

TOWARDS A TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY RENAISSANCE: THE FUTURE OF BENGAL'S PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY

First Report of the Presidency Mentor Group, August 2011

PREAMBLE

Nearly two hundred years ago in the second decade of the nineteenth century, a civic initiative in the city of Calcutta led to the establishment of “an institution for giving a liberal education”. Steered from behind the scenes by the guiding hand of none other than Raja Rammohun Roy, Hindu College was formally founded on January 20, 1817. Renamed Presidency College in 1855, rarely has the trajectory of one institution of higher learning been so inextricably intertwined with the larger history of an entire subcontinent’s encounter with modernity. During the nineteenth century its faculty and students played an innovative part in the making of Indian modernity and the articulation of its multiple meanings. In the early twentieth century they negotiated the challenge of contesting colonial power while creatively engaging with Europe in the domain of generating and disseminating new forms of knowledge. Home to a galaxy of dedicated scholar-teachers and brilliant students, Presidency College maintained its status as India’s premier institution of higher education in the early decades after independence. Its distinguished alumni have left their impressive mark in academia and all walks of life across the country and in different parts of the world.

The time has come for the rejuvenation of Presidency as it transitions from College to University through a new, concerted civic initiative in the second decade of the twenty-first century. By adopting a bold set of reforms, Presidency can emerge stronger after an interregnum of stagnation, if not decay, and once more enrich the intellectual and cultural life of Bengal, India and the world. The state government can play an important enabling and non-interfering role in facilitating the work of citizens and educationists to **refashion Presidency as a center of excellence.**

The Presidency Mentor Group’s recommendations are not designed simply to recover the institution’s lost glory. While seeking inspiration from past achievements of this iconic college, we are really concerned about the future and suggest ways to build a fine, contemporary, twenty-first century institution. We would like to see the rejuvenation of Presidency in the wider context of the regeneration of higher education in Bengal as a whole and as an example that other institutions would seek to emulate.

Our aim is to turn Presidency University into a world-class research and teaching institution by the time of its 200th anniversary in 2017. Between 2011 and 2014 we recommend the recruitment of a critical mass of outstanding faculty members and a perceptible upgrading of the academic

infrastructure that will attract the best scholar-teachers and prevent the flight of the most talented students because of the lack of opportunities for a superior education in Bengal. From 2014 to 2017 we hope to see the consolidation of the faculty to its full strength and the establishment of a state-of-the-art campus with rich library resources and laboratories. As a unique institution devoted to high-quality undergraduate and post-graduate teaching as well as cutting-edge scholarship and research, the aim is to make Presidency a magnet to draw the best teachers, researchers and students from across the country and beyond by 2017.

On June 3, 2011, Mamata Banerjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal, invited Sugata Bose to serve as Chair of the Presidency Mentor Group and requested him to ask Amartya Sen to be Adviser to the Chair. Professor Sen kindly agreed to play that role and to be consulted by the Chairperson for advice on all aspects of the Group's work. The Chief Minister asked the Chairperson in consultation with his Adviser to select the other members of the Group. On June 29, 2011, Sugata Bose announced the names of the members of the Presidency Mentor Group in the presence of the Chief Minister at Writers' Buildings: Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Abhijit Banerjee, Swapan Chakravorty, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Himadri Pakrasi and Ashoke Sen. The 15-point terms of reference for the Presidency Mentor Group were also made public. On July 8, 2011, the Chief Minister, Mamata Banerjee, held a meeting with Amartya Sen and Sugata Bose in Kolkata's Town Hall.

On July 9, 2011, both Sen and Bose visited Presidency University. Bose had an interaction with the Presidency Alumni Association at their Annual General Meeting and met the Vice-Chancellor in her office. On July 19, 2011, the Higher Education Department of the Government of West Bengal sent a formal notification to Presidency University regarding the formation of the Presidency Mentor Group and its terms of reference. The PMG had its first formal meeting on July 22-23, 2011 with five members – Sugata Bose, Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Swapan Chakravorty, Himadri Pakrasi and Ashoke Sen – in attendance. They visited the departments, libraries and laboratories of Presidency University on July 22, interacting with a broad range of faculty and students. They also had a meeting with the nominated PU Council. The PMG had intensive deliberations during July 22 and 23, and called on the Chief Minister at 5 pm on July 23. In addition to discussing matters related to their terms of reference, the Group responded to eight specific queries from the Vice-Chancellor. Sugata Bose, Swapan Chakravorty, and Sukanta Chaudhuri met on July 28 and Bose, Abhijit Banerjee, Chakravorty and Chaudhuri met on August 4, 2011. Bose, Banerjee, and Chaudhuri visited Presidency University on August 6, 2011. The recommendations that follow are based on thorough discussions held at the meetings, continuous consultation by email among the PMG members, and conversations on the phone. We trust these recommendations will receive the most serious consideration.

A STATE UNIVERSITY WITH A SPECIAL STATUS

[Terms of Reference No. 11: To explore whether Presidency should continue to be a State university or seek the status of a Central university or aspire to be counted as one among the new innovation universities.]

In light of its rich history and traditions, **we recommend that Presidency University be regarded in the future as the crown jewel of institutions of higher education in Bengal that will be an example for other institutions to emulate.** Since the Chief Minister of West Bengal has taken the initiative to set up the Presidency Mentor Group to suggest ways of restoring academic excellence, our first preference is to allow Presidency University to remain a state university, but be accorded a special status. We propose below a transparent and rigorous process to create an outstanding and diverse faculty as well as a streamlined admissions process to draw the most talented students from all sections of society. The institution of these processes to recognize the highest academic merit should be the basis for awarding the special status involving salaries and benefits for faculty comparable and competitive with the best on offer in India at central and central government funded institutions of higher education, research facilities of the highest international standards, and a high-energy teaching and learning environment.¹

The achievement of excellence is a challenging task and will require the generation and commitment of significant resources. Presidency University should generate its own resources and launch a major fund-raising drive from alumni and other public and private sources, which may reduce its financial dependence on the state over time. This should be a highly professional capital campaign mounted by the University with well-defined targets. However, since recruitment of an outstanding faculty must begin now, the state needs to come forward with seed funding and adequate resources necessary to rebuild Presidency between now and 2017 as a genuine center of excellence. We hope that the state government, despite its fiscal constraints, will see it as a worthwhile investment in human capital that will attract some of the finest minds all over India and abroad to a center of excellence in Bengal. To work towards financial viability and sustainability over time, both capital grants for infrastructure and an endowed scholarship fund for covering tuition fees of needy students will be required. Presidency University should establish a Finance and Budget Committee to draw up a detailed plan of revenue and expenditure over the next six-year period. Upon the receipt of firm economic data, the Presidency Mentor Group will work with such a committee to assist in working out the economic feasibility of implementing its recommendations to achieve the goal of

¹ This does not preclude other worthy or aspiring universities from seeking special or central university status as they see fit, but that is a matter beyond the remit of the Presidency Mentor Group whose role is to recommend ways to rejuvenate a unique, iconic institution as a center of excellence.

excellence. The aspiration to become a center of excellence has to be matched with the establishment of world-class governance standards.

On the basis of adopting a transparent and rigorous process of appointing an outstanding faculty, the best practices of university governance, and a clearly laid out economic feasibility plan, a very substantial capital grant along the lines provided to the IISERs should be sought from the center. Every year a special one-time budgetary allocation is made to a couple of universities to enable them in their quest for excellence. We encourage Presidency University to send a serious proposal and request to the Prime Minister, who is on record in stating a firm commitment to revive Presidency, for such an allocation in February 2012. The University Grants Commission typically offers extra funds to institutions on the occasion of anniversaries. Presidency should make a strong case for special support for a five-year period from the UGC leading up to its 200th anniversary in 2017. A similar carefully worked out proposal should be sent to the Planning Commission for incorporation in the 12th Plan, which promises significantly higher allocations and outlays in the field of higher education.

AN OUTSTANDING AND DIVERSE FACULTY

[Terms of Reference No. 4: To define search procedures and the constitution of search committees to make the best faculty appointments at the levels of professor, associate professor and assistant professor in order to create an outstanding and diverse faculty.]

