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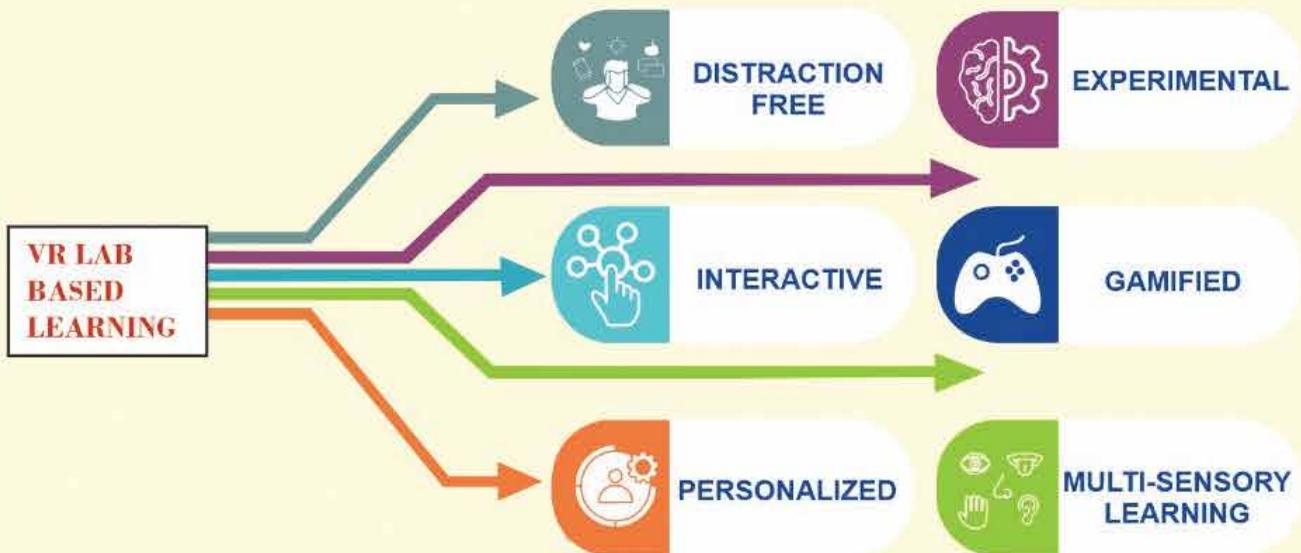
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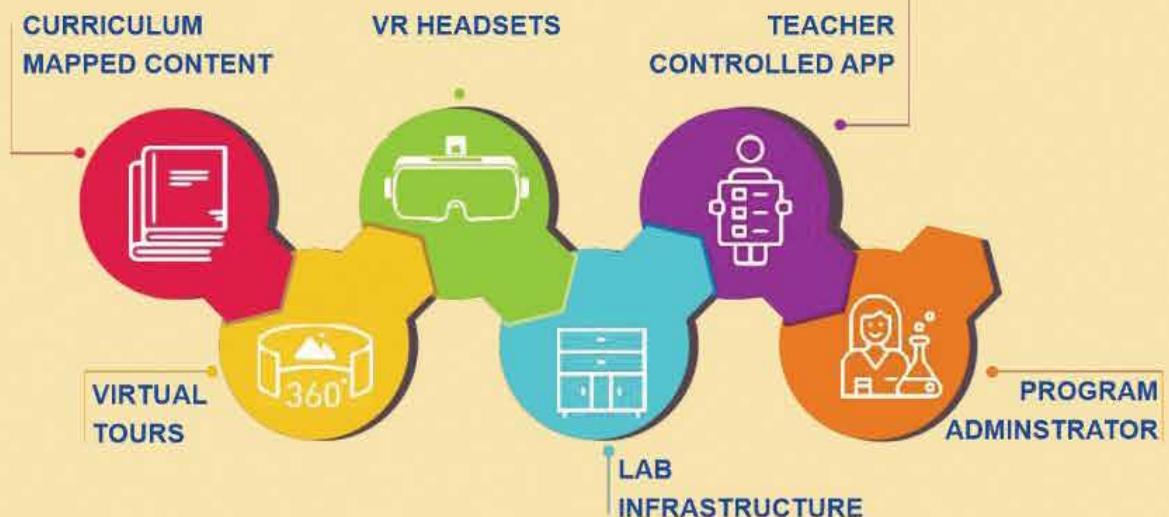


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Editor

Dayan Hyanes

Sales & Marketing

magazine@indian-preneur.com

Editorial Enquiry

magazine@indian-preneur.com

Branding & Marketing Partnership

Anria Luisa

Ethan

Saif Khan

Shruti Kumari

Harshavardhan Yeddula

Art & Design

Manjunath R

Asia-Pacific

Bangalore, Karnataka, India



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PIONEERING INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

India stands at a pivotal moment in its higher education journey. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has set ambitious goals for transforming universities into vibrant hubs of innovation, inclusivity, and global relevance. Yet, policies alone cannot bring this vision to life without the driving force of exceptional leadership. This issue celebrates the extraordinary Vice-Chancellors/ Pro Vice-Chancellors whose foresight, resilience, and progressive mindset are reshaping India's academic landscape and charting a path for future generations.

The leaders we feature embody the essence of what it means to be visionary in today's complex educational ecosystem. Their commitment transcends routine administration; instead, these Vice-Chancellors / Pro Vice-Chancellors are catalysts for change who inspire faculty, ignite student potential, and nurture ecosystems that thrive on interdisciplinary learning and cutting-edge research.

Among the luminaries is **Dr. Amit Ganatra** of **Parul University**, celebrated for nurturing a culture of innovation that bridges academia with real-world industry challenges. Through strategic partnerships and a relentless pursuit of excellence, Dr. Ganatra's leadership has elevated Parul into a dynamic institute recognized internationally.

Dr. M. A. Shekhar at **Adichunchunagiri University**, known for grassroots engagement and fostering research with societal relevance, has championed inclusive policies that extend educational opportunities beyond conventional boundaries, creating a more equitable learning environment.

Dr. Muddu Vinay of **ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education** has been a torchbearer for integrating technology and entrepreneurship into education, preparing students for a rapidly evolving

global marketplace with flexible and industry-relevant programs.

At **SAM Global University**, **Dr. Naresh Kumar's** visionary approach to governance and curriculum innovation has enabled the institution to rapidly ascend in quality benchmarks while emphasizing sustainability and student well-being.

Leading **Apex Professional University**, **Dr. Naseer Ahmed** blends academic rigor with administrative acumen, driving robust faculty development initiatives and championing the seamless adoption of hybrid teaching models that cater to diverse student needs.

Dr. Parag at **PP Savani University** is recognized for fostering international collaborations and research excellence, propelling students and faculty into global networks that enhance academic and cultural exchange.

Finally, **Dr. Parma Nand** of **Sharda University** exemplifies transformative leadership through dynamic curriculum reforms, digital learning advancements, and a strong commitment to societal impact, mentoring the next generation of scholars and innovators.

Together, these leaders embody the spirit of leadership that India's higher education sector desperately needs: adaptive, inclusive, and future-focused. They illustrate that visionary leadership is not a title but a continuous journey of learning, unlearning, and leading with empathy.

As you explore their stories in this issue, you will discover pathways of innovation, inspiration, and impact that define the future of Indian higher education. Their journeys remind us that the strength of an institution lies not just in its infrastructure but in the passion and purpose its leaders bring every day.

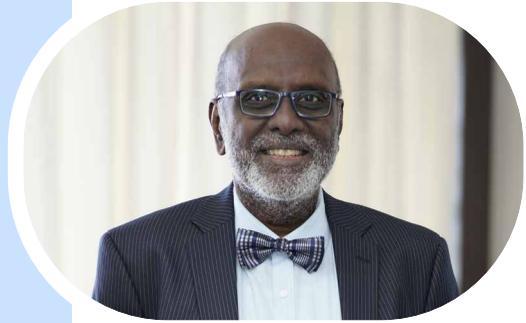


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TUMKUR
UNIVERSITY

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CONTRIBUTORY ARTICLE



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Dr. Rini

PhD (Marketing Management, IoT)
| MBA (Gold Medallist), Panjab University

**SMART CAMPUSES:
TRANSFORMATION THROUGH AUTOMATION**

Supriyo Chowdhury
Technology Leader - AI & Product Practice |
Speaker, Mentor & Author
**RESILIENCE IS THE NEW STRATEGY:
THRIVING THROUGH CONTINUOUS CHANGE
IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

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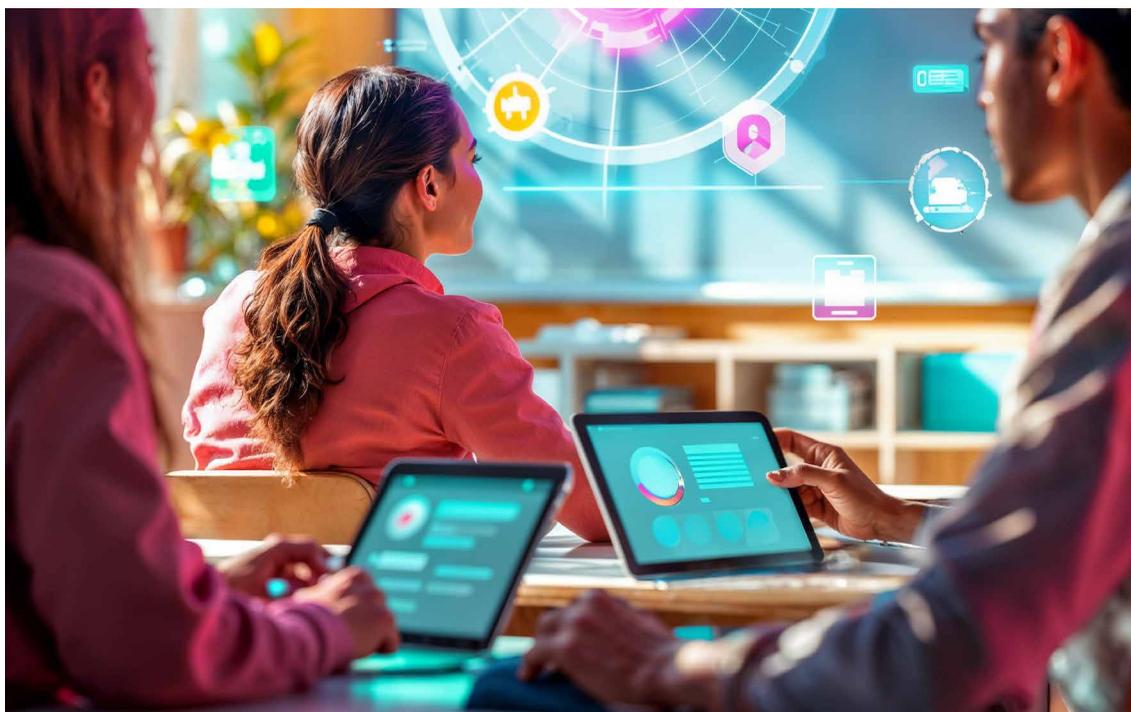
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THE MODERN LEADER



In Asia, the **National University of Singapore (NUS)** has created a climate-smart campus using IoT-based systems for smart cooling, lighting, and air quality monitoring. These systems have helped the university achieve **20% energy savings** across its academic buildings. Meanwhile, **Stanford University** has implemented a smart central energy facility and real-time dashboards, projected to save **\$420 million over 35 years**, while cutting carbon emissions by 68% and water use by **18%**. The **University of Melbourne** has leveraged digital twins and AI-powered analytics to save **\$2 million annually** and reduce energy use by **20%**, on track to meet its **net-zero emissions goal by 2030**.

