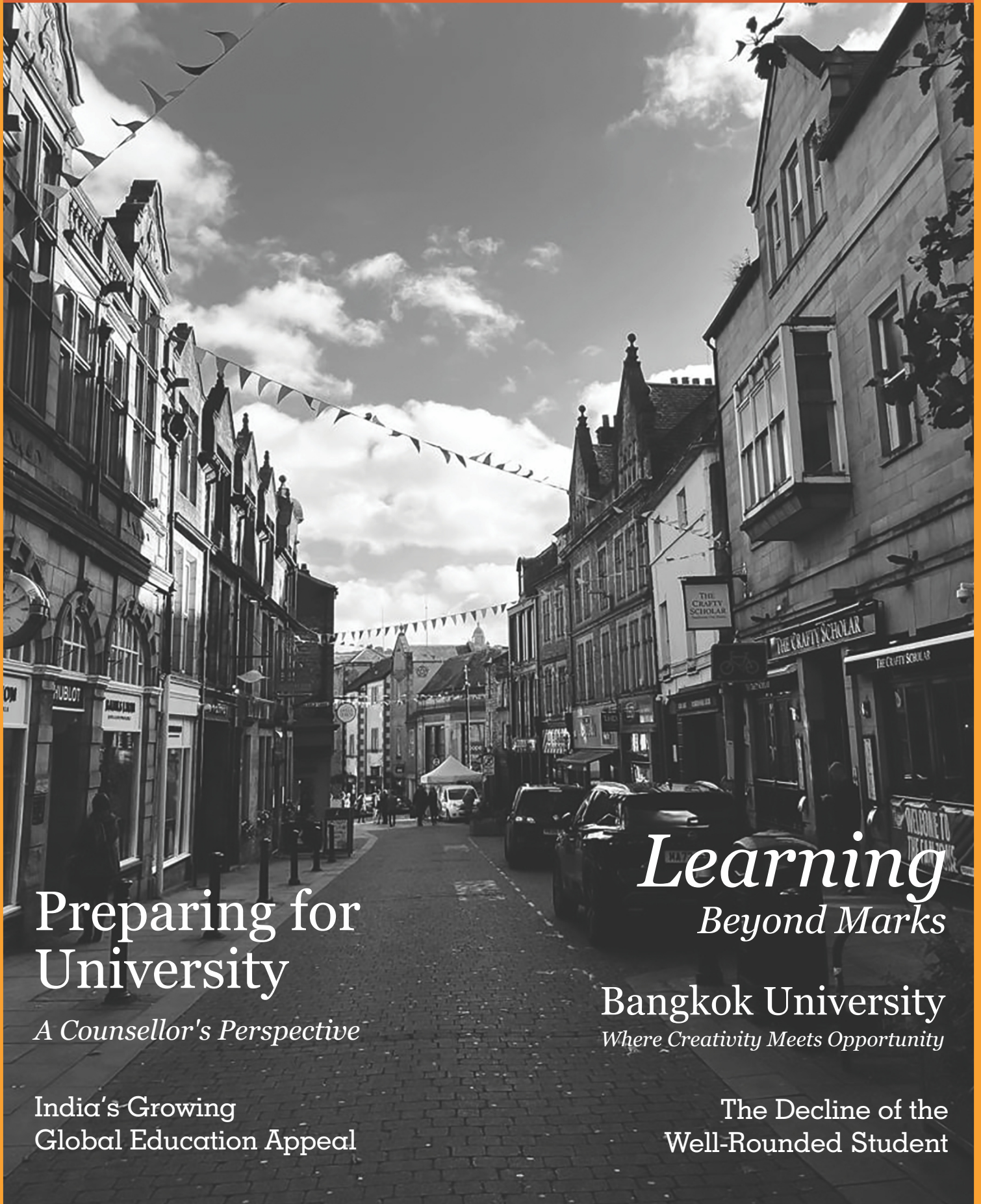


4th June 2026

# UC CONNECT

Vol. III, Issue 14

The Education Newsletter



## Preparing for University

*A Counsellor's Perspective*

India's Growing  
Global Education Appeal

## Learning Beyond Marks

Bangkok University  
*Where Creativity Meets Opportunity*

The Decline of the  
Well-Rounded Student

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We would like to invite our readers to participate in our exciting Photo Contest by sharing powerful moments that reflect learning, mentoring, and student life. The winning entry will be featured on the cover of our newsletter. Please send your entries to [write@uconnectworld.com](mailto:write@uconnectworld.com). Submissions must be in portrait format

## Meet the Photo Contest Winner



Anhad is a final-year Bachelor of Computer Science (Hons.) student at Lancaster University currently on a gap year, pursuing internships while building his own SaaS product. Passionate about technology and innovation, he enjoys transforming ideas into practical solutions and believes growth comes from staying curious and embracing new opportunities.

This black-and-white view of Lancaster captures the town's timeless charm, where historic streets and everyday life come together in quiet harmony.



## Contributors

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## COVER STORY

# International Students seeking Indian Universities: An oriental choice or a strategic decision?

By Aleifiya Bagasrawala (Netterwala),  
Independent Higher Education Consultant

### Inside India's transformation from talent exporter to global education powerhouse.

For decades, the global geography of higher education followed a predictable, unidirectional path: **talent migrated from the Global South to the Global North**. But today, that paradigm is fracturing under the weight of its own unsustainability. As the cost of Western degrees reaches a breaking point, compounded by tightening visa regimes, housing crises, and shifting immigration policies, the traditional monopoly on academics, especially foreign prestige, is dissolving.

