

OCTOBER 2020

Practical Guide to Successful U.S.-India Higher Education Partnerships

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A Report of the CSIS Wadhvani Chair in U.S.-India Policy Studies

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This report is a product of the *Partnership 2020: Leveraging US-India Cooperation in Higher Education to Harness Economic Opportunities and Innovation* project funded by the U.S. Department of State.

Contents

About Partnership 2020	1
Executive Summary	3
Research Design	6
<i>Population</i>	6
<i>Sample Selection</i>	6
<i>Methodology</i>	7
U.S.-India Higher Education Cooperation	8
Practical Guide to Successful Partnerships	12
<i>Funding Partnerships</i>	12
<i>Partnership Agreements</i>	13
<i>Research</i>	15
<i>Institutional Best Practices</i>	15
<i>Communication</i>	17
<i>Culture</i>	18
About the Project Directors and Authors	20

About *Partnership 2020*

The *Partnership 2020: Leveraging US-India Cooperation in Higher Education to Harness Economic Opportunities and Innovation* project is a collaborative agreement between University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and the United States Department of State, with Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) playing a key advisory role. The project is funded by a grant from the United States Department of State.

The goal of the project is to strengthen the strategic partnership between the United States and India through collaboration in higher education, research on key issue areas, related economic growth, and people-to-people linkages. *Partnership 2020* was publicly launched in March 2019.

Work produced as part of this project includes:

- *A Searchable Database of U.S.-India university partnerships*, which can be accessed at partnership2020.org
- *Policy Recommendations on Enhancing U.S.-India Partnerships*
- *A Practical Guide to Successful U.S.-India Higher Education Partnerships*
- As part of the project, 15 partnerships are supported through sub-awards at a total value of \$1,153,502 to eligible U.S. universities, in order to enhance current partnerships with Indian universities or to start new ones
- *Partnership 2020 Quarterly Newsletter*, which serves as a way for university leaders, U.S. and Indian policymakers, and other relevant stakeholders to receive updates on *Partnership 2020* work, higher education policies, new funding opportunities, employment opportunities, and best practices in higher education partnerships

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Executive Summary

This report is made possible through the generous support of the U.S. Department of State and is part of the *Partnership 2020* project. The *Partnership 2020: Leveraging US-India Cooperation in Higher Education to Harness Economic Opportunities and Innovation* project is a collaborative agreement between the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) and the United States Department of State, with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) playing a key advisory role. The goal of the project is to strengthen the strategic partnership between the United States and India through collaboration in higher education, research on key issue areas, related economic growth, and people-to-people linkages.

In this report, we detail some of the best practices that commonly emerged in our conversations with higher education leaders. These best practices relate to funding partnerships, enforcing partnership agreements, conducting research, institutional support, communication, and culture.

Funding Partnerships

- U.S. universities where leadership wants to play an active role in forging partnerships can create a *seed fund*. This seed funding can be used toward travel expenses, to be accessed by university departments and global partnership offices when they are in the final stages of negotiating a partnership.
- Partnerships are best sustained—and have a higher chance of success—when they include an *entrepreneurial element*. Educators and researchers should become solution-oriented and problem-based in their approach toward projects during the fundraising phase, rather than adapting merely a discipline-focused approach.
- Collaborating partners must have *clear primary objectives*—be it research, capacity building, or student mobility—and must allocate funds for partnership activities accordingly.
- When funding partnerships, *mutuality of actions and commitments* is important. In the absence of mutuality, partnerships run the risk of failure, as one side may feel that they are giving too much.

Partnership Agreements

- Partnership agreements must be *clear and reasonable with equitable commitments* by all parties without being extractive toward any one party. Partnerships must focus on mutual strengths when framing contract obligations. Agreements must address logistical processes and legal obligations with concrete specifics. Mutual trust amongst partners is key to successful partnerships.

- *Maintaining partnership agreements* is easier when there is continuous interaction between the parties and annual or bi-annual partnership reviews, and when the renewal process has already been included in the original partnership agreement.

Research

- U.S. administrators and educators generally *prefer research-based universities* and large public universities in India, since they have the institutional and human capacity—and the affinity—to complement their prospective U.S. counterparts.
- *Research impact* and *research ethics* must be prioritized when conducting research. The research impact on society, students, and institutions involved must be clearly defined, measured, and catalogued to ensure continuity and to provide an impetus to future collaboration. Partners must follow uniform research ethics, especially in fields involving human/environment interactions or when the research is experimental in nature.

