

Tete – a – tete with Prof. Onkar Singh, Vice-chancellor

VMSB Uttarakhand Technical University (UTU), Dehradun

Stability has returned and things have started looking up for the better with the joining of a new vice-chancellor (VC) in UTU. He is working tirelessly for achieving academic excellence and putting UTU amongst the leading universities of the country. The man behind this ambitious plan is Prof. Onkar Singh. A well-known academician and educationist of the country, he has varied experience in various capacities over the years in his career. Known for his result-oriented approach and fearless decision-making, he is very generous while dealing with people and HR matters. A glimpse of his friendly, informal and supportive attitude was quite obvious when we met him for the interview. His initiatives for systemic transformation of UTU have started showing desired results. In this exclusive interview with the editor of the Newsletter Yogesh C. Verma (YCV), he talks about his vision, thoughts and plans for UTU.

YCV: There is a positive trend these days amongst girls to opt for technical education. How does Uttarakhand Technical University (UTU) plan to encourage and make more opportunities available to the aspiring candidates in Uttarakhand?

VC: VMSB Uttarakhand Technical University (UTU) has established an exclusive campus institute for women namely 'Women Institute of Technology, Dehradun' in its premises. This is offering undergraduate programmes leading to B Tech. (Bachelor of Technology) degree in popular engineering disciplines of civil engg., computer science and engg., electrical engg., electronics and communication engineering, and mechanical engg. along with Bachelor of Computer Applications (BCA) degree for female aspirants. Thus, UTU is trying hard to extend educational opportunities to encourage girls to opt for careers as engineers and technologists. In addition to this exclusive women institute, the UTU has its own campus institutions spread across the Uttarakhand in Gopeshwar, Pithoragarh, Tanakpur, Tehri, and Uttarkashi for catering to the technical and professional educational requirements of youth residing in these cities and nearby areas.



Prof. Onkar Singh, Vice Chancellor in conversation with Yogesh C. Verma, Editor

YCV: Nowadays technology is changing very fast leading to the outdated of course contents of technical education. Do you have any mechanism to revise and update your syllabus periodically and if so, how frequently is it done?

VC: UTU keeps track of the on-going developments in the fields of education offered by it namely in engineering & technology, architecture, management, computer application, hotel management, pharmacy and law through the respective Boards of Studies which comprise of domain experts from academia and industry. The last full revision of the syllabus and ordinances for all programmes offered by the University was carried out in session 2022-23 in accordance with National Education Policy 2020. The next full revision will be held after the next academic session.

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VC: The shortage of teachers is being addressed by hiring teachers on a regular basis through a national level recruitment process. The University has set up an Academic Staff Development Centre in its premises for taking care of updating the faculty members as per contemporary developments in various domains along with training teachers for different pedagogical approaches.

YCV: A number of technical institutions of higher learning are collaborating with industries in various ways e.g. setting up high-tech laboratories, establishing centres of excellence, using services of industry professionals for academics etc. Is UTU thinking on these lines or has it already initiated the process for it?

VC: The University already has a good number of collaborations with industry / organizations and keeps on exploring the possibilities of executing new memorandums of understanding. The setting up of the Centre of Excellence and higher-end laboratories in different campus institutions is in progress. For example, a 5G telecommunication laboratory is being developed at THDCIHET (Tehri campus of the University) with the financial support of Govt. of India and the University. Similarly, each campus institute has been mandated to set up a centre of excellence suiting to their strengths, and requirements and develop trained human resources. Quite often, the affiliated / campus institutions call the field experts / industry experts for motivating students.

YCV: Many technical institutions in India are going in for academic tie-ups with foreign universities or high-ranking Indian institutions for mutual benefits. Is there something on the radar for UTU also?

VC: UTU is open for academic tie-ups with foreign universities and high-ranking Indian institutions. The affiliated institutions are encouraged to explore such opportunities. However, such academic tie-ups are yet to get matured at the University level.

YCV: Start-up culture is fast catching up in India and many of the technical institutions are setting up start-up / incubation centres to inculcate a spirit of entrepreneurship amongst its passing out graduates. Have you given it a thought to make your students more enterprising?

VC: The University has set up the UTU Incubation Hub (UTU I-Hub) for promoting start-up / incubation activities and a few incubates are working therein. The UTU I-Hub regulations permit different categories of entrepreneurs to join the incubation hub as per the terms and conditions laid down therein.

YCV: Skill development has assumed very high significance for employment generation amongst youth. Is UTU contributing in any way in this endeavour or is it conducting any certification course for less qualified youngsters?

VC: The University lays emphasis on the skill development of its students studying in different programmes. A good number of such skill development programmes are offered free of cost to bonafide students through its web portal. Currently, around 90 skill development programmes offered by NASSCOM and 8 skill development programmes offered by Softpro India are available for students online. In addition, the University keeps on arranging short-term skill development programmes on its campus by engaging subject experts from industry / academia from time to time.

YCV: Soft skills and personality development are considered to enhance the employability prospects of students as per some surveys. How does UTU groom its students to fare better in job interviews or have a better career prospect in future?

VC: In view of the University having the majority of students in its affiliated colleges, the institutions are directed to hold specialized soft skill development programmes. Periodical personality development programmes are being organized to nurture students for ease of their placements.