In its place, a powerful counter-narrative is emerging. **India is no longer merely a localized education system or a secondary option based on cultural curiosity**. It is rapidly transitioning into a strategic, sophisticated global knowledge hub. International students for decades, especially from countries in the Middle East, GCC, Africa, Europe, Thailand, to name a few, have already ventured into Indian universities for higher education – Delhi University, Ashoka University, Manipal, Symbiosis, IIT's, and BITS Pilani are on the top of their lists. I personally think India is not an emerging destination anymore; it has already arrived.

*We have growing intellectual capital, and the scale we need to respond to is, of course, enormous.*

#### What Makes a World-Class Education Destination

Dr Pramath Raj Sinha, Founder & Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Ashoka University, Founding Senior Partner, Jetri, and Founding Dean, Indian School of Business, adds that the conversation about India as a global destination for higher education has to start with an important question: **what kind of institutions are we building, and for whom?** He believes the answer lies in building institutions defined by academic excellence, world-class research, inspiring faculty, exceptional campuses, and diverse programs that empower every student, whether they choose to return home after graduation or build their future here. In context to

other global higher education institutions, he mentions that - "What they have in common is sustained, deliberate investment in quality, strong institutional capacity, and regulatory environments that give universities the conditions to pursue excellence. India is taking steps in this direction. We have growing intellectual capital, and the scale we need to respond to is, of course, enormous. That calls for more institutions, an expansion of the programs we offer that reflect where students want to go and

what they want to do with their education, and the creation of environments where our institutions can genuinely innovate and improve."

As a branding and communications professional within the higher education ecosystem, I look at this shift through a dual lens: one that evaluates macro institutional strategy, and another that listens deeply to the human stories that bring our campuses to life. The unfolding reality forces us to ask a fundamental question: Is choosing an Indian university merely an "Oriental" choice, a budget-friendly layout rooted in nostalgia or cultural exploration, or is it a calculated, strategic decision to plug into an emerging economic powerhouse?

#### India's Longstanding Culture of Internationalization

The foundation for internationalization in India is far from new. Long before the term "global hub" became a regulatory buzzword in policy circles, these institutions were quietly creating the blueprint for multicultural campus ecosystems. For decades, **India has acted as a cosmopolitan sanctuary**, drawing students from across Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. This wasn't accidental; it was a deliberate exercise in campus branding and community building. They recognized early on that those international students don't just buy a curriculum, **they invest in an environment where they feel safe, visible, and culturally understood.**

*India offers affordability, scale, cultural comfort, a fast - growing economy, a thriving digital ecosystem, and a front-row seat to one of the biggest transformations of our time.*

When we look at the lived experiences of students on the ground today, that legacy of inclusivity remains the bedrock of India's appeal. Consider Amatullah Jamalee, a second-year BBA Media Management student from Tanzania, who chose Symbiosis precisely for this established multicultural reputation. She notes that the campus environment challenged her to grow independently while feeling entirely supported. Similarly, Anjana Palat, a UAE

resident currently pursuing her BA in Mass Communication in India, highlights a profound shift in external perception after arriving. She discovered a welcoming and deeply diverse culture paired with high-quality English-medium programs that offer genuine value for money. These are not isolated anecdotes; they are proof that Indian campuses have long mastered the art of balancing academic rigor with deep, emotional equity.



**COVER STORY** *Contd.*

**India's New Era of International Higher Education**

What has changed today, however, is the structural scale of India's ambitions. With the advent of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the historic arrival of International Branch Campuses (IBCs), India is aggressively positioning itself to capitalize on and retain talent from across the Global South. By bringing world-class global degrees directly to Indian soil, the subcontinent is creating an unparalleled, distributed academic ecosystem.



Prof. Atul Khosla, Vice Chancellor, Shoolini University and Honorary Professor at the prestigious University of Melbourne, Australia, who is actively involved in setting up the Indian Branch Campus partnerships, adds that "India is not a temporary alternative to the West. It represents a deeper and more permanent rebalancing of global education. For decades, students looked West for prestige, opportunity, and mobility. But today, students and families are asking sharper questions: what is

the real value of a degree, what career does it lead to, what future does it prepare me for, and is the cost justified? India is beginning to answer these questions in a powerful way. It offers affordability, scale, cultural comfort, a fast-growing economy, a thriving digital ecosystem, and a front-row seat to one of the biggest transformations of our time.

**This can be India's Vishwaguru moment, not as a slogan, but as a real possibility.**

India can attract students from across the world, and global universities can come here not only to teach, but to innovate and build new models of education that are more affordable, more relevant, more technology-led, research-driven, and more connected to the needs of the future. What global universities learn in India can then travel to the world. The centre of gravity of the world is moving east, and India is no longer just sending students out. It is ready to welcome the world in."



Siddharth Shahani, Co-founder & Executive President, ATLAS SkillTech University, adds that there is a strong emphasis on global student exchange, collaborative international projects, student and faculty exchanges, and international academic tie-ups that have further strengthened this cause in India to be positioned as a global hub for higher education.

"India today offers a compelling combination of affordability, academic quality and cultural richness. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is further accelerating this transformation by creating a more globally aligned, multidisciplinary and student-centric education ecosystem with greater flexibility, research focus and international collaboration. Supportive measures such as scholarships, tuition waivers and simplified student visa processes are also strengthening India's attractiveness for international learners. While Western countries have traditionally been preferred destinations for higher education, Indian universities are increasingly being recognised for delivering innovation-driven education with global relevance at accessible costs. With a strong focus on academic excellence, sustainability and inclusivity, India is well-positioned to emerge as a leading hub for international education in the years ahead."