Campuses rely on solutions like **Siemens' Desigo CC**, **Honeywell Forge**, **Schneider Electric's EcoStruxure**, **Cisco's IoT platforms** and **BuildTrack's Digital Twin Platforms** to manage and optimize their resources to deliver better safety, security and conveniences all with lower energy and resource consumption. **Intelligent infrastructure is not just futuristic—it's practical and profitable.**

BuildTrack, which has innovated its Digital Twin Platform for management of campus infrastructure is an Indian leader in smart automation. which has integrated **IoT and AI based lighting and HVAC control, centralized management** of all building

assets and systems and **monitoring of energy performance**. These technologies align with national goals like the **Smart Cities Mission** and **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which are aimed at helping institutions cut costs while enhancing the quality of campus life. In India institutions like **IIT Hyderabad**, **BITS Pilani**, **Ahmedabad University**, and **Vellore Institute of Technology (VIT)** are already moving down this path and beginning to integrate smart automation into their infrastructure. to improve sustainability and efficiency.

The impact is backed by data. **Gartner** reports that smart automation can reduce campus energy costs by **30–40%**, improve space utilization by **15–25%**, and cut water consumption by **20–30%**. **Deloitte** notes that institutions investing in smart infrastructure see ROI within five years and up to **35% operational savings**. **KPMG's Global Education Survey 2023** found that **89% of universities** using smart systems reported positive **environmental impact**.

In conclusion, as universities reap the rewards of smart technologies, **India must accelerate its adoption**. With indigenous innovators like **BuildTrack** and the right policy support, Indian campuses can lead the way—**becoming smarter, greener, and more resilient** for the future of education.

RESILIENCE IS THE NEW STRATEGY: THRIVING THROUGH CONTINUOUS CHANGE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

WORDS BY
SUPRIYO CHOWDHURY

Introduction: When Change Becomes the Only Constant

Higher education has always evolved—slowly, deliberately, and often conservatively. But today, the sector is operating in a world where change no longer arrives in cycles. It is continuous, disruptive, and deeply intertwined with technology, workforce expectations, economic pressures and societal

shifts. This relentless pace has rendered traditional strategic planning—usually built on predictable five-year roadmaps—insufficient.

In this environment, resilience has emerged not just as a virtue, but as the new strategy.

Resilience is not simply the ability to “bounce back” after disruption. In higher education, it means absorbing shocks, adapting quickly and using

SUPRIYO CHOWDHURY

**TECHNOLOGY LEADER - AI &
PRODUCT PRACTICE | SPEAKER,
MENTOR & AUTHOR**

Supriyo Chowdhury is a Technology Leader in AI and engineering practice, Product & Program Management and Digital Transformation across India, USA, UK, and the Philippines. He has led multi-billion-dollar AI and Cloud transformation programs across four continents, built and scaled high-impact teams in six countries. Currently as Associate Director at Concentrix, he heads the Salesforce Practice & Centre of Excellence for global strategic accounts. Previously, he held leadership roles at Amazon, Accenture and Wipro.

Beyond his corporate role, he is doctoral scholar in Strategy and Innovation, an avid reader, mentor, speaker and author. His last article published in iTech magazine, “How IT will look in 2030”, addresses the intersection of AI ethics, workforce transformation, and human potential. He has spoken at major industry forums such as Agile Network India, DigitalConfex 3rd IT Conference, Salesforce Trailblazer Group and PMI forums.



change as a catalyst for innovation rather than a threat to stability. It is a mindset, a capability, and ultimately a competitive advantage.

From shifting enrolment patterns to AI-driven learning, from geopolitical complexity to the expectations of digital-native learners, universities today operate at the intersection of multiple transformations. Institutions that recognize resilience as a strategic asset are not just surviving—they are thriving through continuous change.

The Unprecedented Pressures Facing Higher Education

Higher education is navigating a landscape that is reshaping everything from curriculum design to operational sustainability. Some of the key forces include:

1. The Enrolment Cliff

Many regions are experiencing demographic declines, creating a shrinking pool of college-age students. This “enrolment cliff” is forcing institutions to rethink how they attract, retain and support diverse learners of all ages.

2. Rapid Technological Disruption

Artificial intelligence, automation, virtual reality and adaptive learning platforms are redefining how students learn, how faculty teach, and how universities operate. The pressure to keep up with technological change is immense.

3. Shifting Workforce Demands

Employers today value skills over degrees. Micro-credentials, nanodegrees and specialized certifications—often delivered by non-traditional players—are reshaping the credentialing landscape. Universities must prove their relevance in the skills economy.

4. Financial Instability

Public funding fluctuations, high operational costs and growing student debt place financial stress on institutions. Several smaller colleges are merging or closing altogether.

5. Student Expectations for Experience and Support

Modern learners expect universities to operate with the speed, personalization and digital sophistication of consumer tech companies. Their expectations are evolving faster than institutional processes.

6. Global Competition

Education is now borderless. Online platforms, global campuses and international institutions are competing not just for students but for faculty, research grants and industry partnerships.

These pressures demand more than incremental improvement. They require institutional resilience—a capacity to evolve while preserving the core mission of education.



Why Resilience Is the New Strategy

Traditional strategy focuses on prediction—forecasting trends and planning around them. But continuous change makes prediction unreliable. Resilience, in contrast, focuses on preparation, adaptability, and long-term sustainability.

1. Resilience Enables Agility

Institutions that adopt resilient mindsets can pivot faster—whether in curriculum updates, technology deployment, or student support models.

2. Resilience Encourages Innovation

Rather than reacting to crises, resilient universities proactively experiment with new teaching models, partnerships, and revenue streams.

3. Resilience Strengthens Institutional Identity

When an institution knows its core values, it can evolve without losing its essence. Resilience aligns transformation with purpose.

4. Resilience Builds Trust

Students, faculty and communities place more trust in institutions that respond effectively and compassionately during change.

5. Resilience Protects Long-Term Sustainability

By creating systems that adapt to uncertainty, institutions safeguard their future—even when disruption is unpredictable.

In short, in a world where change is the norm, resilience becomes the most durable strategy.

Building the Resilient University: Five Pillars That Matter

Universities that thrive in continuous change do not rely on luck. They intentionally cultivate resilience across their systems, culture, and leadership. Five pillars define truly resilient institutions.

1. Strategic Agility: Planning That Moves as Fast as the World

The old model—five-year strategic plans with static

goals—is increasingly obsolete. Resilient universities practice dynamic strategy, characterized by:

- Shorter planning cycles
- Real-time data-driven decision-making
- Scenario planning and stress testing
- Rapid experimentation and “fail-forward” learning
- Cross-functional task forces for emerging challenges

During the pandemic, institutions that already had scenario-based planning adapted faster shifting to online learning, rethinking campus operations, and maintaining academic continuity with minimal disruption.

Agility is no longer a temporary solution; it is a permanent strategic capability.

2. Digital Transformation That Enhances Human Learning

Digital transformation is often misunderstood as a technology upgrade. Resilient universities recognize it as a value upgrade, a shift in culture, pedagogy and operations.

Three types of digital transformation matter most:

a. Academic Transformation

- AI-enabled tutoring and assessment
- Virtual and augmented reality for immersive labs
- Personalized learning pathways
- Hybrid and multimodal classrooms

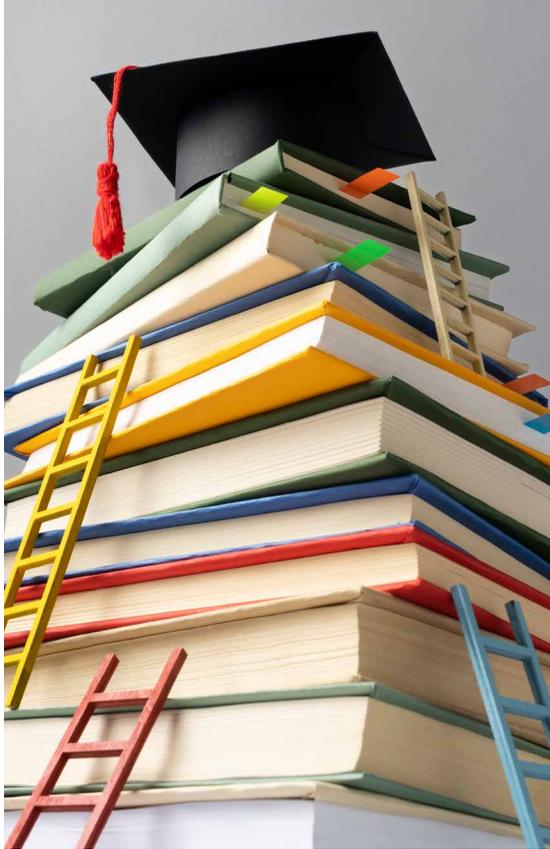
b. Operational Transformation

- Cloud-native systems for scalability
- Process automation to improve efficiency
- Data analytics to enhance decision-making

c. Student Experience Transformation

- Unified digital platforms for services
- Digital advising and mental health support
- Predictive analytics for student success

Technology does not replace educators—it augments their impact. The resilient university uses technology to enhance human connection, not diminish it.



3. A Culture of Continuous Learning: Faculty, Students, and Leaders Evolve Together

Resilience thrives in cultures where learning never stops.

For Faculty

Reskilling and upskilling are essential:

- Training in AI tools
- Curriculum redesign for skills-first learning
- Digital pedagogy certification
- Cross-disciplinary collaboration
- Faculty are no longer just subject matter experts—they are learning architects.

For Students

Students must learn resilience as a core competency:

- Adaptability
- Critical thinking
- Digital fluency
- Interdisciplinary problem-solving
- Emotional and social intelligence
- These skills prepare learners not just for jobs,

but for lifelong employability.

For Leaders

Resilient leadership requires:

- Clear communication
- Data-informed decision-making

- Empathy
- Collaboration with external ecosystems
- Courage to drive transformation despite uncertainty

When leaders model learning, resilience spreads organically.

