

# Promoting Education Partnerships

Text by MANISH CHAND Photographs by AJIT KUMAR

Educationists discuss how to build sustainable ties between Indian and American universities and make campuses in India more enticing to international students.

Indians make up the largest group of foreign students pursuing higher education in the United States. But the number of American students in India remains relatively small. In the 2006-07 academic year 2,627 of them studied in India, according to the Open Doors 2008 report by The Institute of International Education, an American nonprofit organization. While this represents a 24 percent increase over a decade, there is consider-

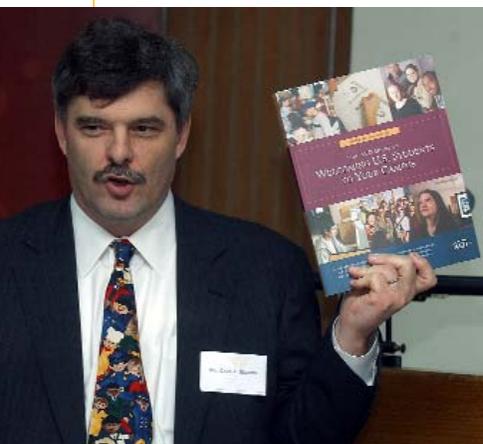
able scope to draw more American students to India and promote educational collaborations.

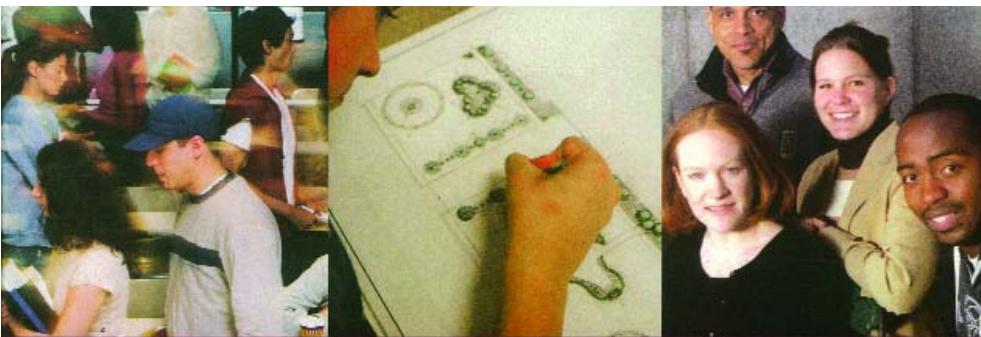
At a recent two-day workshop in New Delhi, American and Indian educationists explored ways of promoting sustainable partnerships between American and Indian universities and encouraging Indian institutions to internationalize their campuses and facilities.

Conducted by the U.S. nonprofit

Academy for Educational Development, American education leaders and more than 30 Indian academics discussed issues ranging from health, safety and security of students to the nitty-gritty of drawing up contracts, marketing universities, handling emergencies and pre-departure cultural orientation of students.

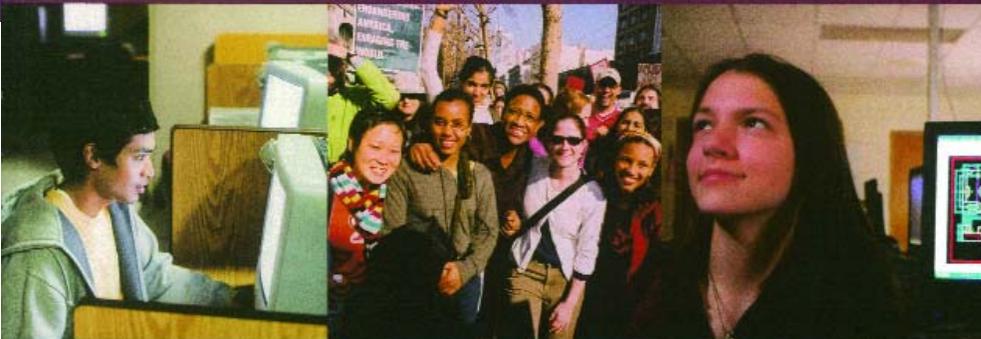
Structured around the Academy for Educational Development's publication *Handbook for Hosting: The AED Guide to*





HANDBOOK FOR HOSTING

## THE AED GUIDE TO WELCOMING U.S. STUDENTS TO YOUR CAMPUS



★ COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH U.S. PARTNERS ★ OVERVIEW OF  
U.S. HIGHER EDUCATION ★ ORIENTING U.S. STUDENTS ★ LODGING  
AND FOOD ★ HEALTH AND SAFETY ★ LEGAL ISSUES ★ COMMUNITY  
INVOLVEMENT ★ MARKETING YOUR INSTITUTION ★

AED

*Welcoming U.S. Students to Your Campus*, the workshop also highlighted U.S. government efforts to popularize study abroad programs and the importance of making university campuses in India more enticing to international students.