**The Strategic Future of Global Education Begins in India**

Ultimately, the choice to study in India has evolved past the historical boundaries of cost or romanticized cultural exploration. Backed by progressive regulatory frameworks, the institutional muscle of incoming IBCs, and decades of proven international student integration in legacy hubs like **Mumbai, Delhi, and Bengaluru**, amongst others in India, is rewriting the rules of educational migration. For the forward-thinking global student, choosing India is no longer an exotic alternative; it is the ultimate strategic move.

### INDIA'S EMERGING GLOBAL HIGHER EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

International Branch Campuses and Indian Universities with Worldwide Academic Pathways

**Two Powerful Pathways. One Global Future.**

<p><b>INTERNATIONAL BRANCH CAMPUSES ACROSS INDIA</b> World-class universities. Indian campuses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON</b> Established: 2018   Focus: Engineering Gurgaon, Haryana</li> <li><b>UNIVERSITY OF YORK</b> Established: 2021   Focus: Liberal Arts, Computer Science Noida, Uttar Pradesh</li> <li><b>UNIVERSITY OF SURREY</b> Established: 2022   Focus: Engineering, Business, Data Science GIFT City, Gujarat</li> <li><b>UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS</b> Established: 2022   Focus: Engineering, CS Mumbai, Maharashtra</li> <li><b>HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY</b> Established: 2014   Focus: Engineering, Management Bengaluru, Karnataka</li> <li><b>THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA</b> Established: 2023   Focus: Ocean Science, Environmental Studies Chennai, Tamil Nadu</li> <li><b>DEAKIN UNIVERSITY</b> Established: 2023   Focus: Business, IT, Health Sciences Pune, Maharashtra</li> <li><b>MONASH UNIVERSITY</b> Established: 2020   Focus: Data Science, Business, IT Kozhikode, Kerala</li> </ul>	<p>India is fast becoming a global education hub—welcoming world universities and empowering Indian universities to build global academic pathways. This list or graphic is no way exhaustive and does not give a complete depiction of the complex web of universities framework that exists within India.</p>	<p><b>INDIAN UNIVERSITIES WITH STRONG GLOBAL PATHWAYS &amp; ARTICULATION NETWORKS</b> Global opportunities. Unlimited possibilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>BISHKOP UNIVERSITY</b> Sonapat, Haryana 20+ partnerships across 20 countries Collaborates with Harvard, Yale, Stanford, UPenn, NYU, King's College London &amp; more</li> <li><b>O.P. JINDAL GLOBAL UNIVERSITY</b> Sonapat, Haryana Global collaborations with 40+ universities 20+ research centers &amp; dual-degree opportunities across Europe, North America &amp; Asia</li> <li><b>Shoolini University</b> Solan, Himachal Pradesh International program pathways Research collaborations &amp; study opportunities with UK, Europe &amp; Australia</li> <li><b>ATLAS SkillTech University</b> Mumbai, Maharashtra 100+ international tracks &amp; articulation pathways Partnerships with Univ. of York, York, York, Sheffield, Brunel, UCL, Cambridge &amp; more</li> <li><b>FLAME UNIVERSITY</b> Pune, Maharashtra Strong international degree cooperation Collaborates with leading universities worldwide</li> <li><b>Krea University</b> Sur City, Andhra Pradesh Global-based art collaborations International academic mobility programs</li> <li><b>SYMBIOSIS INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY</b> Pune, Maharashtra 100+ international degree programs 100+ international university collaborations</li> <li><b>MANIPAL ACADEMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION</b> Mangaluru, Karnataka Multiple articulation, transfer &amp; dual-degree pathways with top global universities</li> </ul>
<p><b>WHY IT MATTERS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Global Curriculum &amp; Standards</li> <li>International Exposure at Home</li> <li>Student Mobility &amp; Exchange Programs</li> <li>Dual Degrees &amp; Articulation Pathways</li> <li>Better Employability Worldwide</li> <li>Research &amp; Innovation Collaboration</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;">From welcoming the world to empowering our own—India is shaping a future-ready, globally connected generation.</p>		

*Pic: AI Generated*



If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you. Please write to us at [write@uconnectworld.com](mailto:write@uconnectworld.com)

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.*



**STUDENT'S  
Corner**



**Should predictive algorithms influence insurance, employment, or treatment decisions?**

By Japneet Singh,  
Studying Computer Science at the University of California, Riverside, USA  
CAAS 2024 student, UC Peer Mentor 2026

**Predictions may be mathematical, but their consequences are deeply human**

A computer might help decide whether you get hired, how much you pay for insurance, or how urgently a doctor treats you. That sounds dramatic, but it's already happening. **Predictive algorithms are systems trained on past data to estimate future outcomes.** The promise is simple: better predictions mean better decisions. The problem is also simple: the past contains bias, inequality, and imperfect human judgment. When we train machines on history, we risk automating its flaws.

Take employment. Many companies use AI tools to scan resumes before a human ever sees them. The point is efficiency and consistency. But when a model learns from past hiring data, it also learns the patterns of who was historically favored. At Amazon, an internal recruiting tool once downgraded resumes that included words like "women's" because the system had learned from male-dominated historical data. The algorithm wasn't programmed to discriminate; it simply copied statistical patterns. This shows the core issue: predictive systems don't understand fairness; they optimize patterns.

