

“The student understands that the global knowledge society knows no boundaries. Now, it remains for government and higher education institutions, working in partnership with the private sector, to match their students’ ambitions.”

—U.S. Under Secretary of State Karen P. Hughes  
Mumbai, March 2007

# U.S.-India Higher Education

Exchanges of students, professors, research and laboratory access can meet the growing demand for more top-quality instruction and high-value degrees.

By SEBASTIAN JOHN

Georgia, in the southern United States, is known for its sweet peaches and busy airport. Aviation, cell phone equipment and paper pulp are key export industries. However, as the state eyes increasing trade with India in the coming years, it is not simply investing in business delegations or marketing offices. It’s looking for faculty and hoping to build a state-of-the-art research campus in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh.

In fact, The Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) aims to become the first American university in India to offer U.S.-recognized graduate degrees identical to those received by students at its American campus in Atlanta. Dr. Gary B. Schuster, provost of Georgia Tech, says the Hyderabad campus would “focus on new research areas that are critical to the growth of India’s economy, but will also provide unique market opportunities for U.S. economic interests.” The planners are already talking with corporations to set up research facilities and other collaborations. Students in courses such as power distribution, solar energy and infrastructure engineering would be taught by permanent Georgia Tech faculty and have opportunities to finish their degrees in the United States, according to a memorandum of understanding between the university and the Andhra Pradesh government signed on June 5, 2007.

A new initiative from President George W. Bush and the U.S. State Department to increase cooperation with foreign universities has further encouraged American higher education institutions to consider unique ways to establish themselves in India and elsewhere.



Courtesy A. Mahesh Kumar

Above: Indian students read brochures from among 32 American universities at the Linden U.S. University Fair in Bangalore, Karnataka, in 2006.

Left: Gary B. Schuster, provost of Georgia Tech, exchanges a memorandum of understanding in June 2007 with Andhra Pradesh government officials: (left to right) Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, Technical Education Minister R. Chenga Reddy and C.B.S. Venkataramana, principal secretary for higher education.

In the fields of study Georgia Tech would offer in Hyderabad, Schuster points out India produces fewer than 500 doctoral graduates a year. “Our courses will be aimed at creating a set of alumni who will be successful entrepreneurs, thus producing new jobs and new industries in India, as opposed to graduates seeking jobs elsewhere,” he says.

Georgia Tech wants to be a pioneer in a new kind of U.S.-India collaboration on education, but it’s not alone. In March, India’s Union Cabinet approved the Foreign Educational Institutions Bill for introduction in Parliament, though that has not yet occurred.

The Indian legislation that is being considered would clarify regulations for setting up campuses in India, a process which many U.S. universities have found to be an obstacle. One proposed provision of the bill is that foreign educational institutions would invest 51 percent of the capital for a project, and all profits would be reinvested in the Indian partner institution in most cases, encouraging only serious educators. The foreign universities and colleges would also have to ensure that the quality of the programs they offer in India is comparable to those on the home campus. Exemption from Indian reservation, admissions and tuitions

# Two-Way Education Exchanges

America wants to open its doors even wider to students from India, and we want more American young people to travel to India to study and learn. More two-way exchanges of students with India will:

- Help address the demand for education in India, where there are many more students who want higher education than there are spaces for them;
- Continue a welcome infusion of Indian talent and creativity into U.S. campuses;
- Give American students

important skills to work effectively in a global environment and enrich Indian institutions with their intellectual contributions;

- Meet the growing demands of American and Indian businesses for skilled, knowledgeable workers;
- Help future generations forge stronger bonds between our countries.

—U.S. Under Secretary of State **Karen P. Hughes**, Mumbai, March 26, 2007



rules could be given by the government, after consultation with an advisory board.

With only 7 percent of India's 18-to 24-year-olds entering universities, according to India's National Knowledge Commission, increasing education opportunities takes on new importance for India's growth in the 21st century. Education in India is also an increasing priority for the American government and American students.

## The lure of the East

"Studying abroad is becoming an essential component for success in the competitive global environment," U.S. Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs Karen P. Hughes said during her trip to India in March. "The student understands that the global knowledge society knows no boundaries. Now, it remains for government and higher education institutions, working in partnership with the private sector, to match their students' ambitions."