In the considered view of the Presidency Mentor Group, the top priority must be to recruit an outstanding faculty capable of cutting-edge research and high-quality teaching. As of August 1, 2011, there are exactly 100 sanctioned, vacant faculty positions at Presidency, as many as 51 at the full professorial rank. The university administration has sought 104 further faculty positions. An unspecified number of posts will become available depending on how many of the current faculty members from the Presidency College era leave Presidency University and move to government colleges.

The quality of the first 100 faculty appointments will be of critical importance in determining the future of Presidency University. There can be no compromise on excellence in making these appointments that must be based on academic merit alone. We strongly recommend that all these appointments be made by Search and Selection Committees consisting of leaders in the various disciplines and fields of study. The Presidency Mentor Group has spent considerable time and effort in identifying distinguished scholars active in research and teaching in each discipline/field. We recommend that the Search and Selection Committees for each discipline/field be drawn from the lists supplied in Appendix 1 of this report. We earnestly request the Chancellor to consider choosing his nominee for searches in each

discipline/field from our carefully compiled list. Those on our list who are not asked or available to serve on a particular search and selection committee for appointments in their discipline/field should be written to seeking their nominations of promising candidates.

All faculty positions must be widely advertised and announced nationally and internationally utilizing all modes of communication, including the Presidency Mentor Group's website. Every application needs to be given due consideration. Presidency should be proactive in seeking good candidates, for example, by presenting what it has to offer at the annual Young Investigators' Meet in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where freshly minted Ph.D.'s interested in returning to India gather to interact with representatives of recruiting universities and research institutes. The Search and Selection Committees should be empowered to approach potential candidates who have not applied, especially for the senior appointments, and enquire whether they wish to be considered. All short-listed candidates should be invited for interviews. Arrangements should be made for interviews to be conducted through a video conference for those candidates residing abroad who cannot come for interviews on a particular day and also for candidates living elsewhere in India for medical or other special reasons.

Once a critical mass of excellent faculty has been assembled, we expect that they will take a leading role in recruiting their colleagues with the help of outside experts. We hope that by 2017 the search and selection procedure outlined in this report will give way to the normal rules of university autonomy and faculty self-governance that are in place at all well-established, reputable universities in the world. A fine faculty usually knows how to replenish itself.

In addition to excellence due attention needs to be paid to the question of diversity. All legal norms must be followed in seeking and appointing candidates belonging to the scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and other backward classes. We note with concern that among the current 141 faculty members only two appear to be Muslims. Less than 2% representation on the faculty of a community that constitutes nearly 27% of the population of the state is clearly untenable and unacceptable at what we expect will once again be the premier institution of higher education in Bengal. Members of under-represented groups should be especially encouraged to apply and a faculty diversity officer should brief Search and Selection Committees on this matter. The issue of diversity should be addressed both at the university-wide and departmental levels. For example, there is not a single woman among the fifteen full-time faculty members of the Geology Department. There is no woman faculty member in the Political Science Department either. This gross gender imbalance needs to be tackled during the first round of appointments under the aegis of Presidency University. The University should have a Committee on Faculty Diversity. All departments should be required to submit demographic reports and all searches must document the demographic profile of applicants.

Among the more than fifty full professorial appointments it may be advisable to recruit about half a dozen strong leaders in the biological sciences, physical sciences,

mathematical sciences, social sciences and the humanities as distinguished University Professors. The Presidency Mentor Group as well as the Search and Selection Committees in the different disciplines may suggest names for such appointments. Full professors should be typically scholars and teachers of national and international distinction. Even the most distinguished professors should be asked to teach at least one undergraduate course. This will help revive the tradition of high-quality, research-based undergraduate teaching at Presidency. The normal course load may be two courses in one semester, and one course in the other semester. For researchers who are also engaged in doctoral dissertation supervision, the course load could be reduced to one course per semester. Associate professors should have a strong publication record in the form of a book published by a reputable academic publisher or articles in top, scholarly, refereed journals as well as teaching experience. Assistant professors should have Ph.D.s and display evidence of research potential and teaching ability. Cluster recruitments should be allowed whereby a leading scholar may recommend two or three team members. Each appointment, however, must be processed according to its own merits. There should be enough flexibility to offer inter-disciplinary scholars joint or shared appointments in two departments.

The above principles should form the basis of a faculty recruitment policy. A guideline for faculty recruitment, including planning, advertising, the constitution of Search and Selection Committees, procedures for screening, interviewing, offering and hiring, should be prepared by the University. It should be printed in the form of a booklet and posted on the official website. A similar statement on the conditions of employment should be made available to the applicant at the point of applying. Candidates should be able to submit their applications online.

The Presidency Mentor Group is making available to the University letters expressing interest in faculty positions sent directly to them. These scholars should be deemed to have applied or encouraged to send a formal application. We also encourage a Rolling Plan, which will enable applications to be sent in by those seeking positions even if a vacancy has not been advertised. These would be processed and the candidates called for selection when the need arises. The same policy may be adopted with candidates who have been interviewed, but not selected for a particular opening. This is a simple way of creating a large hiring pool. It also puts into place a permanent data collection system. Many institutions at home and abroad adopt this policy to their benefit.

In order to attract the best faculty to Presidency as a unique institution and center of excellence, it will be necessary to offer salary scales and medical and retirement benefits comparable and commensurate with central and central government funded universities in India and institutions like IISER (Kalyani), IIM (Kolkata) and

IIT (Kharagpur) located in West Bengal.² Such a policy of the state government will draw the finest talent from across India and abroad to Bengal. Pay protection should be offered to faculty willing to join from another state or central government funded institution in India. Scientists of real caliber at Presidency will be able to bring in sizeable funds for their research projects from a variety of sources, including central government agencies, but should along with faculty in all disciplines be offered start-up research funds. In certain instances special research fellowships may be offered to talented scholars. A paid sabbatical leave for a semester should be offered for research after three continuous years of full-time teaching. Unpaid research leaves should be approved for those who are awarded prestigious fellowships. Permission should be given without having to go through cumbersome bureaucratic processes for attendance of important international conferences so long as any missed classes are made up in the course of the semester.

The University should provide assistance with housing, child care, transport for research, purchase of equipment including computers, access to electronic material for research and teaching, instruction in the local language for faculty members from outside Bengal, and advice on career opportunities for spouses and partners. The nature of assistance available should be explained in a faculty resource information booklet and on the university website.

Presidency University should create a faculty incentive fund for making incremental appointments and preempting counter offers in the case of genuinely outstanding leaders. This fund could draw on consultancy fees, commercialized services, citizens' initiative, alumni/alumnae contributions, and private/corporate sponsorships properly vetted by a gifts policy committee.

Since the recruitment of a permanent faculty to its full strength may take a few years, we recommend **contractual appointments of very capable guest faculty** for terms ranging between one semester and five years. Since the retirement age is low in India by international standards, **it should be possible to employ recently retired scholars and teachers with a proven track record as either full-time or part-time faculty. There should be no age limit for contractual appointments of superannuated teachers, but all such appointments should be term-limited to a maximum of five years.** If a search does not yield an outstanding regular faculty member, the funds sanctioned for that post may be used to appoint a guest faculty member. The guest faculty may include scholars and teachers from universities and institutes in other parts of India and abroad who may be willing to spend a semester or two at Presidency on sabbatical leave from their home institution, on deputation, or on any other scheme. Presidency University should acquire a guest house so that visiting faculty coming from outside Kolkata for a

² This recommendation is strongly endorsed by all but one of the members of the Presidency Mentor Group. For Professor Sukanta Chaudhuri's alternative proposal regarding salary scales, please see Appendix 2.

semester can be accommodated. The guest faculty may also include qualified members of other institutions in the greater Kolkata region who may be willing to teach a course. They should ideally be paid for a semester's course or a monthly honorarium. If it proves necessary to pay a fee per lecture hour for a limited number of lectures in a course, we suggest the fee should range from Rs 750 to Rs 1500 based on the seniority and qualifications of the person.