*When we train machines on history, we risk automating its flaws.*



Now consider insurance. Companies such as Allstate and UnitedHealth Group use advanced analytics to price risk more precisely. The logic is straightforward: if someone is statistically more likely to file a claim, charge them more. That increases efficiency and protects company finances. However, insurance is also meant to spread risk across society. If predictions become too precise, high-risk individuals may incur extreme costs, and the social purpose of shared protection weakens. Accuracy improves, but fairness may shrink.

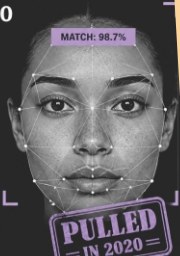
**Healthcare shows both the best and worst possibilities.** Predictive systems can detect early signs of disease and, in some cases, outperform human specialists in specific tasks, potentially saving lives. Yet one widely discussed case exposed how a healthcare algorithm used past medical spending as a measure of patient need. Since some communities historically had less access to healthcare, they also spent less on treatment. As a result, the system underestimated their medical risk. The algorithm was optimizing cost patterns rather than actual health needs. In other words, the algorithm followed the pattern it was trained to recognize. Because the data reflected unequal access to healthcare, the system repeated that inequality in its decisions.

So should predictive algorithms influence these decisions? Yes, but only with strict oversight, transparency, and human accountability. They can reduce certain human errors and process information at a scale no person can match. At the same time, they can amplify bias faster than any individual ever could. A prediction is a probability, not a moral judgment. Society must decide whether these systems serve human values or quietly replace them with mathematical convenience.



**Facial recognition tech was pulled in 2020**

after research linked systems to racial profiling and biased outcomes.



**THE PROBLEM:** Studies found higher error rates for darker skin tones, leading to misidentification, false arrests, and unfair surveillance.

**DID YOU KNOW?**



IBM withdrew its facial recognition technology from the market in 2020 after growing concerns that such systems could contribute to racial profiling and showed higher error rates for women and people with darker skin tones.

This highlighted a major challenge in AI ethics and indicates that systems trained on unbalanced data can produce inaccurate and unfair outcomes for certain groups.



## When Should Students Start Preparing for University? A Counsellor's Perspective

By Komal Singh,  
Student Admission Manager, UniversityConnection.in



### The Importance of Starting Early Without Losing Sight of the Student's Individual Growth



As a high school counselor and an Independent counselor, I have had the privilege of working closely with students and parents, guiding them through one of the most important journeys of their lives, **planning for higher education**. Interestingly, this journey is no longer limited to high school alone. Recently,

during a Parent-Teacher Meeting, I interacted with several middle school parents who were equally curious and eager to understand how they could begin preparing their children for the future.

This growing awareness made me reflect on an important question: *When is the right time to start preparing for college?*

While curiosity can begin early, **Grade 9 is the ideal stage to start preparation in full swing**. At this point, students are better equipped to explore their interests, build academic strength, and gradually shape their future goals with clarity and direction. One structured approach that supports this early guidance is **PAAS (Personalized Application Admission Schedule)**, designed by Ms. Charushilla, Founder Director of University Connection, specifically for students as early as Grade 8. The program ensures that while students are not overwhelmed with constant sessions, they have **consistent access to a counselor** and connect at regular intervals (at least once every two months). This balanced approach helps students stay on track while allowing them the space to grow independently.

#### Key Areas of Preparation

A well-rounded university application is built over time, focusing on multiple aspects:

- Academic Performance
- Standardized Tests (IELTS, SAT, ACT, etc.)
- Profile/Portfolio Development
- Letters of Recommendation (LORs)
- Essays / Statement of Purpose (SOP)
- Scholarship Research and Applications

#### The Role of a Mentor

A counselor or mentor plays a crucial role in guiding students through this journey:

- **College Shortlisting:** Assisting in identifying and finalizing universities and courses aligned with the student's interests and goals.
- **Profile Building:** Recommending internships, summer schools, workshops, research opportunities, and passion projects.
- **Timeline Planning:** Creating a structured roadmap, including application deadlines and milestones.
- **Application Support:** Guiding students in drafting and refining essays and SOPs.
- **LOR Guidance:** Assisting in securing strong and meaningful Letters of Recommendation.
- **Scholarship Guidance:** Supporting research and application for relevant scholarships.

#### A Growing Awareness: A Counselor's Perspective

Over the years, as a counselor, I have observed a significant and encouraging shift in the mindset of both students and parents. There is a growing awareness about the importance of early planning and informed decision-making when it comes to higher education. What was once a conversation reserved for Grades 11 and 12 is now beginning much earlier, often in middle school. Parents today are more proactive, curious, and engaged, seeking clarity on how to best support their child's academic and career journey. This early interest is not driven by pressure alone, but by a genuine desire to understand opportunities, pathways, and the evolving global education landscape. Students, too, are becoming more aware of their interests and are open to exploring diverse fields, new-age careers, and skill-building opportunities beyond the classroom. This shift allows for more meaningful guidance, where decisions are not rushed but thoughtfully planned over time.



From a counselor's perspective, this realignment creates the opportunity to guide students in a structured and balanced manner. It enables us to focus on building strong academic foundations, encouraging exploration, and gradually introducing elements like profile building, skill development, and career clarity without overwhelming the student. **However, it is equally important to channel this awareness in the right direction, ensuring that early planning does not turn into undue stress.** The goal is to create a supportive environment where students can explore, make informed choices, and grow with confidence.