4. Ecosystem Partnerships: Expanding Beyond the Campus Walls

No university can survive alone in a world of continuous change. Resilient institutions build networks of industry, government, technology providers, community partners, and global academic alliances.

- These partnerships create value by:
- Updating curriculum based on real-world needs
- Co-developing research and innovation
- Providing internships and apprenticeships
- Offering industry-grade technology access
- Enabling global mobility and exchange programs
- Creating alternative revenue streams

The university of the future is open, connected, and collaborative.

5. Student-Centricity: Support, Belonging, and Well-Being at the Core

A resilient institution prioritizes student well-being—academic, emotional, financial, and career-related.

Key components include:

- Mental health services integrated with digital platforms
- Predictive analytics for early intervention
- Personalized career pathways
- Financial aid optimization
- Accessible learning resources
- Belonging initiatives for diverse and underrepresented groups

Resilience is not just operational—it is human. When students feel supported, the entire institution becomes stronger.

From Surviving to Thriving: Stories of Resilient Institutions

Across the world, several universities have embraced resilience as strategy—and transformed themselves.

1. The Hybrid University Movement

Institutions that invested early in blending physical and digital education saw higher retention rates and global enrolment growth post-pandemic.

2. AI-Enabled Learning Platforms

Universities adopting AI tutors and analytics have reduced dropout rates and improved learning outcomes by predicting which students need support.

3. Community and Industry-Driven Learning Models

Schools collaborating with industry have produced job-ready graduates at scale, addressing employer needs and enhancing institutional relevance.

4. Global Partnerships

Cross-border collaborations have enabled universities to deliver micro-credentials, global classrooms, and research ecosystems—even in resource-constrained environments.

These success stories show that resilience is not theoretical—it is practical, powerful, and transformative.

Embedding Resilience into the DNA of Higher Education

Resilience must evolve from a reaction to crisis into a **foundational operating principle**. This requires systemic shifts:

1. Governance That Welcomes Adaptation

Decision-making structures should empower rapid responses—not create bottlenecks.

2. Funding Models That Encourage Innovation

Flexible budgeting, revenue diversification, and impact-based investments strengthen agility.

3. Policy Frameworks That Embrace New Learning Models

Governments and accreditors must support micro-credentials, lifelong learning, and hybrid credentials.

4. Technology Infrastructure Built for Scale

Cloud-first ecosystems, secure data platforms, and AI-integrated tools must become standard.

5. Transparent Communication

Open dialogue with faculty, staff and students builds trust during transitions.

When resilience permeates governance, culture, and operations, institutions become future proof.

Resilience as a Leadership Mindset

The future of higher education will be shaped less by technology and more by leadership mindset.

Resilient leaders are:

- **Empathetic** - understanding the emotional impact of change
- **Decisive** - taking informed action despite uncertainty
- **Collaborative** - building alliances internally and externally
- **Innovative** - willing to experiment and iterate
- **Purpose-driven** - anchoring decisions in mission and values

Such leaders turn disruption into opportunity.

Conclusion: Resilience Is Not Optional—It Is the Path Forward

In times of continuous change, institutions that cling to tradition risk becoming obsolete. But those that cultivate resilience can transform unpredictability into possibility.

Higher education stands at a defining moment. The challenges are real—financial pressures, technological shifts, demographic changes, and rising student expectations. Yet the opportunity is greater: to reimagine what education can be for the next century.

Resilience is the new strategy not because it protects the institution, but because it empowers it to thrive, to innovate, to lead, and to create meaningful impact in a world that needs learning more than ever.

The universities that embrace resilience will not merely survive disruption; they will shape the future of global education.



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LEADERSHIP TRENDS 2025

As we head deeper into 2025, the landscape of leadership is undergoing rapid transformation. The leaders who will shape the future are no longer just traditional commanders but visionary enablers of change. Amid global uncertainties, technological revolutions, and evolving workforce expectations, leadership has pivoted toward being deeply human, highly adaptive, and tech-savvy.

What's Hot?

a. Human-Centered Leadership and Emotional Intelligence

Empathy remains king in 2025 leadership. Organizations have recognized that emotional intelligence, the ability to understand and respond to the emotions of others, is not merely a soft skill but a crucial driver of employee engagement, mental well-being, and productivity. Leaders focused on cultivating trust, compassion, and effective communication create workplaces where innovation and collaboration thrive. The pandemic years amplified the need for a supportive, human-centered approach, and this trend continues to gather momentum as the foundation for sustainable leadership success.

b. Tech-Savvy and Data-Driven Leadership

Far from being at odds with human-centric leadership, technology adoption has become integral to effective leadership in 2025. Artificial intelligence (AI), big data, and automation tools enable leaders to make smarter, faster decisions, optimizing workflows and anticipating market changes with predictive analytics. Today's visionary leaders are fluent in digital literacy, leveraging AI to automate routine tasks, personalize team interactions, and gain deep insights from vast

data. This integration sharply contrasts with outdated notions of leadership based solely on instinct or hierarchical authority.

c. Agility and Adaptability: The New Norm

In an era where change is the only constant, agility has emerged as a non-negotiable leadership trait. Leaders must pivot quickly in response to economic shifts, geopolitical uncertainties, and technological disruptions. Agility means more than reacting, it requires foresightedness and strategic flexibility, empowering teams to experiment, iterate, and innovate in real time. Hybrid and remote work models further demand flexible leadership styles that nurture trust and maintain connectivity across diverse, distributed workforces.

What's Not?

a. Command-and-Control Leadership

Top-down, rigid leadership models are rapidly losing ground. Employees and stakeholders expect transparency, inclusivity, and empowerment. Drone-like execution of orders with little room for collaboration or creative problem-solving is increasingly seen as outdated and ineffective. Leaders who fail to embrace evolving expectations risk losing talent and relevance. The rise of participative and servant leadership styles demonstrates that the real power lies in inspiring and enabling others rather than issuing commands.

b. Purpose-Driven and Ethical Leadership

Looking ahead, leadership in 2025 and beyond must go beyond profit motives to embed social responsibility and ethics at their core. With growing awareness about climate change, social equity, and corporate governance, visionary leaders are

embracing sustainability as a strategic imperative. Purpose-driven leadership mobilizes teams through meaningful missions connecting business success with positive societal impact. This trend signals an important shift toward value-based leadership that inspires loyalty among customers, employees, and communities.

c. The Hybrid Leadership Challenge

As organizations settle into hybrid work cultures, leaders face the challenge of balancing flexibility with performance. Effective hybrid leadership requires mastering new communication technologies and creating inclusive cultures where remote and onsite employees feel equally valued. Leaders must cultivate resilience and emotional intelligence to manage the ambiguity and social nuances of increasingly virtual workplaces.

d. Leadership Lifelines

Finally, the most successful leaders in 2025 will be lifelong learners, always evolving their skills and perspectives. Rapid technological advances require constant reskilling, and the most adaptable leaders foster cultures of curiosity and continuous improvement. Collaboration, across departments, industries, and borders, has become essential for driving innovation and solving complex challenges. In a globally connected economy, leadership is fundamentally a collective endeavor.

In Conclusion

Leadership in 2025 is a rich blend of heart and mind, technology and empathy, agility and purpose. The leaders who thrive will be those who inspire, empower, and innovate while staying grounded in ethical values and human connection. As we celebrate India's most visionary leaders and venture capitalists in this special issue, it is clear that tomorrow's leadership is about inclusivity, adaptability, and the courage to forge new paths, both in boardrooms and communities alike.





INDIA'S MOST VISIONARY VICE-CHANCELLORS AND PRO VICE-CHANCELLORS 2025

Charting the Future

As India strides confidently toward becoming a global knowledge powerhouse, visionary leadership in higher education emerges as a cornerstone of this transformation. In this special issue, we proudly present “India’s Most Visionary Vice-Chancellors and Pro Vice-Chancellors 2025”, leaders who are not just administrators but pioneers shaping the future of education amid rapid social, technological, and policy shifts.

The selection of these exemplary Vice-Chancellors /Pro Vice-Chancellors was a rigorous process guided by comprehensive parameters designed to spotlight true visionaries. At the heart of our shortlisting was the commitment to educational excellence aligned with innovation and social impact. We considered leaders who have demonstrated exceptional capability in academic governance, holistic institutional development, and a forward-looking approach grounded in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Key parameters included:

- **Leadership Acumen and Strategic Vision:** Candidates were identified based on their proven track record of steering universities toward academic distinction while embracing future-ready curricula, research excellence, and global collaborations.
- **Governance and Ethical Standards:** Transparency, inclusivity, and integrity in institutional management were paramount. We valued leaders who foster environments

of trust and collective growth among faculty, students, and stakeholders.

- **Innovation and Adaptability:** In an era marked by fluid challenges, visionary VCs showcased agility, championing interdisciplinary programs, digital transformation, and inclusive education models that prepare students for a dynamic future.

- **Social Responsibility and Impact:** Beyond academic metrics, we looked at how these leaders embed societal relevance into university missions, addressing access, equity, sustainability, and community engagement with measurable outcomes.

- **Alignment with National and Global Education Trends:** Our selection echoed the aspirations of NEP 2020 and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, spotlighting those who align their leadership to national priorities and global best practices.

This judicious combination of parameters ensures that our list features Vice-Chancellors/Pro Vice-Chancellors who are trailblazers in educational leadership, inspiring peers and communities alike. Their stories exemplify how visionary leadership can reimagine and elevate Indian higher education to new heights.

As you explore this issue, you will encounter nuanced narratives of innovation, resilience, and commitment. These leaders exemplify a harmonious blend of tradition and modernity, setting benchmarks for transformative change. Join us in celebrating their journeys and the future they are crafting for India’s academic landscape.

INDIA'S MOST
VISIONARY VCs
AND PRO VCs 2025

Leading with Purpose: Vision for a Future-Ready Dr. Amit Ganatra Provost (Vice-Chancellor) Parul University



In an era where higher education is rapidly evolving, **Dr. (Prof.) Amit Ganatra**, Provost of **Parul University**, stands out as a dynamic academic leader shaping a student-centric, innovation-driven, and globally aligned university ecosystem. With a career dedicated to empowering learners, building institutional excellence, and reimagining education for the 21st century, Dr. Ganatra is charting a transformative course for Parul University and Indian higher education at large.

Inspiration and Drive: Educating with Purpose

Dr. Ganatra's journey into academic leadership is deeply rooted in a **passion for shaping future generations** and transforming educational ecosystems. He believes that higher education is not merely a gateway to employment but a **catalyst for societal progress**. His energy is fueled by the impact he can create: **enabling student success, fostering innovation, and positioning Parul University on the global academic map.**

His driving force lies in a singular vision—**building a university**



that addresses real-world challenges, cultivates talent, and produces graduates who are not only industry-ready but also responsible global citizens.