Presidency University should also draw on the Government of India's Senior Research Associateship Scheme or "scientists' pool" (not limited to scientists) of scholars and teachers residing abroad but wishing to return to India, who may be prepared to join the faculty for a period of up to three years. A special effort should be made to attract young scientists who could get the Ramanujan or other such Fellowships that provide attractive salaries and research funds. **The Search and Selection Committees could play an active role in identifying guest faculty in all categories, but not all guest faculty appointments need to go through such committees.**

DISTINGUISHED VISITING PROFESSORS

[Terms of Reference No. 15: To create a provision for short courses to be taught by distinguished scholars based in other parts of the world as visiting professors.]

In addition to guest faculty for the next few years, a permanent provision should be in place for short courses to be taught by distinguished scholars. Some of them may well be people with Kolkata connections, but who are based at universities abroad. However, we also encourage the University to attract scholars who will forge new Kolkata connections through Presidency. The most obvious opportunity to get distinguished visiting professors from abroad comes from the fact that July and August are working months in Kolkata but summer holidays in USA, Canada and Europe. A similar possibility might exist in the winter during the months of December and January.

To facilitate this kind of teaching by distinguished visitors who are likely to have some other concurrent obligations, each class should have a post-graduate student teaching assistant. For the teaching assistant this can be a very valuable experience, because she gets to work closely with a distinguished faculty member.

A TALENTED AND DIVERSE STUDENT BODY

[Terms of Reference No. 5: To refine and streamline the admissions process in order to recruit the most talented students from all sections of society and the process for awarding scholarships and providing financial aid on the basis of merit and need.]

The admissions office should have an outreach policy to schools in all parts of Bengal and India and make information available on an attractive website to potential foreign students as well. It should be possible to send applications online. Admission tests for entry into the undergraduate college should be of a very high standard. There should be no compromise on excellence and the temptation to fill up vacant seats with students who have not done well in the admissions tests must be avoided. Presidency University may consider in the future admissions tests in two broad streams – Natural Sciences and Social Sciences/Humanities – so as to give prospective students some flexibility in choosing their honors/major subjects. Economic rationalization of the tuition fee structure will be required in the future. A scholarship fund will have to be built in order to provide financial aid based on merit and need.

Entry into post-graduate courses should also be based on a rigorous application process that should include a personal statement, writing sample, letters of reference, undergraduate results and an admissions test in the relevant subject. There should not be any kind of reservation of seats for graduates of Presidency University, who can be expected to hold their own in competition from graduates of other universities. The best applicants, regardless of where they did their first degree, should be admitted in order to ensure excellence.

In addition to excellence, due attention should be paid to diversity in student admissions as in the case of faculty recruitment. Our impression is that the minorities are under-represented among Presidency students.

DEPARTMENTAL REORGANIZATION AND INTERDISCIPLINARY INITIATIVES

[Terms of Reference No. 6: To suggest innovative and efficient ways of organizing Departments and Schools of the University enabling both disciplinary and interdisciplinary appointments and courses of study.]

We recommend the reduction in the number of departments in the Sciences by merging Physiology, Botany, Zoology and Biotechnology as well as the Center for Bioinformatics and the Biochemistry program in Chemistry into one dynamic Department of Biology focusing on the most intellectually exciting areas in the biological and life sciences. The Science departments will, therefore, be as follows: Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geology, Mathematics and Statistics – each with core strengths. We note that the university administration has already decided to start a Department of Computer Science. It should not be thought of as a department to provide IT services. A theoretical computer sciences wing could be attached initially to the Mathematics department. If a separate Computer Science department is set up, it should be distinctive in its coverage of complexity theory and algorithms and also create connections with other departments. Computational biology may evolve in the curriculum via collaborations between the new Biology Department, the new Computer Science Department and the Statistics Department. A new Computer

Science Department should also set up initiatives in digital humanities in association with relevant departments.

In the social sciences we recommend the broadening of the Department of Sociology into a Department of Anthropology and Sociology to include new scholarship in social and cultural anthropology. There is a special need to create spaces for people with unique talents in interdisciplinary expertise, especially in the humanities and social sciences and also bridging the divide between the natural sciences and social sciences. We must start to think in terms of thematic clusters cutting across departmental lines in terms of cultural studies and digital humanities, modern Asian studies, and public policy that can in time grow into Schools or Centers. One model to explore might be a Cluster Innovation Center as proposed by the National Knowledge Commission with an aim to foster an ecosystem of innovation, and connect research with application for the benefit of society. Some support may be forthcoming from the National Innovation Council to facilitate linkages and partnerships with various stakeholders (other universities, CSIR labs, National Innovation Foundation (NIF), Industry, DBT, DST, CII, FICCI, Industry Clusters). **A School of Public Policy may well be one of the long-term goals of this kind of interdisciplinary collaboration.**

We also encourage the introduction of two or three thematic, University-wide research initiatives on such topics as “Energy, Environment and Sustainability”, “Water and Poverty”, and “Asian Interconnections”. These will draw faculty and graduate students from more than one department in joint research and training (develop and offer courses) activities. All of these must be term limited – five to seven years – so that new themes can be taken up in future. Internal seed funding for these initiatives should be supplemented by funds to be raised from outside. This may be the type of incentive that will attract outstanding faculty to Presidency University.

AN INTELLECTUALLY EXCITING CURRICULUM

[Terms of Reference No. 7: To propose a curricular structure and an intellectually exciting curriculum with a balance of lecture courses, seminars and tutorials and to provide detailed guidelines for innovative syllabi in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and the arts.]

We envisage Presidency University to be a self-contained university with a high-quality faculty. Moreover it is on a semester system, which means that one or at most two professors can be reasonably expected to cover one course. Therefore it does not seem to make sense to set down the exact details of the syllabus before the faculty arrives. It would make more sense to create a list of core courses for each field and then offer additional courses based on who is available to teach and what they want to teach. It does not make sense to insist that every specialized field would need to be covered at the undergraduate or even MA level. It is better to offer

fields that the faculty feels excited to offer than to force them to cover some imagined map of the entire field. For example, each faculty member could have responsibility for a certain number of core courses and be best allowed to teach the rest of the courses in whatever area they please.

An additional advantage to this kind of flexible approach is that the University could try to attract, as described above, many scholars (some of them Presidency alumnae) who work elsewhere but wish to spend part of the year in Kolkata. If they were allowed to teach what they want to teach—perhaps as a half semester course, to be combined with another half semester course on some related topic by a resident faculty member or even just a research paper to complete the requirement—many of them will be much happier to teach than if they have to follow some preset syllabus. Jointly taught courses by two permanent faculty members should also be encouraged.

Of course the danger of this approach is that there may be too many courses on topics that do not interest the students. Therefore every class must have an anonymous evaluation and the chairs of department should be given some discretion whether or not to continue certain courses based on enrolment and the evaluation results. In fact, **confidential students' evaluations of the courses at the end of each semester must be a requirement.**

We also propose that **the current distinction between honors and pass courses be eliminated.** It may be better in terms of teaching resources to just have one set of classes on a particular subject or theme and then require that students need to take say six semester courses for a pass and twelve for an honors. Courses would of course have to be structured in terms of pre-requisites (field courses and advanced courses should have the basic core courses as pre-requisites) so that students' plans of study make intellectual sense, but there seems no other reason to have courses that are taught at two levels.

There are two important caveats to this plan. One is that it will mean that some courses within the same department will be much larger than others (the ones that the pass course students want to take). Rather than the current system of departmental classrooms, the University should have an inventory of small, medium and large classrooms that get centrally allocated. Having the college run from 8.30 am till at least 7 pm (when the last class can start) will help a lot here.