Her accompanying delegation included presidents of a type of institution Indians have usually been unaware of: two-year community colleges whose degrees can be used for credit at four-year institutions.

Columbia University in New York City, George Washington University in Washington D.C.

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*Akhilesh Pandey in his laboratory at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, works with researchers in Bangalore, Karnataka.*

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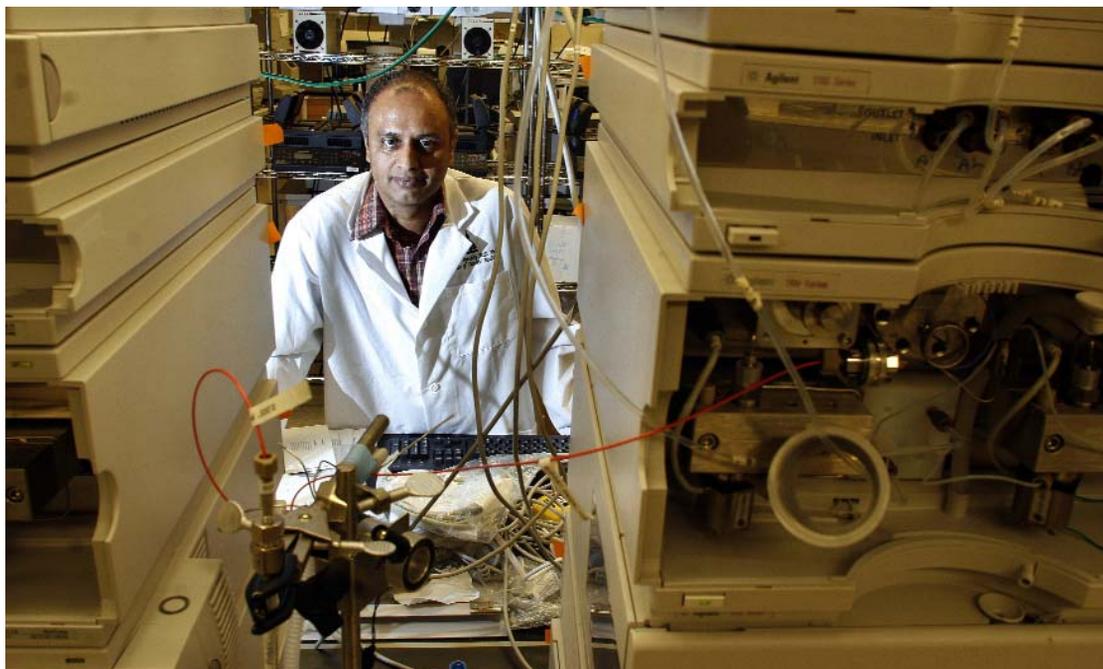
*Hiba Aleem of the U.S. Institute for South Asian Undergraduate Leaders Program, with Nishi Pandey, alumna of the Study of the U.S. Institute on Contemporary American Literature, greets U.S. Under Secretary of State Karen P. Hughes, in New Delhi in March 2007.*

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and the University of North Dakota are among those tying up with Indian schools to send American students over for an international experience. The U.S. government is also fostering educational collaborations like the U.S.-India Agricultural Knowledge Initiative, which allows students from both countries to do joint degree programs.

The American Society of Engineering Education is working with Indian engineering educators on an action plan to strengthen engineering programs, and recently had a high level meeting at the Infosys campus in Bangalore.

Darryl Calkins of Linden Tours organizes education fairs where U.S. university officials can meet prospective Indian students. He



says the new push toward India comes from increasing international awareness and also the concerns that U.S. universities have about meeting the demand from potential students in America. By opening up joint programs and campuses abroad, they can provide the same quality education to students who would have otherwise come to the U.S. campus, he says. Yet, they still have an opportunity to grow their school and their alumni. Calkins also says U.S. universities have realized that in a fast globalizing world, they have not sent enough American students overseas to study and gain perspective. Programs in India give students a somewhat familiar environment to step into. It "makes it easier for U.S. students who have never thought of it before" and might have been afraid of all the unknowns in going abroad, he says.

