Dear freshman,

Let me start this letter by welcoming you to SASTRA. This is your first step on a journey, which will take you to a certain extent decide the course of your life. You are about to embark on a four or five (in some cases) year long journey. A journey that will teach you a lot about yourself, other people and life.

Looking back at my first year here, I remember the initial few weeks being filled with confusion and nostalgia. My parents wondered how I would manage to keep my room clean, wash my clothes, wake up on time, attend classes and manage assignments without being under their watchful eyes. On the other hand, I began to enjoy the liberty that college life offered. Back at home, it was lights out by midnight (max), but here, there was no mother nagging me to wake up on time, eat my meals on time, and more importantly, study, which felt wonderful at first, but then eventually took a toll on me.

There are so many things, I wish I had been told about college life and of what I had been told, I wish I had listened a bit more carefully. Walking around the new campus can be a daunting task at first. Choosing what to wear (or rather what not to wear) can be an intimidating one. Picturing worst case scenarios can keep you up all night. You may also be upset and nervous right now. You’re probably missing home, missing your family and friends. You probably just want to quit college and go back right now. These feelings are totally natural and trust me on this; they won’t last long.

The best advice I would give you to cure homesickness and survive college is to relax, socialize and keep yourself busy. Attend as many orientation sessions as you can, participate in as many activities as you can, this will help you find people who share common interests and is a great way to make new friends. This is how I made friends in college, and I have absolutely nothing to regret. Go for lunch and dinner with friends, have a movie night in your hostel, watch sitcoms, play your favourite sport, keep yourself busy and before you know it, your first semester will be over. If the mess food doesn’t seem appealing at times, or you need a late night grub, Maggi will be the saviour.

College life is all about striking a balance. When it comes to academics, don’t expect to be spoon fed. Stay focussed on academics, study little by little every day. Don’t procrastinate on assignments. Submit them on time and you will automatically feel relaxed. Don’t cram before an exam, or if you do, you’ll realize soon enough, that there is no point in doing that. Unlike school, the college does offer certain liberties when it comes to attendance. So sometimes if it all gets to you, take some time off, take a long walk or just sit in the canteens (without getting spotted by your professors that is), or stay in hostel and finish watching an entire season of your favourite sitcom.

Never hesitate to ask for help. Everyone out here will help you. Age is no bar. You will find that seniors are as accommodating as your peers in answering all the queries you will have. Never feel ashamed or intimidated to ask for help. Asking for help will only benefit you in the long run.

The best bit of advice that I would like to give you, something which would have been told to you by everyone who has had their fair share of college experiences, but which I would like to reiterate, is to cherish every moment you spend here. Don’t get stressed out. Form healthy relationships with your peers, professors and seniors. Have a set of close friends. Keep your goals in mind; make best use of whatever the college has to offer. Try out everything at least once. You may never know what catches your fancy. In all, just have truckloads of fun.

Tejas Kinger
II EIE

Sponsored by Canopy
Canopy, located favourably on campus, offers quite the range of services – Laundry service to the hostels, a food court with spacious seating, a cab service so that you’re never stranded, an online handicraft store Mayjai which showcases the work of small scale artists thus providing a wide selection of items that can be gifted, an online bookstore (read.com to be precise) which has already been demonstrated to this writer as selling books at prices lower than Flipkart’s offerings and food delivery to the hostels. All of these services can be availed by accessing and recharging your online Canopy account at canopy.sastra.edu.

The food at the food court is an eclectic mix and it has caused many a student to linger confused near the token counter, unsure of what to order. With sandwiches, burgers, parathas, ice creams, pizzas, chaats, sodas and sugarcane juice, I’m sure that everyone is there at some point or the other. After nearly two years of being that student, I have gravitated to some standard choices and hence, am in a position to offer advice to the confused: try the double decker chilli sandwich if you’re in the mood for lunch. If it’s dessert you’re after, I’d recommend the chocolate dream (a bit steeply priced, though. For the lighter pockets, take the softies. It doesn’t matter which one.). When I’m feeling peaky, I always settle for the muss melon juice.

Canopy has plans for expansion; soon, there’s going to be another branch near TIFAC-CORE(right next to it as a matter of fact) which will serve breakfast in the morning, sandwiches and juice at other times for a quick pick-me-up, ice cream for the decadent and coffee at all times for the sleep deprived and the sleepy. This is just the tip of the iceberg in comparison to the other things that the Directors have in store for us.

The Team would like us to mention that feedback is always welcome, whether it is on the spot to the vendors or to the Directors.

Aishwarya Hariraran
IV CSE

Crossing the Placement Hurdle

This is the time to get placed - transforming a careless student life to a responsible professional life has come for all the final years. Everybody will go gaga over sample papers, interview questions and patterns of TCS/Wipro and Accenture question papers. All the seniors will be remembered; we are remembered only during the placement season. You will be asked to brush up the basics of most of the subjects and read one or two in detail. Here are a few things to keep in mind while sitting for placements.

The Right People:

Be in a group where everyone is preparing with the same passion as you. There will be many guys who already have 320+ on GRE and have plans to fly abroad, and some will concentrate on MBA entrances. But you have to be clear about what you want and how hard to work for it. Conduct mock interviews within the group. The group of friends with you during the placement process matters a lot. Choose wisely.