Second, some fields like economics may be taken both by mathematics students and history students as a pass course, but they would have different levels of math preparedness and therefore different courses would be needed. Some additional courses would need to be taught to accommodate this demand (Harvard does this for example—it has math-free and math-intensive economics courses)

Finally the entire system of restricting students to a single field from the very day of admission may be dispensed with. **While students may indicate their choice of honors/major at the time of admission, there should be flexibility in terms of**

their being able to change their choice based on aptitude and performance at the end of the first year. In their first year they will be expected to take only core courses, but potentially in multiple fields (one student could do economics, history, politics and another mathematics, statistics and economics). Then at the end of the year, they will declare their final choice of particular honors/major programs and changes desired will be allocated based on a combination of their grades in the first year classes and available slots (may be internal recommendations as well). **The number of honors/major courses taken will be the same as is current practice, except that students will not have to follow an arbitrary, regimented schedule over three years.** In addition the college should think of introducing a core curriculum, under which every student is required to take at least one course in philosophy or literature, two on contemporary India (history, sociology, politics or economics) and one on scientific or moral reasoning. But this may require some time to develop the capacity to teach these courses.

The syllabi currently adopted for various subjects will have to be reviewed as excellent new faculty are recruited. The syllabus for each subject needs to be up-to-date in terms of scholarship in the field, imaginative and exciting. Since the academic year has already begun, we will provide detailed guidelines for innovative syllabi in the natural sciences, social sciences and humanities in our second report to be presented in January 2012 for adoption from July 2012.

Career Services

An office of career services should advise students to take internships in a variety of organizations, including local industries, during vacations or even part-time during the academic year. Some internships may be eligible for academic credit. The office should also advise students on future placement.

New Courses

Presidency University should first ensure the smooth and efficient running of the existing courses before embarking on any new program, especially at the Masters' and Ph.D. levels. It is more important for a university to provide quality education to its students than to cover all areas of study at all levels. Proper arrangements should be made for high-quality faculty and adequate space and resources before commencing any new post-graduate programs. As a notable example we might cite Jawaharlal Nehru University which so far has not opened a masters degree program in Mathematics or Chemistry due to lack of a sufficient number of faculty, even though the university has been in existence for many years.

THE UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGE AND GRADUATE STUDIES

[Terms of Reference No. 8: To define the relationship between the undergraduate College and the post-graduate Departments and Schools.]

The best universities typically have a synergistic relationship between undergraduate and graduate studies. As has been stated above, even the most distinguished faculty members engaged in research should be required to teach at least one undergraduate course. Post-graduate students should have opportunities to serve as teaching assistants to professors in large undergraduate lecture courses and meet the undergraduates for discussion in small sections. Well-prepared, advanced undergraduates may be given permission to take one or two courses at the post-graduate level. Advanced Ph.D. students may be allowed to take small independent undergraduate courses under the general supervision of a faculty member.

THE ACADEMIC CALENDAR

[Terms of Reference No. 9: To devise the most suitable academic calendar and consider whether to adopt a semester-system or year-long courses.]

We endorse the University's decision to adopt a semester system. Now that a semester system is in place, it does not make sense to have a one month long Puja holiday. The autumn holiday should extend from the first day of Durga Puja to Lakshmi Puja.

AN EFFICIENT AND ATTRACTIVE ACADEMIC INFRASTRUCTURE

[Terms of Reference No. 10: To suggest ways of making rich library resources available to faculty and students, building laboratories for scientific research, and equipping the campus with state-of-the-art information technology.]

In addressing the questions of library resources, scientific laboratories, and IT-capability, the Presidency Mentor Group was forced to confront the challenge of **space** in the campus.

The university is extremely space constrained. Economics, for example, at any one time has seven different cohorts of students and 3 lecture rooms. If we take into account the fact that the MA students have to take special papers, the number of groups is even larger. Space considerations, besides the current shortage of qualified faculty and lack of adequate resources, suggest the need for careful preparation before deciding to introduce new courses of study.

Most professors have either no place to sit or sit in tiny cubicle like offices, which creates an incentive for people to leave as soon as possible, given their teaching commitments. The recruitment of new faculty will only make the office constraint more challenging.

Faculty Offices and Lab Space:

If the university is to have a vibrant intellectual life, it is vital that the faculty feel happy to spend the whole day in their offices. The task of attracting talented faculty members who have other options will become infinitely harder if they are not assured a comfortable office, both because this is what other quality institutions offer, and also because they would then expect no one else to be around. **The University should aim to offer every faculty member a comfortable air-conditioned office. In addition, to attract talented experimental scientists the university will need to make it possible for them to set up their own labs.** Even if funding for that is available from DST or other sources, labs need space. The number of students is going up and they need space to sit and read (from their laptops for example) and socialize. They also need access to computer terminals for serious number crunching.

Library Space:

While the University is indeed short of space, the current use of space is far from optimal. To take just one example: there are multiple libraries with their own small collections, each of which takes up a number of rooms. Economics, for example, has two separate collections on different floors. A single library collection would free up a lot of space. The library houses a large number of books and serials that are more than fifty or even a hundred years old and are of more interest to historians and other senior scholars than to students. Moving these books out of the library and into some appropriate collection or storage space and fetching those books that are of interest to anyone from a depository, should make it eminently possible to put the whole collection into the central library building.

Space in the central library is not optimally used, with stacks much further apart than they are at libraries at MIT or Harvard and many other fine universities. Making the stacks moveable is another (somewhat costlier option). College and university libraries are shrinking in space all over the world. Their place is being taken by reading spaces where students can read and write (and surf the web). Reading spaces do not need to be contiguous—they can be just quiet corners where a few people can sit. Many such corners create a much more congenial academic atmosphere than one large room.

A Culture of Reading

To instill a culture of using time between classes to read and research, the university should provide high-quality WIFI access everywhere on campus (on which more in the section on IT below) and also require every student to have a laptop. Those who cannot afford one, based on parental income etc., should be provided one at the university's expense at the time of admission.

Extension of Working Hours

We recommend the extension of time to compensate for the limitation of space. The working hours can be extended. Many international universities have classes from

8.30 am till 10 pm and Presidency has to move in this direction. This will need a reorganization of the support staff and the shift in the expectations from the faculty.

“Swing Space”

The problem of space during transitions needs to be tackled on an urgent basis. To achieve the goal of providing modern high quality space to the faculty (including new labs, etc.), the university will need to plan its space upgrading strategy for the next ten or even twenty years. The basic process will involve moving people out and revamping their space and then moving them back. This requires creation/acquisition of a sufficient amount of swing space, either on campus or nearby, where a department or a part thereof can be temporarily moved. It would be helpful if the government can obtain the use of a portion of the All India Institute of Hygiene and Public Health Building as swing space for Presidency.

Enhancement and Expansion of Space

The Derozio Hall is a large auditorium that needs to be upgraded with state-of-the-art technology and a superior sound system. It should serve as a venue for major international conferences as well as theatrical and musical productions by faculty and students.

We are aware of plans for a second campus and a new ten-storey building behind the main heritage building where the canteen is located. We recognize the need for vertical expansion in an urban university. However, the new building must be of the highest aesthetic quality conforming to contemporary environmental standards. It is not possible to proceed to the building phase based on just one proposal. We recommend exploring the possibility of a national competition between September and December 2011 to be conducted under the aegis of the Council of Architects under the Ministry of Human Resource Development. An eminent jury should choose the best architectural design and plan. Funds can be sought while the architectural competition is on. The state government should consider matching any grant that may be obtained from the UGC for this purpose. The necessary municipal sanctions should be fast-tracked so that construction can commence in 2012.

There is a need to carefully study the site plan and digital map of Presidency University. **A high-quality space consultant should be appointed who will be able to generate more innovative ideas and a design brief for any architectural competition.**³

³ The Presidency Mentor Group is grateful to Partha Ranjan Das, conservation architect, for visiting Presidency with members of the Group on August 6, 2011, and generously sharing his expert opinion.

Information Technology:⁴

Presidency University has a "Comprehensive Proposal for 'E-Campus' for Presidency University". The proposal covers a lot of areas of possible IT support. However, It does not address the some basic architectural issues of how all these systems would fit together.

