

ECHOES

Members of the IIIT-H family speak about their experiences

Vatika Harlaka

B.Tech in Computer Science and M.S. by Research in CNS, Batch of 2013

It took me a whole lot of deliberation and confusion coming down to last-moment chaos that ultimately made me decide to come to IIIT-Hyderabad. College was a fresh, new world and I was brought again to a stage where I had a multitude of new realms to explore. As it turns out, one year later in IIIT-H I find myself being a lot more mature, understanding of the world around me - a lot more confident of myself. In this one year, I've had numerous academic, cultural and organizational problems presented to me and I believe I've come out of them, a stronger person.

IIIT-H encourages the students to play an active role in decision-making and conducting various events that happen in college. As a student, one has full freedom and ample opportunities to take part in or initiate activity in things that interest them be it music, sports or other extra-curricular activities. Ultimately, if there's one thing that I've learned here, it is that life, and more so, in this context, one's life in college is what one chooses to make it. I hope you make your journey here worthwhile!

Vignesh Prasad

B.Tech in Computer Science and M.S. by Research in Computer Science, Batch of 2012

I joined IIIT in 2012 through DASA and had come with a skeptical mind shaped by the experiences of a family friend who had joined one of the NIT's through DASA. I was told about the general dislike towards the DASA crowd which was a problem few years ago in the NIT's. On coming to IIIT, I was also expecting such reactions from people. To my surprise, I was treated like any other student. No judging, or stereotyping or any kind of discrimination took place because I was from a foreign land.

On my first day here, when we had our orientation meeting, I went and interacted with a couple of people and managed to make a few new friends. We had our campus tour and then a bunch of us came back to have some juice. It was easy to make new friends and no one showed any sort of derogatory attitude towards me or even the other people who had come through DASA. That night, I went and sat in my neighbor's room and we kept on chatting for quite a while and I had made my first close friend in IIIT. As the days went by, I met a lot of new people among my own batch mates and the seniors. After meeting them, I was glad that I chose IIIT over other colleges and I was sure that I wouldn't be able to get such an experience in other colleges.

These 4 years (more than 4 for dual degree students) of our lives are what shape how we are for the coming years. It's up to us how we utilize our time here and get the best out of these years, these friends, these people that we have and meet. I try and make sure not to regret my time over here.

Sarthak Agarwal

LE – 2013: CSE Dual, Batch of 2013

At IIIT-H, you see a very different environment compared to other colleges around the country, both academically and culturally and that is what makes IIIT stand apart. The Lateral Entry program provides you much flexibility in terms of choosing your own courses, research labs as well as Professors with whom you might want to work. It took me a while to leave my previous college and settle down here. But very soon, I was ready for the sail. Academically, you get ample opportunities to explore your interests in all the fields you had wanted to during your school days like dance, dramatics, singing, painting, graffiti, coding, hacking, sports, photography, etc.

IIIT will give you a perfect environment for academics and coding. Students over here participate in many events like ICPC, Codechef, GSoC etc. and are doing quite well in that. I started with developing applications, participated in many contests and had an amazing time working in new languages. I, hence, could move into algorithmic coding that is based upon logical thinking and how efficiently you can prepare algorithms.

Now I'm more aligned towards my research field. It feels amazing to work with some talented brains of the country, from whom you can learn and draw inspiration from. The culture of the college along with constant support from the faculty motivates a student work beyond his abilities and pushes him to explore new areas.

Manu Viswanadhan

B.Tech in ECE, Batch of 2011

After weeks of research and analysis I decided to join IIIT-H mainly for 2 reasons – exceptional placement record and extremely low cutoff ranks. The latter was of major importance to me as I felt that better overall competition would bring out the best in me. Another thing that caught my attention was the direct introduction to only the relevant courses to ECE and CSE in the first year, hence giving us a great head start compared to the other colleges.

Time flew by once I joined here. The academic curriculum is indeed rigorous but you get to enjoy what you are doing especially since the assignments given are interesting and challenging and you are surrounded by likeminded and really bright minds. The sincerity, knowledge and approachability of professors here are exemplary. Their energy and grasp in their respective fields has been a major inspiration for me to push myself harder.

Although, the infrastructure regarding sports here, is not exceptional (still waiting for an indoor shuttle badminton court), we make the most of it. I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in the inter-house and inter-batch competitions and organizing them as a part of Sports Council. Being part of such a small community essentially means that you will probably be good - relatively in one or the other event and there are always opportunities up for grabs.

The life in IIIT-H so far has been engrossing, fun and productive. If you are passionate about learning new things and don't shy away from putting in the necessary hard work, IIIT-H is the place for you.