Motivate Yourself:

A quote from 3 Idiots comes to mind and holds true for placements also. You don’t want to be the guy who is left out. When everyone around you, especially your friends are placed and you aren’t, that’s the time when stress levels hit a high. Keep this in mind and it will work as a self-motivating factor.

Accept Rejection:

You may be rejected by one of the mass recruiters, or a dream company. The mantra of successes in how you handle rejection. When you leave the room without an offer letter, you may be dejected. That is the time for self-assessment. Give yourself a break and analyze what could have gone wrong. If it was technical, go through it and polish your skills. But if it was your attitude or the body language, reach out to seniors or friends you are comfortable with. Discuss with them and practice for the next opportunity.

I was part of a group who would never settle for anything less than the best. We all had a common goal that we needed to crack Accenture interview. We worked for it and achieved it. But that was not the end. We worked hard for the dream companies - Rockwell Collins, Ascendant Tech., KLA Tencore, Microsoft etc. I tried to figure out my mistakes, talked to some people about it and started preparing again. I was working with Accenture for 4 months, when I got an opportunity to interview at Samsung India Software Operations. I remembered everything that happened in the campus interviews, prepared accordingly and I am a proud Samsung employee now. Everything is possible, never lose hope, and always stay focused.

The writer is a SASTRA university passout from the 2011 batch and is currently working in Samsung. He was also the first Chairman of ICT@S and was also a Microsoft Student Partner.

Kusumakar Dwivedi

People who achieve greatness as academics are the ones who stand the testimony of time. We have amidst us, Dr. Varadharajan R. (ECE) who is celebrating 50 years of teaching. A brief interview with him reveals his youthful personality as he commemorates One Hundred Semesters of his teaching career.

Prof., can you tell us a bit about your schooling and collegiate years?

I did my schooling in a government school situated in Lalgudi, Trichy. I completed my UG and PG in Physics from St.Joseph College, Trichy. Immediately afterwards in 1963, I joined as a lecturer in the Physics department of National College, Trichy. I later obtained my PhD in “Liquid State Physics” from Madras University.I later joined MAM College of Engineering as a Professor of Physics. Then in 2001, I was appointed as Professor of ECE department in SASTRA.

Who was your inspiration? Are you in this profession by choice?

My father was a teacher and he was a great source of inspiration. I made the decision during the study holidays of my first year PG. I had to stay close to home due to some circumstances. But I have no regrets for taking up this profession as I am a person who takes life as it comes.

Do you think any changes that can be brought about at SASTRA? The teaching methods have changed a lot during the past fifty years. What is your take on it?

I feel the students are retained in classrooms longer than necessary. Instead, they can be allowed to have more practical sessions. The lab practice is insufficient in general in the engineering curriculum. I feel first Saturday soon after college re-opens could be a holiday. More scientific ways of teaching have come up. Multimedia and internet play an important role in today’s education. I support Wipro’s Mission10X where the agenda is developing new methods to supplement the conventional “chalk and talk”.

What are your alternative interests?

I play cricket, tennis and badminton. I advise all the students to get involved in sport as it helps them increase their concentration and stay active. I read a lot of books. This summer holidays, I finished reading ‘The Kite Runner’ in one day! I also read ‘A Thousand Splendid Suns’ by the same author. The habit of reading books has always stayed with me. Reading helped me a lot to improve my vocabulary. I don’t frequently watch movies. But I watched three movies in ten days during the holidays. I like to listen to music and Hindi songs are my favourite.

What is your opinion on Indian students going abroad for education and living?

Students can go anywhere to enrich their knowledge depending on the resources available. If they are able to make a global contribution, it is not necessary for them to return to India. Have an ambition in life according to your capability. Try to find ways of realising the goal by fair means. If you have other avenues of interest, nurture them and you will come out in shining colours.

The interview concluded with him quoting the lines “I can see farther because I stand on the shoulder of giants” referring to his role models.

Hope to have you with us in the forthcoming years too!

S. Namitha
III ECE

A Canopy of all sorts...

PROF. VARADHARAJAN – 70 YEARS YOUNG!

STUFF THAT MATTERS

Write to us at news.sastra@gmail.com
Sponsored by Canopy
The SCORE (or) SASTRA Community Outreach Program, an initiative started by our University not so long ago, had tasted success in its maiden venture. Curiosity, apart from killing the proverbial cat, led me to visit Dr. V. Badrinath, Dean, T&P, the man behind the mission. I had a chance to interact with Dr. Badri sir, as he is popularly known, about their plans for the forthcoming academic year.

With an ataractic ease, the genial Dr. Badrinath explained that this year was to be centred about overall community development, and self-sustained development in areas of Education, Employment, Health, Sanitation, Environment, Agriculture and Governance. “This is just the tip of the iceberg. There has been a lot of effort put into the implementation of this wonderful programme”, he adds.

The primary focus will be on increasing the self-sustainability skills by equipping them with the power of education. This paved the way for the school adoption drive which forms an essential part of SCORE. Students of SASTRA are planning to take classes for the kids of the villages. Empowering them with knowledge will reap rewards in the future. Arranging Career Guidance and Computer Literacy classes are also on the agenda.

