

IITGN first of its kind to have mandatory design course

LAKSHMI AJAY

AHMEDABAD, NOV 3

IN a first, the Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IITGN) has become the only IIT in the country to introduce design education as a mandatory course at UG level for engineering students. The institute may soon launch a full-fledged masters programme and a PhD in the discipline.

"We started thinking of the design course as part of our new curriculum in 2011 and to the best of my knowledge, we are the only IIT to have a full fledged course in design for our B. Tech students. Since we pursue a broad context here at IITGN, we have flagged off a range of courses on humanities, cognitive sciences, biology, design, archaeology, public health, earthquake and fire engineering among others. We are always on the lookout for such opportunities and once we get good people we think of starting a course," said Sudhir Jain, Director at IITGN.

The institute introduced the compulsory design course for UG students in the second year with the first batch in July-Nov 2013 across all streams of engineering has a separate paper that students have to appear for. "The course is called 'Introduction to Design & Innovation'. While IIT Guwahati offers a Bachelors in design (B.Des) and IIT Bombay of-

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fers a Masters and a PhD in design, no other IIT offers design at the UG programme as a core course armed with standard course credits. We have plans of starting a masters and PhD programme as soon as possible, hopefully by the next academic year," said Bhaskar Bhatt, Assistant Professor of Design at IITGN and co-chair of Design Innovation Center (DIC).

"We teach engineering students 'societal focussed design' so that they graduate and use engineering skills to make life easier for the community. We teach things that a typical designer does. Later on, students can sign up for design electives offered in the fourth, fifth and sixth semesters. While we currently have an adjunct and an assistant professor, we have a significant number of faculty at IITGN with an interest in design and visiting faculty who have expertise in the area. In fact, the design course has led engineering students at the institute to develop 35 product prototypes that are design-innovation led. Of this 12 student teams have voluntarily opted to carry the project forward for

further technical and commercial development," Bhatt added.

Putting the focus on design as an integral part of training engineers, IITGN will also be hosting a three-day international design conference called 'Design for a Billion' on 7, 8, 9 November 2014, that aims to bring together researchers, educators, practitioners, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists to discuss the implications and future of mass impact design. The design conference at IITGN will see deliberations by international speakers and Indian experts on interweaving the theoretical and the empirical, research and applications, market pragmatics and social idealism in the sphere of design.

"People think of design in the context of aesthetics however, we at DIC are distinguishing ourselves by also addressing usability, effectiveness of relevant products. The event provides a good platform to our students and will expose them to internationally renowned people from the design and industry sphere on how to come up with solutions that have a mass impact and address commercial, societal needs. We expect anywhere between 150 to 200 participants and design professionals," said Achal Mehra, Dean, Strategic Planning and Special Initiatives, IITGN.