

VC Umakant Dash aims to make GIPE 'go-to place' for economics education

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Pune: Umakant Dash, the new vice-chancellor of Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics (GIPE), said his focus would be on quality, transparency and inclusive governance, after taking charge on Tuesday.

Dash said he would remain sensitive to both legacy and current challenges, and aim to balance tradition with necessary reforms, prioritising the interests of the institute and its stakeholders. While holistic development of GIPE students would be his objective, he said placements were a key concern, especially for postgraduate (PG) students.

"For undergraduates, the focus is on preparing them for higher studies and ensuring the institute's brand value helps them. For the PG students, the plan is to engage with employers and analyse systems to improve their market acceptance," he said.

Acknowledging the recent controversies surrounding the institute, Dash said for him, the institute's interests were of priority. Going forward, he would focus on consultation, consensus-building and inclusive



The new vice-chancellor with two undergraduate students of GIPE

ness among all stakeholders, including faculty, staff, students, employers and society.

"I plan to look into introspecting and learning from the institute's alumni and historical case studies. We also need to critically analyse international models before adopting them to suit Indian contexts. The quality of students and value in education are very important to me. The quality of teaching as well as the quality of life of students on the campus and various facilities are equally important," said Dash, expressing hope to make the institute a "go-to place" for economics education in India.

He said he would draw from his experience at IIT Madras and other institutes, and stressed on the need to make processes smooth and transparent. "It is important to have inclusiveness in decision-making so that there is a collective sense of responsibility. Tomorrow (Wednesday) I plan to meet with students, faculty, staff and committees to understand issues of each stakeholder," said Dash, whose tenure would be five years.

Dash has nearly two decades of experience in academia and research with institutes of national and international repute. Before joining IRMA, he

was professor and head of the department of humanities and social sciences at the Indian Institute of Technology, Madras, and adjunct professor at the Indian Institute of Management, Tiruchirappalli.

GIPE has been without a full-time VC since last year, when questions were raised about the appointment of then VC, Ajit Ranade, culminating in then chancellor Bibek Debroy's resignation. Ranade also resigned, citing personal reasons. Shankar Das from TISS then took over as the interim VC, but controversies didn't leave GIPE. Earlier this year, the Servants of India Society (SIS), the parent body of GIPE, raised questions over alleged irregularities in appointments within GIPE by Das, which then led to SIS removing the chancellor, Sanjeev Sanyal, from his post and then reinstating him. This was followed by both parties — SIS and GIPE — trading allegations against each other. GIPE registered a case in April against SIS for misuse of its funds, resulting in the arrest of the SIS secretary, now out on bail. In June, GIPE wrote to the charity commissioner seeking suspension of SIS and appointment of an administrator.

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