The Community Welfare program, which involves adopting villages, has taken centre stage. Clothes, food and necessary items would be provided to the people and a free eye camp will be organized. This is an example of the holistic approach adopted by SCORE. The move has come as a ray of hope to the villagers who have open heartedly accepted this kind gesture.

“FROM THE HORSE’S MOUTH” : THE SEMESTER ABROAD EXPERIENCE

The Semester Abroad Program is a golden opportunity offered by SASTRA each year to consistent performers in the V and VII Semesters of B.Tech and VII/IX semesters of M.Tech to spend a semester abroad in some of the top-class universities in the world. The main criterion for selection is a CGPA of above 7.5 with no history of arrears. Following this, the short-listed students are interviewed on career goals and areas of interest. This year, 28 people made it through the SAP and set off to different parts of the world.

“There are so many benefits for someone like me, a research enthusiast. What more can one ask for, if one is selected into one of the most prestigious labs in the world?” says an elated Laksmini Balachander. Laksmini is a IV year Bio student who was selected to the MIT-Harvard Labs.

“The abundant resources – in terms of infrastructure, literature, and the exquisite fields of study, set Harvard and MIT apart, and opens doors for students,” feels Laksmini. When asked for her views on education in India, she says, “Undoubtedly, the course work in Bio-Engineering at SASTRA built up a strong fundamentals, which are instrumental in our being able to carry out our tasks here.”

Laksmini is thankful she was mentored by Dr. Piero Anversa, one of the world’s leading cardiovascular scientists. She asserts that this experience has reaffirmed her interest in the pursuit of research. She adds, “The SAP is a knowledge enriching experience, and it has built not only my professional contacts and opened up multifold career options in future, but also made me witness and enjoy this multicultural milieu.”

After achieving such a brilliant start to her career, Laksmini has now taken up a yearlong research assistanship with the Stritch School of Medicine along with two other SASTRAites, Sreshtha Ra madesikan of Bio-E and Sudharshan Ravi of IIB.

And “die Geschichte von Erfolg” (German: “the success story”) continues with Gayatri Gopalakrishnan who spent her semester at Karlsruhe University, Germany, one of the most famous, prestigious and oldest institutes in the world. This is what the delighted fourth year student at II CSE, Shwetha Srinivasan, of SASTRA, has to say: “From the Horse’s Mouth” : The Semester Abroad Experience

Bioinformatics students had to say: “An intern- ship abroad teaches you way more than just science! It will teach one how to deal with people, improve presentation skills and give you the courage to take calculated risks” She admits that there had been times when she wasn’t sure whether she would perform in informatics, given the little experience she had. “My mentors gave me the time to think and came up with my own solutions despite the fact that it took time. This was very important because it taught me that there was something I could do which I thought I was not capable of doing. This I believe is going to have a great im- pact on my career.” Gayathri will attempt to enter TCS R&D to further her research career. To both of them and to the other global SASTRAites, our hearty congratulations!”

VISUAL VICISSITUDES

It’s pronounced v’lis/’tood, in case you decided it was too much trouble. But if you’re a Vidyut Vihar student, that would be the least of your problems. No no, I do not mean the academic struggle you will face, unless you belong to "ahem", or the boredom that will surely have you looking the window more often than not.

I am, however, referring to the obstacle course that is Vidyut Vihar, and I must say, karan got most away easy, perishing to his death. Even the Minotaur could not have had VV figured out.

My looking forward to a "thought pro-voking" experience in the second year of college ended, not under the grounds of discovering the subjects, but the place instead. VV was most definitely not how I envisioned it to be. And the people who nested upon the building I was destined to for the next three years. Long windows styled the French way, a pathway that numbed your senses (please don’t try this) and the guard staring at you grim faced, monitoring your every move.

A warm welcome indeed. That’s one of the unintended positives about VV. It’s always warm, (literally only) even in the non-existent winter.

The numerous stairways, most of which are unchartered waters for the lot of you, remind one of the moving staircases from the Harry Potter series. One time its there, and when you try looking for it again, you end up outside the Bio Processing Lab… in IVC. Okay, that was a little too much. But you get the idea. Some staff members spend more time walking to and fro from classroom to their staff rooms, than actually inside the classroom. VV is a must explore for all those with a sense of adventure, and attendance too!

The highlight of the building is the availability of a mobile reception even in the darkest of corners.

Surely Airtel must reach those in the middle of a maze to offer them free relationship advice.

This building can fool the brain (in more than one way) because it appears so simple and unwound. Except, beneath this mask, lies the grand illusion. For instance, VV is quite possibly the only building on campus whose numbering can be randomly generated by a piece of C++ code. For all the people who share the same disease as me, the innumerable doubts about directions, this place will only get you to feel special, trust me. For the rest with a good memory, I might end up writing the same article in my final year. My struggle wouldn’t have ended and I could get embarrassed being guided by a junior instead.

R. Sai Anand
III Chemical

Shwetha Srinivasan
II ECE
D-Day : July 19th, 2012


According to Wikipedia, the President is the formal head of the legislature, executive and judiciary branches of Indian Democracy and is the commander-in-chief of the Indian Armed Forces. Also, the President has the powers to pardon and grant clemency. If you’re thinking what I think you’re thinking, and no, not that this is the civics textbook coming back to haunt you, then you couldn’t be more wrong.

