

Academics and Research Cell

Vision and Need:

Academics and research are a major component during the stay of all students at IIT Kanpur. There are different levels of organisations for the same at IIT Kanpur. We have DUGCs at the department level, SUGC and Deans at the Institute level and then the Academic Senate at the topmost level. The unique feature of IIT Kanpur is that there is the amount of trust and respect the institute has had over the years in its students for this purpose. Student nominees are invited to meetings of all these bodies and their views are given sincere thought by the Institute as a whole.

Although the Students' Gymkhana has always tried to help in the process by organizing elections or appointing suitable nominees to these committees, yet there is a primary concern of more freedom, responsibility and accountability that we need to give to the whole process. For now, we have the UGSAC and PGSAC as the primary bodies where we are supposed to discuss all matters pertaining to common student concerns regarding academic and research related issues. Students Welfare Cell is another body under the Presidential Council which in some measure does this job at present. However, these bodies are currently structured as either a standing committee of the Senate or Presidential Council with generally the President, Students' Gymkhana at the top. It is to be noted that in this model of working there is immense pressure on the President or the SUGC/SPGC nominees to call meetings and inform students of what major discussions of interest are presently going on in the college with respect to these matters. These meetings are often marred by low attendance as very often the agenda to be discussed may not be of interest to all the members. It is also unfortunate but true that most of the student opinion is developed at the last minute which leaves little or no time for discussions between the student nominees at various levels for the same.

Therefore, currently there is a need to create a sort of autonomous body, with a strong leadership that is directly responsible to the Students' Senate. The roles of the Academic and Research Cell (ARC) and its coordinators will be:

- 1) To keep track of primary issues being discussed in all DUGCs, DPGCs, SUGC and SPGC and even the Academic Senate and help formulate a unanimous student opinion with regard to them. The critical feature of this should be timing and anticipation as currently only few people (President, Chairperson, and SUGC/SPGC nominees) are aware of some of the issues being discussed, which often cause the students to formulate their opinions only at the last minute and that too at Institute level. For example, there is a need for SUGC student nominees to discuss the important possible agendas with the President/ Chairperson and DUGC student nominees so that they can know about the problems before the actual meeting.
- 2) To keep a record of important decisions taken at the Department and Institute (Senate + SUGC + SPGC+DUGC+DPGC). Currently, we rely only on the Institute functionaries for providing minutes of a meeting. However, student nominees

present in a meeting should also try to contribute to an alternate record of all important decisions and nuances discussed in a meeting for future reference.

- 3) Such a cell should also work directly with the Academic Affairs Division of the Institute to modify the existing programs, rules and regulations to create a better environment for teaching and learning. For example, coming up with possible sets of new minor specializations could be a start. The information record, mentioned above, would definitely help the cell while debating the pros and cons of a proposal.
- 4) It should serve as a primary source for dissemination of authentic, up to date information for the entire student body (this is a very difficult goal as sometimes rules are not clear or are transitioning and thus only continuously updated information can help the student). It should also strive to become the “Go to” point for the students for resolving any problem.
- 5) In addition to the points above which pertain more to academics, there is also a need to push for better representation of students’ interests in the research sphere. Currently, there is no student body or organisation (except the Students’ Senate) which caters to better evaluation and representation of the interests of the students (both UG+PG) relating to research and development. A research wing within the proposed cell could go a long way in coming up with tools to understand and document the amount and level of research being done by students of this college at the undergrad and graduate level separately. It can also help in identifying underlying issues such as lack of infrastructure or other forms of inputs from the institute such as monetary help to attend conferences etc.
- 6) Lastly, this cell would be responsible for bringing important agendas to the attention of the Students’ Senate for either noting or discussion (as the case maybe) and will be directly responsible to the Students’ Senate for working to create a better environment for education and development.

Organisation and Constitution:

It is suggested that the Academics and Research Cell have three wings (UG Academics Wing, PG Academics Wing and Research Wing). The Cell as a whole should have two Overall Coordinators. The Coordinators should be nominated from the general body members by the Nominations Committee of the Students’ Senate. It is suggested that the outgoing coordinators be special invitees for this meeting. The overall composition of the Cell is as mentioned below:

- 1) Overall Coordinators
- 2) Head, UG Academics
- 3) Head, PG Academics
- 4) Head, Research
- 5) All student members in SUGC, SPGC and SEPC
- 6) All student members of all the DUGCs/DPGCs
- 7) Other members as nominated by the OCs and approved by the Senate