A system of this scale should not (and cannot) be designed, or even specified, overnight. However, in order to start building the various components of the system, it is extremely important to understand and enunciate the guiding architectural principles, and lay out the interfaces between the subsystems, so that it is easy to enhance the system, as requirements change or are solidified. Hardware and network interfaces have achieved a much greater degree of standardization, than software, and has therefore allowed "a thousand ways of skinning the cat", not all of which are optimal. This means that it is far easier to connect networks at the "wire-level", than it is to connect the software that use it.

The network infrastructure within the University campus is fairly comprehensive, with adequate bandwidth and redundancy built in. However, **the user connectivity possibilities are quite limited and daunting, with lack of adequate WiFi access points spread across the campus. Access to the network should be one of the highest priorities.**

Speaking of access to the network, priority should be given to allow under-privileged students equal access to network computing resources. The present-day reality is that Google is a far more reliable and accessible source of information, than any other resource. Easy and quick access to such resources from anywhere within the campus should be part of the charter. This also means that the University should set up several dedicated "computing rooms", with adequate number of terminals or PCs, located throughout the campus, so that students can readily access information. As mentioned above, every student ought to have a laptop, and the University should provide laptops to those students who qualify based on family income.

In a project of this magnitude, it is unwise and impractical to contemplate a centralized administration, which becomes the bottleneck for implementing new applications. Therefore, it is extremely important to build an architecture of loosely coupled components, that work autonomously, but cooperate to provide a comprehensive solution. Thus, we would recommend several things, viz.

- Use of a "TWiki Workspaces" like collaboration portal, that allows every user,

⁴ The Presidency Mentor Group is grateful to Dipankar Deshmukh, Mathematics alumnus and computer science specialist, for visiting Presidency with members of the Group on August 6, 2011, and generously sharing his expert opinion. The section on IT draws considerably on his expertise.

- regardless of function or category, a single authentication entry point into the system.
- The authentication data should reside in a central redundant LDAP repository, which is common across all applications in the University. This means that if a user needs to be purged or blocked, or otherwise re-validated, it is sufficient to do so at a single place. This is one of the few places that we advocate the necessity of centralization. However, administration of this data (e.g. account re-activation) may be delegated to competent, and authorized users.
 - The portal should be organized in a tree-like structure, allowing different user communities to branch into their own universes, where they can exercise their own administrative priorities, with respect to privacy, deployment of applications, sharing authorized access to certain applications to users from other universes (e.g. the library system might be administered by the library staff, but would allow access to students and faculty).
 - A set of template pages should be created to allow a common look-n-feel for information that is similar. The purpose of these templates should be to increase efficiency and ease of navigation for outsiders, by providing a consistent interface. However, care should be taken to ensure that creativity and enhancements are not stifled through dictats.
 - Each user group, and sub-group should be provided with basic system administration hands-on training to promote the vision of decentralized but cooperating systems.
 - The University should establish the idea of subject-wise moderated "bulletin-boards" where users can share tips, submit suggestions, questions, comments, rants, etc.
 - Wherever possible, open-source Software solutions should be used in preference to commercial Software. The establishment of a Computer Science department would facilitate the maintenance of such solutions, while providing the students and faculty with insights into the workings of a live mission-critical system. In this vein, use of LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, Perl) and similar technologies is encouraged.
 - Placing sentries at the gate (firewalls and intrusion-detection systems) are only partially capable of enforcing security. Too much trust in these systems is often misplaced. (Consider the number of times credit card information has been stolen recently from "highly secure" organizations). A pragmatic, but effective approach to securing privacy of information is of extreme importance.
 - User-interfaces and maintainability issues. As far as feasible, preference should be given to applications that do not necessitate installation of custom components at the user device, but run as browser accessible applications on servers.

The existing proposal should be evaluated in the context of the above guiding architectural principles. While there is (and always will be) a necessity for certain applications to be secure and closed, the overall architecture should consciously seek to avoid "information silos".

The Chairman of the Presidency Mentor Group has met Mr Sam Pitroda, former Chairman of the National Knowledge Commission, and received an assurance that **Presidency will be connected to the National Knowledge Network on a priority basis.**

In order to ensure successful implementation of the network, the following will be provided to Presidency by NKN:

- ▶ Necessary equipment required to connect Presidency to the network;
- ▶ Access to high performance computers such as GARUDA (mutual consent with the owner of HPC services);
- ▶ Access to Global Research & Development (R&D) Networks such as GLORIAD (Indo-US initiative), TEIN 3 (Indo-European initiative) etc;
- ▶ Platform to interact with other research and educational institutes: Pan India and across the Globe;
- ▶ Access to high speed internet and other commodity services (DNS, Collocation, Security Links, Messaging Gateways, Authentication etc.).

Presidency must provide NKN with the following:

- ▶ Nomination of ONE Technical Nodal Officer willing and able to coordinate with NIC in dealing with all matters (technical & administrative) relating to the integration of Presidency with the network. This person will become the single point of contact for the NKN team.
- ▶ Space for 1 rack (at the most 2 racks, in exceptional cases) in Presidency's computer center;
- ▶ UPS of 5 KVA for the installed equipment; (However, a typical for NKN equipment UPS uses only 3 KVA);
- ▶ Permission to one of the National Long Distance providers (like BSNL/ MTNL/ RAILTEL/PGCIL) to provide the optical connectivity to NKN.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to be signed between NKN and various institutes is getting finalized. This will be sent shortly. However, Presidency may allow the work to be carried out by the NKN.

So, Presidency needs to

- Nominate a person, who can represent the University both technically and administratively to NKN
 - Sign a MoU with NKN
 - Decide where the NKN gateway will be located in the campus, and provide one rack space, provision for a second (my understanding is that NKN will provide the equipment in racks)
- Procure a 5KVA UPS (uninterruptible power supply), ensure that the room has adequate electric capacity.

Contact a provider, e.g, BSNL, to lay the optical fiber from this room to the nearest NKN connection point.

Library Staffing

1. There is an acute shortage of library staff. Key posts, such as that of the librarian, are lying vacant, and should be filled immediately.
2. There is also need for in-service training of present staff, if they are to handle new resources and technology, in addition to switching over to electronic library management. Most good library software have built-in modules for processing, cataloguing and library management, and the cost of software would not be an additional burden. This is a relatively simple matter, and institutions such as the National Library and IASLIC may be approached for conducting short-term courses. Vendors may also be invited to conduct user-training programs, after the purchases have been made.
3. An interim solution may be the appointment of interns from library science departments of universities for house-keeping functions for specified periods. Students of Presidency University may also volunteer to help in processing and other jobs.
4. There might be an integrated computer services division that would look into computer-related problems of all departments, including those of the library. Such a service is necessary for website security, round-the-clock maintenance of electronic infrastructure and providing high-quality internet service for users.

Library Collection Building: Print Resources

In addition to the routine grants, the university may consider innovative ways of building collection.

1. One such way may be to start a pro-active gift and exchange programme with other libraries, especially those of universities, colleges and research institutions. Duplicate titles may be selected for exchange with other institutions (including universities abroad), while gifts may be welcomed from institutions, funding agencies, publishers' associations, government publishers, cultural missions, past students and faculty. Sorting gifts, especially from donors who want to get rid of unwanted books, is a tedious business. For this reason, the university needs to have a Gift and Exchange Policy in place that would allow unwanted gifts to be exchanged or disposed of.
2. Departments need to pursue projects funded by the DST, UGC (e.g. DSA projects, Major Research Projects), etc. that offer grants for enhancing library collections. The funds available from the state government may then be freed for procuring print journals.

Library Collection Building: Enhancing Electronic Resources

Special emphasis needs to be placed on augmenting electronic resources, such as those available through INFLIBNET, especially in the current context of a shortage of space. There are a number of immediate things that one could do.

- **Digital Library of India**

Presidency University should join the Digital Library of India project initiative, started with in collaboration with Carnegie Mellon University, USA which provided scanners free of cost to India for promoting Digital Library Initiatives under the Universal Digital Library Project. The Indian Institute of Sciences, Bangalore has been coordinating the project from the Indian side since March 2002 when the first digitization project was started.

Since then the Department of Information Technology, Government of India has supported 30 projects under the DLI scheme.

