



# PRécis

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## Admissions: Greater emphasis now on student satisfaction, PR

*Setting the context for his presentation, about the higher education system in the UK going through transformational change presently, Prof David Willey, deputy vice chancellor, Bournemouth University, the UK, speaks about employability, the value of the UK education, and the student experience. He mentions the importance of marketing, PR, branding, and of identity and distinctiveness in higher education.*

The traditional model of education is changing all the time, it is now much more market-focused, on students (as customers), said Prof David Willey, deputy vice chancellor, Bournemouth University, the UK, addressing members of the Public Relations Society of India, Chennai Chapter. Across the UK, there are 115 universities and 50 other colleges and

higher education institutions. There are around 2.5 million students (out of a total population in the UK of about 60 million). The field of education is a “highly internationalised sector”, one of the most important export industries for the UK, with nearly a quarter of the staff coming from outside the UK; indeed, the UK is home to about 400000 students from outside, accounting for about 15 per cent of the total student population. India and China are most strongly represented.

At Bournemouth, Prof Willey leads the implementation and delivery of the university's strategic plan, including management of organisation change, delivery of investment and estates, and IT infrastructure; he also has responsibility for marketing, PR and alumni relations, and the university's fund-raising activity. Started as a municipal college in 1970, Bournemouth became a university in 1992, one of the top universities in the UK that has the motto: to learn is to change. It is built around strong



*Prof David Willey addresses the audience.*

academic traditions, and on quality in standards.

“We continue to be a popular destination either for those who are looking at doing their first degree or their post-graduate studies. Everybody has heard of the dreaming spires of Oxford or the cloistered corridors of Cambridge, but the tradition of British higher education is much deeper than that and indeed has been mimicked by many parts of the world in terms of what others might aspire to achieve. The other aspect is the kind of disciplines that are offered from computer technology and IT to nursing and PR as Bournemouth offers,” Prof Willey said. He added that education at Bournemouth was built on a strong research base. “Our students learning from those who are themselves learning. Our academic staff and faculty are continuing to push back the frontiers of learning through their own research and that gives them a richer experience.



*A view of the gathering, which includes members of the faculty from Bournemouth University, the UK.*





Elizabeth Tyson holds the attention of (l-r) R.K. Dharan, P.M. Belliappa, Kartar Singh and Prof David Willey.

The increasing emphasis is also in ensuring that the students are high-quality learners, independent learners and, indeed, that makes them employable in terms of what employers are looking for. It's the critical benefit of the UK higher education system.”

Traditionally, UK higher education has been publicly funded, by the government. More than 30 years ago, tuition fees was paid for by the government, a large grant was paid at the beginning of each term, enough to pay for all living costs. The change happened in the early 1990s when students had to begin to pay for their own education about 1000 pounds against a total of about 10000 pounds. Today, partly because of the recession, all financial support has been withdrawn, and it will have an impact from September this year. Students will have to pay about 9000 pounds a year, or, typically, 27000 pounds for a three-year course. That, Prof Willey said, was having a fundamental change in terms of UK education. “Although we may have our own views about this, there are

some benefits as well. We have seen de-regulation of this sector. Private enterprises are getting into higher education, so it is opening up the university sector, provided they are able to meet the stringent academic standards.”

At Bournemouth, of the 120 million pounds a year needed to finance

courses, 50 million comes from the government. “Over the next three years we will see that decline to about 2 million pounds. So that whole extra bit has to be made up for by students paying their own way. What it does do is that there is greater competition within the sector between universities and greater choice for students,” Prof Willey said. Not all the things coming out of the withdrawal of public funding of students were negative, he added. “Universities are having to focus much more on the needs of students, on what students want from their education. There is greater emphasis on value for money, they expect good job opportunities as well. All that increases the importance of marketing, PR, branding of identity, distinctiveness in the higher education.

Now universities are looking at differentiating themselves from others and to make it more attractive to students. It is these sort of things that are getting more important indeed, what some might say the marketisation of higher education. There is greater emphasis on student satisfaction.”

