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## NRI profs bunk foreign classes to teach at city institutes

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Academicians, who taught abroad for a better part of their career, have made A'bad & G'nagar institutes their new playground

Ahmedabad: In Ashish Nanda, IIMA has got its first director from a foreign university. He may seem a trendsetter, then – quitting a well-paying, high-exposure plush job in the US to return to his roots – but his is not an isolated case.

There are several other NRI professors in Ahmedabad, who have quit their positions abroad to teach full-time at premier education institutes in the city and in Gandhinagar.

Noteworthy among them are TT Sreekumar of MICA, Bimal Patel (vice-chancellor of GNLU), and Achal Mehra and Srinivas Reddy of IITGn.

“I chose to join MICA (Mudra Institute of Communications, Ahmedabad) because it's one of the best institutes in India for communication,” says Sreekumar, who before MICA taught new media communication at Singapore National University for nine years. “Academics is a global enterprise and it doesn't matter where one is. Also, now there are institutes in India that offer quality education and infrastructure for higher education. Professors here are getting decent exposure and opportunity.”

Achal Mehra is teaching journalism at Indian Institute of Technology, Gandhinagar (IITGn), after spending 27 years as an academician in Hong Kong and several universities in the US.

“The new challenges, initiatives, and the excitement that comes with it, that drew me to a young institute like IITGn,” says Mehra, accepting in the same breath that adjusting in this country is a challenge for those who have stayed away for long. “I certainly didn't come here for money. It is the professional challenge that brought me here, and the satisfaction I get,” he says.

But it was the grim economic outlook of the US and Europe that brought Srinivas Reddy to IITGn to teach music. A scholar in literature and music, Reddy was visiting faculty at Centre for Indic Studies, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth and Brown University. “The mood in the west hasn't been very encouraging, in the past five years, but positive development is happening in this part of the world (India, China and Middle East),” says Reddy. “When one doesn't have to compromise on availability of literature for research in internet era, there is no restriction on academicians to go anywhere.”

Clearly, the times they are a changing – at least in the academic domain. Reverse brain drain, anyone?

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