

A trip report by Sumitra Sinha, '79ETC

I just got back from my 17 day long India trip and wanted to report on my visit to BESU. Bhaskar Dasgupta was also in Kolkata at the same time.

Arunda was kind enough to schedule a meeting for us with the VC, Dr. Ajay Ray, Prof Anjan Ghosh, Prof Gautam Bandopadhyay, Prof Santanu Karmakar and Prof Aditya Bandopadhyay for Jan 27.

I had not visited BESU in 2.5 years. It was quite overwhelming and emotional for me to go through the first gate of our College. There was an obvious facelift of the whole campus. The very first thing I noticed this time is a number of street and building signs directing traffic to various building locations in the campus. That was quite helpful.

This is the first time I met Ajayda in person. After the introductory conversation, Ajayda showed us the proposal and plans for the Center of Excellence for Green Energy building that will be used to expand and promote the research work in green technology.

As planned, we discussed the Student Counseling/Mentoring program briefly. We all stressed for a scaled back pilot program involving a few faculty members and first year students. The goal is to learn what works and what doesn't work for this approach without investing too much staff time initially. Arunda and Anjanda got a list of faculty members from Civil department who would be the first round counselors for this program.

Ajayda took us to the new Ladies Hostel (LH) for a brief visit. This new building is located next to Pandiya. The LH students have done a fabulous job in landscaping/gardening the front lawn. At first sight, the building looked like a pretty resort place. As soon as we entered the building with the VC, words spread out and the students started gathering in the center hall. Within minutes they transformed the center hall into a nice seminar room. I can see that Ajayda has already fostered a close rapport with the students. There we met a remarkable group of very energetic and ambitious students who are motivated to make a difference. These kids are forthcoming and willing to have a conversation with the VC and staff members. It has been one of the most rewarding and fulfilling experiences from my college visit. I also felt that these students can make good use of a counseling/mentoring program if it were offered as part of their college curriculum. We talked about the concept of the student-counseling program with the LH students. There were a few questions from the students. Overall they all seem to be interested in the registration process and implementation details. Bhaskar, Arindam and I plan to have a follow up call with Anjanda and others to finalize the implementation plan of this pilot program. We were also quite amused by a story of these courageous young girls who happened to catch a thief in the LH in the middle of the night. As we were wrapping up the meeting in LH, the super was getting ready to give an update on this story to the registrar. I asked the girls to create an online blog of this story. Cheers for our LH!!! Go girls!!

Ajayda talked about his plans to build Volleyball and Tennis court behind the LH. While we were catching up with the VC's plan, Prof Gautam Bandopadhyay and Bhaskar took a walk to the Industrial Electronics Lab which has been funded by the government of India.

Later Ajayda gave us a tour of the Slater Hall which is a pride and joy for our Oonoashites (79 Batch). It was a true pleasure to see the demonstration of the art and photography work done by the students. This newly renovated building includes facilities for drama, music and photography. One can see the change in the air. In a very short period of time, the VC has established an environment for creative and cultural activities. In addition to the academic curriculum, the students are actively participating in sports, drama, photography and music. Not only the teachers and administration are encouraging the students, they are also taking part in their activities. This is a wholesome campus picture that we all envision for BESU. We learned there that Ajayda personally played cricket with the students the whole day of Jan 26.

Ajayda is a very hands-on person. His relentless effort of being in touch with the students has definitely brought a significant change in the administration and day-to-day college life. One can feel that his top priority is to renew and improve student academic/personal life in the campus. I was talking to some of the students in the elevator. The student community seemed well informed about the future plans and programs of the college. Overall the campus feels more student-friendly and accessible to everyone.

We really had a good time with the VC, professors and students at the college. It was a true homecoming for all of us. We are confident that under Ajyada's leadership, BESU will regain its reputation if it has not already.

Thanks to Bhaskar for taking the pictures [[Album](#)].

Sumitra Sinha, 79ETC