Shivani Poddar

B. Tech in Computer Science and MS by Research in Exact Humanities, Batch of 2011

Exact Humanities Department encompasses the confluence of Humanities (the abstract) with Computer Sciences (the not-so-abstract), is what the brochure will tell you. However, the experience I have had here is entirely different from what I expected by this definition. I came here with the idea that you do what you are told to do. Big surprise there! IIT didn't work like that. *You find what you love, you try to chase it and you conquer it.*

I found myself working with pure computer sciences applications with opportunities like Google Summer of Code, participating in “Hackathons” et al, along with Exact Humanities applications like predicting user personalities from social media (Facebook, Wikipedia, you name it). I was encouraged to indulge in whatever motivated me, be it cultural activities like dancing or debating, sports like basketball and badminton, or even social causes like opportunities to reach out to the underprivileged. Unlike my expectation, the faculty student relationship in our department is phenomenal. We are fed free food on various festive occasions and are imparted guided freedom on the much needed academic fronts. The numerous opportunities I have had here have made me grow into a person with not only diverse interests but also some much focused aims. Thus, in my opinion for every such student who wants to wriggle out of the rut and attempt to digitize the abstract, EHD is a place which has a potential to nurture their spirit to a concrete reality.

Raveesh Motlani

B. Tech in Computer Science and MS by Research in Computational Linguistics (CLD), Batch of 2011

I took a year drop to get into a good college and finally settled with IIT-H. My batch was the first to get admissions through Interview mode. When I visited the college for my entrance exam and interview, I was amazed by the vegetation here, so much greenery all over the place. The learning curve began, as soon as I joined. Interacting with seniors, batch mates was just a part of it. Sitting straight and awake in those chairs for one to one and a half hours was another more grueling task. Linux OS, working on a PC on sharing basis, teaching methodology, compulsory attendance policies, new courses, classes in the morning, tutorials in the evening, assignments in the night and other extracurricular activities (at the cost of assignments). I had just came out of 3 years of rote-learning and gruesome JEE preparations, hence I spent a bit too much time in extra-curricular. Nevertheless, I learnt how to manage all these things with time and hence I became the Cultural Secretary in 3rd year and also got selected for Google Summer of Code 2014.

College life here, is the way you take it. Restrictions are there but you can also find little drops of happiness lying at the end of your work or maybe behind those green bars of your code being “ACCEPTED”. Coming to dual degree, it's an unimaginable experience, I was fascinated by some of the things that I learnt in Linguistics. Although the Institute is highly research oriented, a lot of students aren't. Hardly a few join with a “research” perspective but one gains it with time over here. I am in NLP/MT lab in LTRC, which is India's largest lab working in Computational Linguistics field. The work environment in the labs is pretty good. Summing it up, I'd say that the academics are remarkable and other things, well one learns to adjust. What I cherish the most is

what I earned here, knowledge of new subjects, communication skills, management skills (special thanks to Felicity, Cultural Council and heavy coursework, of course) and friends for life.

Arpit Merchant

B. Tech in Computer Science and MS by Research in Exact Humanities, Batch of 2011

When I got my acceptance letter from IIIT-H, I cancelled all other applications and decided to join this institute. The college boasted of strong academic focus, esteemed faculty and emphasis on research. I still remember the first day I entered the campus as if it were yesterday. I was clutching a similar paper in my hand reading stories of senior students. Boy did it exceed all expectations!

The very first thing I realized was how tightly knit the entire community was. Practically everyone knew everyone else. More importantly, the environment was such that people took the time and effort to inculcate the new members and make them a part of the community. Although small in number, it was large enough to encompass people with varied interests. If I wanted to pursue any field or hobby, I always managed to find someone or the other who shared that interest with me. Academically, the workload is challenging to say the least. Right from strict deadlines for assignments, to projects and presentations, you are kept on your toes. But when things get tough, you can always rely on the faculty and seniors to help you out.

In terms of research, the various labs in college introduced me to specializations in theoretical computer science in a rigorous way. And CEH provided me the tools to look at these fields abstractly. This led me to work on research projects at TIFR during the summer-2013, an experience I cherish dearly. It's been an amazing three years and I have met and worked with some of the most brilliant people. As the current Speaker of the Students' Parliament, and a Teaching Assistant, I have come to admire the immense role that students get to play in the college administration. I'm sure it can do all this and more for anyone who is sincere, dedicated and willing to work hard for it.

Shiv Raj

B. Tech in ECE, Batch of 2011

Take a pen and a paper. Plot a graph. Mark the next 4 years on that x-axis, choose your desired y-axis. Irrespective of what you draw there, I bet, it can be realized here. The life at IIIT-H is such. You can give. You can take. You can offer. You can receive. The choice is always yours.

I spent my early days sinking in the essence of newly found freedom that the college had to offer. Opportune moments included interaction session with seniors, participating in extra-curricular activities and above all, being confident enough to opt for a better path than that of cut-throat academic competitions. This path, despite all its hardships, will develop not only your personality but also nurture you as a person. Presently the Class Representative and a Member of Student's Parliament last year, I had an enriching experience dealing with the fundamentals of decision making and learning to respect others' choices. I was thus motivated to dig deep in this field and hence, have taken up a research project in ISB. This is just one example. IIIT-H is full of such stories. Bigger ones. Better ones.

Time flew by quite fast. As you pack your bags for a new journey, I realize that I would be starting my last year. And yes, when I look back at the last three years, I feel content. I hope the same comes true for you. Now going back to where we started, when you are done with your graph, plot another. This time with a different y-axis.