The Digital Library of India is hosted by the IISc, Bangalore, in co-operation with Carnegie Mellon University, International Institute of Information Technology, Hyderabad, the National Science Foundation, Virginia, USA, ERNET and Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, Egypt for the Government of India and 23 participating centers at <http://www.dli.ernet.in/> and <http://www.new.dli.ernet.in/>.

Although more than 160 million pages have already been digitized, as of date 108.55 million is up on the web from 3,08,643 books in over 40 languages.

Presidency University, with its rich collection, should be integrated to the DLI for accessing the material and for digitizing part of its collection through Central Government funds. The DLI is at present entering its third phase. The high speed scanner donated by Carnegie Mellon currently charges Rs 1.50 per page for scanning, which is paid by the Government of India. Presidency should submit an integrated project to the DLI, and get in touch toward that end with the Working Group of Digital Library, the Digital Library Cell, Department of Information Technology, and CDAC, Kolkata.

Living Space for Students:

The PMG Chairperson visited the Eden Hindu Hostel on August 6, 2011, accompanied by a reputed conservation architect and interacted with representatives of the Women's Hostel (in Salt Lake) in the Bankim Sabhaghar. Another member of the PMG subsequently visited the women's hostel.

The Eden Hindu Hostel is a beautiful 125-year old heritage structure, but the conditions inside are squalid. The bathrooms and toilets do not accord with the minimum standards of hygiene, and showed signs of massive wastage of water due to poor sanitation and plumbing. The kitchen and dining room were unclean and gloomy spaces. The entire hostel has zero IT-capability and no internet connection.

The new women's hostel in Salt Lake has rooms of reasonable quality, but faces

problems of water seepage in the rooms and waterlogging on the ground floor. The storeroom for kitchen supplies is unhygienic. The kitchen floor looked in need of polishing and the two exhaust fans dripping with oil and grease clearly require to be cleaned on a regular basis. The toilets need to be renovated and plumbing repaired. There are no IT facilities. The bus service from the hostel to the university, promised in the prospectus, has not been in operation for at least six months. The fire extinguishers have expired in 2009. This is a serious safety hazard. Security certainly needs to be strengthened. There are only two guards, who can hardly be expected to carry out twelve hours' duty each. In case they go on leave or are even temporarily absent from their posts, the premises are left wholly unguarded.

We recommend certain short-term and long-term measures to improve living conditions for students and an expansion of dormitory facilities for the increasing number of students we hope to attract from outside Kolkata. Urgent improvement is called for in the areas of safety and security, especially in the women's hostel. Outsourcing on a contract basis to a reputable security company may be considered. This would also make it easier to post women guards. Bus transport from Salt Lake to College Street should be resumed, even if it is not fully utilized, and could be outsourced to an independent contractor. Security and conservancy services need to be outsourced on the basis of defined work, and not on the basis of specified manpower or hours of service.

The second and third floors of the Salt Lake hostel should be completed quickly and the existing boarders transferred to these floors. The lower floors may be renovated/upgraded in one or two months before new intake happens. A floor can be added to the Eden Hindu Hostel buildings, which will dramatically increase capacity. The end block can be renovated and converted into a women's hostel. It can easily be cordoned off and a separate entrance created with adequate security. There is an issue of gender inequity involved in getting all the women boarders to travel from Salt Lake while all the men are lodged next door to the campus.

ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS

Even though this item does not figure specifically in our terms of reference, we venture to make a few suggestions in this regard as no proposal for academic excellence at PU can succeed without adequate administrative support. The basic requirements in this respect fall into three categories:

A. Freeing Presidency University from its total reliance on the state bureaucracy, and setting it up as an independent administrative entity like other state universities.

B. Ensuring adequate staff, in number and required skills, in the key administrative departments, with necessary infrastructure. This does not mean that Presidency University must duplicate other universities in its administrative structure. Rather, we would suggest a leaner and more streamlined pattern.

C. Setting up the financial, technical and administrative machinery to address our proposals for creating new space. Even though the question of space is being treated separately in this report, its administrative implications are so important as to call for special mention here.

To take up these concerns one by one:

A. Setting up Presidency University as an independent administrative entity, free of day-to-day reliance on the state bureaucracy.

Presidency University is in a transitional stage between its old and new avatars as a college and a university. We would therefore recommend that the following measures be implemented:

1. All physical assets of the former Presidency College should be considered as transferred to Presidency University, and a general order issued to this effect.

2. Till they are explicitly replaced by other arrangements, all routine grants and other disbursements to the former Presidency College (except salary and other payments to teachers from the WBSES and WBES) should be made to Presidency University without need for further specific orders in each case. Such funds can then be handled independently by Presidency University, as is the case with other state universities. It should be the onus of the Government to issue and circulate a general order to this effect to all relevant departments and sections.

3. All new allocations of funds should be made to Presidency University for direct disbursement and control, not through the P&A office or AG's office. Needless to say, they will be subject to the usual government audit procedure.

4. To consolidate the above arrangements, Presidency University should draw up its own full-fledged budget from the financial year 2012-13 onward. Drawing up a consolidated budget, and having it sanctioned by the Government, is the first crucial step towards financial autonomy, so that all state funds can be directly disbursed to Presidency University under broad heads from an annual allocation, as with other state universities.

B. Setting up an adequate administrative mechanism.

1. Senior officials. As of now, Presidency University has a VC, a Registrar, and (only since 1 August) a Finance Officer. We would move the Government to immediately sanction appointment to some other crucial posts:

- a) Dean of Students
- b) University Engineer
- c) at least one Deputy Registrar

d) Internal Auditor: imperative under rules if Presidency University is to be financially autonomous

(On what might be thought another crucial post, the Controller of Examinations, see remarks below.)

2. Other officials.

- Accounts and Audit. So far, accounts and audit activities relating to Presidency College had been carried out by the P&A office and the AG's office: the few such personnel at Presidency College functioned as a kind of post office. Presidency University will need a full complement of finance-related staff.
- Technical staff for building, engineering and maintenance. Here again, all such work at Presidency College was carried out by the PWD. Presidency University, like any other university, must be autonomous in this respect no less than in financial matters. This will mean employing a full complement of technically trained hands. It will also require at least two Assistant Engineers, to look respectively after (a) new construction, and (b) maintenance, repair and renovation.
- Computer support and systems management
- University Development Office for fund-raising

3. Controller of Examinations and the Examination Office.

We may consider whether, under the semester system, this office is really necessary. The semester system necessarily means that many tasks previously carried out by the Controller's office now devolve on the academic staff, while other tasks are eliminated altogether. The sole tasks that can usefully be carried out centrally are (a) tabulation of results and (b) issue of grade sheets, certificates and transcripts. This can be done by a small team under an officer like the present Deputy Controller inherited from Presidency College days. (The post can, of course, be redesignated.) As the entire process can be computerized, it is easy to devise a fast and error-proof system involving minimal staff, delay and official formality.

If Presidency University could successfully implement this model, it would serve as an example for other universities to follow.

C. Setting up the financial, technical and administrative support for creating new space.

The chief requirements in this respect are:

1. Appointing a University Engineer with adequate support staff as proposed above.
2. To immediately commence the process for a design brief and a possible architectural competition for the proposed new building, keeping the heritage and

environmental factors in mind. The preparation of the design brief will involve provision of expert staff. They may be engaged on a consultancy basis as in-house staff is not available.

A CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

[Terms of Reference No. 12: To establish a University development office and recommend a process to vet private gifts for endowed chairs, research funds, fellowships, scholarships, and physical infrastructure that might augment government funding and grants.]

Presidency University should immediately establish a University Development Office headed by a professional with experience in fund-raising from public and private sources. The UDO should compile and maintain a comprehensive database of Presidency alumni across the world and identify potential donors who might support the rejuvenation of an iconic institution. We appreciate the offer of the Presidency Alumni Association based in Calcutta to help with raising funds, especially to bring distinguished visiting professors. Networks of “Friends of Presidency” can be set up in North America and Europe, enabling tax-deductible philanthropic contributions to be made by alumni and well-wishers in foreign countries. A similar network might be set up in India as well to include supporters beyond the circle of alumni.

