

Indraprastha College for Women
Equal Opportunity Cell & Enabling Unit

Report July-December 2019.

Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi, is unique as it is one of the oldest constituent College of the University serving the cause of women empowerment through higher education. Besides the above, the College also has a special place for students with disabilities. Accordingly, the College has instituted an Enabling Unit to cater to the students with special needs. In line with the UGC guidelines, the Enabling Unit works in close coordination with the Equal Opportunity Cell.

The Equal Opportunity Cell (EOC) and the Enabling Unit (EU), with the active support and constant encouragement from the College administration, have been working as a support system offering all services to students with disabilities, under one-roof. In an endeavour to provide a barrier-free campus, the College keeps accessibility as one of the priorities. In recognition to the efforts the College has made in the areas of accessibility and universal design, thanks to the visionary leadership of the current Principal who took the issues of disability services and accessibility to the forefront. The National Centre for Promotion of Employment for Disabled People (NCPEDP) and Mphasis (a Multi-National Corporation) selected the College for NCPEDP-Mphasis Universal Design Award 2015 in the category of the best institution providing barrier-free environment.

The College has admitted a total of 17 students with disabilities: 9 in Under Graduation and 8 in Post-graduation programmes for the academic year 2019-20. Like last year, the College admitted another student with Specific Learning Disability (SLD) — a disability newly recognised under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016.

In line with the larger vision of the College, the EOC and EU conduct various programmes every year such as: seminars, skill development workshops, cultural events, training and orientation programmes for students with disabilities enrolled in the College. Given below is a summary report of some of the major events, distinct facilities and services run under EOC and EU in the first half of the academic year 2019-20.

Facilities and Services:

The College has a well-equipped a special computer unit for students with disabilities. The unit contains six PCs, braille printer, a flat-bed scanner and Lex Air Camera (a photo scanner) and a LaserJet printer, all to assist the students with visual disabilities in their day-to-day educational requirements. Students with visual disabilities are also issued notebooks/laptops and Angel Pro DAISY Players on returnable basis. The college freely supplies braille sheet for students with visual disabilities to be able to take class notes in

braille script. The college arranges free transportation for all the students with disabilities to travel back to their destinations during the winter month examinations.

The coordinator, Enabling Unit has in the beginning of the academic session conducted a need-based assessment test and accordingly designed a syllabus for computer training sessions to be run subsequently. Mr. Vidhur Patel was appointed as Computer Instructor on contractual basis during the odd semester of the academic year 2019-20 to conduct the customised computer training sessions in order to assist the students with visual disabilities who generally come with different levels of skill sets. Periodic assessment tests were conducted to test the progress of the students. The computer Instructor conducted an in-house skill test for all students with visual disabilities to gauge their levels of computer proficiency at the end of the Semester. The students have themselves appreciated the initiative as they are today much more confident in their computer skills.

Coordinator, Enabling Unit and Convener, EOC, besides being available on all weekdays in person, also conduct meetings for students with disabilities every week in the Enabling Unit. The weekly meetings proved to be a great platform for information sharing, to hear grievances and to find out quick solutions.

Like last year, the EOC and EU in collaboration with the College NSS made two NSS volunteers available from 2:30-3:30 PM on all working days in the Enabling Unit. The NSS volunteers assist the needy students with visual disabilities in all their reading and writing tasks. Ms. Archana Mina from the library has also been available from 2:30-3:30 PM in the Enabling Unit to facilitate issuing and returning of books and other equipment's.

It is a matter of encouragement to note that Ms. Jyoti Gupta, B.A Political Science III year Hons. Ms. Ruchi Dubey, B.A Political Science II year Hons were elected as President and Vice President of Enabling Unit and are playing an active role in the College Student Union.

In strict compliance with the directions of UGC, the College makes a provision for the allotment of an extra 20-minute time per hour to all students who employed scribes to assist them in writing the exams.