When Lord Mountbatten, the last Viceroy of India, took leave to attend the marriage of Princess Elizabeth to his nephew Prince Philip, C. Rajagopalachari was appointed the Acting Governor-General of India. He continued in this capacity until June 1948, when Lord Mountbatten withdrew from India and two years later, in 1950, India had her first President in the form of Dr. Rajendra Prasad. How he got there is another story, one that is not very well known and will certainly have you gaping at the end of it. Since Dr. Rajendra Prasad, India has had many distinguished men as the President of India, including two interim Presidents – VV Giri and Mohammad Hidayatullah. The Presidential Election 2012 is scheduled for 19th July, 2012, while the counting of the votes and declaration of India’s new Head of State will happen on 22nd July, a few days before the end of the incumbent’s term. In nominating a candidate for President, both the ruling party and the Opposition can arrive at a consensus, thus unanimously electing the new Head of State. Unfortunately though, these particular elections will have to be won the hard way.

Prior to the filing of the nominations of the candidates, much hullabaloo was created over the possible nominees from both the ruling party and the Opposition. The first name thrown over the possible nominees from both the ruling NDA, the second and final nominee in the Presidential circle, has been Pranab Mukherjee. It is widely known that a move to Rashtrapati Bhavan signals the end of one’s active political career. The Trinamool Congress, one of the allies of the UPA in the alliance, decided to play spoilsport and put out a list of its personal choices that contained the name of Dr. Manmohan Singh, the current Prime Minister of the nation. This encouragement doubled PM and was hotly contested across the globe. However, the Congress refused to back down and finalised Mr. Mukherjee as their candidate. 

Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, President of India before Ms. Pratibha Patil, refused to stand for re-election four years ago citing lack of a consensus between the two parties. Once again, he steadfastly maintained that he would only consider it if there was a consensus. However, this stand flipped lastly on him as his enthusiasm was half-baked and didn’t lead him anywhere. The AIADMK and the BJD proposed the name of former speaker P.A. Sangma, and backed by the NDA, he is the second and final nominee in the Presidential circle. It is ironical to note that his own party, the NCP deserted him and that his daughter Agatha Sangma is the youngest elected Member of Parliament, and ran on an INC ticket.

You have probably noticed that I kept mentioning that certain parties had to nominate people for the post of President. The 13th President of India will not be elected by the people, not directly at least. He is elected by the Ministers of Legislative Assembly and Members of Parliament in both houses, who in turn are elected by the people. The number of votes per eligible member depends on the size of his state and as this is a secret ballot, one is not expected to declare his/her loyalty to any one candidate. However, most voters toe the party line and vote as a group. When India celebrates its 65th Independence Day, we will have a new President. Not just a Pinocchio to a Geppetto, but a learned man, an erudite being, one who is as well versed in Bengali as in politics. Thankfully, I can freely say that and not sound like the next President has been decided. You see, both the nominees have Bengali as their mother tongue. In this crucial phase with the Lokpal Bill and the GST Tax Bill awaiting approval from both Houses, not to mention the restriction on multi-brand FDI, the President will have more than a perfunctory role.

If Mr. Mukherjee does indeed win the election, as is largely expected, he will step into the shoes of Pratibha Devsingh Patil, whose Presidency was overwhelming and disappointing. India has seen little or no development socially under her, as was promised in her election manifesto. Considering that Mr. Mukherjee, or Pranab Da as he is respectfully known in political circles, has had a four decade long career as the pillar of strength for the Indian National Congress, the move to relocate him from North Block was seen as shrewd by experts. In that case, it is fitting that India be led from the front by a man who is respected all over the world for his acumen and humble attitude.

To quote a few instances, Pranab Da was the Finance Minister in the Indira Gandhi government from 1982-1984, and was rated the World’s Best Finance Minister by a leading magazine. When the revered Rajiv Gandhi passed away, he was instrumental in Sonia Gandhi entering politics and taking over the reins of the INC. When a crisis sparks in the UPA government, everyone turns to Pranab Da, or the trouble-shooter. Be it the Bofors Scandal, the 2G fiasco or the Office for Profit scam of 2004, Pranab Mukherjee has seen it all.

On the other hand, PA Sangma, the former Speaker of the House in the Lok Sabha, has been a source of concern. Some feel that his nomination is to prevent an unopposed victory to the UPA alliance. Also, as Meira Kumar has aptly demonstrated, being Speaker of the House entitles you to nothing. However, he is banking sharply on the tribal vote, which has so far pulled him along. PA. Sangma has been working diligently to undermine his rival by unveiling highly controversial documents, and so far, they seem to be working.

With the TMC still to decide on which way it is going to vote, if it chooses not to abstain, this Presidential poll could spring a few surprises. For one, we could be looking at our first ever tribal President. Or our first ever active politician turned President in the hot seat. One thing is for sure though – this election will set the precedent for the assembly elections in 2014.
The best place for Math enthusiasts

After applying for seven summer internships, the wait for the results was still a skip-a-beat moment. One evening, I received confirmation from IMSc that stated that I had been selected for their summer program in the Department of Theoretical Computer Science. I was ebullient, as only five students across the country, get selected each year for the same. For those of you who do not know, The Institute of Mathematical Sciences is renowned for their work in theoretical sciences and is hailed as the numero uno in Theoretical Computer Science. Their research areas include Mathematics, Theoretical Physics, Computational Biology, Theoretical Computer Science etc.