A Leadership Style that Evolves with Vision

Dr. Ganatra describes his leadership as **collaborative, transformational, and empowering**. Over the years, he has transitioned from a directive leadership approach to a **facilitative style that emphasizes decentralization, trust, and shared vision**. By involving faculty, staff, and students in strategic planning, he ensures that Parul's growth is inclusive and responsive to the changing educational landscape.

He places great emphasis on **strategic foresight, stakeholder engagement, and agility**—traits that are now essential in navigating rapid shifts in technology, industry demands, and student aspirations.

Guiding Values: The Pillars of Purposeful Leadership

Dr. Ganatra's decisions as a university leader are

Parul University is rapidly becoming a technology-integrated academic institution under Dr. Ganatra's guidance. With AI/ML labs, IoT, cloud computing, and data science embedded into curricula, the university is preparing students for the digital economy.

anchored in a strong set of values:

- **Student-Centricity:** Placing learner needs and outcomes at the heart of every initiative.
- **Academic Excellence:** Maintaining high standards in teaching and research.
- **Innovation & Agility:** Encouraging experimentation and rapid adaptation.
- **Integrity & Ethics:** Ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability.
- **Inclusivity & Access:** Promoting diversity and equal opportunities.
- **Industry & Societal Relevance:** Aligning education with the needs of the market and community.

Transforming Institutions Through Innovation Under Dr. Ganatra's leadership, Parul University has implemented several transformative initiatives:

- **Modernizing the curriculum** to ensure industry alignment and skill-based education.
- Expanding **research infrastructure, PhD programs**, and establishing Centers of Excellence.
- Rolling out a **robust internationalization strategy**, including global partnerships, joint degrees, and exchange programs.
- Embracing **large-scale digital transformation** across all academic and administrative functions.
- Strengthening **industry-academia partnerships**

to provide students with real-world learning, incubation support, and career readiness.

Global Standards, Local Relevance: A Student-First Approach

For Dr. Ganatra, **student-centricity isn't just a principle—it's a practice.** Through continuous feedback from students, alumni, and industry leaders, Parul's programs are constantly refined to meet evolving needs. The university has implemented **Outcome-Based Education (OBE)** and international benchmarking across curricula, faculty development, and research.

At the core lies a focus on **holistic development**—nurturing soft skills, entrepreneurial mindset, digital literacy, and global exposure to create well-rounded, future-ready graduates.

Nurturing Faculty and Driving Research Innovation

A firm believer in faculty empowerment, Dr. Ganatra has institutionalized:

- **Mandatory Faculty Development Programs (FDPs)**, workshops, and global training opportunities.
- **Incentive structures for research, patents, and high-impact publications.**
- **Reduced teaching loads for research-active**





- **faculty**, enabling deeper academic inquiry.
- **Seed funding and interdisciplinary research clusters** to spur collaboration and innovation.
- **Mentorship programs** and recognition platforms to celebrate teaching and research excellence.

Technology as a Growth Engine

Parul University is rapidly becoming a **technology-integrated academic institution** under Dr. Ganatra’s guidance. With AI/ML labs, IoT, cloud computing, and data science embedded into curricula, the university is preparing students for the digital economy.

AR/VR-enhanced classrooms, smart labs, simulation tools, and widespread use of **Learning Management Systems (LMS)** are creating immersive learning environments. Strategic partnerships with leading tech firms further ensure **industry-aligned, certification-driven skill development**.

Challenges and Opportunities: The Road Ahead

Dr. Ganatra identifies the biggest challenge for Indian higher education as ensuring equitable access while maintaining relevance in a tech-disrupted world. However, he remains optimistic. “India’s demographic dividend, policy reforms under NEP 2020, and digital readiness present a

historic opportunity to become a global hub for talent and innovation,” he shares.

A Legacy of Excellence and Impact

When asked about the legacy he wishes to leave behind, Dr. Ganatra is clear and compelling:

“I envision Parul University as a globally respected institution—renowned for academic excellence, cutting-edge research, graduate employability, and deep social impact.”

He aspires to cultivate a **self-sustaining ecosystem of innovation, entrepreneurship, and lifelong learning**, led by a globally competent faculty, and deeply connected with both **industry and community**. Above all, he hopes to set a benchmark for what **holistic, accessible, and transformative higher education** in India can look like.

Final Thoughts: A Model for Modern Indian Universities

Parul University’s unique strength lies in its **vibrant, multidisciplinary learning environment**, strong NEP 2020 implementation, and significant investments in infrastructure, community engagement, and research. Dr. Amit Ganatra’s leadership is turning this potential into reality, **redefining what a 21st-century university in India can achieve**.

INDIA'S MOST
VISIONARY VCs
AND PRO VCs 2025

Vision Rooted in Wisdom: The Transformative Leadership of **Dr. M. A. Shekar** Vice-Chancellor **Adichunchanagiri University**

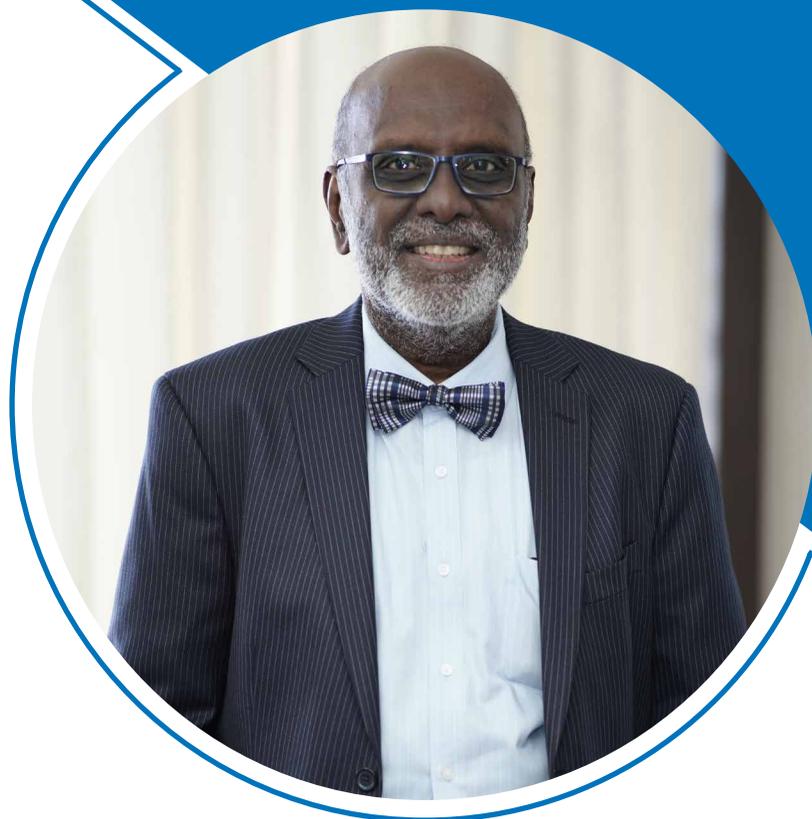


In the ever-evolving landscape of Indian higher education, few academic leaders bring together the clarity of purpose, deep spiritual grounding, and strategic foresight as effectively as **Dr. M. A. Shekar**, Vice-Chancellor of **Adichunchanagiri University**. Under his stewardship, the university has emerged as a beacon of academic innovation, rooted in values and committed to societal transformation.

A Purpose-Driven Journey into Academic Leadership

“My journey is about the pursuit of knowledge, service, and academic leadership,” says Dr. Shekar. With a background in science and medicine, his commitment to education has been lifelong, driven by the goal of shaping young minds and building institutions that impact society meaningfully.

As the Vice-Chancellor of Adichunchanagiri University, he draws constant inspiration from the university’s Chancellor, **His Holiness Jagadguru Sri Sri Sri Dr. Nirmalanandanatha Mahaswamiji**. “Our institution integrates spiritual wisdom with scientific progress. This blend helps shape not just careers, but characters,” he shares.



“I have felt the transformative power of education in influencing institutional growth and shaping future generations.”

Leadership Grounded in Ethics and Empowerment

Dr. Shekar describes his leadership style as **consultative, purpose-driven, and grounded in institutional ethics**. From day one, he has prioritized active listening, leading by example, and participatory decision-making.

Over time, his style has evolved to become more agile and data-informed, keeping pace with technological shifts and changing stakeholder expectations. “I empower faculty and students alike while ensuring we maintain accountability and a focus on continuous improvement,” he explains.

Values That Guide Every Decision

At the heart of Dr. Shekar’s leadership philosophy lie three core values: **Excellence, Empathy, and Integrity**.

“Education must be both ethical and equitable. Producing competent graduates is not enough—we must cultivate responsible, compassionate citizens.”

He ensures all initiatives, whether academic or administrative, reflect these principles. Through **transparent**

Adichunchanagiri University is uniquely positioned at the confluence of spiritual grounding and academic excellence. Our strength lies in our community-oriented vision, rooted in the values of Dharma and Seva. We welcome collaborations that help build a just, enlightened, and self-reliant society



systems, inclusive practices, and a relentless pursuit of quality, he has created a culture where values and vision go hand in hand.

Driving Transformation: Impactful Initiatives Under Dr. Shekar's Leadership

Since taking charge, Dr. Shekar has spearheaded several transformative initiatives:

- **Seamless implementation of NEP 2020** with flexible, multidisciplinary learning pathways.
- Establishment of the **Centre for Rural Health Innovation** and expansion of **mobile health units**.
- **International collaborations** and **MoUs** to enhance research and exchange opportunities.
- Introduction of **interdisciplinary programs** like AI in Medicine and Digital Health.
- Digitization of workflows and launch of a **Learning Management System (LMS)**.
- Strengthened **industry-academia linkages** to boost research and employability.

“Our programs align with national priorities and global standards. Transformation for us means relevance, responsiveness, and responsibility.”

A Student-Centric Vision with Global Outlook

- At Adichunchanagiri University, **students remain**

at the center of every policy and program. Dr. Shekar ensures this through:

- **Mentorship programs** and **career readiness workshops**.
- **Entrepreneurship cells** encourage real-world innovation.
- Flexible and **skill-based curricula**, aligned with international standards.
- **Feedback mechanisms** through IQAC for continuous student-centered improvement.

“We prepare students to thrive globally while remaining grounded in Indian values.”

Fueling Faculty Growth and Research Innovation

Recognizing that **faculty are the pillars of academic excellence**, Dr. Shekar has initiated:

- A **Faculty Research Incentive Scheme** to boost research output.
- Regular **Faculty Development Programs (FDPs)**.
- Formation of **innovation labs and Centers of Excellence** in areas such as medicine, agro-biotech, and indigenous knowledge systems.
- National and international collaborations that promote meaningful, interdisciplinary research.

“We’ve built a culture of inquiry, collaboration, and innovation—essential for institutional progress.”



