

# Graduation Dinner, 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016

Today, we celebrate the imminent graduation of over 140 students of IIT Mandi. This is a historic graduation: we have our first **MSc and MTech** students graduating this year.

When they joined 2 years ago, the MSc(Chemistry) students were perhaps apprehensive about this strange curriculum that started with a Design Practicum and went on to have a Mini Project and a Major Project. Were they being dragged into an engineering degree? Thanks to this unusual curriculum and to your teachers, I am glad to note that all students have written papers for publication. Arpit Bharadwaj who is the topper of the batch has his paper accepted for presentation in the Electrochemical Society Meeting, San Diego. I understand that many of you aspire to do a PhD. I hope that some of you will choose to do it at IIT Mandi. The Dean(Academics) is proposing a special fast-track admission scheme for those of you who wish to do PhD here – I am pleased to approve this!

Nitesh Das, MTech(Energy Engg), has published papers in two international conferences, the ASME Power & Energy Conference in the US, and the Asia Pacific Conference on Energy storage and conversion, in Taiwan.

PG students are often seen as boring academics. Contradicting conventional wisdom, many of you have shown keen interest in other activities. Vaidehi has enchanted us with her graceful dancing, Arpit Bhardwaj, Rituporn Gogoi & Vinod Kumar in the music band "Musoc" have entertained us on several occasions, others have participated in sports and won medals in badminton.

**You are our 4<sup>th</sup> batch of BTechs:** When you joined on 30<sup>th</sup> July 2012, I spoke to you about IIT Mandi and about your future in IIT Mandi. On that occasion, I said that:

- *IIT Mandi has all the basics of an IIT, but much remains to be done*
  - *not yet a residential Institute: activities split between a transit campus in Mandi and the new campus in Kamand which is under construction*
  - *some labs to be setup, curriculum incomplete, some courses lack teachers*
- *Q? What should you do:*
  - *Grin and bear it? Complain bitterly? Look for greener pastures elsewhere?*
- *Answer: Engineering is problem solving, putting ideas to work for the benefit of society*

*==> A problem is an opportunity – to learn, to innovate, to solve!*

*We will open doors for you. Where you go, what you achieve will depend on your initiative and efforts.*

From IIT's side, we have mostly lived up to our promise to you. IIT is today a fully residential institute, practically all teaching labs and many research labs are functioning, we have a well-defined and unique curriculum. Today we have so many teachers that some of their courses lack students! We have provided diverse opportunities for you.

The 3 batches who went before you have set an increasingly high bar:

- The Pioneer Batch was exceptionally productive – for instance, developing our public face, the IIT Mandi website
- In 2015, Pradeep Seervi topped GATE (EE) ahead of 1.26 lakh candidates
- Athar Aamir Khan – 2<sup>nd</sup> in Civil Services

Today, as you near the end of a 4-year journey, it is apt to look at what your initiative and efforts have achieved. What defines you in your future is not whether you went to Rohtang Pass, but what you accomplished in the classrooms and labs of IIT. In the reminiscences of your 4 years at IIT, I'm pleased that we have heard several instances of scaling the peaks of academic excellence, of your aspirations for the future!

Some of you have already made a mark. Ankit Agrawal and Uday Sood have got direct PhD admission in IIT-KGP and Purdue University respectively. Yesterday, for the first time in six months, I saw Hrudaya smiling – he had just been selected for MTech (CSE) at IIT-Madras, one of the most highly selective PG programmes in India, and he had just cracked a difficult problem in his MTP. Such accomplishments take sustained effort over a long period. Others have participated in various competitions and won laurels.

There are a number of you but who have not yet made your mark. Perhaps you decided that having cracked JEE, graduation with a decent CGPA and a job is certain so let's take life easy in IIT? Let's relax in the final year? If so, this was a mistake. We still expect great things from you and it is not too late. Greatness has two components – hard work and passion. You will need to work hard and persistently to achieve your full potential. Such persistent hard work requires passion. I advise you to carefully weigh the options you see for your career or higher studies. If you can find a future in a field that captures your passion, your chances of happiness and greatness are much better. We are sure that each of you has the potential to achieve great things.

Nearly 20 **MS and PhD** are graduating. However, by the nature of their programmes, many of them have already left for jobs, for higher studies, for postdocs. I would like to mention some of the first batch of PhDs who are leaving us: Reena Singh, Hemant Jalota, K. Sindhu, Diwakar and Abhishek Chaudhary. Sindhu with roll no. D10001 was the first PhD student to register in IIT Mandi. Reena had the distinction of serving as the 1<sup>st</sup> Research Affairs Secretary and as the 1<sup>st</sup> Resident Warden of the girls' Renuka Hostel. She was the 1<sup>st</sup> student to shift to Kamand in June 2012. Hemant served as the 1<sup>st</sup> Resident Warden of the boys' Nako Hostel. Both Reena and Hemant spent many years resident in Book Nook, one in Kamand and the other in Mandi.

On behalf of the Board of Governors, the Senate, the Institute, my wife and myself, and Rusty, congratulations to you and to your teachers on your historic achievement as the first batch to have both bachelors and masters by coursework. Best wishes to you for a future!

Prof. Timothy A. Gonsalves  
Director, IIT Mandi  
20<sup>th</sup> May 2016