The program spanned a period of six weeks. They had selected ten students along with me, in various other departments. Over the course of six weeks, I had the opportunity to learn from the topmost brains in the country. The areas covered included computational complexity, randomization algorithms, distributed algorithms, polynomial equations, graph theory, probability theory and game theory. If any of that sounds like gibberish to you, then you haven’t been to IMSc yet! There were topics ranging from the eccentric “Relational Between Locking and Soft Cryptography”, to hardcore math with “Why is the Travelling Salesman problem really HARD?”

Here’s an easy one - “How to cut a cake?” Feeling smarter than a fifth grader, aren’t you? Well, you won’t believe that it took almost four years to solve the problem of splitting a cake between three people. It took four years more to solve the problem of splitting a cake between four people. And it took another ten years to come up with an algorithm for a generic number of people.

For those of you out there who wish to take a sneak peek into what I (we) dealt with, here are some examples:

1. Is chess determined? i.e., can you come up with a winning/losing strategy for either of the players?
2. An ideal sphere is cut into a number of pieces and are put back to form two spheres which have the same volume as that of the original sphere. Is it possible?
3. “This statement is false.” – Is this statement true or false?
4. Does there exist a universal antivirus software? If no, why not? If yes, are the antivirus software companies cheating you?

The way these topics were taught totally changed my outlook towards finding solutions. It made me look at problems from a different perspective. When I was stuck in traffic, I was thinking about how a good algorithm for clearing the traffic congestion over the internet would easily solve the real-time traffic problem. The last two weeks of the program were committed to independent research. It was time for us to flap our wings and fly. The first four weeks gave me immense confidence and knowledge that enabled me to work on some of the open problems in the field of computer science like the chromatic number of planar graphs and optimization algorithm for the Travelling salesman problem. Even though it might take years or perhaps an eon for me to really solve an open problem, it was nevertheless a good start.

If a penchant for mathematics, an ability to learn quickly and thinking differently are your ingredients, IMSc is the best place to be. Generally, the students selected for the program have good academic records and a few publications in either journals or international conferences. So for those of you, who aspire to be there, try to meet these prerequisites to stand a good chance. After all, they teach you and pay you at the same time!

C. Jagannathan
IV ECE

TCS Mobeel Challenge

The Android platform has come and swept away masses with its attractive interface and choice of applications. One can make their own mobile apps and put them in front of millions using Google Play, the Android storefront for applications, movies and music.

Of late, our campus has been a breeding ground for multiple mobile application developers. After Microsoft’s ‘I Unlock Joy’ saga came the ‘TCS Mobeel challenge’; Students hunger and quest for knowledge and expertise with a few published Microsoft applications and a high-end Windows phone just didn’t die out. ‘TCS Mobeel challenge’ had students all over the nation participating. The team ‘Phoenix’ comprising of Ganesh (IV yr, CSE), Sudharsanan (IV yr, CSE) and Shrikanth R (IV yr, IT) was SASTRA’s entry into TCS Mobeel. Ganesh was in charge of the GUI of the application. Because he was well versed in Adobe Photoshop and Corel Draw, in designing the software, he could create mockups pretty quickly. Shrikanth and Sudharsanan were taking care of the backend coding and as a result of their combined effort they managed to bring out a successful fitness monitoring application. The theme of their application was seen after an intensive survey of what was available in the market. With so many apps available, it is very difficult to come with something brand new but these students managed to get an overall idea of all the health related apps available and create a new one which was a culmination of the ideas. Their application mainly calculated the number of calories burnt alongside many other necessary features.

PHOENIX was selected as one of the top 10 in the country. The team added more features which made it an exemplary show of Android coding. When put to vote, team PHOENIX was right up front leaving the other nine competitors far behind. On the day of the results, they were taken to the sprawling TCS Siruseri campus. A panel of experts reviewed all the applications that were developed and awarded them with a runner up prize. To show their appreciation towards the hard work and dedication of this team, TCS awarded them with a 32 GB iPod Touch, an offer letter to work in the mobile application development domain and a three month internship to do their final year project.

As they say, ‘hard work works!’

Here’s wishing them good luck in all their future endeavours.

Arvind Viswanathan
IV CSE

Internship at NDTV’s Car & Bike Show

My work description was simple but very taxing. The first few days of the week were our research days wherein we procured information about the cars and bikes that we reviewed in the following episode. Once done, we move for the shoot, which I looked forward to because they always had a lot of testing, observation and evaluation. Siddharth and I discussed what we liked and what we didn’t like in the vehicle, what should have been added, whether it had good value for money etc. Automotive evaluation is all about mental comparison to a vehicle’s competition.

The days when the episodes were shot were always packed with a lot of brainstorming about camera angles. When, where, how to shoot and so on. The next phase was video editing where an episode’s shoot video was edited, some music added and shots of the car were arranged to match dialogue. There were also a lot of days when I spent more than twelve hours at work. I came back roasted and dehydrated every night, but with the satisfaction of doing something that felt right.

