

# **A Brief Report on The PanIIT Alumni Global Conference-2011**

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I represented IIT Roorkee as Director's Nominee in the PanIIT Alumni Global Conference 2011 held on Sept. 30-Oct. 2, 2011 at the Hilton New York hotel. The theme of the Conference was SOLUTIONS FOR A BETTER WORLD.

Global alumni conferences are held on an annual basis with an aim to inspire more IITians to join the movement and at the same time provide networking, bonding opportunities to relive those cherished moments with batch mates, juniors and seniors. Also, directors of alma mater tend to join the event making it as one of important interfaces for Alumni inputs to the current functioning of the IITs. Every alternate year, the conference is held outside India, typically US, to reach out to alumni staying abroad. Earlier conferences were held

- Global Conference 2003 at San Jose, USA
- Global Conference 2004 at New Delhi, India - Empower India
- Global conference 2005 at Maryland, USA - Technology without Borders
- Global conference 2006 at Mumbai, India - Inspire, Involve, Transform India
- Global conference 2007 at Santa Clara, California, USA - Transforming the world through Technology
- Global Conference 2008 at Chennai, India - Inspire, Innovate, Transform
- Global Conference 2009 at Chicago, USA - Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Global Economy

- Global Conference 2010 at Noida, India - Sustainable Transformation: Our New India

The Pan IIT 2011 conference was attended by about 800 delegates, notable from India were

1. Dr. Damodar Acharya, Director, IIT Kharagpur
2. Dr. SG Dhande, Director, IIT Kanpur
3. Dr. UB Desai, Director, IIT Hyderabad
4. Dr. TA Gonsalves, Director, IIT Mandi
5. Dr. Sudhir Jain, Director, IIT Gandhinagar
6. Dr. MK Surappa, Director, IIT Ropar
7. Dr. Sanjay K. Bose, Dean, Alumni Affairs and External Relations, IIT Guwahati
8. Mr. Ashok Kalbag, Secretary General, PanIIT Alumni India, IIT Bombay, Mumbai

As a pre-conference activity, the PanIIT Leadership Circle(PLC) forum was very professionally managed by Farrokh Mistree from 8.30 to 11.30 AM on Sept. 30, 2011. After opening remarks, three breakaway groups were formed to brainstorm and evolve recommendations on how IIT alumni in North America can help in addressing the following issues of new and old IITs

- (a) Shortage of faculty
- (b) Improving quality of Research
- (c) Infrastructure support

I was in Group (a), chaired by Prof. Damodar Acharya. I spoke on how to facilitate eminent faculty of North America visit India on short time capsular program. Mr. Rajat Gupta (former MD, McKinsey) also spoke on length and gave very useful inputs. Prof. Nitish Thakore and Ms. Sangya Verma(an IIT Roorkee alumni) were monitoring the progress of all the three sessions to ensure that discussions were focused and result oriented. The three groups joined and reports were

read out. Sangya was finally asked to finalise the report which she did.

I also met Mr. Raghav Pant(rpant@ou.edu) who is doing Ph. D. in Industrial Engineering at University of Oklahoma. He is interested in a faculty position at IIT Roorkee after finishing his Ph.D. next year.

Then there was a session on WHEELS initiative of Pan IIT for creative solutions for sustainability, which stands for Water, Healthcare, Energy, Education, Lifestyle and Security. Pan IIT is working aggressively on these social cum business opportunities for the rural population of India and USA.

The main conference was inaugurated in the evening at 5.00 PM in Grand Ball Room. Prof. Damodar Acharya was given the honour of inaugurating it. Ms. Chandrika Tandon, Chairman, Tandon Capital Associates, Inc and her group performed Invocation. A Souvenir of the Conference was released which carried photographs and profiles of eminent Alumni and Directors of IITs and a few articles.

Senator Charles Schumer, US Senate, presented his address where he acknowledged the contribution of IITians in development. This was followed by a panel discussion on clean energy. Then PanIIT global awards were presented to 'amazing' IITians in a glittering award ceremony.

## AWARDS

1. Academic Accomplishment, Dr. Nitin Nohria, Dean of HarvardBusiness School
2. Lifetime Achievement, Arun Sarin, former Chief Executive, Vodafone Group plc

3. Social Entrepreneurship, K. Sridharan, President and Founder, Sankara Eye Foundation
4. Technology Leadership, Dr. Arogyaswami Paulraj, Professor Emeritus Stanford University
5. Entrepreneurial Achievement, Purnendu Chatterjee, President, The Chatterjee Group
6. Corporate Excellence, Manoj Singh, COO, Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Limited
7. Global PAN IIT Award, Arvind Kejriwal, Indian social activist.

I met all Roorkee alumni present:

- (a) Ms. Purnima Gupta, 1968 batch Arch
- (b) Mr. Sunil Singhal, 1974 batch E&C
- (c) Dr. Praveen Gupta, 1978 Batch E&C
- (d) Dr. Atma Sahu
- (e) Mr. Vivek Varma, 1983 batch Mech.
- (f) Mr. Pradip Singh, 1974 batch E&C
- (g) Ms. Smita Bagla

Mr. Anoop Varma, President IITR Alumni Association of North America, was to attend the Conference, but had to cancel to visit due to personal reasons.