Institutional Best Practices

- *Decentralization of authority* is important for swift and efficient decisionmaking and continued partnership momentum.
- *Partnership champions* are crucial for success because they can avoid red tape, galvanize momentum, foster institutional relationships, and push the partnership forward. It is advisable to have more than one partnership champion so that institutional ties are not dependent on one person.
- Universities must consider housing a *Global Partnerships Office*. An office dedicated to initiating and managing partnerships helps establish institutional engagement and provides support for partnership success.
- Partner institutions must *address academic considerations that enable cross-institutional collaboration*. This includes coordinating curricula, being flexible when transferring credits and grades, and providing more course choices (especially on the Indian side).

Communication

- Partners must ideally *meet in person* and establish a rapport as they negotiate roles and responsibilities. *Mutuality of visits* ensures it is not always just the U.S. partners visiting India. *High-level visits* (from representatives such as the Vice Chancellor, Dean, or Provost of a university) are also recommended when long-term institutional ties exist.
- An overwhelming majority of respondents noted that *communication is key* to a successful partnership. Regularity of contact can be maintained by having weekly or monthly check-ins during formal projects. Some of our respondents also found that informal ways of communication—for instance, through WhatsApp and social media—were especially helpful in establishing and sustaining a rapport with their Indian partners.

Culture

- Given the cultural gap between the United States and India, it is critical that partnership programs involve a *pre-departure briefing*, especially when they involve undergraduate students. *Parents or guardians* in both India and the United States must be briefed so that they are less concerned and anxious. Students must take part in a *student orientation* to avoid culture shock upon arrival in the

United States or India. When travelling to India, it is also helpful to have a member of faculty or staff who can serve as the *cultural guide* for the group.

- Partners must *embrace a culture of learning* while keeping an open mind. Both parties must respect the other and recognize that they have much to learn from one another.

Research Design

Population

For the purpose of this report, the research team conducted interviews with 21 U.S. higher-education leaders and educators in the United States who have led U.S.-India partnerships, with the aim of ascertaining the critical best practices in U.S.-India higher education cooperation. Our *Partnership 2020* team also hosted five roundtable dialogues with education leaders in India and one in the United States. The insights derived from the interviews and roundtable dialogues both helped inform this report.

Sample Selection

The 21 U.S. university educators were chosen randomly from the *Partnership 2020* Searchable Database. The intention was to have a sample, which is representative in terms of partnership type and regional distribution. The specific breakdown is below:

TYPE OF PARTNERSHIP:

Faculty Exchange	3
Joint Conference	1
Dual Degree/Joint Degree	3
Joint Research	8
Student Exchange	6

TYPE OF INDIAN INSTITUTE:

Public	16
Private	5

U.S. PARTNER REGIONS:

West Coast	1
East Coast	5
Rocky Mountain	2
Midwest	7
South-central	5
Southeast	1
Northwest	0

INDIAN PARTNER REGIONS:

North	7
West	1
East	1
Northeast	0
Central	4
South	8

Methodology

The methodology focuses on qualitative data-gathering methods and data analysis. Data was gathered through a series of 45-minute telephonic interviews conducted with U.S. university leaders and educators. Each interview was on background, thus the information derived from the interviews is published under clear conditions negotiated with the interviewee. These conditions relate to the right of the interviewer to publish all contents of an interview except individual identifying attributes of the interviewee (such as their name and university).

The interviews followed a set format based on a uniform questionnaire. However, the interviewees were given enough freedom to steer the conversation in order to help capture their most relevant insights and experiences.

U.S.-India Higher Education Cooperation

People-to-people bonds have been foundational in relations between the United States and India since well before the two countries had meaningful economic ties or momentum in their security relationship. A principal path to forging these bonds has long been linkages in higher education, although there is scope to do far more.

Indian students make up the second-largest international student population in the United States.¹ Higher education partnerships allow students in India and the United States to receive international experience, and they are critical to the future of research collaboration. By facilitating an environment for high-quality research, partnerships increase university rankings and strengthen India's research culture.² Furthermore, the two countries have a vibrant history of bilateral cooperation on science and technology. In collaboration with the United States, India has proposed the development of the world's most powerful telescope, and there is a strong collaboration on research and design in the medical sciences; furthermore, the two countries are jointly looking for ways to increase the number of women in the sciences.³ U.S. partners bring in grants and assistance to research faculty in India, and as research partnerships grow, grant opportunities and avenues for collaboration in science and technology follow. The current fast-paced global research ecosystem has prompted scientific collaboration on a large scale to meet with growing medical and environmental challenges, with both India and the United States recognizing that partnerships are the pathway to jointly tackling these challenges.