Future Focused: Technology as a Catalyst

Preparing students for the future world of work is another key priority. The university has invested in:

- AI-enabled adaptive learning platforms, virtual labs, and digital assessments.
- Simulation labs, cybersecurity workshops, and coding bootcamps.
- Curriculum in emerging fields: AI, IoT, robotics, AR/VR, telemedicine, and more.
- Collaborations with EdTech platforms and startups to ensure applied, hands-on learning.

“Technology is not a tool—it’s a mindset. We aim to make every graduate digitally fluent and future-ready.”

Looking Ahead: Challenges and Opportunities

Dr. Shekar believes that the

biggest challenge for Indian higher education is balancing **quality with scale**, especially in rural regions. However, he sees tremendous opportunity in India’s **demographic dividend** and expanding **digital infrastructure**.

“By embracing digital inclusivity, global partnerships, and multidisciplinary learning, we can lead a new wave of innovation rooted in the Indian ethos.”

A Legacy of Impact and Integrity

When asked about the legacy he hopes to leave behind, Dr. Shekar speaks from the heart:

“I hope to be remembered for building a holistic, inclusive, and future-ready institution—where tradition meets innovation, where knowledge becomes wisdom, and where societal impact is as important as academic success.”

He envisions Adichunchanagiri

University as a hub of **academic excellence, ethical leadership, and social responsibility**—an institution that produces not just professionals, but changemakers.

Final Thoughts: Dharma, Seva, and a Shared Mission

Dr. Shekar closes with a powerful reminder of the university’s deeper mission:

“Adichunchanagiri University is uniquely positioned at the confluence of spiritual grounding and academic excellence. Our strength lies in our community-oriented vision, rooted in the values of Dharma and Seva. We welcome collaborations that help build a just, enlightened, and self-reliant society.”

“Our journey is guided by service to humanity. Compassion, competence, and community are our maha-mantras.”

Prof. Dr. Muddu Vinay

Founding Pro Vice-Chancellor ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, Bengaluru



Architect of Impact

A pro-vice-chancellor is a pivotal senior executive in any university, entrusted with translating strategy into daily operations while safeguarding academic quality, institutional growth, and fiscal discipline. The role also functions as the VC's chief deputy with university-wide purview, spanning academic planning, quality assurance, staffing, industry linkages, and governance.

At its best, the office demands a leadership temperament that is accessible to students and stakeholders, intellectually humble yet rigorous, candid about limitations, and adaptive enough to course-correct when realities shift.

Prof. (Dr.) Muddu Vinay, Founding Pro Vice Chancellor, ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education, Bengaluru, exemplifies this profile. A builder-leader with a record of launching and scaling higher-education initiatives to national and international accreditation standards, his journey ventures across domains of academics, administration, accreditation systems, HR development, people management and retention, and institution creation.



At IFHE Bengaluru, Dr. Vinay's mandate aligns squarely with the modern pro-VC brief, that is to engineer robust industry linkages, catalyzing collaborations with Indian and global partners, and operationalizing growth through team-led execution.

What first drew you to academic leadership, and what keeps you motivated as Pro Vice-Chancellor?

My path into academic leadership was shaped by a conviction that education can transform society. Early classroom experiences showed me its impact on individual lives; leadership revealed how that impact could scale across institutions and cultures. Today, the mission is clear: build a university that equips students with knowledge, ethics, creativity, and the resolve to tackle global challenges with purpose.

How would you define your leadership style, and how has it evolved?

It is visionary and collaborative, setting ambitious goals while engaging teams end-to-end. Over time, it has become more agile, blending data-informed insights with intuitive judgment and aligning traditional values

By investing in people and ideas, and specialized training, coupled with funded innovation grants, and options for global leave. A dedicated Innovation & IP unit established on our campus supports patents and practical translation, in turn, creating an ecosystem where research serves the greater good



with progressive innovation. Today, active listening and swift adaptation are its core.

As a leader, how do you “show the way” in practice?

By setting visible benchmarks and modeling the conduct expected of the team, because people emulate what leaders do. Exemplary actions create positive momentum and grow future leaders, while poor conduct is quickly copied, so striving for excellence in behavior is non-negotiable; excellence begets excellence.

What key values guide your decisions as a university leader?

Take on work for the greater good, not personal gain; let knowledge temper every task so the outcome enriches the community. Share credit generously, acknowledge those who enable success, and keep

motivation anchored in purpose rather than rewards.

What transformative initiatives have you led since taking charge as the Pro VC?

We launched interdisciplinary hubs in AI, environmental sustainability, and policy studies to spur cross-department collaboration, align scholarship with societal needs, and deliver practical outcomes. We also overhauled the curriculum to embed experiential learning, ethics, reasoning, and technological competencies across programs.

How do you keep the university student-centric while meeting global standards?

We center student voice through platforms like an Advisory Council for policy input and sustain global quality via international collaborations and certifications. Comprehensive

support also includes - wellness initiatives, career readiness, and skill-building workshops.

How do you promote faculty development and research innovation?

By investing in people and ideas, and specialized training, coupled with funded innovation grants, and options for global leave. A dedicated Innovation & IP unit established on our campus supports patents and practical translation, in turn, creating an ecosystem where research serves the greater good.

How are you leveraging technology to prepare students for future jobs?

By embedding tech across learning. From AI-driven personalization to VR-enabled labs, and even programs in data science, digital skills, and innovative problem-solving. Also, at IFHE we partner with leading tech firms, to power online internships and innovation challenges.

What legacy do you hope to leave at your university?

A university known for impact, not just metrics, where “graduates become catalysts for change,” research informs policy, and education uplifts marginalized communities. The aim is an institution defined by a bold vision, ethical practice, and a self-determined sense of success, so students “learn to lead their own lives before leading others.”



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Vice-Chancellors & Pro Vice-Chancellors as Change Agents

In the rapidly evolving landscape of Indian higher education, Vice-Chancellors (VCs) & Pro VCs have emerged as pivotal change agents driving transformative shifts in universities across the country. As torchbearers of institutional vision and governance, today's VCs are not just administrators but dynamic leaders charting new directions amid policy reforms, technological advancements, and socio-economic challenges.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 sets a bold agenda for multidisciplinary education, research excellence, digital integration, and equity in access, goals that demand visionary leadership at the helm. Vice-Chancellors are uniquely positioned to translate these mandates into actionable strategies that revamp curricula, foster faculty development, and stimulate innovative research ecosystems.

What distinguishes modern VCs is their ability to blend tradition with innovation. They uphold the values of academic rigor and ethical governance while catalyzing change through digital transformation and global collaborations. By creating inclusive, flexible learning environments, they enable universities to become agile institutions responsive to shifting global standards and local societal needs.

Beyond academic excellence, VCs serve as bridges between academia and industry, fostering partnerships that align education with employability and entrepreneurship. Many are championing sustainability and social responsibility, embedding these principles into university culture and community engagement.

The role of a Vice-Chancellor & Pro VCs today extends into managing diverse stakeholder expectations, from students and faculty to



policymakers and industry leaders. This requires exceptional emotional intelligence, collaborative leadership, and the courage to innovate amidst resistance. With new UGC guidelines aiming to broaden eligibility criteria and formalize transparent VC selection processes, the emphasis on merit-based and visionary appointments is set to strengthen institutional autonomy and quality.

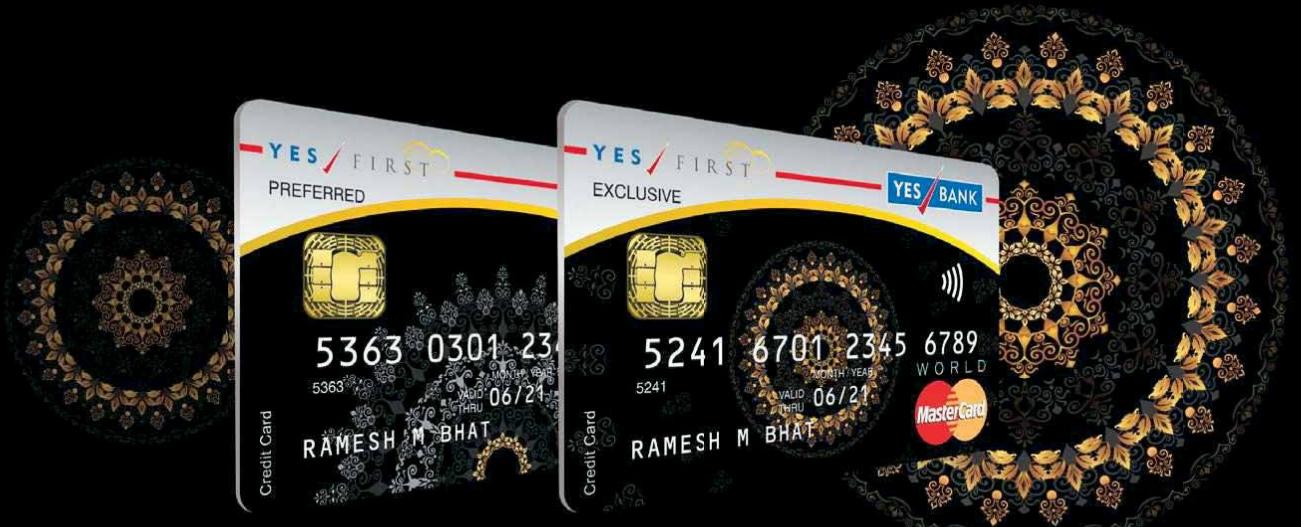
However, challenges such as political interference and governance bottlenecks persist, underscoring the need for continued reforms that protect academic independence while fostering accountability.

In summation, Vice-Chancellors & Pro Vice-Chancellors as change agents play an indispensable role in India's higher education renaissance. Their visionary leadership, strategic agility, and commitment to societal impact are driving universities to evolve from mere knowledge hubs into transformative forces shaping the nation's future.



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Vice-Chancellor

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What inspired your journey into academic leadership, and what continues to drive your passion as a Vice-Chancellor?

My journey into academic leadership was born out of a deep conviction that education has the transformative power to shape societies and empower individuals.

Having spent decades in research, technology, and higher education, I realized that leadership in academia is not about administration alone—it is about envisioning change and inspiring others to achieve it. What continues to drive my passion is witnessing students from diverse backgrounds discover their potential, innovate fearlessly, and become responsible citizens of a modern India.

How would you define your leadership style, and how has it evolved?

My leadership style is participative and transformational. I believe in empowering teams rather than commanding them. Over time, my approach has evolved from managing to mentoring—from focusing on processes to nurturing people. I encourage open dialogue, shared vision, and accountability. I've learned that true leadership lies in listening, empathizing, and enabling others



to shine while keeping the institution's long-term mission at the forefront.

What key values guide your decisions as a university leader?

