

# **Indraprastha College for Women**

## **Equal Opportunity Cell & Enabling Unit**

### **Annual Report**

#### **Academic Year 2020–2021**

Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi is unique as it is one of the oldest constituent Colleges 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 the 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 for students with disabilities all services 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 28 students with disabilities: 20 in Under Graduation and 8 in Post-graduation programmes for the academic year 2020-21. Students admitted in the current academic year belong to a diverse set of disability categories: visual disability, speech and hearing disability, locomotor disability, cerebral palsy and specific learning disabilities, all benchmark disabilities as specified in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

In line with the larger vision of the College, the EOC and EU every year conduct various programmes 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 the major events, distinct facilities and services run under EOC and EU in the academic year 2020-21.

Forced by the pandemic, the College admitted students by a full-proof online process. The EOC and EU made every attempt to establish individual communication with all the students right from day one of their admission into college. We created a separate WhatsApp group for the newly admitted students and guided them to navigate the college activities virtually. Given the challenges of low internet bandwidth, scattered schedules and online fatigue students have to face on daily basis, the coordinators of EOC and EU have been interacting with the students individually and extending the support services in meeting their virtual classroom needs.

The EOC and EU conducted elections for students of Enabling Unit online using google forms. All the students participated actively in the online election and elected Ms. Ruchi Dubey (B.A(H)Political Science IIIrd year) as the president, Ms. Rameshwari (B.A(H)Hindi IInd year) as vice-president.

Unperturbed by the sudden disruption in the regular activities of the academic calendar, the university took a decision to shift the exams online and so as to facilitate students to assessment of student performance. Students with disabilities of the College took the advantage of the provision and attended their open book exams online on par with their non-disabled counterparts. The EOC and EU actively aided the students in filling up their examination forms online, giving them up-to-date information on exam schedule and other related issues. During the exams, students were also assisted in accessing and downloading their respective question papers and uploading their answer sheets on time. It gives us an immense satisfaction to place on record that Ms. Jyoti Gupta and Ms. Purnima Singh (B.A(H)Political Science, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, 2019-2020 batch) wrote their OBE exams on their own. When they joined the college for their graduation, they did not have any computer knowledge. But by the time they reached the final year, they were so well-versed that they could write their answers using screen readers and upload them online without anybody's assistance.

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 2020-21, 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 40 students with visual disabilities from the College for their scholarship and sanctioned them a

total of Rs.4,00,000/- (Rupees four lakh only). Additionally, All India Confederation of the Blind also offered a merit-based scholarship for 20 students with visual disabilities.

## **Human Resource Development**

Dr. BR. Alamelu, a faculty in the Department of English (and also currently Coordinator, Enabling Unit in the College) teaches a 6-credit course titled: 'Communication for Special Needs' for the students of BMMMC, Semester-VI. Ms. Ritu Panda — a qualified trainer in Sign Language — takes classes on Indian Sign Language. It is a matter of pride that IP College is the first institute of higher education in the country to have offered a full course on disability in general and special communication needs in particular at the undergraduate level. A total of four batches of students have passed out of the course ever since its introduction in the college, and they all have inspiring testimonies to offer about the course and its impact of their subsequent careers/higher studies. Along with a carefully designed, textual introduction and analysis of disability, the students had hands-on instruction in Braille, Indian Sign Language, white cane mobility and other accessible modes of communication deployed predominantly by persons with disabilities.

Drawing inference from classes on accessibility and universal design, Ms. Elisha Vermani (a student of B.MMMC 2021 batch) published a policy advice titled, 'On Inclusion: Companies Must Revisit Their Hiring Policies for Persons With Disabilities' in Ungender. The article can be accessed at: <https://www.ungender.in/indian-companies-need-to-change-hiring-policies-for-pwds/>

On the occasion of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the College organised an online event on 3rd December 2020 with Dr. R.K. Sarin as a chief guest. Dr. Sarin spoke on, 'Disability movement in India'. The event was well-attended.

As part of Samarthyaa 2021, held fully online for the first time, the EOC and EU invited Ms. Anita Eyer, the founder and chief of 'EKANSH' Trust, Pune, Maharashtra, as the chief guest. She addressed the gathering and spoke on, 'Disability Inclusion: Meaning and Scope'. Samarthyaa was held 1st and 2nd March 2021. Two competitions, namely: Story telling and Debating competition were organised, and cash prizes along with E-Certificates were presented to the winners.

## **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, the EOC and EU continued with the project RISE (Raising Inclusive Skills and Employability) in the current academic year. While Ms. Priyasha, 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 five online courses on employability skills, each targeting the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students with disabilities respectively.

The courses offered during the academic year 2020-2021 include:

- 1. Personal Interview for the students of Semester V (19/08/2020 - 07/10/2020)**
- 2. Resume Building and English Conversational Skills for the students of Semester III (19/08/2020-23/09/2020)**
- 3. English Conversational Skills for the students of Semester I (20/01/2021-15/02/2021)**
- 4. Email Communication for the students of Semester IV (20/01/2021-12/03/2021)**
- 5. Success at Workplace for the students of Semester VI (20/01/2021-12/03/2021).**

The said courses were offered through WhatsApp study group, wherein students were provided with the reading material in accessible medium instantaneously.

The coordinators of Equal Opportunity Cell and Enabling Unit wish to place on record their sincere appreciation for the committee members and other co-opted members for their cooperation throughout the year in translating our goals into concrete actions. None of the events briefly highlighted above would have been possible without the kind assistance, wise guidance and the firm support of our Principal. The Equal Opportunity Cell

and the Enabling Unit owe special thanks to the office of the Principal and other administrative staff.

Ms. Dolly Jain

Dr. BR. Alamelu

Convener

Coordinator

Equal Opportunity Cell

Enabling Unit