The history of the United States-India higher education relationship (and Indian immigration to the United States) dates back to the liberalization of immigration laws after the Second World War. The influx of Indians into the United States began with the relaxation of immigration quotas throughout the 1940s. In the early 1960s, the United States started actively seeking out skilled laborers by passing a bill that sought to "facilitate the entry of alien skilled specialists."⁴ This was the lead-up to a landmark

1. "International Students Data Portal," Institute for International Education, May 2020, <https://www.iie.org/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors/Data/International-Students/Places-of-Origin>.

2. Shamika Ravi, Neelanjana Gupta, and Puneeth Nagaraj, *Reviving Higher Education in India* (New Delhi: Brookings India, November 2019): 52, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Reviving-Higher-Education-in-India-email.pdf>.

3. "U.S.-India Joint Fact Sheet: A Remarkable Expansion of U.S.-India Cooperation on Science & Technology," U.S. Department of State Archives, June 24, 2013, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2013/06/211028.htm>; "U.S.-India Bilateral Cooperation on Science and Technology," U.S. Department of State Archives, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/06/192271.htm>.

4. U.S. Congress. *An Act to Facilitate the Entry of Alien Skilled Specialists and Certain Relatives of United States Citizens, and for Other*

legislation that brought many well-educated Indian doctors, engineers, scientists, and prospective students to the United States: The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965.⁵ In addition to repealing immigration quotas by country, this bill resulted in an influx of educated Indian immigrants.⁶ Between the early introduction of the Fulbright program and recent measures such as the U.S.-India 21st Century Knowledge Initiative, the U.S.-India higher education relationship has had a rich history of growth and progress since its inception.

Recognizing the importance of these higher education ties, India and the United States have spearheaded various initiatives to promote university-level science and technology cooperation. These initiatives have further ingrained educational cooperation as a fundamental aspect of the two countries' relationship. The timeline below captures some of the most important milestones and initiatives related to U.S.-India higher education cooperation.

- **February 1950:** United States India Educational Foundation (USIEF) is created to facilitate the Fulbright-Nehru program between the United States and India.⁷ The Fulbright program is administered by the U.S. Department of State and offers fellowships meant for the “promotion of international good through the exchange of students in the fields of education, culture, and science.”⁸
- **May 1950:** The United States government establishes the National Science Foundation (NSF) to enable collaboration in international science research with foreign countries and international scholars.⁹ The NSF becomes a crucial agency in sparking U.S.-India collaboration in the sciences.
- **1961:** USAID and nine U.S. universities launch the Kanpur Indo-American Program to establish the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Kanpur. Faculty members and USAID work together to establish courses and recommendations for laying the foundation of further IITs as “Institutes of National Importance.”¹⁰
- **1965:** The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 is passed to further attract a skilled workforce from abroad to the United States. This results in an influx of many international students. By 1969, over 134,000 international students are studying in the United States—most of whom come from Canada and India.¹¹
- **1987:** President Ronald Reagan renews the Ronald Reagan-Indira Gandhi Science and Technology Initiative, extending it to the early 1990s. During Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to the United

Purposes, Public Law 87-885, S.3361, 87th Cong., October 24, 1962. <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/87/s3361/text>.

5. U.S. Congress. *An Act to Amend the Nationality and Immigration Act, and for Other Purposes, Public Law 89-236, HR 2580, 89th Cong., October 5, 1965, <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-79/pdf/STATUTE-79-Pg911.pdf>.*

6. Chazen Global Insights, “A Singular Population: Indian Immigrants in America,” Columbia Business School, February 22, 2017, <https://www8.gsb.columbia.edu/articles/chazen-global-insights/singular-population-indian-immigrants-america>.

7. “USIEF’s Historical Landmarks,” United States-India Educational Foundation, <http://www.usief.org.in/About-USIEF/USIEF-History-and-Overview.aspx>.

8. “About the Fulbright Program,” United States-India Educational Foundation, <http://www.usief.org.in/About-USIEF/About-the-Fulbright-Program.aspx>.

9. S.247, 81st United States Congress, National Science Foundation, 1950, <https://www.nsf.gov/about/history/legislation.pdf>.

10. “Kanpur Indo-American Program, 1962-1972: Education Development Center,” *United States Agency for International Development*, 1972: iv, https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/PNAAA164.pdf.

11. Teresa Bevis and Christopher Lucas, *International Students in Colleges and Universities* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 164; Patrick Barta et al., “How International Students Are Changing U.S. Colleges,” *Wall Street Journal*, 2015, <http://graphics.wsj.com/international-students/>.

