ON INCREASING THE VISIBILITY OF THE UNIVERSITY

The Problem:
Universities like PU might be quiet places but they play host to many happening people. Whether it is faculty members doing high value work, student start-ups or students engaged in some community-oriented activity or businesses coming to campuses for placements, all these are eye-ball grabbing activities. Surely then a good way to increase visibility would be to reach out much more to these and other social groups.

Learning might be a quiet activity, conducted best in an ivory tower but the spin-offs of learning are considerable. Here are some possible ways for universities to use those spin-offs to generate good space in social and other kinds of media. In the absence of a conscious effort to project the university, there is a propensity for the university to get slotted as a university in the provincial backwaters despite the fact that over 80% of the news about the university in the media continues to remain very positive about the university. But that news only happens for the local city pages. Never by default on the main pages of the media. One recent example of this particular lacunae was in the reportage seen over the recommendation of names of universities for Institution of Eminence. PU got a mention only on the Chandigarh city pages. The news regarding IoE in the main newspapers ignored PU entirely.

Some General Strategies
1. **Reach Out to Students**:
    1.1. **Campus Newsletter:** A good online newsletter that can be brought out on say a monthly basis could cover major STUDENT events, prizes won by students in competitions, community activities being conducted etc. Once the newsletter is generated, some positive stories are sure to find their way to the local press. It is always best to ensure that students steer this newsletter WITHOUT supervision and censorship by faculty. Currently such a campus wide newsletter is missing and the entire task of outreach is left to the already overburdened office of the DPR and the students of the department of Mass Communication. Even the annual student festival of PU organized by the PUSC has lost its verve on matters of attracting public attention or the attention of other universities and colleges.

    1.2. **Student Clubs:** Specific activity centred student clubs provide a major outlet for the creativity and interests of students. They also train students in handling a complex set of issues in real life. Currently PU does not have any university wide, activity centric student clubs that would enable students to hold Positions of Responsibility on campus, coordinate among themselves across departments and around a particular activity. The annual festivals of the SSBUICET and the UIET remain stand-alone annual activities of some note. But their visibility too is limited, both inside and outside of the campus.

    1.3. **Advisory support to student start-ups and translational research**. Start-ups have a high failure rate and lack of experience is a major factor. Universities have a rich selection of faculty, some of whom have spent time in industry. They can provide advice on marketing, management and project design generally. Such support cells have a great deal of potential for news stories. The current efforts at PU in this direction are quite healthy but they are currently focused mostly on students of engineering, leaving out the large mass of students from the sciences, social sciences and humanities.

1.4. Research projects by students: Annual events/competitions where college students from the catchment area of the university build projects and participate in a discipline-specific competition, has many benefits. Not only does it generate huge publicity, it also encourages students to be more curious and innovative about their respective subjects. At present the UIET conducts a few such events. PU on the whole conducts the Chasscon and the Chasscong. Both events currently have acquired an episodic form, avoid publicizing the researches presented and there is little encouragement for presenting student research. Subsequent to the conference there is little effort to bring out proceedings in a professional form. The various outreach activities of the Dr. Harvansh Singh Judge Institute of Dental Sciences & Hospital currently mostly go unreported.

1.5. Campus Placement Cells are the most important outreach mechanism for the university nowadays. Everyone, including those who disdain such things, wants to know how placements were done, where and for how much. The Campus Placement Cells therefore need to reach out to not just potential employers but also to students and their guardians. It would be a good idea to involve students actively in the functioning of the placement cells. Even where campus interviews for businesses happen, there is hardly any buzz created about these. People, both parents and students and the general public, would like to know what are the kinds of businesses that come, what are the skills they look for and most of all what the average package offered is.

2. **High Value Work Done by Faculty:** The high value work done by the university faculty needs to be show-cased much better. Gathering information about such work and issuing press releases about it should be a routine activity. Private universities routinely issue press releases about faculty members writing books, getting patent applications through, transferring technology. Such achievements need to be also showcased on the university web-site.

3. **The University Website** remains the first stop for people who are curious about PU. It needs to be redesigned to make it more pleasing aesthetically and easier to navigate. Currently both attributes are missing. The university also needs to provide some web space for students, departments and, faculty to showcase their activities. Currently the only thing available is a brief position for news for each department which the departments don't much use either for sharing news or as a noticeboard.

4. **Reaching out to Businesses:**
   4.1. Problem solving competitions: Many businesses use consultants for solving problems. University can organize events in tandem with businesses for students to solve problems of businesses. The software industry routinely organizes hackathons. Such competitions could conceivably be held in many sectors.
   4.2. Seeking business sponsorship for student festivals- once they are involved, businesses would make sure that the event gets publicity.

5. **Reaching out to Schools:**
   5.1. The interface with schools needs to be developed more strongly. Especially, schools can be encouraged to send students to the university for a learning day-long trip. This

would help the students get an idea of the work done in a research institution and also create publicity. The current practise of having an Open Day, Science Day is too little and too infrequent.

6. **Reaching out to government:**

6.1. The government routinely requires a very large amount of data, analysis of data and training of its personnel to make good policies. University faculty and students are very well placed to provide this service to the government in a reliable manner and at very cheap cost. However, in the absence of any formal and easy to use mechanism to work with government this entire field is left open to the so-called consultancy companies. Ironically, the consultancy companies in turn hire university students and faculty to do the job without the university or the hired personnel getting any credit for the work done.

Setting up a system to make the university's work visible: the IQAC

The IQAC plays an important role in ensuring that the university is familiar with its own goings on. This ensures the creation of better strategies for the university to claim a high status for itself.

Creating an IQAC and its work needs to become the basis of continuous feedback to the university on how to do better.

Important in this regard is:

1. **Creating systems that capture all information** about all activities in which a university is involved, as and when an activity happens as also all personnel of the university, their past, current and future activities. This can also be seen as every entity in the university maintaining a daily diary of its activities. At PU we have created the *Information Resource Book* Portal to help the departments of the university to capture their daily activities. This online portal was created after a comprehensive enquiry into all the activities of the university and its members. For administrative use we have an online **Campus Portal** which provides a substantive ERP solution to the administrative side of the university.

2. **Create a sense of fairness within the university** so as to enable people to be comfortable in reporting their activities to the IRB portal. This also involves providing substantive assurance to all that the reports they make shall not be used against them.

3. **Constant training of administrative staff** in maintenance of information. We consciously avoid the term 'data maintenance' since every person in the administration is supposed to maintain data online through the IRB portal and the Campus Portal.

4. **Continuous analysis** of information thus gathered to provide the university regular feedback on its diverse activities and inactivities.

5. **Feedback** systems need to be created to ensure that there is continuous feedback to the university from (1) students, (2) faculty, (3) administrative staff, (4) technical staff, (5) employers of the students, (6) parents and guardians of students, (7) alumni. Having robust feedback systems is very important for coopting everyone in the task of improving the university and enhancing the sense of being colleagues, equals with a stake in making the university better.

   Currently at PU we have in place only a system of student feedback on teaching and on living conditions in the hostels. There is no mechanism to take feedback from the faculty or the administrative and technical staff. Even a system of feedback from parents and guardians is missing. Some departments like UIPS and UBS do have a system of taking feedback from employers and alumni but, this system of feedback from employers and alumni needs to be established for each department and used to improve outcomes.

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