Vivek Hamirwasia

B. Tech in Computer Science and MS by Research in Computer Science, Batch of 2010

When I joined IIIT Hyderabad back in 2010, I was still getting over the feeling of not making it to the IITs. Fast-forward four years and now, that's the best decision I've made in my life. Owing to its excellent course structure in Computer Science, students are equipped to innovate and explore their interests as early as in their first year. IIIT has always attracted some of the best computer enthusiasts from India and this ensures that you will be surrounded by brilliant minds throughout your college years. Over the years, the students have proved to excel in all fields of the subject - be it competitive programming, open source development or research. Personally, some of my best experiences involve participating in ACM ICPC and contributing through Google Summer of Code. The strong foundation provided by IIIT also enabled me to intern at two of the top software companies and work towards my start-up.

Due to the small size of the IIIT community and the large number of events around the year, one has many opportunities to discover and explore his/her interests. I would strongly recommend participating in as many events as possible - be it technical or extra-curricular. IIIT has various active clubs with enthusiastic students growing together as a community and ever ready to help. Being a competitive programming addict, I always loved both taking and attending the sessions of the programming club - especially for the energy and interest displayed by the students.

IIIT strives for overall development of the individual by promoting humanities in the course structure. Personally, I've gained a lot of perspective from these courses, which has had impact on both my social and professional life. You are fortunate that IIIT is one of those colleges, which strives to make you a better person rather than just a better engineer.

Being the incoming batch, you now hold the power to shape and improve the environment and activities here. From this day, IIIT is you and you are IIIT.

Garima Agrawal,

Batch of 2010, ECE dual

Like most of you, I too reached to the decision of joining IIIT Hyderabad after a lot of confusions and long counselling sessions. But, now looking back to the last 4 years, I feel happy and proud of the decision I made 4 years back. The best part about IIIT is that since it is a relatively small institute, everybody knows almost everybody else. It is a great advantage in terms of academics and also otherwise as your professors, TA's, seniors and friends are reachable to you at any point of time. IIIT enjoys a beautiful diversity in its campus. Being a north Indian girl, I never imagined myself craving for Idli-Bonda on streets, learning counting and those catchy phrases in Telugu in the beginning week of the college, and having Telugu friends reading my Hindi blogs and then asking so many doubts. I hope you too don't restrict your circle to a particular language, region or a branch. The opportunity to know and meet people coming from all across India and further

understand yourself as a person like 'self-exploration'. In two years of rigorous coaching and trainings for JEE, we tend to ignore our inner selves- IIIT gives you ample opportunities to nourish that and pursue the interests you enjoy. You never know, what 'new' you might discover about yourself here. Be it organizing some Fest and Cultural events, or spending four hours writing an article for college magazine or hours long brainstorming coding session in a Hackathon! As a dual degree student, I am delightful to get the kind of research exposure I got at IIIT. As a young girl at school, I was not very fond of machines and computers and I never thought Robotics is something that will ever fascinate me so much that it has now become an integral part of my life. IIIT gives you enough exposure not just within campus but also outside like I could gain some research experience in Germany at a proclaimed Robotics institute during Summer-2014. There are many such opportunities waiting for you too, just keep your eyes open, be sincere but not serious and enjoy your stay. I hope you find IIIT as rewarding and exciting place, as I did!

Sourav Chatterjee

Batch of 2010, CND

Let me commence by congratulating you all on your outstanding performance in the competitive exams. You are all about to take a very important decision of your academic career by choosing an institute where you will spend the next few invaluable years of your life. I believe that my subsequent experiences will aid an uninitiated engineering student to confidently make a perfect choice.

I had completed my B.Sc. in Physics around mid-2010 and had got calls from few of the most significant institutes in India for pursuing a routine masters' program. Because of my love for both science and technology, the Computational Natural Science (CNS) dual program at IIIT-H captivated me. I took the brave decision to pursue my serious interests and joined the CND program at IIIT-H. At the institute, I discovered that apart from the celebrated notion of "best placements", IIIT-H had a plethora of insights and learning to offer. It provides a unique opportunity to pursue research of international standard even at an undergraduate level. The amalgamation of extremely distinguished faculty members, broad as well as deep curriculum and cutting-edge research facilities helps one to understand the subject at a greater details. More importantly, I observed that it helps in a holistic development of an individual which includes giving a best answer on "how to do a thing" (the science and technology part) and an optimum answer on "why to do that thing" (the humanities part of it). Apart from academics, being a core member of Students Academic Council, I realized that students indeed play an active role in various governing bodies of the institute which fosters the development of leadership and organizational qualities within them. Lastly I feel, IIIT-H has kind of a close family environment due to which even voices from an individual student never goes unheard. In a nutshell, being a IIITian I learned that if one silently lets the inherent curiosity to be the driving force for knowledge rather than fame or money, then eventually success will make the noise for him and the latter aspects will automatically follow as by-products. For me choosing IIIT-H can be summed up in the following phrase: "Two roads once diverged in a wood and I took the one less traveled by which has made all the difference."