It is a matter of immense satisfaction that the college administration takes every possible effort to facilitate external funding to support students with disabilities. In the academic year 2019-20, Help the blind foundation, a Non-Governmental Organisation that offers financial support to the deserving students with visual disabilities across the country, selected a total of 46 students with visual disabilities from the College for their scholarship and sanctioned them a total of Rs.6,16,000/- (rupees six lakh sixteen thousand only). Additionally, All India Confederation of the Blind also offered a merit-based scholarship for 18 students with visual disabilities.

Events in the first half of the Academic Year 2019-20

EOC and EU of the College conducted the Annual Orientation Programme for the Semester I new entrants on 22ND August, 2019. Students were first briefed about all library facilities which include: Braille books, scanning facility, issuing of Braille sheets, book bank facility etc. The Convenor of EOC and Coordinator of EU took all the participants for an accessible College tour, wherein the new entrants were detailed the accessibility features of the College and techniques of easy navigation around. The Principal also distributed certificates of

participation to the students who successfully completed the online courses on employability skills conducted in collaboration with Arise Impact during January-April 2019.

Like every year, a fifteen-day Mobility Orientation Programme was conducted for students with visual disabilities of Semester I from 21 August to 07 September 2019. Mr. Anil Kumar, a certified professional in Mobility Orientation for persons with visual disabilities, conducted the said training and offered students with visual disabilities a detailed orientation in the accessible navigation around the College.

Help the blind foundation conducted interviews for merit-based scholarships on 29 August 2019, in which a total of 47 students appeared. Of the 47, 46 students were selected for the same.

Ms. Shikha Agarwal, member EOC, and a faculty at the Department of computer science of our College conducted a workshop on IP LectureHall — a mobile application developed and operated by the college — on 01 October 2019.

Mr. Irfan Jami, an independent film maker visited the College on 01 November 2019 and interacted with the students with visual disabilities for his story. In his two-hour discussion, he touched upon various aspects of life with disability and had an expansive discussion on the story he was writing which centred around women with visual disabilities.

A group of students from Lady Shri Ram College, University of Delhi, visited the College on 18 October 2019 to learn about the accessible environment in the college. They also interacted with students with visual disabilities as part of their project work.

The EOC and EU organised a fifteen-day self-defence skills workshop for students with disabilities in collaboration with the Special Police Unit for Women and children, Delhi Police, from 15 October 2019 to 31 October 2019. Ms. Bharti, a Head Constable deputed by the Delhi Special Police conducted the training sessions. On the successful completion of the workshop, each student also received a certificate of participation on 08 November 2019.

Mr. Abhishek Syal, the Founder and CEO, Arise Impact, on his visit to India, visited the college on 13 November 2019 and interacted with the principal, faculty and students with visual disabilities. Having been briefed about the activities of EOC&EU, he expressed his admiration and gratitude towards the college administration for their active support and special efforts made for the empowerment of students with disabilities.

Skilling Initiatives

In an effort to build the employability skills of students with disabilities in general and students with visual disabilities in particular, the EOC and EU has been collaborating with Arise Impact — an NGO founded by Mr. Abhishek Syal, an MBA Graduate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA — that offers a plethora of online courses for students with disabilities. Streamlining the collaboration that, the EOC and EU in the current academic year initiated a project RISE (Raising Inclusive Skills and Employability). While Ms. Bhavika kohli, Associate Head of Arise Impact, Delhi Operations, and also a member of United Nations Global Volunteering Team, heads the RISE, a group of ten students of the College also pledged their support and participate actively in the project. The project RISE

has run a total of three online courses on employability skills, each targeting the Ist, 2nd and 3rd year students with disabilities respectively.

The courses offered during the current Semester (9 September to 25 October 2019) include:

1. English conversational skills for the students of Semester I;
2. Professional Introduction for the students of semester III;
3. In-Person Interview for the students of Semester V.

The said courses were offered through WhatsApp study group, wherein students were provided with the reading material in accessible medium instantaneously. Face-to-face contact classes were also held on a weekly basis so as to obtain the student progress and clarify doubts. The Principal distributed the certificates of course completion to students on 8 November 2019.

Ms. Dolly Jain

Convener

Equal Opportunity Cell

Dr. BR. Alamelu

Coordinator

Enabling Unit