



Freedom to fly

By Lakshmi Subramanian | June 19, 2016

Loyola College, Chennai, Rank 2 Science, Rank 2 Commerce, Rank 3 Arts

In December last year, when Chennai was submerged, the sprawling Loyola College campus gave refuge to about 2,200 people. The hostel rooms were overflowing and every classroom was filled, not with students, but with men, women and children. The Give Life Cafe, a training centre for students, baked at least 2,000 loaves of bread a day. It gave out several thousand plates of biryani throughout the day. A few days later, when the water receded, the people went home and took with them the love of the students.

The college is not only about education and placements. It is also a place for learning life skills and getting along with people. The 100-acre campus with tree-lined avenues nurtures talent and always aims high. Now, exactly six months later, there are serpentine queues of students awaiting admission.

What makes Loyola stand out in nurturing talent is its up-to-date curriculum. Says principal M. Arockiasamy Xavier: "We stress on the importance of freedom. Students are not restricted to academic excellence. We don't make them sit inside the classroom, study and reproduce it in the exam. We help them achieve the impossible."

At least 90 per cent of the 2,400 students who graduate every year turn entrepreneurs, pursue higher studies and get into research or get employed through the placement cell. "Curriculum revision is done once in five years," says Xavier. "It is restructured to meet global requirements. We revise the curriculum and also the governing policies to reinvent ourselves."

Though it can accommodate only 2,400 students in more than 30 streams, at least 23,000 students apply every year. "The crowd is growing every year," says K.S. Antonysamy, director of Web Enhancement and Public Relations Office.

Another reason for the institution's success is the outstanding research-based programmes. "Our students used to help the people at the nearby hamlet. When floods washed away their houses, we were able to provide them shelter only because of this outreach programme," says Antonysamy.

As of now, there are at least 40 minor ongoing projects in various streams. Also, 21 clubs function as special forums to prepare students to be leaders in their field. For instance, the Aura club helps students become counsellors themselves. "These clubs instil practical knowledge in the students," says Xavier.

But what stands apart is the variety of courses. The BSc Visual Communication stream is the

most sought after every year. And the new Bachelors in Multimedia and Animation course is very popular. However, its flagship programme is BCom, and its BA English Literature course has produced several literary scholars over the years.

Also, there is the School of Human Excellence. “Here we offer skill orientation,” says Antonysamy. “This department was created to meet the requirements of outgoing students—to equip them for an interview or to be entrepreneurs, and to teach them skills to cope with life.”