States, there is a strong emphasis on expanding cultural, educational, and scientific cooperation between the two countries. In their remarks, both countries commit to establishing exchange fellowships between universities in India and the United States.¹²

- **2000:** The Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum (IUSSTF) is established. Jointly funded by the U.S. and Indian governments, IUSSTF is significant in promoting further science and technology project cooperation between the two countries.¹³
- **January 2009:** The Indian government establishes the National Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB). This agency works to provide grants and promote research in the fields of science and engineering, allowing researchers in the United States and India to further collaborate.¹⁴
- **November 2009:** To further build on their commitment of enhancing U.S.-India higher education relations, U.S. president Barack Obama and Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh announce the Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative.¹⁵ The initiative works to strengthen institutional collaborations between universities in India and the United States, with the last funding round concluding in 2018. The initiative has now been renamed the Indo-U.S. 21st Century Knowledge Initiative.
- **2012:** The first meeting of the U.S.-India Higher Education Dialogue is held between U.S. secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton and Indian minister of External Affairs S. M. Krishna. The dialogue is the first of three, and builds upon the U.S.-India Higher Education Summit.¹⁶ Each of these discussions touch on the future of higher education partnerships and the expansion of research and faculty collaboration between the two countries.
- **2015:** The Indian Department of Higher Education, under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), starts the Global Initiative for Academic Networks (GIAN) program. GIAN works to expand upon Indian institutions' global research networks and improve India's research environment, enabling Indian student researchers and faculty to interact with international faculty across ranking global institutes.¹⁷ The initiative prompts a multitude of joint courses and research projects between the United States and India.
- **2017:** The U.S. Department of State and The Ohio State University establish the Passport to India program. This program works to create internship opportunities for U.S. citizens in India, Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and research opportunities in India.¹⁸

12. "Remarks Following Discussions With Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India," Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, 1987, <https://www.reaganlibrary.gov/research/speeches/102087d>.

13. "About us," *Indo-U.S. Science and Technology Forum*, <https://www.iusstf.org/about-iusstf>; "Joint U.S.-India Statement," U.S. Department of State Archives, March 21, 2000, https://1997-2001.state.gov/global/human_rights/democracy/fs_000321_us_india.html.

14. "The Science and Engineering Research Board Act, 2008," *The Gazette of India*, January 19, 2009, http://www.serb.gov.in/pdfs/about_serb/act-serb.pdf.

15. "Remarks by President Obama and Prime Minister Singh of India in Joint Press Conference," Obama White House Archives, November 24, 2009, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-obama-and-prime-minister-singh-india-joint-press-conference>; "Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative Announces First Round of Awards," *U.S. Department of State Archives*, June 12, 2012, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/06/192154.htm>.

16. "Joint Statement on the Third U.S.-India Strategic Dialogue," U.S. Department of State Archives, June 13, 2012, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2012/06/192267.htm>.

17. "Objectives," Global Initiative of Academic Networks, <https://gian.iitkgp.ac.in/cgenmenu/objectives>.

18. "Passport to India," U.S. Department of State Archives, https://2009-2017.state.gov/p/sca/ci/in/passport_to_india/index.htm.

- **2018:** The Indian Department of Higher Education builds further on the GIAN program and establishes the Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC). Aiming to improve the quality of India’s higher education research and to facilitate academic collaboration with high-ranking institutions across the world, SPARC becomes an important funding organization for university research collaboration between Indian and U.S. universities.¹⁹
- **2019:** The United States and India discuss new initiatives to expand university research partnerships and conclude a new bilateral Science and Technology Agreement in their 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue.²⁰ The ministers propose a new initiative for internship opportunities between the two countries called the U.S.-India Young Innovators Initiative.²¹
- **2019:** The U.S. Department of State funds *Partnership 2020: Leveraging US-India Cooperation in Higher Education to Harness Economic Opportunities and Innovation* with the goal of strengthening the strategic partnership between the United States and India through collaboration in higher education, research on key issue areas, related economic growth, and people-to-people linkages.

The United States and India share a strong history of higher-education research collaboration and partnerships, which serve as the crux of the interdisciplinary cooperation between the two countries. *Partnership 2020* follows in that history, continuing to strengthen collaboration between U.S. and Indian universities. However, despite these great efforts to sustain and expand education ties and collaborative research, there are still various challenges and barriers in the U.S.-India higher education relationship. This report lays out some practical solutions and best practices to ensuring successful and sustainable U.S.-India higher education collaboration.

19. “Sanction of Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration,” Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Higher Education, August 13, 2018, <https://www.aicte-india.org/sites/default/files/SPARC.pdf>.

20. U.S. Department of State, “Highlights of 2019 U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue,” news release, December 18, 2019, <https://www.state.gov/highlights-of-2019-u-s-india-22-ministerial-dialogue/>.

21. U.S. Embassy & Consulates in India, “Joint Statement on the Second U.S.-India 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue,” news release, December 20, 2019, <https://in.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-on-the-second-u-s-india-22-ministerial-dialogue/>.