My decisions are guided by integrity, inclusivity, innovation, and impact. Every decision must align with ethical principles and contribute positively to students, faculty, and society. I also place great emphasis on transparency and empathy—ensuring that every stakeholder feels heard and valued. For me, education without values is incomplete, and administration without compassion is ineffective.

What have been your most transformative initiatives since taking charge of your institution?

Since assuming leadership, several transformative initiatives have been implemented. We established interdisciplinary research centers, introduced digital learning ecosystems, launched an incubation hub for startups, and strengthened industry-academia partnerships. We have also focused on capacity building for teachers through regular

The biggest challenge lies in balancing access, equity, and excellence. Ensuring employability while maintaining academic depth is a complex task. However, the opportunity is equally immense. With NEP 2020, India can become a global education hub if we integrate technology, skill development, and value-based learning



FDPs and training in emerging technologies. Our community engagement programs and rural outreach initiatives have made education socially relevant and impactful.

How do you ensure your university remains student-centric while meeting global academic standards?

Student welfare is at the heart of our institutional framework. We have adopted outcome-based education (OBE) and competency-based assessment to ensure global quality benchmarks.

Simultaneously, mentorship cells, counseling support, and career guidance ensure that students feel personally supported. We benchmark our curricula with international universities and foster a learning environment that promotes both academic excellence and emotional well-being.

In what ways do you encourage faculty development and research innovation?

Faculty are the backbone of any academic institution. We have instituted continuous professional development programs, funded research projects, and international collaborations. Faculty members are encouraged to publish, patent, and present their research globally. We reward innovation and interdisciplinary work. Through exposure visits, seminars, and grants, we have built a culture where teaching and research reinforce each other.

How is your institution leveraging technology to prepare students for the jobs of the future?

Technology is at the core of our academic ecosystem. We have introduced AI, IoT, Data Analytics, and GIS in our curriculum. Smart classrooms, digital labs, and e-learning platforms enable blended learning. Our partnerships with industry leaders ensure real-world exposure. Through innovation labs and start-

up incubation, we're preparing students for future-ready careers driven by creativity, adaptability, and digital fluency.

What do you see as the biggest challenge and opportunity for Indian higher education in the next decade?

The biggest challenge lies in balancing access, equity, and excellence. Ensuring employability while maintaining academic depth is a complex task. However, the opportunity is equally immense. With NEP 2020, India can become a global education hub if we integrate technology, skill development, and value-based learning. The next decade will determine how effectively we transform our demographic dividend into a knowledge superpower.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind at your university?

I aspire to leave behind an institution recognized for excellence, empathy, and innovation—a university that nurtures both intellect and integrity. My dream is to see every graduate emerge as a global citizen rooted in Indian values. A research-driven, student-centric, and socially committed institution would be the true legacy I hope to build.

Is there anything additional that you want to highlight? Please share.

Education is the greatest tool of social transformation. At our university, we are deeply committed to the philosophy of 'Education for Transformation and Nation Building.' By aligning our vision with NEP 2020 and emphasizing research with social relevance, we are preparing youth to be innovators and nation-builders. The future of India depends on how we educate our young minds today—with knowledge, compassion, and creativity.



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The Modern Leader



In 2025, leadership is no longer just about having a compelling vision. The modern leader must master the delicate art of balancing visionary foresight with flawless execution in an increasingly complex and fast-changing world. As technological innovation accelerates and markets become more unpredictable, leaders are faced with the dual challenge of charting bold futures while navigating the present with agility and precision.

Vision as the North Star

At its core, leadership begins with a clear, inspiring vision, a long-term picture of where an organization aims to be and the impact it will create. However, in 2025, vision must be much more than a statement on paper or a lofty ideal. It is a decision-making compass that guides every

action and investment. Modern leaders craft visions collaboratively, engaging diverse teams and stakeholders to build shared ownership. This collective buy-in transforms vision from abstract aspiration into a living, breathing guide for all initiatives.

A well-framed vision is also deeply aligned with purpose, addressing not only business goals but societal and environmental responsibilities. Whether it is sustainable growth, technological innovation, or social impact, today's leaders must ensure their vision resonates broadly to inspire and engage internal teams and external partners alike.

The Execution Imperative: From Idea to Impact

Despite the vital role of vision, execution is where leadership's true test lies. Research increasingly

shows that many organizations stumble not for lack of vision, but due to poor implementation. Execution requires translating big ideas into actionable steps, aligning resources, and establishing clear priorities that link back to the overall vision.

In today's dynamic environment, execution can no longer rely on rigid plans or top-down mandates. Instead, leaders foster flexibility, encouraging experimentation, rapid learning, and agile responses to emerging data or market shifts. This iterative approach allows organizations to course-correct in real-time, turning setbacks into valuable insights and adapting strategies as conditions evolve.

Leaders also embed performance metrics and feedback loops that tie daily activities to strategic goals. This makes progress measurable and keeps teams motivated by showing the tangible value of their efforts.

Integrating Technology and Human-Centered Leadership

Technology is both a driver of disruptive change and a powerful ally in execution. Modern leaders leverage artificial intelligence, analytics, and digital tools not just to automate tasks but to enhance decision-making and unlock new opportunities. Data-driven leadership enables timely insights into customer behavior, operational efficiency, and market trends, fueling smarter strategies and sharper competitive advantage.

Yet technology alone is not enough. Exceptional leaders balance digital fluency with emotional intelligence, cultivating trust, empathy, and collaboration across diverse, often distributed teams. They recognize that engaged, motivated people remain the most critical asset in turning vision into reality.

Agility: The Hallmark of Successful Leadership

Change is the new constant. Whether due to geopolitical shifts, technological breakthroughs,

or evolving customer preferences, leaders must keep their organizations nimble. Agility is more than speed; it is the capacity to anticipate trends, prepare for multiple futures, and pivot quickly without losing sight of core values and purpose.

This means empowering frontline employees, embracing decentralization, and fostering a culture where innovation and risk-taking are rewarded. In such ecosystems, leadership is less about command and control and more about enabling others to lead within their spheres.

Sustaining Long-Term Growth and Impact

The modern leader's challenge is to balance short-term demands with long-term sustainability. This requires embedding resilience into both operations and organizational culture, nurturing continuous learning, diversity, and ethical governance. Visionary leaders integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into their strategies, recognizing that lasting success depends on building trust with customers, communities, and investors.

Moreover, they invest in leadership development, ensuring the next generation is equipped to navigate complexity with courage and wisdom. This commitment to succession planning and lifelong learning is crucial for organizational longevity.

Conclusion: Leading with Purpose and Precision

The leaders who thrive in 2025 and beyond are those who harmonize bold vision with pragmatic execution. They create compelling futures while skillfully managing present realities, guided by data, empathy, and adaptability. Their leadership is a journey, an ongoing cycle of envisioning, acting, learning, and evolving.

As organizations face unprecedented challenges and opportunities, the modern leader stands as a beacon of clarity and resilience, a force capable of inspiring teams, mobilizing resources, and transforming aspirations into impact. In today's rapid-fire world, successful leadership demands not only dreaming big but delivering bigger.

Building a Research-Driven Future: The Visionary Leadership of **Prof. Naseer Ahmad Khan** **Vice-Chancellor** **Apex Professional University**



In the heart of Arunachal Pradesh, Apex Professional University (APU) is emerging as a hub of academic excellence, thought leadership, and innovation in higher education. At the helm of this transformative journey is **Prof. Naseer Ahmad Khan**, Vice-Chancellor of APU, whose visionary leadership is driving a new era of research, global exposure, and inclusive academic development. In this exclusive feature, Dr. Khan shares insights into his journey, values, and the legacy he hopes to build. **Prof. Naseer Ahmed Khan is a retired professor of Hyderabad Central University, (Retired in the year August 2022) School of Economics.**

A Journey Rooted in Purpose

Prof. Khan's foray into academic leadership was inspired by a powerful goal: to **motivate faculty for effective teaching and cutting-edge research.** His mission aligns with the recommendations of the Knowledge Commission, which emphasizes that every progressive university must strive to produce **at least 500 PhDs**



annually. “This target,” he explains, “requires a passionate and visionary leader who can inspire academic excellence and cultivate a vibrant research ecosystem.”

Servant Leadership: Listening First, Leading Forward

Over the years, Prof. Khan has embraced a **Servant-Leadership model**—a progressive approach where leadership starts by listening to the needs and insights of all stakeholders, especially those at the grassroots level. “Incorporating their feedback into strategic planning,” he says, “creates a culture of trust, ownership, and shared success.”

Core Values That Shape a Leader

When asked about the values that guide his decisions, Prof. Khan is unequivocal: **honesty, morality, hard work, and teamwork**. These principles are not just ideals—they are daily practices that inform every policy and initiative at the university.

Transformative Faculty Empowerment

Under Prof. Khan’s leadership, Apex Professional University has taken substantial steps to empower its faculty. “We have

Prof. Khan’s vision for APU goes beyond immediate achievements. “I want to leave behind a research-oriented university where the pursuit of knowledge takes precedence over everything else,” he shares. His legacy will be a university that doesn’t just teach, but leads in innovation, research, and societal transformation.



actively encouraged participation in **national and international seminars, workshops, and faculty development programmes,**” he shares. The result? A faculty body that is more **efficient, globally connected, and specialized** in their respective fields.

Putting Students at the Center

Prof. Khan firmly believes that students must remain at the core of academic decision-making. “Our university is **student-centric in both policy and practice,**” he explains. APU ensures that students participate in **national and international programs—both offline and online—to keep them aligned with global academic standards.** Plans are underway for **student exchange programs** through international MOUs, allowing students to complete part of their studies abroad.

Encouraging Research and Faculty Growth

“At APU, faculty members are **actively encouraged to complete their PhDs and become research supervisors,**” says Prof. Khan. The university also motivates them to **pursue funded research**

projects, thereby promoting a culture of continuous innovation and academic contribution.

Future-Ready Through Technology

Apex Professional University is leveraging ICT-enabled tools such as **smart classrooms and master boardrooms** to enhance learning. “We are also introducing **AI-driven programs** to ensure that students are well-prepared for the jobs of the future,” says Prof. Khan, positioning the university at the forefront of tech-integrated education.

India’s Higher Education Challenge: Raising the Bar

India stands at a critical juncture in its higher education journey. As part of the National Education Policy (NEP) goals, the country aspires to achieve a **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of 50% by the year 2030.** This is an ambitious yet essential target to ensure inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all.

Reaching this milestone will require **massive expansion in academic infrastructure,** improved access, and a strong focus on **advanced research**

and doctoral output. One of the most pressing challenges lies in the need for universities across India to **significantly increase the number of PhDs they produce,** with each institution ideally aiming to graduate at **least 500 PhDs annually.**

This goal is not merely about numbers—it is about **strengthening the intellectual capital of the nation,** fueling innovation, and equipping India to meet the demands of a knowledge-driven global economy. The future of Indian higher education will depend on how effectively universities rise to this challenge by fostering research ecosystems, enhancing faculty capabilities, and prioritizing excellence in every aspect of academic life.