After adequate preparation a capital campaign should be launched in 2012. Half of these funds could go into an endowment while the other half may be for current use. Funds for named Chairs in honor of outstanding students and professors of Presidency might be sought from public sources. Private gifts should also be welcomed by offering naming opportunities for chairs, fellowships, scholarships, buildings, floors and rooms of buildings, reading spaces in libraries, library materials, and labs. The amounts required for naming should be determined in advance. A Gifts Policy Committee should vet the acceptance of donations from private sources to ensure that no strings are attached, which might impair the principle of academic freedom.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNIVERSITIES

[Terms of reference No. 13: To suggest cross-registration agreements with other universities and colleges and partnerships or exchanges with other research institutes in West Bengal and India.]

The academic departments in Presidency need not try to do everything but rather excel in chosen areas within each department and in certain interdisciplinary fields. It would be important, therefore, to explore cross-registration agreements and make plans to share academic resources with other universities. To begin with, such

arrangements could be made with IISER, BESU, Calcutta University and Jadavpur University. Short-term student exchanges with top colleges and universities in other parts of India should be carried out.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

[Terms of reference No. 14: To help create international partnerships and exchanges with select, outstanding colleges and universities in other parts of the world.]

The outstanding faculty we hope to recruit will take the lead in establishing research collaborations with international partners. More formal faculty and student exchanges with select overseas universities and colleges can be explored. Haphazard signing of MOUs with all comers must be avoided at all costs. The exchanges should be of mutual benefit and made with top-ranking institutions. In addition to universities in North America and Europe, it would be important to look east in the search of international partnerships towards such institutions as the National University of Singapore, Chulalongkorn University, Tokyo University and Peking University.

THE GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

[Terms of Reference No. 1: To craft an appropriate governance structure for Presidency University enabling its most distinguished alumni to play a positive role in restoring it to a position of academic excellence.]

Well-functioning governing boards in the best universities of the world mostly draw on distinguished alumni. There needs to be a judicious balance between invitation and election in shaping the governance structure. This combination of invitation and election can be seen in governing boards of foreign universities like Harvard and Indian universities like JNU. It is best to avoid over-representation in statutory bodies of ex-officio members who happen to be government functionaries or hold various positions. Individual talent needs to find a proper place in the governing structure.

THE PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY ACT

[Terms of Reference No. 2: To propose amendments to the Presidency University Act, as necessary, to facilitate achieving its goals of excellence and equity.]

It is our understanding that the statutory bodies prescribed by this Act have not yet been constituted. So if the government of the day wishes to make improvements to this legislation, this is a good moment to do so. The Presidency Mentor Group would be willing to offer comments on any amendments that the government might

propose. It would be advisable in this connection to study recent legislation in Parliament and follow what is being proposed for the new innovation universities. It may make sense to have one Governing Board rather than a Court and a Council. The search and selection process we have recommended in this report is crucial to the achievement of excellence. The relevant clauses of the Presidency University Act should be amended, if necessary, to give a strong legal foundation to this process.

STATUTES

[Terms of Reference No. 1: To revise and frame Statutes of the University as they relate to its governance structure, the process of appointing the Vice-Chancellor and other officers of the University, and the conduct of academic affairs.]

It is our understanding that the first Statutes have not yet been adopted. If the government so desires, the Presidency Mentor Group would be willing to offer comments on draft Statutes. The process of appointing the Vice-Chancellor should be spelled out in the legislation and the powers and responsibilities of the Vice-Chancellor and other officers defined in the first Statutes. The Vice-Chancellor of Presidency University should always be a scholar and public figure with national recognition and of international distinction. In this report we have recommended a search and selection process for recruiting an outstanding faculty, who will in time take charge of the academic affairs of the University.

CONCLUSION

The Presidency Mentor Group has identified the process to appoint outstanding faculty and to improve the academic infrastructure as the top priorities in this first report. Specific recommendations have been made in these areas, which we hope will be implemented with a sense of urgency. Members of the Group will remain in touch with one another as well as the state government and the university administration in the subsequent months. The Presidency Mentor Group will have a formal meeting in late December 2011 in Kolkata to review progress and submit a second report in January 2012 containing observations and recommendations.

We wish to place on record our most profound thanks to Professor Amartya Sen, Adviser to the Chair, for his unstinted support since the inception of the Presidency Mentor Group and for taking the time to read this report prior to its submission.

Sugata Bose (Chair), Isher Judge Ahluwalia, Abhijit Banerjee, Swapan Chakravorty, Sukanta Chaudhuri, Himadri Pakrasi, Ashoke Sen

Acknowledgements

The Presidency Mentor Group would like to thank the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Amita Chatterjee, and other officers, faculty and students of Presidency University for facilitating visits to the campus. We are grateful to a number of friends and advisers for their expert opinion in various matters: Dipankar Deshmukh (alumnus) and Sam Pitroda on information technology and Partha Ranjan Das on space and architecture. We have also received help in various ways from Professor Debashis Mukherjee (alumnus), Professor M.S. Raghunathan, Professor Sankar Chatterjee, Professor Rahul Mukherjee (alumnus), and Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi. Ram Ray (alumnus) supplied the photograph of Presidency College in the mid-nineteenth century (photographer: Francis Frith), which is the basis for the artwork on the cover of this report designed by Imon Deshmukh. Many distinguished scholars, whose names are listed in Appendix 1, have generously agreed to help with the search and selection process to recruit an outstanding faculty for Presidency University. We have been overwhelmed by expressions of goodwill and support from alumni belonging to all generations and ordinary citizens keen to see the rejuvenation of an iconic educational institution that had been our country's pride.

APPENDIX 1

NAMES for SEARCH and SELECTION COMMITTEES

We give below the names of scholars who have agreed to our request to help with the search and selection process for faculty appointments at Presidency. We have asked or are in the process of asking a few others whose names will be added once their consent has been obtained. Applicants are requested not to contact these scholars directly, but to send in their applications once the positions are announced.

Bengali

1. Sankha Ghosh
 2. Pabitra Sarkar
- Further names to be supplied in September 2011

Biology

1. R. Gadagkar, Ecology, IISc
2. Rajesh Gokhale, Genomics, IGIB
3. V. Nagaraja, Microbiology, IISc
4. Shekhar Mande, Structural Biology, CBSB, Hyderabad
5. M.R.S.Rao, IISc. and Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advanced Scientific Research, Bangalore - Molecular and Cell Biology
6. Jayant B.Udgaonkar, National Centre for Biological Sciences, Bangalore - Biophysics, Physics, Biochemistry
7. Sumantra (Shona) Chattarji, NCBS

Chemistry

1. T Chakraborty, Synthetic Organic Chemistry, CDRI
2. Santanu Bhattacharya, Organic and bio-organic Chemistry, IISc
3. Dipankar Chatterji, Bio-physical Chemistry, Chemical Biology, IISc
4. G Lahiri, Inorganic Chemistry, Catalysis, IIT(Mumbai)
5. S Ramakrishnan, Experimental Physical Chemistry (Materials and Polymers), IISc
6. N Chandrakumar, Chemical Spectroscopy, IIT (Chennai)
7. Charusita Chakravarti, Theoretical Chemistry, Statistical Mechanics, IIT (Delhi)
8. Dipankar Das Sarma, Experimental Materials Chemistry, IISc
9. K.L. Sebastian, Theoretical Chemistry, IISc
10. V. Chandrasekhar, IIT (Kanpur)

Economics

1. Pranab Bardhan, UC-Berkeley
2. Dilip Mookherjee, Boston University
3. Debraj Ray NYU
4. Anjan Mukherji, JNU (retired)
5. Sujoy Mukerji, Oxford
6. E. Somanathan, ISI, Delhi
7. Sugata Marjit, CSSS, Kolkata
8. Maitreesh Ghatak, LSE