And it is not only traditional universities that are responsible for growing ties. The Simmons School of Management in Boston, Massachusetts, is creating a student exchange program with the Indian Institute of Management in Kolkata so that students from both schools can gain global experience, and women MBA candidates, in particular, can be encouraged to take on leadership roles and become entrepreneurs. "My fundamental belief is that to be a successful manager in organizations today, you need cross-cultural competencies and global experience," says Simmons' dean, Deborah Merrill-Sands.

Johns Hopkins University Professor Akhilesh Pandey set up the Institute of Bioinformatics in Bangalore in 2002 to help him evaluate huge amounts of data generated by his experiments in isolating and studying proteins to help fight cancer. Even though many people doubted his idea, Pandey put up his own money to get the institute running and later received grants to step it up. Now, it operates the Human Protein Reference Database, which contains information on more than 24,000 human proteins. It gets thousands of hits a month from laboratories around the world, and Pandey has helped many of the institute's Bangalore-based researchers complete their PhDs in India and study at Johns Hopkins in Maryland. He hopes to set up more collaborative projects with American institutions that want to expand their research by taking advantage of lower costs in India.

Private corporations also play a role in helping universities set up these collaborations. The University of California at Berkeley, Carnegie Mellon University in Pennsylvania, Cornell and other U.S. universities have started a science and engineering electronic-learning program with Amrita University in Tamil Nadu, thanks to funding for travel and salary supplements from Qualcomm, Microsoft and Cadence Design Systems.

## The draw of the West

Though there are growing opportunities to get an American education in India, it hasn't dampened the desire to study in the United States. India's Knowledge Commission estimates 160,000 Indians are studying abroad, spending an estimated \$4 billion a year. More than 76,500 of them went to the United States in 2006. Most of these Indian students pursue masters and doctoral programs, though about 20 percent now go into undergraduate studies, says Vijaya Khandavilli, who recently retired as country coordinator for Educational Advising Services of the U.S. Educational Foundation in India. USEFI is on hand to help Indian students, scholars and

Photographs courtesy Washington University



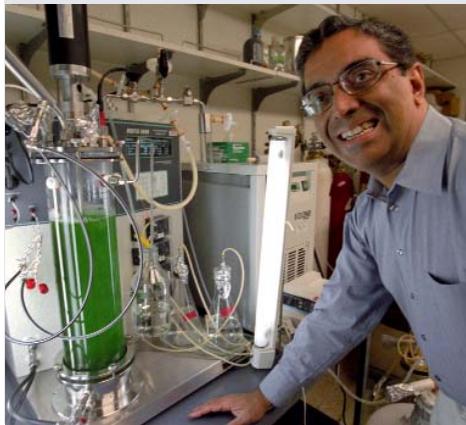
## Seeking International Scholars

**M**ultinational corporations are helping to fund the McDonnell International Scholars Academy, established at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, in partnership with leading Asian universities including the Indian Institute of Technology in Mumbai and Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi. The first group of international scholars, including three from India, arrived for the fall 2006 semester. Their travel, tuition and living expenses are paid for while they conduct research. The Academy also appoints a liaison, or ambassador, to nurture the relationship. Kolkata-born Himadri B. Pakrasi, who moved to the United States in 1984, is the academy's ambassador for IIT Mumbai. He is also director of the university's new International Center for Advanced Renewable Energy and Sustainability.

Washington University's chancellor, Mark S. Wrighton, met with Indian political, educational and business leaders in February 2007 to identify more areas for cooperation in education and research. "The initial areas are going to be energy and environment," Wrighton said. "We found no resistance. It's up to us to identify areas where we feel collaboration would be meaningful for our faculty and students and the IIT faculty and students. We feel a big opportunity exists, for both our countries, in the area of bio-energy. In the U.S., education and research go hand in hand. What we're trying to do is prepare a group of people to be leaders, all around the world. We see this as a two-way partnership."

—L.K.L.

*Top: Washington University Chancellor Mark S. Wrighton chats with 2006 graduates Harsh and Nupur Agarwal while in India to promote collaboration through the McDonnell International Scholars Academy.*



*Left: Himadri B. Pakrasi, the McDonnell International Scholars Academy liaison for IIT Mumbai, in his energy lab.*

# A Community Choice

If you're short on funds, or worried about a bad grade in the past, there is a second chance in life. And he's coming to a college fair near you.