Bournemouth is situated in a beautiful location on the south coast of England, about a hundred miles from London, where

surfing is a popular activity. The university is home to 17000 students 15000 under-graduates, 2000 post-graduates, including many studying for PhDs and it is thus a medium to large-size university. It is a popular destination for overseas students. In 2009 and 2010, the *Guardian* newspaper ranked Bournemouth No. 1 among universities set up after 1992. In the last two years, it was pipped to the post by a university in Scotland. Education here is underpinned by research or professional practice. It is not just dry academic theory, but about practical understanding. The courses are geared to meet employability. The most



Bruce Miller (left) and visitors from Bournemouth University, Alex Tattersal and David Newell (extreme right) have an interesting chat.

popular is the nursing and midwifery course. The university bagged the Queen's Anniversary Prize for animation this year. According to Prof Willey, 90 per cent of students gain employment; more than 60 per cent in high-quality graduate jobs. The university has strong links with industry, it has joint research projects or consultancy programmes with some top companies such as the BBC.

Looking at the future, Prof Willey said: “We are seeing increasing competition, which will become fiercer. There will be more choice for students, and emphasis on value for money and the student experience. Whatever it is, the UK higher education will still have as its basic principles, history, reputation, quality and standards... and that is unlikely to change.”

The meeting was organised through the efforts of Paul Chellakumar, who heads Campus Abroad.



Tyson receives a memento from V. Ramesh Kumar.

# Women must learn to stop moaning, wake up from slumber

*Winner of the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Public Service as well as the Padma Shree and Padma Bhushan, Dr V. Shantha of the Cancer Institute, Chennai, makes some pertinent points while speaking aloud a “few random thoughts” about the empowerment of women on the occasion of International Women's Day. The confidence that nothing is impossible to achieve must come from within, she says, and adds that women must wake up from their slumber, with confidence in their capability and strength. Commitment and purpose should not be disturbed by circumstances or obstacles, she stresses.*

People in India and many overseas have heard about the achievements of Dr V. Shantha, chairman of the Cancer Institute, Chennai. Her dedication and commitment as a doctor has earned her tremendous respect. Born in a distinguished family of

scientists, Shantha dreamt of becoming a doctor ever since she was a small girl; her uncle and grand uncle were Nobel Laureates. She acquired MBBS, DG and MD (Obstetrics and Gynaecology) degrees between 1949 and 1955. In April 1955 she joined the Cancer Institute, set up in 1954 by the Women's India Association Cancer Relief Fund as its resident medical officer, in preference to the assistant surgeon's post in the Women's and Children's Hospital, Madras. Her life has been dedicated to the study and prevention of cancer, and to giving care to those affected. With Dr Krishnamurthy she played a crucial role in developing the institute from a cottage hospital of 12 beds to a comprehensive institution of international stature.

Speaking to PRSI members on International Women's Day, Dr Shantha started off with some poignant words: “You are your own Mandela, your own Gandhi, your own King. Every woman must have a purpose in life and strive to achieve it and face all obstacles with courage. Many of the things I do not deserve and whatever I have done is part of the team at the Cancer Institute. Awards do not mean anything to an individual; it's the team that's responsible. The first thing we have to



Dr V. Shantha.

do is to pay tribute to the three women who have been Nobel Laureates,” she said, referring to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Tawakkol Karman and Leymah Roberta Gbowee.

Sirleaf was the first woman head of state in Africa, in Liberia. Her main vision: a corrupt-free government. “When corruption is rampant in India it is time we woke up to it without politicising it. The end to corruption can change the economic face of India. Women can and should take a leading role,” stressed Dr Shantha, adding, “Corruption is worldwide, stringent laws are necessary but more important is the stringent implementation of the laws. Corruption is a disease, and as in all diseases, prevention is better than cure. Is there a way to prevent it? Corruption is a result of poverty and greed. We can reduce poverty but cannot control greed. When China can inculcate thoughts of communism to youths, why can't we inculcate the thoughts of great men like Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus Christ? It must be a mission of everyone together.”

Tawakkol Karman, the youngest Nobel Laureate, is a journalist, human rights activist and press freedom advocate who founded Women Journalists Without Chains. At 32 years, she said, “I am a citizen of the world, earth is my



V.S. Ramana has a few words to say about the wonderful achievements of the Cancer Institute, as PRSI office-bearers listen.