In conclusion, while curiosity and awareness may begin in middle school, **structured and focused preparation from Grade 9 onwards** provides the ideal balance. As a counselor, it is equally important to recognize when this awareness turns into a **red flag situation**. Concern arises when **early planning becomes pressure-driven rather than exploration-driven**, for instance, when students feel overwhelmed, anxious, or are pushed into making decisions without fully understanding their interests. Another red flag is when there is an **overemphasis on achievements, comparisons, or timelines**, rather than focusing on the student's individual pace and growth.

Additionally, if a student shows **disengagement, confusion, or lack of motivation**, despite being enrolled in multiple activities or programs, it may indicate that the approach needs to be reassessed.

**Guidance should support the student, not burden them.**





## Grades Open Doors, Learning Builds Futures



By Tania Walia,  
Vice President for Marketing, Partnerships & Outreach  
at Silver Fern Education Consultant

**As education evolves, the focus must shift from rote performance and percentages to skill-building, innovation, and future readiness.**

I am someone who has closely followed school education and its developments over the last seven years. During this time, I have conducted numerous sessions across schools in India on career counselling, future success metrics, personality development, and profile building. At the beginning of almost every session, I would ask students what they believed was the most important factor for future success. The answers were almost always the same, and they often made me question the real impact of education reforms in our country.

*While marks may help students enter their dream universities, exposure and experiential learning are what shape their success afterward.*

### The Marks-Centric Mindset Among Students

Most students believed that scoring high marks in board examinations was the only thing that truly mattered. Across schools and cities, the responses were strikingly similar, revealing how deeply students are conditioned to associate success with cut-offs, grades, and percentages. Marks undoubtedly provide an objective way to evaluate performance, but I often wonder who is truly better prepared for life: someone who scores 95% without understanding concepts deeply, or someone who scores 85% yet can confidently apply those concepts in real situations? While benchmark percentages remain necessary for admissions and societal expectations, **the real concern is how intensely students are consumed by the percentages game, often at the cost of genuine learning and intellectual growth.**

### Why Real Learning Must Take Priority

Education has evolved, and this gap is narrower today than it was a few years ago, but there is still a long way to go. Real learning should be prioritized over scoring marks through cramming. Students must aim to understand concepts comprehensively, apply them in real-world situations, and challenge existing ideas to drive innovation. The future belongs not to those who merely meet percentage thresholds, but to those who build genuine future readiness and create impact.

I do not disregard examinations altogether. Exams and assessments are important because they create discipline and accountability in academics. What I disagree with is the exclusivity attached to exams as the only measure of merit. Exam results often create a very black-and-white definition of success and failure. More importantly, the pressure to achieve certain percentages pushes students towards memorization rather than meaningful understanding. Good grades may open doors to institutions, but real learning is what ultimately helps students move forward in life.

### The Power of Experiential Learning

One concept I strongly believe in is experiential learning - learning by doing. This is one of the most effective ways to make students future-ready. **Experiential learning encourages students to step beyond textbooks and classrooms.** Opportunities such as internships, job shadowing, summer schools, cultural exchange programs, leadership bootcamps, and public speaking help students develop practical skills, confidence, and exposure that classrooms alone cannot provide.

While marks may help students enter their dream universities, exposure and experiential learning are what shape their success afterward. True success, in my opinion, is a balanced combination of academic rigor, real-world exposure, experiential learning, and positive impact. Education systems must therefore encourage holistic development from an early stage through practical skill enhancement, gamification, and concept-based learning rather than focusing solely on marks.

### What Global Education Systems Are Doing Differently

There are several global examples that reinforce this idea. In Japan, classroom learning is blended with activities and gamification to develop collaboration and problem-solving skills. Similarly, China introduces students to STEM concepts, coding, robotics, and innovation at an early age to cultivate future changemakers. In such environments, students pursue excellence and application-based learning rather than simply chasing grades. This also builds confidence among students, even if they are not academic toppers. A few years down the line, nobody will ask students about their board exam percentages. Whether students apply for internships or jobs, they will be assessed on communication skills, leadership abilities, problem-solving aptitude, adaptability, and the ability to handle pressure. These qualities emerge from real learning and practical exposure, not from marks alone. The true metric of performance is how much students explore and learn beyond the classroom.

This is precisely the gap educators and mentors must work to bridge. Experiential learning needs to become a core part of education from the elementary level itself. Students should grow up with confidence, adaptability, and readiness to face real-world challenges. Learning should inspire curiosity and enthusiasm, motivating students to perform well in exams rather than making exams a source of fear.

### Redefining Success Beyond Marks

The day we break this deeply rooted stereotype that equates success only with marks, we will move closer to building a far stronger education system. It may be challenging, but it is certainly not impossible. When this foundational gap is healed, schools will nurture far more confident, future-ready, and impactful leaders for the world ahead.

If you're an educator who has a perspective or insight to share, we'd love to hear from you.  
Please write to us at [write@uconnectworld.com](mailto:write@uconnectworld.com)

*Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article are solely those of the author and may not necessarily reflect the views of University Connection, UCONNECT, or its constituting team of Research Counselors.*



## Why Well-Rounded Students are Becoming Irrelevant

By Anisha Parikh, Founder, StarterSky

**In a world of identical achievements, authenticity stands out**

**PARTNER**  
**Spotlight**

**StarterSky**

I want you to picture two 16-year-olds.

Student A has a résumé that is almost perfect. Excellent debater. Model UN. Violin since grade 6. House captain. Two NGOs.

Student B has almost nothing on paper.



But over a few months, she noticed something around her.

- The children of domestic workers in her building often sat with their homework in the evenings.
- They looked like they were struggling, with no one around who could help.
- So she started small.
- A 45-minute session on her building terrace, twice a week.
- Started with maths. Using her old textbooks. Six kids showed up. Then kept showing up.
- Four months later, two of them aced their class tests for the first time.

