

Indraprastha College for Women

Equal Opportunity Cell & Enabling Unit

Annual Report

Academic Year 2021–2022

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

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

The College has admitted a total of 29 students with disabilities: 21 in Under Graduation and 8 in Post-graduation programmes for the academic year 2021-22. Students admitted in the current academic year belong to a diverse set of disability categories: visual disability, speech and hearing disability, locomotor disability, and specific learning disabilities, all benchmark disabilities as specified in the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

In line with the larger vision of the College, the EOC and EU every year conduct various programmes such as: seminars, skill development workshops, cultural events, training and orientation programmes for students with disabilities enrolled in the College. Given below is a summary report of the major events, distinct facilities and services run under EOC and EU in the academic year 2021-22.

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

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

Ever since the pandemic has set in, the university has shifted the semester exams to online. Students with disabilities of the College took the advantage of the provision and attended their open book exams online on par with their non-disabled counterparts during the academic year 2021-2022. The EOC and EU actively aided the students in filling up their examination forms online, giving them up-to-date information on exam schedule and other related issues. During the exams, students were also assisted in accessing and downloading their respective question papers and uploading their answer sheets on time.

It is a matter of immense satisfaction that the College administration takes every possible effort to facilitate external funding to support students with disabilities. In the academic year 2021-22, Help the Blind Foundation, a Non-Governmental Organisation that offers financial support to the deserving students with visual disabilities across the country, selected a total of 37 students with visual disabilities from the College for their scholarship and sanctioned them a total of Rs.3,70,000/- (Rupees three lakh seventy thousand only). Additionally, All India Confederation of the Blind also offered a merit-based scholarship for 26 students with visual disabilities.

Human Resource Development

Dr. BR. Alamelu, a faculty in the Department of English (and also currently Coordinator, Enabling Unit in the College) teaches a 6-credit course titled: 'Communication for Special Needs' for the students of BMMMC, Semester-VI. Ms. Ritu Panda — a qualified trainer in Sign Language — takes classes on Indian Sign Language. It is a matter of pride that IP College

is the first institute of higher education in the country to have offered a full course on disability in general and special communication needs in particular at the undergraduate level. A total of five batches of students have passed out of the course ever since its introduction in the College, and they all have inspiring testimonies to offer about the course and its impact of their subsequent careers/higher studies. Along with a carefully designed, textual introduction and analysis of disability, the students had hands-on instruction in Braille, Indian Sign Language, white cane mobility and other accessible modes of communication deployed predominantly by persons with disabilities.

As an active partner in the celebrations of Azadi Ka Amrut Mahotsav (75 years of India's Independence), the College has conducted a plethora of events during the academic year 2021-2022, and the EOC and EU on their part hosted a webinar titled: 'Disability Policy in Independent India' on 27 August 2021. Shri T.d. Dhariyal, formerly Deputy Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Government of India, and the State Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities, Government of Delhi, graced the occasion and delivered a guest talk on the said topic. The EOC and EU also conducted three online competitions: an Essay Writing, a Slogan Writing and a Poetry writing on the broad themes of the history of India's independence. The Essay Writing was conducted in the month of September 2021 on the topic, 'Diversity and Inclusion: Progress through 75 years of India's Independence'. It was an inter-college event. The slogan Writing competition was held in the month of November 2021 on the theme, '75 Years of India's Independence'. The Poetry Writing competition was held in the month of January 2022 on the theme, 'Forgotten Heros of India's Independence'. A good number of students with disabilities in all the three events.

Like every year, the College observed the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December 2021. In a webinar held to mark the occasion, Dr. Jagdish Chander, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, Hindu College, University of Delhi delivered a talk on 'Disability, A Social Construct: Questioning the Normal'. Both the students and the faculty of the College attended the event in a good number and participated in the interactive session subsequent to the talk.

The EOC and EU organised an Online Orientation Programme for the new entrants on 1st December 2021. The Convener of EOC and the Coordinator of EU made a detailed presentation on the accessibility infrastructure, special facilities and services available for students with disabilities enrolled in the College.

Samarthya —the annual inter-college cultural fest for students with disabilities — was held on 12 April 2022. The event was inaugurated by the Principal, and Ms. Preeti Monga was invited as a chief guest of the inaugural session. She delivered a keynote address titled: ‘Disability and communication’, and the talk was well-attended and received a huge applause from the audience.

As part of Samarthya 2022, the EOC and EU conducted two inter-college competitions: Creative Writing and Singing. More than hundred students with disabilities from various Colleges of the University of Delhi participated in the competitions. The winners in the said events were presented cash prizes and certificates.

A farewell event for the outgoing students was organised on 29 April 2022. The students of Ist and IInd year of under graduation gave cultural performances for their seniors. A total of nine students with disabilities are passing out from various under graduation programmes of the College this year.

The EOC and EU conducted a fifteen-day mobility orientation programme for the benefit of new entrants in the month of May. Mr. Anil Kumar, a certified mobility instructor trained the students with visual disabilities to navigate within and around the College premises.

The EOC and EU feel proud to report that Ms. Jyoti Gupta — an alumna of the College (B.A.(Hons.) Political Science of 2017-2020 batch —qualified for the UGC Junior Research Fellowship through a nation-wide entrance test conducted in 2021. Ms. Ruchi Dubey — a student of B.A.(Hons.) Political Science of 2018-2021 batch — was selected as a Probationary Officer in the State Bank of India.

In an effort to build the employability skills of students with disabilities in general and students with visual disabilities in particular, the EOC and EU has been collaborating with Arise Impact — an NGO founded by Mr. Abhishek Syal, an MBA Graduate from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA — that offers a plethora of online courses for students with disabilities. Streamlining the collaboration, the EOC and EU continued with the project RISE (Raising Inclusive Skills and Employability) in the current academic year. While Ms. Shruti Bagaria, Associate Head of Arise Impact, Delhi Operations, heads the RISE, A group of ten students of the College also pledged their support and participate actively in the project. The project RISE has run a total of five online courses on employability skills, each targeting the 1st, 2nd and 3rd year students with disabilities respectively.

The courses offered during the academic year 2021-2022 include:

- 1. Personal Interview for the students of Semester V (09/09/2021 - 26/10/2021)**
- 2. Resume Building and English Conversational Skills for the students of Semester III (09/09/2021-13/10/2021)**
- 3. English Conversational Skills for the students of Semester I (17/01/2022-26/02/2022)**
- 4. Email Communication for the students of Semester IV (17/01/2022-25/02/2022)**
- 5. Success at Workplace for the students of Semester VI (17/01/2022-04/03/2022).**

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

There was an online interaction between the Principal and the Chief Executive Officer of Arise Impact on 19 January 2022. The Convener of EOC, the Coordinator of EU, the former and current Project Heads of RISE also participated in the interaction. The interaction reviewed the ongoing partnership between the College and the Arise Impact and various skill development courses being jointly offered out of this partnership therewith.

In line with the directions issued by the Ministry of Education, Government of India, the EOC and EU collected the reading material for the courses where the students with print disabilities have enrolled. The reading material in accessible formats will be made available on the College website for the intended users.

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

Ms. Dolly Jain

Convener

Equal Opportunity Cell

Dr. BR. Alamelu

Coordinator

Enabling Unit