Practical Guide to Successful Partnerships

“A successful partnership has three necessary ingredients: a big idea, funding, and people who want to work together. You need all three for a successful partnership. Any one goes missing and the partnership will not sustain.”

– Partnership 2020 interview respondent

There are various moving parts involved in a successful higher education partnership. We detail some of the best practices that commonly emerged in our conversations with higher education leaders. These best practices relate to funding partnerships, enforcing partnership agreements, conducting research, institutional support, communication, and culture.

Funding Partnerships

- 1. Seed Funding:** U.S. universities where the leadership wants to play an active role in forging partnerships can create a seed fund. This seed funding can be used toward travel expenses, which university departments and the global partnership office can access when they are in the final stages of negotiating a partnership. These funds should be given without any immediate expectation of results; partnerships in India can often take time to gestate, and they may require courting a few potential partners to find the right match. The seed fund can therefore help serve as a catalyst for new partnerships. Some respondents’ universities allocated seed funds, which were utilized in travel and administrative expenses as they finalized new partnerships. Other respondents, whose institutions did not allocate seed funding, managed to forge new partnerships while they were in India for work on another project, partnership, or conference. Since most funds for U.S. academics are tied to specific projects, they often lack monetary sources to allocate toward travel when initiating or negotiating partnerships. However, having the chance to meet with potential partners is important, and all respondents mentioned having had some degree of in-person interaction with their partners before establishing partnerships. For instance, sometimes the U.S. partnership lead had personal ties to India—such as having grown up and studied there, or having a spouse, friends, or fellow

researchers in the region—or had existing partnerships, conference experience, or institutional ties with their Indian partner universities. Ultimately, respondents agreed that in-person interaction is crucial to the creation and success of new partnerships. Thus, institutes in the United States and India should consider allocating funds to enable in-person engagement; as partnerships benefit both parties through research, cultural exposure, and funding growth, leaders must think of it as an investment.

2. **Entrepreneurial Element:** Partnerships are best sustained and have a higher chance of success when they include an entrepreneurial element. This means educators and researchers should become solution-oriented and problem-based in their approach toward projects during the fundraising phase, rather than merely adopting a discipline-focused approach. Proposals that are practical, implementable, and impactful not only have a higher chance of receiving funds, but also lead to sustainable projects that can grow and secure funding in the future. For example, environmental science projects can include an entrepreneurial element by incorporating solution-based research, like pollution control technology that can be adapted and implemented by the market. Research impact is also augmented by incorporating an entrepreneurial element, especially when the research addresses global problems or problems that are common to both partner countries.
3. **Assess Primary Objective:** Partners must be clear about their primary objectives—such as research, capacity building, or student mobility—and allocate funds for activities accordingly. If the primary motive for higher education collaboration is research, for example, then it is essential not to deviate from this goal; when raising funds for prospective partnerships or applying for available grants, applicants must ensure they are allocating a substantive portion of their budget to research. At least two respondents noted that in their experience, a majority of funds is often allocated to administrative and travel costs; in a research-oriented project, these should be ancillary costs, and the budget should instead focus on research processes and outputs. When student mobility is the main objective, on the other hand, then high allocation toward travel can be justified and even desired. Similarly, U.S. land grant universities that have an engagement mission should make allocations accordingly for partnerships that promote capacity building.
4. **Mutuality:** When funding partnerships, mutuality of actions and commitments is important. In the absence of mutuality, partnerships run the risk of failure, as one side may feel that they are giving too much. When one side cannot make a monetary commitment, they should make smaller commitments in ways that contribute toward the partnership. For instance, a respondent noted that if Indian partners cannot commit to travel funds when inviting U.S. partners, they usually offer housing or cover the cost of meals. Small gestures like these create trust and show that both sides are committed to bringing something to the table.

Partnership Agreements

1. **Reasonable and Clear Contracts or Agreements:** When agreements are clear and terms are reasonable, the signing process becomes quicker and endures less friction. This includes ensuring that the roles and responsibilities of the partners are clearly defined. While there may be a desire to keep elements of a contract or agreement somewhat vague to allow adaptation as a project proceeds, partners who started with clear and reasonable expectations during the negotiation process usually signed their agreements or contracts within three months. On

the other hand, partners that did not have clear agreement terms or equitable responsibilities required a longer period of negotiation—between six months and a year. Further, reasonable agreements ensure that the partnership remains active and is not relegated to a mere “on paper” understanding, which is never truly implemented. One respondent mentioned how agreement signing took a very long time, with multiple iterations of the agreement needing to be produced, because the partners were not forthcoming about all their expectations and the terms the partner had drafted were unreasonable to the respondent’s team. Although this partnership was able to work out their issues after a period of trial and error, this is not always the case, and unreasonable and inequitable terms may quickly make the partnership unsustainable; some respondents noted that their projects never took off due to unsustainable terms, despite many contracts having been signed.