**One student has an outstanding list. But the other changed someone's trajectory.** Now imagine an admissions officer is on their 50th application of the day. Which one do you think they will remember? Here's what has been happening.

For decades, the playbook was pretty straightforward. Good grades. Lots of activities. And maybe a few leadership titles. This worked really well. Colleges wanted it. Parents chased it. Schools built entire systems around this winning formula. **But somewhere along the way, the game shifted.** Today, every ambitious student profile looks the same. They all have impressive grades. A dash of debate. A bit of sport. Add some music. Volunteering. All impressive, but all strangely identical. **And when everything looks impressive, what's the one thing that really stands out? Nothing really.** Let's be honest. Everyone knows the checklist. The things you are supposed to do. That used to be enough, but it isn't anymore.

### TESTIMONIALS

- StarterSky Lab was an amazing experience that truly brought my child's idea to life. The program encourages kids to ideate, be innovative, research, and finally turn their imagination into a real, working website.  
*Shivani Jatia, parent to Raghav*
- The Startersky Lab program was an excellent experience, and helped me achieve what I thought was impossible - starting a business. They gave continuous feedback throughout the workshop and helped me create a prototype and connect with NGOs, too.  
*Sumer Kothari, 15 years, Bombay International School.*

#### So what actually works now?

Over the last few years, things have changed drastically. Admissions teams, school counsellors; they all want to know one thing now. Not what club or camp a student joined. **But what they have built.** The new standout isn't participation. It's evidence. The proof that you noticed a problem. A problem that required a solution. That you tried to fix it, without being graded on it. And that you stuck with it when it got boring and hard. Whether it is a small or big problem, you kept going. If you think about it, how many teenagers do you know who have actually done this? Not many, and that is exactly why it stands out.

**Here's what I've seen happen when a young person actually builds something real.**

#### Three things change.

- They start to develop judgment. Not the typical kind you get from solving structured problems, but the kind you build when there's no clear right answer.
- They build resilience. The quiet, unglamorous kind, where it's Day 30, things aren't going the way you expected, but you show up anyway.
- And then something shifts. They find their voice. True authenticity, the kind of quiet confidence that only comes from having done something on your own.

You can't manufacture this from a list of extracurriculars. You can't fake it. It's genuine, and it's their story. This is exactly why we built StarterSky.

No lectures. No simulations. No theory. **At StarterSky, there is just one goal: that a student walks away having built something real. A project. A product. A service.** Something that solved an actual problem, even in a small way. Students don't just stop at ideas or business plans. They test things. Build things. Put them out into the real world. Messy, imperfect, uncertain, but with real mentors guiding them through it. And then comes the moment I've watched happen time and again, when a student stops saying, "I have an idea," and starts saying, "I built this." **It sounds like a small change. But it changes the way they see themselves entirely.** If you are a parent reading this, here's the shift that matters. Stop asking: What should my child add to their profile? Start asking: Does my child want to build something? Will they care enough about it to keep going? It doesn't have to be huge. It can be as small as they want. It doesn't even have to succeed. It just has to be real.

#### One last thought.

Your child doesn't need to be well-rounded. **They need to be distinct.** Someone who notices problems. Someone who builds without waiting for permission. Someone who shows consistency and initiative. In a world full of polished, identical profiles, the students who get remembered aren't the ones who did everything. They are the ones who did one thing with enough depth, honesty, and ownership that you simply can't look away. **Well-rounded might get you to be considered. Distinct is what makes you unforgettable.**

Want to build something with Anisha Parikh. Contact [admin@startersky.com](mailto:admin@startersky.com)

UNIVERSITY  
**Spotlight**



Phyto Thawtar Ko



**BANGKOK UNIVERSITY**  
THE CREATIVE UNIVERSITY

**Bangkok University-  
The Creative University:  
Where Ambition Meets  
Global Opportunity**



Shweta Khanna

By Phyto Thawtar Ko, Manager, Business Networking, Bangkok University  
and Shweta Khanna, Strategic Growth Partner - Bangkok University  
and The Smart Edge.

**As education evolves, the focus must shift from rote performance and percentages to skill-building, innovation, and future readiness.**

In today's rapidly evolving world, students are no longer looking at higher education as simply earning a degree. They are seeking 'experiences' that prepare them for a global future, equip them with practical skills, build international networks, and help them confidently step into the 'world of work' or curate their own 'entrepreneurial journeys'. Students and parents across India are increasingly exploring alternatives to traditional study destinations, with Thailand emerging as an exciting and accessible education hub.

At the heart of this transformation stands Bangkok University, one of Thailand's oldest and most respected private universities, steadily emerging as a preferred destination for globally minded students seeking quality, affordability, innovation, and career readiness. Located in the vibrant and cosmopolitan city of Bangkok, BU offers students something unique: an international education experience that combines academic excellence with cultural familiarity, safety, creativity, and global exposure. Global Education, Closer Than Ever

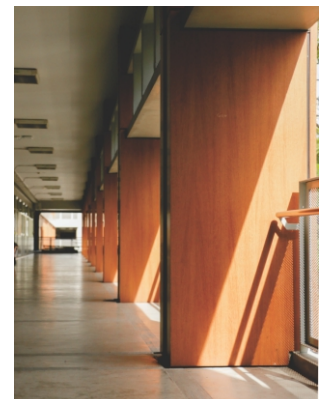
For Indian students and families, one of the most appealing aspects of studying at Bangkok University is accessibility. With Bangkok just a comfortable 3-4 hour flight away from major Indian cities, students can experience international education without feeling too far from home. Thailand's warm hospitality, cultural similarities, food familiarity, and welcoming environment make the transition smoother for students stepping into global education for the first time. Combined with a strong focus on student safety and well-being, BU creates an environment where students can thrive, and BU already has a representative Indian student population!