English

1. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Columbia University
2. Homi K. Bhabha, Harvard University
3. Alok Rai, Delhi University
4. Harish Trivedi, Delhi University
5. Udaya Kumar, Delhi University
6. Malabika Sarkar, Jadavpur University
7. Supriya Chaudhuri, Jadavpur University
8. Ananda Lal, Jadavpur University
9. Jatindra Nayak, Utkal University
10. Tejaswini Niranjana, Centre for the Study of Society and Culture, Bengaluru
11. Shirshendu Chakrabarti, Delhi University

Geography

1. Swapna Banerjee-Guha, Tata Institute of Social Sciences
2. Bandana Purkayastha, University of Connecticut

Geology

1. Sankar Chatterjee, Texas Tech University
2. Alok Krishna Gupta, University of Allahabad
3. Sudipta Sengupta, Jadavpur University
4. Anindya Sarkar, IIT, Kharagpur

Hindi

1. Harish Trivedi (Delhi University)
2. Alok Rai (Delhi University)

Further names to be supplied in September 2011

History

1. Seema Alavi (Delhi University)
2. Dipesh Chakrabarty (University of Chicago)
3. Kumkum Chatterjee (Penn State)
4. Prasenjit Duara (National University of Singapore)
5. Tapati Guha-Thakurta (CSSS)
6. Nayanjot Lahiri (Delhi University)
7. Mridu Rai (Trinity College, Dublin)
8. Upinder Singh (Delhi University)
9. Hari Vasudevan (Calcutta University)
10. A.R. Venkatachalapathy (Madras Institute of Development Studies)

Mathematics

1. V. Srinivas (TIFR, Mumbai) Algebraic Geometry, Commutative Algebra
2. D. Prasad (TIFR, Mumbai) Number Theory
3. T. N. Venkataramana (TIFR, Mumbai) Lie Theory
4. R. Karandikar (CMI, Chennai) Probability
5. S. Kesavan (IMSc, Chennai) Functional Analysis, PDE
6. V. Borkar (IIT, Powai, Mumbai) Control theory
7. A. Adimurthi (TIFR-CAM, Bangalore) PDE
8. Indranil Biswas (TIFR, Mumbai)

Theoretical computer science:

1. Manindra Agrawal (IIT Kanpur)
2. Jaikumar Radhakrishnan (TIFR, Mumbai)

Philosophy

1. Arindam Chakrabarti (University of Hawaii)
2. Saranindranath Tagore (National University of Singapore)
3. Prabal Kumar Sen (Calcutta University)

Physics

1. Sabyasachi (Shobo) Bhattacharya (TIFR, Mumbai): Condensed matter physics (expt)
2. Deepak Dhar (TIFR, Mumbai): Statistical Mechanics
3. Rohini Godbole (IISc, Bangalore): Particle Physics
4. Rajesh Gopakumar (HRI, Allahabad): String theory / Mathematical Physics
5. T. Padmanabhan (IUCAA, Pune): Astrophysics / Cosmology
6. Diptiman Sen (IISc Bangalore): Condensed matter physics

7. Ajay Sood (IISc Bangalore): Condensed matter physics (expt)
8. Dipankar Das Sarma (IISc, Bangalore): Condensed matter physics (expt)
9. Sunanda Banerjee (SINP, Kolkata): Particle physics (expt)

10. Hulikal Krishnamurthy (IISc, Bangalore): Condensed matter physics

Political Science

1. Amrita Basu (Amherst College)
2. Sumantra Bose (LSE)
3. Partha Chatterjee (CSSS and Columbia University)
4. Sudipta Kaviraj (Columbia University)
5. Sunil Khilnani (King's College, London)

Sociology and Anthropology

1. Arjun Appadurai (NYU)
2. Alaka Basu (Cornell University)
3. Amita Baviskar (Delhi University)
4. Partha Chatterjee (CSSS and Columbia University)
5. Bandana Purkayastha (University of Connecticut)
6. Nandini Sundar (Delhi University)

Statistics

1. Rahul Mukerjee (IIM, Kolkata)
2. Mausumi Bose (ISI, Kolkata)
3. Alope Dey (INSA)

Further names to be supplied in September 2011

APPENDIX 2

ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL ON PAY-SCALES FOR THE FACULTY OF PRESIDENCY UNIVERSITY

Sukanta Chaudhuri

While concurring with all other recommendations in the report, I would respectfully offer an alternative proposal on pay scales for teachers of Presidency University. In my view, offering uniformly higher pay-scales than obtain in other state universities would have adverse effects on the higher education system of West Bengal without bringing proportionate benefit to Presidency University. Though our mandate relates to the latter alone, we have to keep the general situation in mind.

1. The growing disparity in pay-scales, benefits and institutional grants between Central and state-run institutions is of great concern to the latter, seriously affecting their recruitment, staff retention and staff morale. I accept that offering the usual state-level pay-scales might adversely affect recruitment at Presidency University. But rectifying this iniquitous situation must be a total exercise. If we recommend higher scales for a single institution, we may actually hinder the prospects of general reform.

2. A few other universities in West Bengal have made impressive progress in recent times, largely owing to the merit and dedication of their faculty. Among them are persons of as high qualifications, experience and achievement as we are seeking for Presidency University. It is my view that if the same additional funds were made available to these institutions, it would give them the extra uplift needed to raise their level to what we are proposing virtually from scratch (and hence at vastly greater total investment) for Presidency University.

It would be grossly unfair to the faculty of these other universities if they obtained no reward for their labours, even as the state implemented higher scales for newcomers to what is, after all, an untried and untested institution in its new identity, whatever its past record under another name and dispensation. If faculty from those other universities were to move to Presidency, it would mean that Presidency's rise were to be at the direct expense of the rest.

3. We are heartened by the expressions of interest from scholars and scientists of proven, and sometimes exceptional, merit. But it remains to be seen whether the entire faculty will prove so far superior to those of other universities as to deserve higher pay-scales across the board. The minimum requirements stipulated on page 6 of the report are roughly at par with UGC norms applying to all universities. The 'something extra' we would expect can be ensured by the alternative scheme I am proposing below.

4. We are suggesting that, as Presidency cannot excel in all fields, it should have exchange and interaction with other institutions including other state universities. It would be ironic if, alongside this arrangement, Presidency were to claim higher status justifying higher emoluments for its own faculty.

In the light of these arguments, I would suggest an alternative scheme to attract and reward merit that the Government may, if it wishes, extend to all institutions in the state. In the latter event, the total cost to the exchequer should be roughly equivalent to that of higher salaries for the entire Presidency staff. If the total cost proves appreciably higher, it would mean that there is a large body of meritorious faculty at other universities, undermining the argument for higher pay-scales at Presidency alone.

My proposal is to offer higher salaries and benefits, and one-time rewards and incentives, for academic achievement (potentially, by all faculty of all colleges and universities). Inter alia, it would incorporate the existing UGC provision (so far not implemented) of a higher Academic Grade Pay for a proportion of the full Professors. All these rewards (including rise in salary) would be applicable both at the time of entry and for all subsequent work. The achievements would include (but need not be restricted to)

- special qualifications (including those acquired after recruitment, which are not rewarded at present)
- publications in journals, or by publishers, of international repute. There are reliable lists of these; they can be further reviewed by the expert panels we have constituted, or opinion invited from the latter in special cases.
- patents
- official surveys and reports
- projects and extension work (the latter assessed by official recognition, status of sponsoring or partner institutions and/or expert review)
- academic awards
- pedagogic or administrative innovation that has actually been incorporated by the University, the Government or other reputed body

Rewards can also take the form of research support and benefits other than monetary. Here, Presidency (like other universities) could use its enterprise, reputation and goodwill to ensure the best deal for its faculty, and thus attract the best new faculty. Also, like all universities, it would be free to obtain non-government funds from sponsorship, benefactions, donations, earned income etc. to offer a better package to its faculty.

Obviously, this brief proposal needs to be fully worked out. The criteria must be made as specific and concrete as possible to obviate the dilution of standards, converting reward into entitlement. We cannot be sanguine that even Presidency University would be free of this risk. As we know, offering uniformly higher emoluments to all Central universities has not made for their uniform advancement. The few distinguished institutions among them attract good faculty for other reasons.