There is no qualifying degree or exam, CGPA required. It doesn’t matter what degree you have or where you have worked before. All you need to have is an undying passion for cars and a valid driving license.

Arvind Viswanathan
IV CSE

Internship @ IMSc

In-plant training and internships are not just about certificates and an addition to your resume. They are all about identifying your cup of tea (or coffee, as long as it’s your cup) – What works for you and what doesn’t.

You’re wondering what an engineer-to-be (hopefully) was doing at a media heavy-weight, one not even related to his domain. To be honest, I was doing exactly what I wanted to do. I was at NDTV because my area of interest is automotive evaluation and journalism; and the best person to do it under was India’s highest automotive authority - Siddharth Vinayak Patankar (NDTV’s Car and Bike Show’s Anchor and Editor) himself. NDTV’s Car and Bike show is almost 8 years old now and has a huge following and respect in professional circles. I e-mailed their HR team stating my interest in interning on their team. I was later put in touch with a senior official and a telephonic interview later, I was in.

The best part is that there is no pot bellied man asking me my CGPA. If you have a penchant for the media and can speak fluent English, you’re in for an experience you will never forget. The first few days at NDTV’s Delhi office were filled with a lot of people asking me what I was doing there... Call your colleagues by name and maintain hierarchy through other forms of respect. Also, walk in whenever you feel like. But make sure you complete your gig before the deadline.

Vignesh V Ramakrishnan
IV Mech

Sponsored by Canopy
JJPK : Viva La Vivarium!

The unassuming structure hidden away from the pedestrian activities at the Chota Can-teen ostensibly plays host to a load of sinister go-ings-on. A modern day Frankenstein drama? Not really. A chat with Dr. Panchapakesan, Director of Jeeva Jantu Pariksha Kendra reveals the facts.

The Central Animal Facility is fully air-condi- tioned with infrastructure for pre-clinical drug testing. Here, researchers test drugs on live ani-mals, as part of the standard protocols. This re-quires highly sterile conditions and a controlled environment, both of which are available. The CAF houses mice, rabbits and even SCID rats. These animals are the guinea pigs (literally) of experiments to test the efficacy of the drugs, study their effects on live animals and conduct toxicity tests. If successful, these proceed to clin-ical studies where the drugs are tested on hu-mans and can be put into therapeutic use. This is in addition to the course (BioE/MT) related work that is undertaken here. The labs are well equipped and conform to standard guidelines laid down by WHO, EPA and OECD pertaining to issues like waste disposal and safety precautions.

The Facility is open to use by student and faculty researchers at SASTRA. As this is the only one of its kind in the South, it is used by research-ers from many institutions. JJPK has an impres-sive volume of research with grants exceeding Rs.1000cr, being carried out alongside notable institutions including CRI, and Orchid, among others. It also has associations with the Depar-tment of Science and Technology, Indian Govt., DRDO and the Indian Council of Medical Research.

JJPK also offers certificate cours-es, internships and other training pro-grams that let you try your hands at ani-mal research in its effort to educate and render scientific services to student researchers.

Ameya Jalihal, II IBT
Haritha Naveen, II BioE

THE EDITORIAL BOARD

Editors:
Asma Afreen, Aishwarya Harirhan, Shankar Ganesh, Tejas Kinger, Niranjani M

Correspondents:

Publicity:
Sai Sharad Raj, Mythri J, Anurag

Illustrations:
Suraj Raghupathy, Akshay Sherikar

Design:
Girish Koundinya, Ashwin Barathwaj, Shreyans Singh, Anirudh Challa, Nikhilesh Ganeshan

PHOTOS COURTESY: SASTRAFotoHub

Sponsored by Canopy

Write to us at news.sastra@gmail.com

THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT!

Tennis has finally arrived at Thirumalais-amudram. SASTRA is now home to two brand new, floodlit tennis courts. One is adjacent to Niranm Vihar while the other is near SPS, it’s 78 feet long (i.e. 23.76 m for us, the fans of the metric system) and 36 feet wide (i.e. 10.97 m). With the introduction of tennis as an event (for both boys and girls) in Colosseum this year, there’s going to be a lot of activity on those courts! Space enough for fashionable tennis outfits (just the good ol’ SASTRA, warden approved kind), fumbling amateurs and awe-inspiring professionals to entertain anyone loitering in the gen-eral area. Beginners can gain a feel of the game while it can help old players regain their form. So, get up off that bed, ignore the humiliation when you fail to connect your racket with the ball for the umpteenth time and grab the opportunity with both your hands! With time, the thud of the ball, the squeal of the shoes and the lukewarm applause that we’re all bound to generate when it’s just us and (if you’re really good) the cheer that can bring the house down if the pride of the University is at stake will be all that you can hear.
The Studio: Dramatics

Before movies, before television even before radio stations – one of the oldest forms of media known to man... oh all right, we’ll cut the dialogue short. We are talking about theatre, and the dramatic events.

The Studio is the name of the dramatics club at SASTRA. We cover all stage events such as one act plays, monologues, monolog sketchs, skits, and in some cases, we tolerate musicals too. If you thought theatre was merely acting, think again. If you thought plays were boring monologues from Shake speare’s play, you are in for a treat. This year we have stepped into the school English curriculum (by mad old educationists) or that scripts are stories which are easy to read (because all the boring narration is cut out, and there are only dialogues), you ain’t seen NOTHING yet.