**Affordability Without Compromising Quality**

As global education costs continue to rise across traditional study destinations with unpredictability from geopolitical situations,

affordability has become a major consideration for families. Bangkok University stands out by offering internationally aligned programs at significantly more affordable tuition fees and living costs. This balance between quality and affordability makes BU an increasingly attractive option for students who want global exposure without the financial burden often associated with overseas education.



**Learning Beyond the Classroom**

What truly differentiates Bangkok University is its emphasis on experiential, hands-on learning. The University strongly believes that future-ready graduates are created not only through theory but through practice, industry immersion, creativity, collaboration, and innovation. Programs are designed in close alignment with industry expectations, ensuring students graduate with practical skills that prospective employers will value.

Bangkok University is particularly well known for its unique and highly sought-after programs offered in four distinct Clusters-Business, Innovation, Service, and the Creative Clusters, with diverse courses such as Film, Media, Digital Communication, Creative Arts, Hospitality, Culinary Arts, Business, Entrepreneurship, Computer Science, and Technology. For students aspiring to enter the creative economy, media industry, hospitality sector, or global business ecosystem, BU offers an exciting launchpad filled with opportunities.

**Building Global Careers Through International Exposure**

In an increasingly interconnected world, international exposure is no longer optional; rather, it is essential. Bangkok University has built strong global partnerships and collaborations that enable students to gain international experience far beyond the classroom. Through internship pathways and academic collaborations across countries such as Australia, Hong Kong, Spain, France, the United States, Dubai, and more, students gain valuable cross-cultural exposure and practical global industry insights.

**UNIVERSITY**  
**Spotlight** Contd.



One of the most exciting opportunities available to students is the university's double degree programs, allowing students to earn two internationally recognized degrees while optimizing both time and cost. These pathways not only enhance employability but also provide students with broader international academic exposure and career mobility. The university's growing network of partnerships with institutions and industries across the globe reflects its commitment to preparing students for truly international careers.

**Education with Career Outcomes in Mind**

For today's students, employability remains one of the most important factors while choosing a university. Bangkok University places strong emphasis on career readiness and outcome-based education. Several programs are designed with direct industry integration and pathways that focus on helping students transition confidently into employment after graduation. The university's practical learning environment, combined with global internships, mentorship, portfolio-building opportunities, and industry collaborations, ensures students graduate not just with academic qualifications but with confidence, experience, and professional readiness.



**A New-Age Destination for Future-Ready Students**

As education continues to evolve, Bangkok University represents a new-age model of higher education, globally connected, industry-oriented, creatively driven, and student-centric. Bangkok University has a strong and reliable partnership with The Smart Edge as their Strategic India Partner. The global exposure of BU, coupled with TSE's legacy of Upskilling across K-12, Higher Education and Industry, is indeed a compelling combination for students in India

For students looking for an international experience that is affordable, safe, dynamic, and future-focused, BU offers a compelling alternative to conventional study destinations. More importantly, it offers students the chance to discover themselves in an environment that encourages innovation, creativity, collaboration, and global thinking. In many ways, Bangkok University is not just preparing students for jobs; it is preparing them for the future.

And perhaps that is what makes it one of the most exciting emerging international education destinations for the next generation of learners.



**The Smart Edge named Bangkok University's Strategic India Partner.**

L to R: Asst. Prof. Somyot Wattanakamolchai, Ph.D (Vice President and Pro Vice-Chancellor for International Education and Partnerships), Amit Phull (Founder & CEO, The Smart Edge), Lugkana Worasinchai (Vice President, Business Development), Sasithorn Bosai (Director of International Student Recruitment, International Network Development Office)



**DID YOU KNOW?**

Bangkok is home to one of the world's largest "digital nomad" and creative communities, making it a thriving hub for innovation, startups, media, design, hospitality, and global networking, making it ideal for students looking beyond traditional classroom experiences.

To know more, reach out to: [Operations@thesmartedge.in](mailto:Operations@thesmartedge.in)



# Your Education Digest: Snapshots of events that matter

Are you hosting an event for your institution?  
Send us details, and we will be happy to feature relevant events  
within this section of UCONNECT

Arpit Solanki, Head of Outreach for UPES Dehradun & PEARL Academy, recently shared his reflections on the conclusion of the three-phase Campus Immersion Program for school educators at UPES, emphasising that experiential engagement is key to understanding a modern academic ecosystem. He highlighted the initiative as a powerful vehicle for bringing together educators from diverse regions, intentionally structured in small batches to foster deep engagement, meaningful interactions, and valuable networking opportunities.

A significant portion of his insights focused on the firsthand feedback received from the participants, who commended UPES for its laboratory-rich environment, robust emphasis on experiential learning, and brilliant infrastructure. Educators also expressed surprise at the sheer scale of the institution, which actively supports nearly 20,000 students on campus. Ultimately, Solanki's experience underscored a shared vision for higher education, noting how encouraging it was to see school leaders witness the university's academic and student culture firsthand. He concluded by extending his appreciation to both the participating educators and the dedicated internal team whose collaborative efforts ensured the program's success.