The second day of the conference started in the Grand Ball Room at 8.30 AM with Kumar Shah, co-chair, introducing different functionaries who had put their hands together to give shape to this conference. Thereafter, there were some very impressive panel discussions and keynote speeches for the following well known experts: Nicholas Negroponte of MIT Media Labs gave a very impressive account of his project – one lap for each child (5-7 years age). He displayed specially engineered lap tops,

green coloured, for this project. He has worked extensively in India and through visuals, showed the impact of how the lap tops are changing lives and attitudes to life of rural folk.

“Tiger” Tyagrajan, Hari Bhartia and Arjun Malhotra held a panel discussion on clean energy/ IT Business opportunities.

There were a number of parallel sessions. I attended one on Women leaders in Business, in which five women leaders presented their success Stories: Smita Bagla, California, (M Tech CSE), Madu Sridhar, (Miranda House), Nandita Bakshi, (MBA IR), Neera Singh (IITK) and Neena Shinoy, (MIT, GE) gave very impressive account of how working women can make it to top and do justice at both fronts (home and profession).

John Sexton(President-NYU) and Nitin Nohria (Harward Business School) spoke very authoritatively on future of higher education in reference to globalization. The concept of networked universities was introduced.

The final speaker of the day was Mr. Narayan Murthy, Founder Infosys. He gave a brilliant description of his model of how IITs should perform in time to come. Some of the high priority areas he stressed upon are:

1. Faculty working with industry (as in US)
2. Faculty appraisal should be done by Experts in US
3. An organization similar to NSF in India
4. Faculty should be on a 5-year contract system
5. Get rid of coaching classes, new method of JEE to pick talented students
6. IIT students should be given may courses to improve English speaking skills and more courses on humanities and social sciences.
7. Research must become an essential component at undergraduate level. He gave an example of his son

- authoring a book on pervasive computing and three research papers while he was still in 3<sup>rd</sup> year
8. Ph. D. scholarship must be raised to about Rs. 30,000 per month to attract committed and talented researchers.
  9. 6-years integrated Ph.D. program should be introduced.
  10. Alumni should be members of IIT Council and play role in Governance of the IIT. The Chairman, BOG , should be elected by the Council. Government should only look at Grant which should be based on number of students. The Alumni should create endowment to supplement cost of education (20% from Fee + 60% from Govt. funding + 20% from corpus)

The Roorkee group decided to sit for about an hour together to have discussion on issues concerning IIT Roorkee. Of the 17 Alumni attending the Conference, following attended the session which started at 5.15:

1. Mr. Sunil Singhal, E&C 1974
2. Mr. Pradip Singh, E&C 1974
3. Mr. Naresh Kosaraju, Civil 2006
4. Mr. Saket Jain, Industrial, 1998
5. Mr. Ashok Nagrath, Elect 1964
6. Mr. Ashok Singh, Arch 1983
7. Mr. Praveen Gupta, E&C 1978
8. Ms. Sangya Varma, MSc Chemis 89
9. Mr. Vivek Varma Indus 1983
10. Mr. Rakesh Pilonia, EE, 2006
11. Ms. Purnima Gupta, Arch, 1968
12. Mr. Krishna D. Mishra, Arch. 1963
13. Mr. Karan Garg, 2009 DPT
14. Mr. Nideesh Sharma, Arch
15. Mr. Chandra Shekhar Tekwani

Dr. Atma Sahu could not attend. I gave two PPT presentations on (i) recent initiatives taken by IIT Roorkee

in Greater Noida and in Constructing new Buildings at Roorkee and Saharanpur campuses, and (ii)Growth with Excellence. A 2.34 fold increase in students enrollment has necessitated IIT Roorkee to focus on infrastructural development in a major way in last 10 years. Alumni role in development of their alma-mater was reviewed.

The day was also marked by the visit of Mrs & Mr Viney Jain, 1969 Batch Mech. Who lives in New Jersey. He is instituting two awards of Rs. 5000.00 each at IIT Roorkee and sought to seek some clarifications.

In an exhibition cum job fair, the following were displayed from Roorkee:

1. Two volumes of History Books
2. First Day Cover and a Stamp of the Institute
3. A 15 minute film on IIT Roorkee

In the late evening, a cultural program by artists of Hollywood enthralled the audience.

2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2011

On the third and final day of the Conference, it began with parallel sessions on WHEELS project. Then there were three keynote speeches from Sam Pitroda(Advisor to PM), Vishakha Desai(Asia Society) and Ambassador Nirupama Rao. Thereafter we had Directors' forum moderated by Hitendra Ghosh. I was asked to sit on the Dias with Prof. Sanjay Dhande, IIT Kanpur, Prof. D. Acharya, IIT Kharagpur, Prof. Sudhir Jain, IIT Gandhi Nagar and Prof. Surappa from IIT Ropar. I also made a short speech in which I informed of the new initiative of IIT Roorkee at Greater Noida and that Prof. Pradipta Banerji is joining as Director on Oct.14, 2011. I also complimented PanIIT for launching two new projects –PLC and WHEELS. I stressed that it is time Alumni become part of Governance in IIT

System, as suggested by Dr. Narayana Murthy. I was given as a memento, the PanIIT publication on 101 famous IITians – “GLOBAL 101 IIT: India’s Intellectual Treasures”.

Thereafter the Roorkee alumni met in a meeting where it was stressed that we should improve the connectivity of Alma Mater with Alumni, which will do all round good including fund raising.

The conference was formally closed with an announcement that the next PanIIT Global Conference will be held on 7-9 Dec. 2012 at Kolkata under the theme “Excel - - Transform - - Sustain” , Venue: Science City, J B S Haldane Avenue, Kolkata 700 046.

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