When framing partnership contracts, parties must be cognizant of certain key requirements:

- All parties should provide equitable commitments.
- Agreements should not be extractive toward one party, as such agreements have a lower chance of success. One-sided partnerships also discourage future partnerships, whereas partnerships that are mutually beneficial create an environment for future collaboration.
- Partnerships must focus on mutual strengths when framing contract obligations.
- Strong agreements or contracts should have articulated specifics of how logistical processes will and can lawfully take place. This includes ironing out details relating to expatriation of funds from India to the United States, tax liabilities incurred while carrying out the duties of the partnership, and any other specifics. A respondent noted that often a contract is signed but then the parties involved do not know how to put it into action. Further, when such issues are not addressed beforehand, questions can arise later about which party is liable to pay the additional taxes, fees related to the transfer of funds, or any other expenses and obligations. Partners must ensure that they address all logistical and legal details during the negotiation process.
- Finally, trust amongst parties during the negotiating phase is critical. Taking time to build personal bonds, even by using tools like videoconferencing, is important. Personal rapport usually offers greater security than an agreement or contract.

2. Maintaining Partnership Agreements: Some ways to ensure that agreements are maintained and renewed for longevity of projects include:

- Continuously having interactions between both parties to ensure the partnership remains active and impactful and not exclusively “on paper.”
- Conducting annual or bi-annual reviews of partnerships to ensure that the partnership is maintained regardless of faculty and administrative changes.
- Including agreement renewals into the process from the beginning of the partnership. This can take the shape of automatic renewals, renewals based on goals achieved, or renewals following a partnership review.

Renewals are usually faster than signing a contract for the first time. A partnership has a much higher chance of being renewed when the partnership has good momentum, produces results, and creates an impact.

Research

- 1. Research-focused Universities:** When looking for partner institutions, U.S. administrators and educators prefer research-based universities—such as the Indian Institute of Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Indian Institute of Management (IIM), and other large public universities. This is because research-focused universities in India usually have the institutional and human capacity and affinity to complement their prospective U.S. counterparts. Most universities in India are merely “teaching hubs” focused predominantly on teaching. Students and faculty are neither required nor expected to undertake research, collaborate amongst peers, or publish findings, as is common in the United States. Thus, it is crucial for Indian universities to go beyond teaching and to create a research environment if they want to successfully attract partnerships and undertake international collaboration. When universities are research-oriented, they have a higher frequency of publications and research outputs. This elevates a university’s ranking, increases its credibility, and in turn, attracts international partnerships.
- 2. Research Impact:** Partnership participants must think about research impact from the beginning of the project, making sure that the impact of their work on society, students, and institutions involved is clearly defined, measured, and catalogued. This ensures research continuity and provides impetus to future collaboration. One of the respondents working on urban hydrology noted that their project had practical applications both at the U.S. university where they were teaching and in their hometown back in India (where the partner institution is located). Addressing common problems with an immediate impact on relevant communities also creates partnerships that are more successful in the long term.
- 3. Research Ethics:** Practicing uniform research ethics should be a priority for all involved. Interview respondents noted that researchers can run the risk of adapting lax ethical and moral standards when working in developing countries such as India. These ethical standards are especially important when the research concerns medicine, biodiversity, pharmaceuticals, or other fields where there is human/environment interaction or when the research is experimental in nature. For example, a U.S. medical student should not practice on Indian patients when they are not authorized to practice on patients in the United States, and vice versa. Researchers must follow ethical research practices regardless of their location.

Institutional Best Practices

- 1. Decentralization of Authority:** When authority is decentralized, it leads to swift and efficient decisionmaking and ensures momentum during partnership collaboration. Some best practices that university leadership can follow are:
 - Leadership must empower all deans/principals/department heads to make quick decisions with minimum bureaucracy when it comes to finding partners and negotiating work arrangements.
 - Once a partnership launches, the university must empower leaders with the sufficient decisionmaking capabilities and resources to carry the partnership forward on their own. Otherwise, inordinate delays in securing approvals and other red tape can put the partnership behind on its goals and deliverables.
- 2. Partnership Champion:** An overwhelming majority of partnerships had one thing in common: partnership champions. A partnership champion is an individual working as faculty or

administrative staff that is personally driven and committed to collaboration between the two countries or two partner institutions. These champions are critical to initiating and maintaining partnerships as they can avoid red tape, galvanize momentum, foster institutional relationships, and push partnerships forward. Some common observations on partnership champions include:

