation is not the answer. What we need is the right infrastructure that can make life easy," Vishwanathan said.

B-schools are trying their best for their disabled students by adding voice announcement facility in lifts, providing them motorised wheelchairs, giving more time to students with learning disorders, adopting special software for the blind and encouraging volunteers to help them in their studies. Infrastructural changes have been made in class rooms and hostels, and students have been sensitised on the needs of the specially-abled. Some IIMs are also in the process of creating a special centre where the needs of the differently-abled can be discussed and met.

IIM Calcutta is planning a centre for specially-abled students.

With 26 such students this year (batch 2015 and 2016), it is an urgent need for the institute.

IIM Kozhikode set up an audit committee last month to make infrastructural changes to cater to the needs of the differently-abled. "The institute is built on a hill, so we are reviewing the entire space," said Debashis Chatterjee, dean of IIM-K.

The B-school has 20 such students in the campus this year. "There was difficulty in getting

qualified DA students in the past. Now, the awareness has increased. This year we could fill up 10 seats out of the 12 in the DA category," he added. The B-school has also admitted meritorious students with special needs in the general category.

In 2010, IIM Bangalore installed a lift with features such as voice announcement and accessible control panel for easy access to classrooms and offices on higher floors. They installed Braille in computers and bought motorised chairs for those with locomotive disorders.

"Professors give me notes a day before the lecture and when there are many equations solved on the board, volunteers from other classes sit with me and explain what is being written," says C Gaurav. He is blind and made it to the 2016 batch at IIM Bangalore.

IIM-B appoints readers, scribes and tutors as and when required for the 27 such students on the campus now.

Newer IIMs aren't far behind. IIM Raipur, for example, gives all visually-impaired students larger hostel rooms, which they have to share with two other roommates who do not face similar needs. "This was done to ensure that even if one room mate is not there, we are not alone," says Yogesh Gupta (24) from the 2015 batch.

Gupta became blind in 2005 and

found it difficult to learn Braille. He relies on speech software to understand notes. Gupta wants to make a career in marketing in the logistics industry. An internship with Transport Corporation of India this year has boosted his confidence. His classmate Piyush Rakheja wants a career in finance and absence of sight holds no barrier for this commerce graduate from Kolkata.

SUPPORT FROM RECRUITERS

Recruiters are also doing their bit. Vodafone just recruited two management trainees with special needs from campuses out of a total of 110 management trainees.

"We have not yet hired students with special needs and it hasn't come up in our hiring discussions, but we will look out for such students closely and will be delighted to hire them," says Sachin Nandgaonkar, partner, and head of recruitments for Boston Consulting Group in India.

"Recruitments of the specially-abled tie in with our policy on inclusion, and students are assessed on a variety of factors, including marks and capabilities," says P Thiruvengadam, senior director, human capital, Deloitte.

Meanwhile, Vishwanathan will be leaving for a US stint with Deloitte next month.