Every Sunday, 3pm, Drama Club is held at Gnana Vihar. At these weekly sessions, we conduct events through which every aspect of creating a theatrical spectacle is covered, right from generating a story, to the final bow. The atmosphere is informal, the humour is good, bad and sometimes fatal, and inhibitions are casually murdered.

Walk in if any of the following criteria apply to you: you want to have a an entertaining weekend, you’re high on enthusiasm, you have a different view of the world around you, you want to meet new people, you have a story to tell, you’re curious, you’re schizophrenic, and most important of all, you’re still reading this article. Looking forward to seeing you there,
The Studio.

SASTRA FotoHub

The entire concept of movie making over the years has been for a profession but lately it has even developed into a hobby. No longer do only the so-called ‘arts college’ students excel in the field of video making but even engineering colleges amidst their supposedly busy schedule produce thought provoking as well as feel good short films. Here at SASTRA the official team for movie making and photography call themselves the SASTRA FOTOHUB. What does the SASTRA FOTOHUB do? The SFH as they are called, cover the various fests and occasions happening in the college. At the same time they are expected to be present at the events, by means of promotional videos conveying every aspect of the fest has to provide to the participants and spectators alike. The hub, as a mark of respect for the organizers of such fests release a fest wise ‘organizer’ video as well. As for photography, we will be having photo walks, discussions during club meets from the basics to the advanced levels.

In SASTRA, and in most cultural fests in South India, Photography, Movie making and Ad film Making are the popular sought after events. Inside campus, the months leading up to CARPE DIEM and KURUKSASTRA will see large groups of people with their fancy cameras and tripods, out to submit their works for the events. The hub is a platform for technically and creatively strong people to excel further in their upcoming projects. By means of workshops and weekly club meets, discussions on topics such as camera, script writing, editing is carried out.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/SASTRAFOTOHUB
Contact us: FOTOHUB.SASTRA@gmail.com

The Speed of Light - Celeritas

Founded in 2009, Celeritas, an initiative of Dhananjay Ravikumar and mentored by Dr.John Bosco Balaguru, the forum for modern physics at SASTRA provides a platform to nurture the curiosity of young minds interested in the vast area that is modern physics. Discussions usually range from the tiniest of particles to largest of black holes. Meetings take place once a week where a member of the forum will talk on a pre-decided topic and hence feeding a healthy debate on the topic during the sessions. We also occasionally invite people from outside, to give a talk on cutting edge research going on at major physics laboratories across the world. A notable example would be a live video conferencing from CERN, Geneva where Professor John Ellis, a seniorthoretical physicist, talked about the physics at the LHC, which the time was on the hunt for the elusive Higgs Boson. This forum is not just for aspiring physicists but for each one of you who is intrigued by the way the universe unfolds around us. The sessions for this year will begin from August.

Arzt Club @ SASTRA!

Was it you, who got thrown out of the class after the teacher found that someone had doddled her in your notebook??? NO WORRIES. There’s serious fun in store for you! (and yes, it is an oxyron!) We offer shelter to all such born-artists in the ARTS CLUB!! Help get your due share of name and fame!!

Club up with your like, develop your phenominal ideas and create Chaos. For those who find daily classes too mundane, the ARTS CLUB allows you to pamper the artist in you. Obsessed with paints? Tired of brushes and pallettes? You can just throw it on your friends face and hope for a reaction – we are not fussed. We call it face painting.

Why so serious?

INSIDERZ<SDT>

Loud music jarring the speakers, feet with attractive but used dance shoes swirling everywhere, true passion ebbing out from every nook and corner; if you find a combo of these after five in the evening every single day, welcome to the world of SASTRA Dance Team, where dance is the language that brings life to music. We win because we enjoy and love practicing every single day, pouring our heart and soul into it, growing every second.

The SASTRA Dance Team, SASTRA, commonly known as SDT, started four years ago. However, as the years passed, SDT grew and last year, we took our first step towards being a professional outfit by including various styles like Krump, house step, hip hop, locking, tutting and popping. We did not match the professionals, but they sure had to battle it out with us. SDT 2012-2013, under Praresh, has rechristened itself as “INSIDERZ CREW. We have gone a step closer into turning professional by incorporating few more styles and this year’s choreo has styles ranging from A to Z, including break beat, lyrical hip-hop, finger tutting, fusion of contemporary and jazz, terrific power moves and more. One big difference here is that we at INSIDERZ are INSIDERZ and other teams, is that we don’t just Bboy, we dance! No event is complete without a feast for the eyes and the crowd is never satisfied without SDT spreading out the vibes of enthusiasm. Right from the team in yellow that caught the crowd’s attention, to the team in red and white that struck the admiration chord in all, SDT has always ruled the home stage, sometimes even making its outside participants look small. This might sound cliched, but the fact is that SDT has taught all of us more than dance. Words like punctuation, and team spirit were seen under new light, as we became SDT-Tians. The experience of performing in front of thousands with the INSIDERZ and other teams, is that we don’t just Bboy, we dance! We offer shelter to all such born-artists in the ARTS CLUB!! Help get your due share of name and fame!!