Natasha Mankikar, Associate Director of MBA Admissions at The Red Pen, recently shared her reflections on the commencement of the AIGAC2026 conference, emphasising that staying ahead of global trends is essential for guiding the next generation of business leaders. She highlighted the annual conference, hosted this year by Duke University's Fuqua School of Business and the UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School, as a significant moment for the organisation as proud members of this global admissions community. Reflecting on a pivotal trip two years ago, Mankikar noted that she and Anju Goela had explored the nuances of European Business Schools ahead of the curve, a move that provided them with the deep perspective necessary to successfully navigate the diverse global MBA landscape for their 2025 applicants.

Over the course of the three-day summit, the focus will center on navigating emerging trends in graduate admissions, aligning strategies with the evolving, new-age goals of applicants, and developing collaborative solutions alongside the world's best consultants. The dialogue aims to address the persistent challenges of a shifting industry while unlocking fresh opportunities for students aiming for top-tier international institutions. Ultimately, Mankikar's insights underscore a commitment to bringing these robust global perspectives back to India, driven by a shared vision with the broader AIGAC network to nurture and elevate the next generation of global professionals.



Danielle D'Onofrio, University & Careers Counsellor at ACS Egham International School, recently shared her reflections on an insightful session addressing the rising and falling admissions trends at highly selective U.S. institutions. She highlighted the event as a valuable opportunity to understand how the international market continues to evolve, gaining advice to better guide students navigating the global higher education landscape. During the session, D'Onofrio engaged with perspectives from Jordan Pascucci of University of Pennsylvania and Chrissy Fulton LeMarbre of Brown University, who both reaffirmed that, despite uncertainty in the U.S., their Ivy League institutions remain committed to welcoming international students.

A significant portion of her insights centred on the value of collaborative professional communities, noting that the event provided a wonderful space to share ideas alongside colleagues, including Vicki Ryan and Charushilla Narula from ACS International Schools. Ultimately, D'Onofrio's experience underscored a dedication to action-oriented student support. She expressed a strong commitment to sharing these institutional updates with the student body at ACS Egham, while thanking the hosts and looking forward to welcoming them to campus in the future.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for  
Ask Me Anything Thursdays  
with Charushilla



Futurowise Foundations  
of Data Science:  
Turning Data into  
Real-World Insights



From Idea to Startup:  
Join the StarterSky  
Summer Accelerator:



Symbiosis Summer  
School 2026  
Admissions Now Open





# Check your Orange Quotient (OQ)

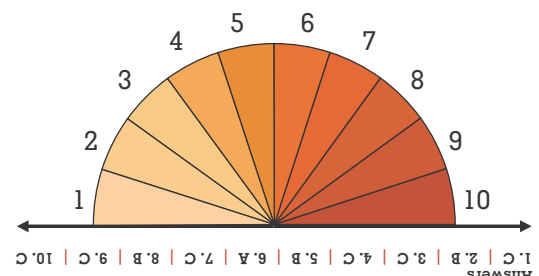
## Two Truths & A Lie: Education Edition

Here's fun for everyone in our community. Find below a series of Two Truths & A Lie questions inspired by some of the biggest conversations in education right now: university admissions, AI, grades, careers, student profiles, and the future of learning. Each set has two real statements and one lie. Your job is to spot the fake.

**Ready to test your instincts? Let the game begin!**

- Why are more international students choosing Indian universities?**
  - Affordable tuition and living costs compared to many Western countries
  - Growing global recognition of Indian institutions
  - Guaranteed placement packages for every international student
- When should students ideally begin exploring university and career options?**
  - During high school, through exploration and skill-building
  - Only after receiving board exam results
  - By researching interests and possible pathways gradually
- What makes a student profile stronger today?**
  - Consistency and depth in a few interests
  - Authentic passion projects and initiatives
  - Joining random activities a few months before applications
- Why are predictive algorithms controversial?**
  - They can inherit bias from existing data
  - They may lack transparency in decision-making
  - They are scientifically proven to be completely fair and unbiased
- What can strengthen a university application?**
  - Recommendation letters and essays
  - Sending universities daily reminder emails asking for admission
  - Demonstrated initiative outside academics
- Why are "well-rounded students" becoming less impressive?**
  - Universities now reject students involved in extracurricular activities entirely
  - Focused achievements can stand out more than excessive activity lists
  - Universities prefer depth and authenticity over doing everything superficially
- What is true about scholarships today?**
  - Some scholarships evaluate leadership and impact, not just grades
  - Financial aid policies differ across universities
  - Scholarships are offered only to perfect scorers
- What is one major misconception about college applications?**
  - Universities often review applicants holistically
  - Marks are the only thing universities care about
  - Essays can influence admission decisions
- Why is early profile building encouraged?**
  - It allows students to discover genuine interests over time
  - Long-term involvement appears more authentic
  - Universities prefer students who start preparing only in Grade 12
- What best reflects success in the modern world?**
  - Continuous learning and adaptability
  - Building networks and practical experience
  - Choosing one perfect career at 17 and never changing paths afterward

## The Orange Meter





## Share your story via UCONNECT

We are proud to be connected with a diverse network of individuals and organizations that resonate with our mission of empowering career choices one student at a time. We welcome and value insights from students, parents, partners, and educators on a wide range of topics and issues, and look forward to sharing their perspectives.

To be featured in UCONNECT - The Education Newsletter, you can write to us at [write@uconnectworld.com](mailto:write@uconnectworld.com)

You can also register your interest to contribute on the Orange Form and we will reach out to you.

**THE ORANGE FORM**

Join our intentional community of readers and contributors

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