George Beers, dean of International Education at Foothill College in the Silicon Valley area of California, has been coming to India for more than five years, to help explain a unique American educational option: community colleges.

"We're an alternative way to do the first two years," he says.

How do community colleges differ from regular ones? They are mostly publicly funded, have two-year degree courses, are located all over the country in small towns and big cities, and are committed to accessibility through open admissions (almost anyone can join) and low tuition fees. Consequently, community college enrollments reflect the rich diversity of the United States, and campuses are populated with people of all ages, ethnic and cultural heritages and socioeconomic backgrounds. There are 1,202 community colleges in the United States, serving 11.6 million students.

In March 2007, presidents of 16 U.S. community colleges visited India to discuss the potential for mutual exchange as part of a U.S. initiative to encourage foreign students to attend community colleges. Visas for students seeking to study at these col-

leges were difficult to get in the past, but the State Department is now trying to raise awareness and encourage more students to consider the option.

"I feel community college education is good for Indian students to cut down costs," says Vijaya Khandavilli, just-retired counselor at the U.S. Educational Foundation in India. "The first two years can be spent at a community college and then the student can move on to a four-year college."

Tuition and other fees at public community colleges average less than half of those at public four-year colleges and about a 10th of those at independent four-year colleges.

Khandavilli says the smaller class sizes of community colleges often help Indian students adjust, and she also points out that studying at the community colleges helps students "understand the American society and the people better than studying at a large, publicly funded university."

Beers also notes that at his college, teaching is done by professors, not assistants. And he's proud to say he sends international students on to big name schools like the University of California, Yale and Stanford every year.

Once you've attended a community college, universities no longer look at high school grades or test scores. The only academic work evaluated is from the community college. "It's like a second chance to be able to get a good academic record to get into top universities," he says.

For more information, see the American Association of Community Colleges Web site. <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/> —S.J.

*George Beers, dean of International Education at Foothill College, California, speaks to students at the Linden U.S. University Fair in Bangalore, Karnataka.*

researchers navigate the visa process and figure out which is the best university or college for their needs, how to pay, find housing, fill out applications and transfer academic work for credit toward a degree.

Aspiring scholars tend to gloss over the more personal trials of cultural adjustment and homesickness. USEFI helps with that, too, inviting prospective students to seminars, workshops and interactions with returned Indian students and Americans.

Deepak Goyal, a PhD student in Aerospace Engineering at Texas A&M University, has been studying in the United States since 2001. At first he was just excited, like nearly all Indian students arriving for the first time. "I came out of my shell and it opened up my mind to new things," he says of his first year in the States. But after that, he felt tired and confused by the American system, and even saw some of his Indian friends leave the country, depressed. "Everyone feels these things to some extent," he says. Often, Indian students come with a very specific idea of what America will be like, and it doesn't often turn out exactly as planned. Goyal says it was hard getting used to cooking for himself and not having the support of family and friends around him. To beat the blues, Goyal advises taking new kinds of classes, finding supportive professors and giving oneself time to settle in. Goyal took advantage of the flexibilities in American higher education, and took courses outside of his field: economics and ballroom dancing. And he enjoyed the freedom he was given to debate what is taught. "If you don't agree with a professor, you can openly talk about it...and your entire life does not depend on one professor's opinion," Goyal says.

Even with scholarships, the average cost of studying in the United States is \$20,000 per year for an Indian student, cautions Khandavilli. This is another reason why earning a U.S. degree in India may be a solution for many. With this in mind, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy, during a visit to the United States in May 2007, signed a memorandum of understanding with Stanford University and Satyam Computers Emergency Management and Research Institute in California. It would provide for a Stanford University branch campus to be set up in Hyderabad to educate Indian emergency medical professionals, or paramedics.

Sreenath Sreenivasan, dean of students and associate professor at Columbia University's School of Journalism, says U.S. schools need to step up their marketing in India, and emphasize their diverse student bodies and Indian student leaders. "On a recent trip to southern India, I met lots of savvy potential students," Sreenivasan says. "They seem to have done a lot of research and spent time connecting with Indian alumni groups."

Another issue is simply one of structure: India tends to operate on a year-based calendar, while American schools use the system of fall and spring semesters, with winter, spring and summer breaks. "With disparity in the two systems, credit transfers are a challenge," Khandavilli says.