*Dr Shantha is formally greeted by Ramesh, K.S. Varalakshmi and G. Krishnan.*

country and humanity my nation.” “In an environment divided by politics, where people are unwilling to share even water, we have to debate and learn; let us draw inspiration by what Rabindranath Tagore said: where the world has not been broken into fragments by narrow domestic walls, into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. Let empowered women be the instrument to realise this dream,” said Dr Shantha.



*J. Madhuri presents a memento to Dr. Shantha.*

Again, referring to what Leymah Gbowee had once uttered (Don't wait for a Gandhi, don't wait for a Mandela, don't wait for a King. You are your own Gandhi, you are your own Mandela and you are your own King.), Dr Shantha said: “What women have to learn – they have all gone through obstacles – is that we can't keep moaning about obstacles. The confidence that nothing is impossible to achieve must come from within. Somebody cannot give it to you. Faith must come from within. If you have to succeed there must be a passion. Women must wake up from their slumber, with confidence in their capability and strength.

As for International Women's Day, Dr Shantha said that over the past few decades it had become the practice to identify such days, essentially to create

awareness about the subject. “To me, it is not a day for celebration. We need to re-dedicate ourselves to the cause and purpose of the day. I see nothing to celebrate, especially in the context of the plight of women in India. There is hardly a day when I open the paper and do not see references to rape, gang rape, suicide, domestic violence and many more. Where is the question of celebration? Despite reservation in panchayats and other local bodies, the status of women, especially in rural areas continues to be pathetic.

Empowerment cannot be given on a platter; you have to get it. Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, a pioneer social worker, the first medical graduate, the first legislator in the world, said that legislation is only a sanction. It is up to you to enginise these laws and rules.”

The Constitution guarantees equality of opportunity and work to all women; 2001 was declared as the Year of Women's Empowerment. After innumerable obstacles, the

Rajya Sabha passed the Women's Reservation Bill in 2010 but it is yet to be taken up in the Lok Sabha. A lot of obstacles were made by politicians, Dr Shantha said. She referred to Hillary Clinton who had “aptly remarked” that the history of women is the history of



*K. Sivagaminathan has Dr. Shantha and the others in splits.*



silence. “Education, employment and property rights are denied (to women) they are accepted in silence and treated as beasts of burden, as reproductive machines, and subject to all kinds of domestic violence. All because of economic dependence, and economic independence can only come with education and equal opportunities. In gender equality India ranks 118 out of 177; a result of lower socio-economic status. You will be shocked to know the definition of literacy, it's all right if a woman knows to write her name! Literacy is not education; how can you get empowerment before you get education?” she asked the audience.

Dr Shantha said that the skewed sex ratio (927 women for every 1000 men) was because of infanticide, maternal mortality, suicide, domestic deaths etc.



*K. Solaiyappan, Krishnan, S. Venkata Ramani, Jaishree Kishore, Dharan, V. Kalidoss and Ramesh gather around Dr Shantha to hear her out.*

Domestic violence seems to be going up, according to her. However, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Maharashtra have done much better. “The greatest obstruction is the traditional mindset in India; most importantly, the mindset of women themselves. Even educated women prefer to depend on men; they do not mind suffering in

silence. It is essentially the mother-in-law problem. Empowerment can only come from women themselves. They have rid themselves of the inferiority complex,” she said.

Dr Shantha urged all educated and empowered women to take it as a mission and see that the less privileged were also empowered. Giving the Indian example of a woman achiever, Dr Muthulakshmi Reddy, she said that there have been many such achievers despite the odds.



*Krishnan and Solaiyappan present rose buds to women in the audience on the occasion of Women's Day.*

“The Hindu orthodoxy resisted her from going to college in Pudukottai. She was determined; her background did not deter her. It was her destiny. She wrote to the Maharaja of Pudukottai. She was the first girl to be admitted to the college in Pudukottai. She was seated behind a screen. No boy could see her. When the bell rang, she had to first step out before the boys could come out. What did she make of her life! I am proud to be a part of the institute she founded. Dr Shantha's sister is at the Avvai Home, also founded by Dr Reddy. Yes, coping with cancer is a challenge, it is not the people you lose, but what you have done. You cannot achieve anything by sitting in an ivory tower. Achievement needs blood, sweat and toil. You get enthusiasm from what you have done.”