INSIDERZ<SDT>
THE UNCONVENTIONAL OPEN-ELECTIVE COURSES

I wish to clarify that I have never opted for an open elective, much less one mentioned below. This piece is purely based on information gathered from the people who did take up these particular courses and of course, my personal views.

I vividly remember that day in my freshman year when I heard about Open Electives. Take one extra course per semester from the fourth semester onwards, and be set free in the final semester. The way everyone went on about it, you’d think it was the greatest thing man had thought of since sliced bread. The first time you chose an Open Elective would have been out of interest in that particular subject. Despite that, there is always the underlying question of, “Is this paper going to be easy (to pass)” and convenience. And who could blame them; I belong to the brood that groans if the professor were to take class even a minute after the bell. But our college does make it fun – the variety of courses it offers is just mind boggling – some easy, some intellectual and some plain queer. Here are some that caught my attention.

Yoga – I could barely contain my giggling as I made a list of questions I needed to ask a student who took it. I took yoga classes for two months when I was 10, all I remember was the supine position and how I repeatedly fell asleep while in it (don’t blame me, it was 6 a.m.) Did they bend themselves into those impossible looking pretzel-shapes during class? How are they graded for the exams? Anyone who can do a position without tearing a ligament gets an S? My insane queries and mild sarcasm were put to rest as the student went on to explain how interesting it actually was and how nobody has missed even one class so far. The course is divided into an hour of theory and an hour of practical every week. The theory class explains the history and the purpose behind Yoga. It garnered a whole new level of admiration when he mentioned that the class consisted of a whopping 60 students. By the time I was done questioning, I was left wondering if I should have waited till college to take up yoga.

Human Excellence – I didn’t even know what to put in the questionnaire. What was I to ask? Is the aim of the course to make you an excellent human being? I was fairly certain I couldn’t ask that without earning a punch to my face. So I just asked a student to tell me about it. The initial confusion was cleared in a few minutes as she told me that, while the course was pretty much what I thought, they had quite an astute way of going about it. The course was a melange of subjects, including philosophy, time management, meditation etc.

Food Processing - A very close friend of mine picked this course, so I didn’t feel the necessity to hold myself back. I was told that there was a section called pizza preservation - probably what attracted her to the course. But after every class she attended, she would come armed with a bunch of food facts I never knew. She professed true interest in the subject and was glad for taking it. In the end, that’s what counts I guess; how much it captivates and encourages the student to learn.

However, several other courses, including Manuscriptology, Vedanta, Basics of Sanskrit and Mathematical Modelling must be mentioned, as I was unable to reach students from the same for comment. As an afterthought, I just realized that I will be allotted these very courses in my final semester.

Pizza munching while in Padmasana, here I come!

S. Muthulakshmi Pillai
IV BioInfo

CINE QUIZ

1) Which is the only film in which Goundamani and Santhanam acted together?
2) Which Tamil actor is an ambassador for Greenpeace?
3) Which is the first Indian movie to use animated characters with actors?
4) Name the only film directed by Gemini Ganesh.
5) If Aboova Ragangal is for Kamal Haasan, what is it for Vikram?
6) Which is the first movie in which Sivaji Ganeshan and Rajnikanth appeared together?
7) When did Crazy Mohan first join hands with Kamal Haasan?
8) Who was the first woman director/producer in Tamil cinema?
9) Which famous Hollywood star uttered this line: “Sivaji Ganeshan can act like me but I cannot act like him”?
10) Excluding Vairamuthu, who are the only two Tamil lyricists who have won national awards?

TOONSCAPE

In Ancient Rome, The Colosseum was an iconic symbol; something much more than a building as it represented their society. It was used for a variety of reasons, to re-enact epic battles fought by the army, scenes from mythology and most importantly Gladiatorial shows. The Gladiators were faced with insurmountable odds and are equipped with only a sword. Nothing but pure grit and determination could ensure survival, and this is the very reason that a Gladiator’s victory inspires so many people and captures their hearts.

SASTRA University has its own Colosseum, the annual sports festival being held for the 5th time this year. Colosseum 2012 promises to be bigger and better this year, and the organizers are leaving no stone in ensuring that it is a grand success. Top class playing facilities and infrastructure (add to it the recently inaugurated Tennis Court), the Colosseum is sure to attract the biggest names in Southern India with athletes vying for an opportunity to etch their names in the annals of the Colosseum. Colosseum has a theme this year, “Road to Rome”. Symbolizing the grit and determination of the modern day athlete and their acts of bravery and courage in the field would surely take the viewer back to the days of the Gladiators. The Colosseum has a Mascot which will soon be unveiled, along with the website and an android application to ensure that you are up to date. An array of shows is being planned for the Opening and Closing Ceremony. T-Shirts and other merchandise will soon be on sale, so grab yours and be there to cheer for our team!

City Union Bank is the title sponsor, Thycorac and Kannan Constructions are the Associate Sponsors and Jaya TV and Suryan FM are the Media Sponsors. With the Olympics being held in London and for those who cannot make the trip, Colosseum 2012 is the next best thing.

S Sponsored by Canopy

Girish Koundinya
IV ICT