A Legacy of Research and Impact

Prof. Khan’s vision for APU goes beyond immediate achievements. “I want to leave behind a **research-oriented university** where the pursuit of knowledge takes precedence over everything else,” he shares. His legacy will be a university that doesn’t just teach, but **leads in innovation, research, and societal transformation.**

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Education transforms lives — that belief drives me: **Dr. Parag Sanghani** **Vice Chancellor** **P P Savani University**



In the evolving landscape of Indian higher education, visionary leadership has become the cornerstone of institutional transformation. At the forefront of this movement stands **Dr. Parag Sanghani**, Vice Chancellor of **P P Savani University (PPSU)**—a leader celebrated for his human-centric approach, academic foresight, and commitment to nurturing future-ready youth. In this exclusive conversation, he shares the values, motivations, and leadership philosophy that guide his mission in academia.

“Education transforms lives — that belief drives me.”

Reflecting on his journey into academic leadership, Dr. Sanghani speaks with clarity and conviction. “Education transforms lives — that belief drives me,” he says. His passion stems from a deep commitment to empowering young people, enabling them not only to acquire knowledge but to innovate, uphold values, and contribute meaningfully to society.

For Dr. Sanghani, the role of a Vice-Chancellor is far more than administrative oversight. It is a calling — one that requires vision, empathy, and the ability to harness collective potential.



“My passion lies in empowering youth to innovate, lead with values, and drive positive change,” he adds, encapsulating a philosophy rooted in purpose-driven leadership.

A Leadership Ethos Built on Collaboration and Trust

When asked to define his leadership style, Dr. Sanghani describes it as **collaborative and transformational**—a blend that resonates deeply in the context of modern higher education.

“I believe in empowering people, building trust, and enabling them to reach their full potential through shared vision and accountability,” he shares. This approach has enabled PPSU to cultivate a culture where faculty, staff, and students feel invested in the institution’s trajectory and are encouraged to contribute ideas, take ownership, and lead initiatives.

His model of leadership reflects an understanding that universities thrive not through directives, but through engagement, inspiration, and collective ambition.

I believe in empowering people, building trust, and enabling them to reach their full potential through shared vision and accountability

Values That Anchor Every Decision

At the heart of Dr. Sanghani's leadership lies a clear set of guiding values: Integrity, **Innovation**, **Inclusiveness**, and **Impact**. These principles, he explains, serve as the compass for every institutional decision. "Every decision aligns with these principles, ensuring quality education that builds both competence and character," he notes.

For him, integrity ensures transparency and trust across the academic ecosystem; innovation drives continuous improvement; inclusiveness ensures that every learner has access to opportunity; and impact reminds the university to measure success not just by academic metrics, but by the societal value it creates.

These values collectively shape the ethos of P P Savani University, reinforcing its commitment to developing graduates who are ethical, skilled, and socially responsible.

Driving Transformative Change at PPSU

Under Dr. Sanghani's leadership, P P Savani University has witnessed a series of transformative initiatives that have reshaped its academic and social footprint. PPSU today stands as the **only NAAC A+ accredited institution in South Gujarat**, a milestone reflecting its commitment to quality and continuous improvement. Addressing regional needs, the university has established **Homoeopathy**

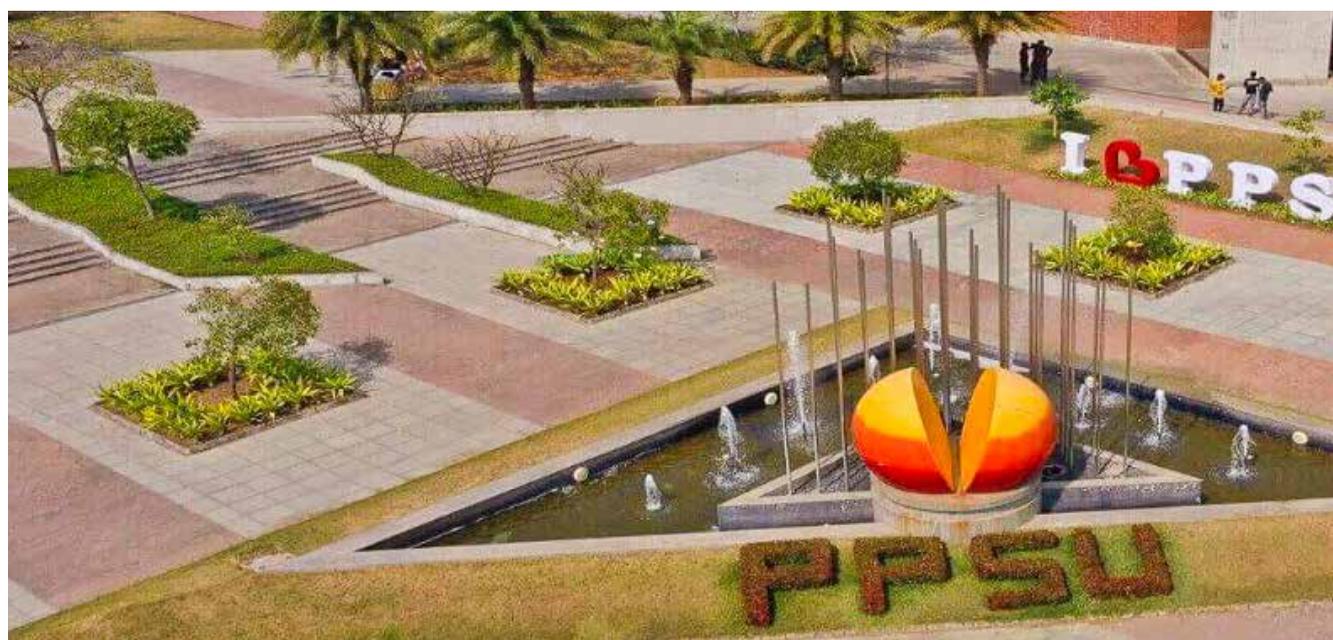
and Ayurvedic hospitals and colleges, bringing accessible healthcare and specialized education to the tribal belt of the region.

A strong advocate of value-driven learning, Dr. Sanghani introduced the **IPDC (Integrated Personality Development Course)** in partnership with BAPS, making PPSU the first university to bring structured, value-based education to its campus. He has also strengthened the university's innovation ecosystem by empowering the **Institution's Innovation Council (IIC)**, fostering a vibrant culture of research, creativity, and student-led entrepreneurship.

To expand access to global learning, PPSU has partnered with platforms such as **Coursera**, **EDex**, **NPTTEL**, and **NSDC**, enabling students to acquire world-class competencies and industry-aligned skills. Simultaneously, faculty research and incubation-driven entrepreneurship have received significant institutional support.

Complementing academic advancements, Dr. Sanghani has championed **digital transformation across teaching and administration**, enhancing efficiency, transparency, and student experience.

Through these initiatives, he continues to reinforce PPSU's mission of delivering **holistic, future-ready education** that empowers graduates to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.





A Student-Centric Approach with Global Alignment

For Dr. Sanghani, maintaining a student-first philosophy while achieving global academic benchmarks is a deliberate and dynamic process. He emphasizes **personalized learning, active mentorship**, and access to **world-class academic resources** as the foundation of PPSU's educational model.

"We personalize learning, integrate global courses, and ensure active mentorship," he notes, underscoring PPSU's commitment to nurturing each learner's potential. The university benchmarks its curricula against international standards, ensuring global competitiveness—yet remains deeply rooted in local relevance, skill development, and employability. This balance enables PPSU graduates to engage confidently with both regional and global opportunities.



Building a Research-Driven, Future-Ready Faculty

A strong institution is built on empowered educators, and Dr. Sanghani has prioritized robust faculty development as a core institutional agenda. PPSU promotes academic excellence through *Faculty Development Programs (FDPs)*, dedicated *research funding*, and support for *patents and publications*.

Collaborations with *AICTE, NPTEL, Coursera*, and other national and global platforms further broaden faculty capability, encouraging continuous learning and exposure to emerging educational paradigms.

Preparing Students for the Jobs of the Future

Future readiness is a central pillar of PPSU's academic philosophy. Dr. Sanghani explains that the university intentionally blends strong academic foundations with exposure to **emerging technologies** such as **Artificial Intelligence, Data Science, and Cybersecurity**. Students work on **industry-aligned projects**, utilize advanced **digital learning platforms**, and gain hands-on experience that mirrors real-world problem-solving.

The Biggest Challenge — and Opportunity — for Indian Higher Education

When discussing the broader education landscape, Dr. Sanghani points to a critical gap: the disconnect between **traditional learning models** and the **future skills** demanded by fast-evolving industries. Bridging this gap, he believes, is the foremost challenge for Indian higher education institutions today.

Prof. (Dr.) Parma Nand

Pro Vice-Chancellor

Sharda University



What inspired your journey into academic leadership, and what continues to drive your passion as a Pro Vice-Chancellor?

Ans. My journey into academic leadership began with a deep belief that education holds the power to transform not just individuals, but societies at large. My education and research at **IIT Delhi** and **IIT Roorkee** were pivotal in shaping this conviction. Those years didn't just train me in engineering—they taught me how to think critically, lead with purpose, and innovate with integrity.

Over time, I realized my true calling went beyond teaching or research—it was about building environments where others could grow, explore, and succeed. What continues to inspire me today is the joy of witnessing that transformation unfold—when students evolve into leaders, faculty into innovators, and learning itself becomes a force that uplifts communities.

How would you define your leadership style, and how has it evolved?

Ans. I would describe my leadership style as vision-driven, participative, and deeply rooted in empathy. Early in my career,



I was focused on achieving measurable outcomes—building systems, meeting targets, and driving institutional growth. Over time, I realized that true leadership extends far beyond authority—it lies in the ability to inspire, empower, and align people toward a shared vision.

I am actively involved in **policy making, governance, multidisciplinary research**, and in driving education reforms aligned with **NEP-2020, Industry 4.0/5.0, and Education 4.0/5.0**. These initiatives are redefining how we teach, learn, and innovate, and I see my role as that of a catalyst—bridging academia, industry, and technology to prepare future-ready learners.

In an age where automation, artificial intelligence, and human intelligence are converging, leadership must balance technological foresight with human values. My focus, therefore, is on nurturing a culture of collaboration, trust, and creativity—where individuals feel inspired to take ownership and contribute meaningfully. To me, effective leadership is about blending strategic vision with compassion and creating an environment where innovation and empathy coexist seamlessly.

I have also prioritized digital learning transformation, stronger industry-academia partnerships, and outcome-based education, ensuring that Sharda University continues to evolve as a hub of innovation, inclusivity, and global relevance—where teaching, research, and societal impact go hand in hand

What key values guide your decisions as a university leader?