## Two deserving awards



*At a function held at the Stella Maris College (see next page), Sister Jasinth Quadras presents Daniel Dass a trophy for Chennai Chapter newsletter PRecis winning the PRSI All India Best Newsletter Award for 2011.*



*V.S. Ramana being presented a trophy and bouquet by Sister Quadras in recognition of the L&T Construction CCD Team having bagged five ABCI Awards at the Mumbai annual session.*

# Several PR lessons are learnt from the Delhi Metro Rail Project

*Making an interesting presentation on the communication and PR exercise undertaken during the Delhi Metro Rail Project, its chief PRO, Anuj Dayal, mentions how too much of 'communication' is not really advisable. By nature, human beings have an interest for exploration and enquiry, but communication is also about having a positive attitude, adjusting to situations and listening, he says.*

Anuj Dayal's presentation provided a broad overview of the Delhi Metro. It showed the route map, including the elevated and underground portions. Eighteen lakh people use the Metro daily, on average. The frequency during peak hours is about 2.5 minutes underground, and 3 minutes on elevated rails. The punctuality is measured with a count of 60 seconds. Significantly, Delhi Metro proved to be operationally profitable from Day 1. The result: Delhi Metro emerged as a vibrant



Chief guest Anuj Dayal lights the traditional lamp, at the Chapter inaugural meeting for 2012-13.

brand. According to Dayal, it reached its peak in 2000 and the brand image has sustained.

PR was adopted as the single point of communication. There was of course a focus on media relations. That the PR head was a part of the top management, helped. The challenge was to convert technical aspects into non-technical visual information, Dayal pointed out. Some of the tools used included Nukkad Natak (street theatre), trade fairs, radio spots and

community interaction. The Delhi Metro Citizens Forum was formed, with voluntary membership. Members helped convey messages to those who take the Metro.

The best laid out plans can go awry. There were shocks and tragedies for the Delhi Metro on October 19, 2008. Two people died and 27 were injured as a result of an accident in Laxmi Nagar in East Delhi where eleven concrete slabs weighing 840 tonnes crashed down on a Blueline bus and a few cars at the Metro bridge site. The driver of the bus was one of the two dead. The accident was construed as even having an impact on the ensuing Assembly polls. Negligence had triggered the disaster; DMRC initiated a probe and pinned blame on the contractor. An open press conference and a quick enquiry helped save the public image.

On July 12, 2009, there occurred another accident, this time in Zamroodpur in South Delhi. The Delhi Metro image took a beating again. Three huge cranes toppled, resulting in the death of six people. The question was asked: was safety being



Dayal starts his presentation with a quote from the Maharishi Patanjali (Yoga Sutra).

(Cont. on page 8)



# PRSI families get together to celebrate

It was a joyous occasion at the SVS Club on the evening of January 13, 2012 as PRSI Chennai Chapter members and their families got together to celebrate the new year with cocktails and dinner. There were various games and quiz programmes, music and dance and even karaoke. Tombola took a major share of the time spent. A flavour of the evening in pictures.



Musical chairs.



Karaoke time.



A prize-winner (right).



Sashi Nair, editor, Precis, and Daniel Dass, branch head, ASP, receive the PRSI All India newsletter award from R.K. Baratan.



As youngsters sing, adults take to the dance floor.



Two other prize winners.



Tombola master Dharan.



A prize for Jayashree Ramana.



Youngsters have a blast.



Kumari Dharan and Sundari Krishnamurthy.



# Several PR lessons are learnt from the Delhi Metro Rail Project

(Cont. from page 6)

compromised in the rush to meet the 2010 deadline? If it was not a Sunday morning, many more might have died. E. Sreedharan, the managing director, Delhi Metro Rail Project, taking moral responsibility, offered to resign but the government asked him to continue. The accident led to a three-month delay.

The lessons to be learnt, according to Dayal: it was difficult constructing in a crowded area; no exclusive interviews should be given during a crisis; you need to be friendly with the media; straight forward and speedy dissemination of information helps; and the information flow within and outside the organisation should be identical.



At the end, Dayal fields questions from Stella Maris PR students.



Principal Sister Jasinth Quadras greets Anuj Dayal and PRSI members before the start.



Founder-member of the PRSI Chennai Chapter R.K. Baratan has a word with Satyan Bhatt (back to camera) as Anuj Dayal (second from left) and PRSI members look on.

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