Some schools solve this through something called "twinning." Manipal Academy in Karnataka initiated the idea in the 1990s with the University of Ohio. In such a program, a student studies for a certain number of years in India, then completes the rest of the degree program in the United States. The



ALIAZ RAHIC © AP/WIDE

# Beware of

## Visa Scams!

By PETER G. KAESTNER  
U.S. Consul-General

You do not need a visa agent and you should not pay one *paisa* to anyone who tells you that they can guarantee you a visa. Every day at the visa window we see eligible applicants who are refused visas because they presented fake documents to a vice consul on the advice of their “visa consultant” or “friends.” Touts abuse the visa system and harm their “customers” by taking, and then selling appointments.

One reason that such “consultants” thrive in India is because the U.S. Government has not been as effective as it could be in getting useful information out to the Indian public. Consultants have entered the information vacuum and have thrived. The U.S. Embassy has reinvigorated its efforts to better inform Indians about our visa rules, regulations and procedures. It is important that Indian applicants get good information—for free—from a trusted source like USEFI and the U.S. Embassy.

[http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/visa\\_services.html](http://newdelhi.usembassy.gov/visa_services.html)

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## Education Scams!

By JANE E. SCHUKOSKE  
Executive Director of USEFI

The U.S. Educational Foundation in India (USEFI) warns Indian students to be wary of advertisements and claims about U.S. higher education that sound too good to be true. Scams can harm your reputation as well as your pocketbook. Common educational scams include:

**Unaccredited schools:** A school's degree may be worthless if the school is not accredited by an official agency. Students can check a U.S. institution's accreditation on the Web site of the Council for Higher Education accreditation. <http://www.chea.org/search/default.asp>. To ascertain the legitimacy of an on-line or distance-education institution, students may contact the Better Business Bureau or state attorney general's office to make sure the school is operating legally in a specific state and to see if anyone has filed a complaint. The bureau has listed red flags about questionable on-line programs. [www.bbb.org/alerts/article.asp?ID=185](http://www.bbb.org/alerts/article.asp?ID=185)

**Quick degrees:** Institutions which offer quick degrees are often called “diploma mills.” A fake degree can ruin your reputation. In case you encounter questionable providers of higher education, check out the questions on the Council for Higher Education Accreditation Web site.

[www.chea.org/pdf/fact\\_sheet\\_6\\_diploma\\_mills.pdf](http://www.chea.org/pdf/fact_sheet_6_diploma_mills.pdf)

**Fake advertisements:** Some of these are also listed on the University Grants Commission's Web site. <http://www.ugc.ac.in/inside/malprac.html>

**“On the spot” admission:** At quality institutions in the United States, the admissions process involves a committee of faculty who review the applicant's academic record, test scores, references and personal statement. By contrast, “on the spot” admission suggests that almost anyone will be accepted, so quality is in question. This may cast doubt on whether you are a serious student when you apply for a U.S. visa.

**Promise of a U.S. visa:** No institution or agent can guarantee you will receive a U.S. visa. This determination is made only by a U.S. Consular Officer.

**Costly scholarships:** Beware of sending an advance fee to a scholarship service that guarantees a scholarship. No one can. Lists of scholarships are readily available for free on the Internet. Visit [www.educationusa.state.gov/finaid.htm](http://www.educationusa.state.gov/finaid.htm) for details.

If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is. Treasure your reputation and your education. Spend your funds wisely. Stay alert to avoid education scams.

<http://www.fulbright-india.org/>

schools synchronize their schedules and mutually recognize course work. However, Khandavilli suggests that students should have a backup plan, in case they are unable to go to the United States, and should make sure there is real parity between the two systems so that their academic work can be transferred.

Despite the obstacles, any student with dreams of succeeding in U.S. schools should know it can be done. Mel Rosso-Llopart, associate director of the Masters of Software Engineering program at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, says the Indian students who study with

him through an exchange program with SSN College of Engineering in Tamil Nadu are always well qualified and provide hot competition for their American classmates. In addition, he says that American students should take note: Indians' respect for knowledge and drive to succeed sets them apart from the rest.

*Sebastian John is an Indian writer and photographer who lives in Washington, D.C.*

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