

'THE FUTURE BELONGS TO BLENDED LEARNING'

Bhimaraya Metri has plans for Indian Institute of Management Nagpur and foremost among them is to push it into the ranks of top 10 B-Schools in India, start new programmes and find more effective ways to teach online. Metri took charge as director in October. He shared his vision for the institute with *Careers360*.

by Pritha Roy Choudhury

Q. What are the challenges with online classes and how do you address them?

A. The future belongs to blended learning, even when COVID will disappear. So, some courses, like leadership and coaching, will continue online. A lot of adjustment has already happened. More needs to happen, not only with the content but also with the pedagogy. In face-to-face interaction, the attention span can be increased, even when the faculty is not speaking, students can connect with the unspoken expressions at usual times. But when it comes to online classes, most of these connections are missing and that is why, engaging with the students and increasing their attention span is extremely important. We have introduced online simulation games, more audio-video materials and more online material.

Q. Where do you see IIM Nagpur in the coming years?

A. I would like to position IIM Nagpur in a manner that it connects with the global faculty and the best of resources. I want foreign faculty to come and teach our students. I would also like to hire senior faculty from good business schools so that they can cater to the needs of executive education. Teaching, research, consulting and training are the four pillars of executive education. It is going to be a holistic business school and the vision is to be in the top ten in India within the next five years.



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Q. What change would you bring in IIM Nagpur?

A. Nagpur is at the center of India and is its logistical capital. This is also where new construction is coming up, such as the multi-product special economic zone in Mihan. Like a medical college without a hospital, a business school without industries nearby has no meaning. The school is located close to 18-odd companies. Because of this,

students will have a close interaction with industry. Another plan is to have a satellite campus of IIM Nagpur near Pune to cater to the needs of executive education in that area. Executive education is my focus. The state should fully benefit from IIM Nagpur.

Q. What are your plans for the regular MBA programmes?

A. We have doubled the strength this year. Now, the capacity is 211 whereas it was 115 last year. We will increase the strength to 600 students as per the guidelines of government of India. We need to expand the infrastructure too.

Also, we are going to start a fellowship programme on management next year; the next academic year, we are going to come up with research programmes. In the future, we may introduce ones like an eMBA programme and an evening part-time programme for working executives. The executive online programme will start soon. I am also looking at collaborating with international business schools.

Q. For management courses, industry exposure is necessary. How do you plan to work around that for online courses?

A. Online courses will go fully online. Students will have to spend a week or two on campus, spend time with the faculty. Their physical presence is always required. This is necessary at the beginning of the session and at the end of the session. IIM Kozhikode is already running an eMBA programme.