- Institutional ties can easily erode if a partnership champion leaves the institution; this was a common grievance among interview respondents. Ideally, there must be more than one partnership champion from each side. Thus, consciously cultivating more than one faculty champion in a partnership from each side is a wise move. This ensures that the partnership does not lose momentum due to staff changes or when the partnership champion leaves.
 - From the Indian side, Vice Chancellors should be involved and active in the partnership process by assisting the partnership champions in ensuring efficient faculty communication and quick approvals. Partnerships are destined for success when senior leadership supports partnership champions, removing barriers as they emerge.
- 3. Global Partnerships Office:** Having an office dedicated to initiating and managing partnerships helps establish institutional engagement and provides an institutional push for partnership success. A global partnership office complements grassroots efforts and allows a clear central point of contact for partnerships to be established. It also allows faculty and researchers to focus on what they do best—teaching and research—without having to deal with administrative issues. Respondents whose university has a global partnership office had much more success in initiating and maintaining partnerships. These universities also have some of the most sustainable collaborations and deep institutional ties going back generations. Global partnership offices have partnership champions, and their staff’s key result area is to forge and maintain partnerships. Thus, global partnership offices are a great solution for universities actively seeking to collaborate and partner with foreign institutions. Such offices will inevitably incur costs and may not always be feasible for universities without adequate resources; however, small or medium-sized universities that are committed to driving partnerships can yield similar results by having a dedicated partnership champion who is given the resources and freedom to pursue partnerships. One respondent at a U.S. university stated how they had been recruited specifically to drive partnerships between the United States and India. This partnership champion used personal connections in India to forge partnerships between the U.S. institution and three Indian universities (all in the respondent’s hometown).
- 4. Academic Considerations:** When pursuing partnerships focused on academic collaborations—such as exchange programs and dual-degree programs—institutions often have specific guidelines for curriculum structure, curriculum content, and grading. Furthermore, universities are often very stringent in allowing a partner’s institution to discharge these responsibilities. Thus, clearly defining institutional policies up front is necessary to help faculty and students collaborate with each other and their respective institutions and to ensure partnership success. Some ways universities can do this include:
- **Curriculum Coordination:** Institutions in the United States and India should coordinate curriculums when undertaking study abroad or student exchange programs. Academic and curriculum challenges can be avoided by ensuring clear communication between

administrators and faculty in partner institutions. One common form of curriculum coordination is called “course mapping,” whereby departments from each side determine up front which courses at each institution meet each other’s standards; review of syllabi is a crucial element of course mapping.

- **Transferability of Credits:** There is often not enough credit portability for students to undertake a study abroad program. Indian and U.S. credit systems are different, which complicates credit transfers across institutions. In navigating issues of transferability, universities must therefore remain flexible and communicate effectively in order to reach a consensus through novel arrangements. It is helpful for faculty and administrators to clearly define student learning outcomes before undertaking a study abroad or student exchange program. When these terms are defined, credit transfer can be reviewed and implemented more smoothly.
- **Flexibility:** Both sides must be flexible and accommodating when it comes to curriculum design and academic teaching. Respondents note that curriculum coordination is based on communication and on the willingness of universities to execute a partnership. Universities may have strict processes in place, but as communication with counterpart institutions and the willingness to partner increase, institutions should embrace flexibility. Institutions should also be flexible when considering grading parameters. The exchange student of one of our respondents found their grades deteriorating at an IIT, as IITs are more stringent in grading; in such situations, going for a pass/fail grade usually makes more sense. Flexibility therefore makes partnerships more effective, and it increases student recruitment. As stringent behavior and processes are an important barrier in executing partnerships, a partnership champion on both sides can be of further help to address this issue.
- **More Course Choices:** The lack of elective courses at an Indian partner institution often demotivates U.S. students from studying in India, as other study-abroad destinations can provide more course options that fit into their U.S. plan of study. While offering course content that aligns with common majors is important, it is also important to include regional and cultural courses or workshops that students cannot find elsewhere, in which Indian educators may have a specialized expertise. This can include courses on Indian politics, India-China studies, Indian languages, Buddhist or Hindu philosophy, and more. Elective courses also motivate universities to forge academic partnerships with institutions, as visiting students have more diverse and attractive course options. Although such courses are common in the United States, where students can take elective classes not directly related to their degree, this model is not prevalent in India.

Communication

1. Visits: Visits to partner institutions are important while finalizing a partnership and also during the course of the partnership. Some best practices partners can follow to ensure a sustainable partnership include:

- **First In-Person Visit:** Although a diverse set of communication channels can reduce the need to physically meet, it is still helpful to ensure that partners meet each other in person before discharging the partnership duties. A respondent noted that they were encountering communication issues and an expectation mismatch during the partnership.

