

IITs devise schemes to attract faculty

PRADIPTA MUKHERJEE / Kolkata January 18, 2010, 1:50 IST

The Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) are in the process of drafting faculty-incentive schemes like overseas travel and special programmes to attract more teachers.

IIT-Kharagpur, for instance, is looking at recruiting faculty during overseas travel as well as make on-the-spot offers. It is also exploring the creation of a database of its own PhD students which would be made available to all recruitment agencies, thus creating a national resource base.

“We will absorb our own PhDs to combat the faculty shortage,” says Damodar Acharya, director, IIT-Kharagpur.

The institute has 8,500 regular students on campus and only 535 faculty. By 2012, the institute will have 11,000 students. “Ideally, we should have had 800 faculty because the ideal ratio of student to faculty is 1:10. The problem is shortage of PhD scholars in India,” notes Acharya.

Other IITs too share IIT-Kharagpur’s plight. Consider this. Published statistics from the Union HRD ministry point out to a rather grim situation. For instance, one-third of the teaching posts at the IITs and National Institutes of Technology (NITs) are lying vacant. Overall, there is a deficit of 1,284 teachers at IITs, which is the largest share of the crunch. The nine centrally-funded technical institutions (collectively called CFTIs), which include the prestigious IITs and IIMs, are currently short of more than 3,000 faculty members or about one-third of the sanctioned strength.

IIT-Bombay, for instance, currently is short of 200 teachers. “We have a policy of rolling recruitment where we fill up vacant posts as soon as we find a qualified candidate,” explains Bhartendu Seth, president of IIT-Bombay’s faculty association. IIT-Bombay also takes care of immediate needs by hiring faculty on a contractual basis.

IIT-Bombay(IIT-B) is planning to introduce a mentorship programme to assist young faculty members who would join the institute. They will be guided to the administrative processes and understand the rules and regulations. Currently, IIT-B has around 480 faculty members and 6,200 students. But as the final phase of the 27 per cent other backward classes (OBCs) reservation is implemented this year, the institute will have more students. Therefore, the institute wants to increase the faculty headcount to about 800 in the next three to four years.

At IIT-Gandhinagar, the newly-constituted Board of Governors has approved all the incentive schemes for faculty recruitment, retention and mentoring to achieve academic excellence. IIT-Gandhinagar(IIT-GN) director S K Jain, says: “To become a world class institution, IIT-GN can now pay any amount to its faculty on top of the salaries drawn by them from the funds coming through donations or other resources such as creation of Chairs.”

IITs are of the opinion that very few students who graduate from these institutes come back to teach, preferring to move abroad or accept lucrative jobs in the private sector. The Sixth Pay Commission did hike salaries at these premier institutes but most professors at IITs and IIMs claim that even the new pay scales are not good enough to attract talented people to teaching in India.

M Thenmozhi, president of All India IIT Faculty Federation, says: “Salaries and stipends are so poor that most students do not wish to take up doctoral programmes and eventually join the faculty. Stipends for doctoral students should be at least Rs 30,000-40,000 per month, instead of 17,000-25,000 right now, in order to encourage them to join the profession.”

“Also, there should be continuous scholarships and faculty development schemes as we absorb several fresh graduates into the faculty,” adds Thenmozhi.