Ans. Four guiding values shape my professional and personal journey—**integrity, inclusivity, innovation, and impact.**

Integrity forms the cornerstone of trust and accountability in all endeavors. Inclusivity ensures that every member of the community—students, faculty, and staff—feels respected, valued, and empowered to contribute. Innovation fosters continuous improvement, keeping us adaptable and forward-thinking in an ever-changing world. And impact reminds us that education must always serve a higher purpose—to cultivate responsible individuals and contribute meaningfully to society.

What have been your most transformative initiatives since taking charge of your institution?

Ans. Since assuming this role, I have had the privilege of leading several transformative initiatives that have strengthened Sharda University's position as a centre of academic and research excellence.

One of the proudest milestones has been **leading the university to achieve NAAC A+ accreditation and further enhancing our NBA-accredited programs**, both of which reflect our collective pursuit of quality and continuous improvement. I have also **spearheaded Sharda's advancement in the NIRF and QSI-GAUGE rankings**, driving a culture of data-driven performance, accountability, and institutional benchmarking against global standards.

In alignment with **NEP-2020**, I have led the **restructuring of our academic framework** to promote flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and experiential learning. Under my leadership, we have established **interdisciplinary research clusters** in emerging fields such as **Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain, and Cybersecurity**, while fostering **strategic global collaborations** to expand our international footprint.

I have also prioritized **digital learning transformation, stronger industry-academia partnerships, and outcome-based education**, ensuring that Sharda University continues to evolve as a hub



of **innovation, inclusivity, and global relevance**—where teaching, research, and societal impact go hand in hand.

How do you ensure your university remains student-centric while meeting global academic standards?

Ans. Students are at the heart of every policy and decision we make. We focus on **holistic academic and educational development** through **flexible, outcome-based education**, experiential learning, and personalized mentoring. Alongside that, we benchmark our curriculum against global standards and integrate technology-enhanced learning tools. To ensure global exposure we encourage international exchange programs, joint research initiatives, and academic partnerships with reputed institutions. Our student feedback mechanisms, entrepreneurship support, and focus on employability ensure that our graduates are globally competent, academically well-rounded, and socially responsible.

In what ways do you encourage faculty development and research innovation?

Ans. Faculty are the intellectual foundation of any university, and their growth directly shapes institutional success. I've always believed that when we empower teachers, we empower generations.

At Sharda, we've built a vibrant ecosystem for continuous faculty development—through **Faculty**



Development Programs (FDPs), research grants, and global collaborations. We at Sharda University encourage innovation through **interdisciplinary projects, industry tie-ups,** and recognition for publications and patents.

We aim to ensure that faculty members not only teach but also inspire, innovate, and lead change through research that makes a real-world impact.

How is your institution leveraging technology to prepare students for the jobs of the future?

Ans. Technology has become the backbone of modern education, and at Sharda University, we see it as an enabler of opportunity. We've integrated **AI-driven learning platforms, digital labs, and virtual simulation tools** across disciplines to prepare students for **Industry 4.0 and beyond.**

Our **Centers of Excellence** in AI/ML, Blockchain, and Cybersecurity provide hands-on learning in emerging technologies. But more than just tools, we emphasize adaptability and ethical application—teaching students not only how to use technology, but how to use it responsibly and creatively.

What do you see as the biggest challenge and opportunity for Indian higher education in the next decade?

Ans. The greatest challenge—and opportunity—lies in bridging the gap between traditional education models and the rapidly evolving global skill

ecosystem. The world is changing faster than ever, and education must evolve with it.

With the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, India has an extraordinary chance to redefine its higher education landscape. If we embrace **flexibility, interdisciplinarity, and innovation**, Indian universities can truly emerge as **global leaders in knowledge creation and dissemination.** The key lies in continuous reform and a mindset open to change.

What legacy do you hope to leave behind at your university?

Ans. I hope to leave behind a legacy of **excellence built on integrity and innovation**—a university that not only ranks high but transforms lives in meaningful ways.

My dream is for **Sharda University** to be known as an institution that empowers people—students who think critically, faculty who inspire change, and staff who take pride in their contribution.

If I can leave behind a culture where curiosity, collaboration, and compassion thrive together, I will consider that my greatest accomplishment.

Is there anything additional that you want to highlight? Please share.

Ans. My vision for education goes far beyond systems or statistics—it's about people and possibilities. I believe education must nurture **curiosity, courage, and compassion** in equal measure.

As a mentor and leader, I strive to bridge the gap between academic knowledge and human values. I'm fortunate to work with a team at Sharda University that shares this vision of using education as a force for good—one that shapes not only skilled professionals but also responsible citizens of the world.

Ultimately, my journey has always been about one thing—**empowering others to grow.** That, to me, is the true measure of success in academic leadership.

INDIA'S MOST
VISIONARY VCs
AND PRO VCs 2025

Prof. M Venkateshwarlu

Vice Chancellor

Tumkur University



What inspired your journey into academic leadership, and what continues to drive your passion as a Vice-Chancellor?

“My journey into academic leadership has been shaped by a deep commitment to strengthening higher education and expanding opportunities for students, faculty, and society at large. I have always believed that universities are powerful catalysts for knowledge creation, innovation, and social progress. Becoming a Vice-Chancellor has enabled me to contribute more purposefully to academic excellence, institutional values, and the creation of an enabling environment that nurtures talent.

What drives me every day is the responsibility to build an ecosystem where students can thrive, faculty can excel in research and scholarship, and the university’s growth aligns meaningfully with societal and national priorities. The transformative power of education—both for individuals and communities—remains my greatest motivation.”



How would you define your leadership style, and how has it evolved?

“My leadership style is collaborative, transparent, and anchored in a strong, forward-looking vision. I believe progress in the university system is possible only when every stakeholder feels valued, included, and empowered to contribute. I strive to encourage open communication, mutual trust, and shared responsibility.

Over time, my leadership approach has become more adaptive and data-driven, shaped by experience and continuous learning. I place greater emphasis on evidence-based decision-making, innovation, and accountability, which has helped balance immediate institutional needs with long-term strategic priorities.”

What key values guide your decisions as a university leader?

“The values that guide my decisions are integrity, equity, academic excellence, and accountability. Ethical governance and fairness are fundamental principles, ensuring that every member of the

I would like to highlight our university's unwavering commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and social responsibility. As higher education evolves, it is essential to remain rooted in core values while embracing new ideas and opportunities



university community is treated with dignity and respect.

I remain committed to upholding the highest standards in teaching, research, and institutional development. Accountability—both personal and systemic—reinforces transparency and strengthens institutional trust. These values collectively shape my leadership and ensure that every decision contributes meaningfully to the university’s growth and societal impact.”

What have been your most transformative initiatives since taking charge of your institution?

“Since assuming office, I have focused on initiatives that create lasting academic, administrative, and societal impact. Key efforts include curriculum reform to enhance academic quality, strengthening research and innovation, and upgrading digital infrastructure for efficient governance.

I have prioritized transparency and efficiency by streamlining administrative procedures and implementing technology-driven systems. Building robust industry and community partnerships has expanded learning opportunities and aligned our academic programs with emerging needs.

Enhanced campus infrastructure, a renewed focus on inclusivity, and a strengthened culture of collaboration have collectively transformed

our academic environment and positioned the university for sustainable, future-oriented growth.”

How do you ensure your university remains student-centric while meeting global academic standards?

“We remain student-centric by ensuring every academic and administrative policy is aligned with student welfare, aspirations, and growth. Our focus is on providing high-quality teaching, supportive services, and opportunities for holistic development.

To maintain global academic standards, we benchmark our programs and policies against international best practices. This includes adopting outcome-based education, encouraging interdisciplinary learning, enhancing research capabilities, and integrating technology enabled pedagogies.

Regular student feedback, global collaborations, faculty development, and strong quality assurance mechanisms help maintain this balance. Our aim is to create a learning environment that is globally competitive and deeply responsive to student needs.”

In what ways do you encourage faculty development and research innovation?

“I place strong emphasis on creating an environment that nurtures continuous learning, innovation, and

academic freedom for faculty. As the intellectual core of the university, their development is essential for institutional excellence.

We conduct regular faculty development programs on modern pedagogy, emerging research areas, and advanced technologies. We also encourage collaborative research through partnerships with national and international institutions, industry, and government agencies.

Institutional incentives such as seed grants, research awards, streamlined processes, and improved research infrastructure further motivate faculty. By celebrating their achievements, we foster a culture of innovation, curiosity, and research-driven growth.”

How is your institution leveraging technology to prepare students for the jobs of the future?

“We are strategically incorporating technology into teaching, learning, and skill development to prepare students for future careers. Smart classrooms, learning management systems, and digital tools enhance flexibility and effectiveness in education.

We offer specialized training in emerging domains—AI, data analytics, cybersecurity, and digital entrepreneurship—through certificate courses and industry-linked programs. Virtual labs, simulation platforms, and project-based learning expose students to real-world environments.

By integrating academic rigor with digital competency, we equip students to succeed in rapidly evolving, technology-driven workplaces.”

What do you see as the biggest challenge and opportunity for Indian higher education in the next decade?

“The primary challenge will be balancing rapid expansion with sustained academic quality. As enrolments increase and institutions diversify, ensuring strong faculty capacity, research ecosystems, infrastructure modernization, and equitable access will be critical. Managing the digital transition responsibly and improving

employability will also remain pressing concerns.

However, India is poised for unprecedented opportunity. With a vibrant youth population, expanding innovation landscape, and transformative policy reforms such as NEP 2020, the nation is well positioned to emerge as a global leader in education and research. Multidisciplinary learning, digital education, internationalization, and skill development offer immense potential. With strategic and inclusive implementation, Indian higher education can play a pivotal role in shaping the nation’s future.”

What legacy do you hope to leave behind at your university?

“I aspire to leave a legacy of academic excellence, ethical governance, and transformative institutional progress. I hope to be remembered as a leader who strengthened foundations, expanded horizons, and built systems that continue to inspire growth long after my tenure.

My vision is of a university that is student-centric, globally connected, research-driven, and socially responsible. By fostering a culture of transparency, collaboration, and innovation, I aim to ensure that every stakeholder benefits from a more vibrant and future-ready institution.”

Is there anything additional that you want to highlight?

“I would like to highlight our university’s unwavering commitment to inclusivity, innovation, and social responsibility. As higher education evolves, it is essential to remain rooted in core values while embracing new ideas and opportunities.

I am proud of the dedication and resilience of our students, faculty, and staff—their collective strength drives the institution forward. Our focus moving ahead is on strengthening global partnerships, enhancing research output, promoting sustainability, and deepening community engagement.

Together, we will continue to build a university that inspires, empowers, and transforms.”

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