“In the era of internationalization, globalizing the campus helps,” says Vasudha Garde, director of the international center at the University of Pune. Currently, the university has about 9,500 foreign students, including many Americans. “They

imbibe Indian culture, food and music. Inhibitions are lost in this cross-cultural transaction,” says Garde.

Others see these international tie-ups as a much-needed investment in brand building. “It helps us in raising the profile of the college and getting a global branding,” says Kanika Khandelwal Aggarwal, senior lecturer at New Delhi’s Lady Shri Ram College for Women.

Most American students still come to study India’s history, languages, music, films and dances, but there has been a shift in recent times with more students opting for subjects like grassroots development, information technology, alternative medicine and management practices. An added advantage for students is that they earn credits while studying in India.

“There is this heightened attention to

India as a new world economic power. There is a changing dynamic in official India-U.S. relations, which was simply not there a decade ago. We have now more friendly and compatible relations,” says Carl A. Herrin, one of those conducting the workshop. Herrin is an international educator who has been involved with study abroad programs for over two decades.

The United States is one of India’s largest trading partners, with bilateral trade estimated at \$41.6 billion in 2007. More Indians and Americans now travel to each other’s countries. “The interest in India is growing. The economic success of India in the 1990s after it embarked on reforms has kindled a new interest in India,” says Aparna Rayaprol, associate professor of sociology at the University of Hyderabad, which has had a successful Study in India program for over 10 years. There were 146 participants in the 2007-08 academic year. About 1,000 American students have come to the university for six to eight weeks to single semester courses over the last decade.

“The idea is to facilitate a conversation so that when something happens in India, these American students can act as interpreters of Indian culture and systems,” says Herrin. Patricia Martin of the University of Pennsylvania adds: “Young people, with their exuberance and optimism, tend to be good diplomats and rep-

### For more information:

Alliance for International Educational and Cultural Exchange

<http://www.alliance-exchange.org>

United States-India Educational Foundation

<http://www.usief.org/in/>

Association of International Education Administrators

<http://www.aieaworld.org>

Forum on Education Abroad

<http://www.forumea.org>

*Far left: Carl A. Herrin displays The AED Guide to Welcoming U.S. Students to Your Campus.*

*Left center: Patricia Martin interacts with delegates.*

*Left: Kim Kreutzer of the University of Colorado at Boulder at the workshop.*



*Above left: Professor Mohi-ud-Din Sangmi of the University of Kashmir at the workshop. Above: Participants engaged in group discussions. Left: Carl A. Herrin addresses the delegates.*

representatives of their country. It's soft diplomacy or citizen diplomacy."

Lack of understanding is not something two of the world's largest democracies can afford. "We should encourage more American students to come to India. It will not only help us to understand Americans better but help in creating a new generation of American scholars who

understand India in all its complexity," says Lalit Mansingh, former Indian ambassador to the United States.

"We want more Indian students to study in American universities in exchange programs. It makes for greater value addition," says V.C. Jha, professor in charge of planning and development at Visva-Bharati university in Shantiniketan, West Bengal. American as well as Indian students are exposed to many cultures and languages at the university as it has a large

number of students from South Asia and Europe.

Cultural education has acquired a new resonance for many in the post-9/11 world that saw a burst of enthusiasm among American students for learning Arabic. "Having more American students and greater linkages with U.S. universities will help remove misconceptions of what a Muslim university is like," says M. Saleemuddin, professor at Aligarh Muslim University. "It will give Americans an insight into Indian Muslims and lead to a dialogue among civilizations."

Bridging the perception and knowledge gap is central to the ethos of education abroad programs. Says Rayaprol: "Sometimes they come with stereotypical images of India like stray cows on roads, maharajas and snake charmers. And when they come here, they find that Indian women are heading large corporations and McDonald's is just round street corners."



*Manish Chand is a New Delhi-based senior editor with Indo-Asian News Service and editor of Africa Quarterly.*

*Below: The workshop participants and staff of the United States-India Educational Foundation.*