However, after the two sides met toward the end of the partnership, their communication improved and partners started getting along better. As a result, the partnership picked up momentum toward the end. The respondent also noted how they were still in touch with their partners even though the partnership had ended few months earlier, continuing to interact over social media despite the end of the project. By having an in-person meeting at the start of the partnership, faculty and students can establish a rapport. Meeting and establishing a strong relationship with a partner is crucial to building trust and creating quality projects.

- **Mutuality of Visits:** Respondents noted that although it is common for U.S. faculty to visit India, Indian faculty visits to the United States are rare. Mutuality of visits is crucial. This not only leads to effective and equitable collaboration, but it is also important for future partnerships. One respondent noted how they felt bad that they would always be received and hosted by their partners in India but could not host the Indian partners and show them around the U.S. campus.
 - **Vice Chancellor (VC) Visits:** When long-term institutional partnerships exist, VCs should visit partners often—once every few years. This shows that both sides are invested at the most senior levels, helps adjust key staffing issues on either side, and provides a solid basis to the institutional relationship. Again, such senior-level visits must have mutuality and reciprocity.
- 2. Constant Communication:** An overwhelming majority of respondents noted that “communication is key” to a successful partnership. Partners and universities must invest heavily in communication. It is essential to have regular contact and strong, quick, communication lines between both parties. Regularity of contact can be maintained by having weekly or monthly check-ins during formal projects. It is also important to be clear about one’s expectations when communicating with partners; for instance, respondents noted that Indian partners frequently assume that they will be provided housing in the United States for free, as this is the practice in India, and are disappointed when this does not occur. Partners must also understand that they have different incentives and constraints. For example, respondents noted that Indian partners have university-provided funds, whereas U.S. partners usually raise money on their own. Clear and regular communication is crucial to ensuring that all parties are benefitting equally from the partnership and are on the same page. Some respondents found informal ways of communication through WhatsApp and social media especially helpful in establishing and sustaining rapport with their Indian partners.

Culture

- 1. Cross-Cultural Briefing:** Considering the cultural gap between the United States and India, it is critical that exchange, research, and study programs involve a pre-departure briefing, especially when undergraduate students are involved.
- **Briefing Parents or Guardians:** Both Indian and U.S. parents or guardians of undergraduate students involved in partnership activities (study abroad, student exchange, joint research) should be briefed. Parents and guardians on both sides can harbor a number of concerns and anxieties about an unknown country; informing them about the host country, providing them details of the program, and reassuring them of the safety of their children will allay some of these fears. In addition, such briefings can also increase

the number of students participating in student exchange, as oftentimes parents and guardians can be uncomfortable with their children studying in developing countries. As a further example, a respondent from a women's college in India recounted their efforts in ensuring the parents were at ease when sending their children for student exchange programs in a co-education institute in the United States. Student recruitment grew notably over time as parent engagement increased—especially as students started recounting their experiences abroad to parents of prospective students.

- **Student Orientation:** Students from both countries can suffer cultural shock when visiting the other country for the first time. Students must receive an orientation in which they are briefed on cultural differences and what to expect from their destination. Respondents noted that Indian students also need to be briefed on matters of academic culture in other countries. For instance, the consequences of plagiarism are much greater in U.S. universities than they may be in Indian universities. Similarly, U.S. students need to prepare themselves that living conditions will differ in India. These steps will help ensure a smoother overseas semester or research trip. When students are prepared and aware of what to expect, they ease into newer surroundings much more quickly.
 - **Cultural Guide:** It is helpful if at least one accompanying faculty or staff member is well-versed in India—in other words, that they have experience researching, teaching, or otherwise living in India. This does not necessarily mean that the faculty needs to be Indian or of Indian origin, but the person should be able to navigate culture and life in the country owing to previous experience and serve as the group's "cultural guide." This person can be in charge of talking to local people on behalf of the group, negotiating with local partners, and briefing students on how to proceed when they are unsure due to cultural differences. Many of the respondents were partnership champions who were already familiar with India; they mentioned how undertaking these trips would not be possible if they were not so well versed.
2. **Culture of Learning:** Successful partnerships involve partners who are eager to learn and who keep an open mind about navigating different cultures. Partner researchers are to be viewed as "equals" and as collaborators—it is important that both parties respect each other and recognize that they have much to learn from one another. For example, respondents noted that educators and students from developing countries sometimes feel that their part of the partnership entails teaching their partners how to do things the right way. Instilling a "culture of learning" in the partnership is critical to enriching the partnership, laying the foundations for continued collaboration, and ensuring that both parties learn equally from one another.

About the Project Directors and Authors

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