



Students' Senate (2018-19)
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur
Students' Gymkhana
Gymkhana Review Committee



Festivals Review - Interim Report

Should Students' Gymkhana be responsible for organizing festivals?

The committee took cognizance of the fact that over the years, the gap between Gymkhana Office Bearers/Senate and Festival Core Teams has increased manifold. There is discontentment on part of both involved parties about the style of functioning of the other party. Generally speaking, keeping checks on any executive body slows its functioning and restricts their growth for that year, whereas stringent checks are more often than not necessary to ensure the robust functioning and sustainable growth of the body in question.

A classic example of where the ideologies of the Senate and the Festival Core Teams differ is on the need of the rule of reserving a part of the sponsorship amount as a buffer.

- Perspective 1 - The festival team had to work day and night to convince sponsors to sign MoUs to give that money, and the Senate, (which is mostly composed of Senators who have little or no experience of organizing such events) is simply asking them to not use their hard earned money.
- Perspective 2 - The Senate feels that we cannot plan for everything, despite how good the festival team might be, and some things may still go wrong. So in order to safeguard ourselves, we should keep aside some money for emergency issues. In case this money remains unused, this can be used to build a corpus, and in the long run, the festival can benefit from it as they will be able to use the annual interest generated on the corpus, and the festival does not fall into absolute deficit.

An alternative to the current model would be that all festivals move out of the Gymkhana into separate bodies, who each have an institute appointed faculty in-charge (who will be the Festival Chair). The committee realized that from an administrative perspective, liaising with multiple such bodies would be highly infeasible in the long run for the institute and students.

The objective of the Students' Gymkhana is to ensure the welfare of students by providing avenues for developing all-round development via extra-curricular activities to which will supplement education. Student festivals play an integral role here. They help students better their



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organizational and management skills, learn to deal with the various situation and thus directly align with the vision of the Gymkhana. Further, campus Festivals are a key aspect of the college life of every student and are eagerly waited for and hence they should a part of the student body which caters to students' interests.

Therefore, the committee concluded that it shall be the responsibility of the Students' Gymkhana to organize student Festivals. Finally, the committee remarked that for the successful organization of Festivals, it becomes essential that the Festival Teams and Gymkhana Office Bearers work together in harmony, understanding each other's perspective and needs, setting aside their personal differences and thereby ensuring that their common objective of student welfare is kept as their topmost priority.

Timing of Festivals

A question that has been making its rounds is that why should the Festivals not be shifted to vacations considering the time they demand during regular semesters. The committee opined on the issue.

- Winter Break Issues:
 - Campus students won't be there
 - Placements and Inter IIT competitions
 - Harsh weather conditions in Kanpur, resulting in travel issues for both participants and professionals
 - Semester exams for most of the participating colleges in December
- Midsem Break Issues:
 - Our mid-semester breaks coincide with Durga Puja (Dussehra) and Holi in the odd and even semesters respectively.
 - Organizing Gymkhana Festivals during that time will lead to a large decrease in participation, which will not only affect the involvement of the student body at an organization level but also the level of competition because of the quality of participants.

A reduction in participants due to a shift in the dates will make it even more difficult for the festival teams to secure sponsors.

Shifting festivals to either of the aforementioned vacations will defeat both the aspects of why we have student organized festivals:



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- To help students learn how to organize large-scale events and hone their management skills
- To provide a highly competitive platform for our campus teams, and other colleges (which we feel is a duty of a premier institute of India like IIT as those colleges normally don't have the resources to organize these events)

Council of Festival Affairs

Current Scenario

Festivals are one of the most critical aspects of the Students' Gymkhana and at present, the Students' Senate guides and keeps check upon them either directly or through the wings of its standing committees. However, it has been observed that there exist issues in both of these mechanisms.

The festivals face multiple issues throughout the year which need to be resolved at the Senate floor in addition to necessary scrutiny of pre and post conduction reports. These squeeze a significant time of the Senate and are mostly urgent due to their nature. A disproportional time dedicated to Festivals in the Senate is one of the major reasons in low popularity of Senate meetings as very few people have enough interest or understanding of the issues. The scheduling of Senate meetings sometimes suggests that the primary function of Senate meetings is to pass Event reports rather than discuss the actual issues of students and Gymkhana. The ineffectiveness of the Senate in this regard reflects in lesser candidates for the position of Senate which eventually threatens the very foundation of Students' Gymkhana.

On the other hand, the main reason behind bringing these agendas to the Senate is still not catered to as the Senators upon whom the final responsibility is entrusted, have limited experience to make decisions or scrutinize reports. In past, there have been situations where the Senate did not enough opinions to make a fair decision.

On the other hand, the composition of CoFA adds a significant workload on the President and Chairperson, SS as the CoFA is expected to oversee the day-to-day affairs of the festival. A small strength on the wing makes it essential for a larger body to perform the checks. Moreover, the positions that members of CoFA occupy makes it quintessential that the agendas for CoFA are discussed with them and the formal committee remains just a stamping authority. The present



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structure though allows space for joint meetings, is not very effective in resolving the issues. The structure of CoFA is also aligned with the general structure in Constitution with the presence of wings and Executive Chairman heading small standing committees.

Composition

The committee recommends that the Committee of Festival Affairs shall be converted into Council of Festival Affairs - a standing council of the Students' Senate. It shall be composed of:

- President, Students' Gymkhana (ex-officio Chairperson)
- Convener, CoFA
- Chairperson, Students' Senate (ex-officio)
- Finance Convener (ex-officio)
- General Secretary, Media and Culture
- General Secretary, Science and Technology
- General Secretary, Games and Sports
- Festival Coordinator(s), Antaragni
- Festival Coordinator(s), Techkriti
- Festival Coordinator(s), Udghosh
- 3 members of the Finance Committee (associated with each festival)
- Two nominees of the Students' Senate
- Student Advisors of each festival.

Functioning Guidelines

The model for the standing council shall be similar to its counterpart CoSHA. However, unlike CoSHA, all the stakeholder are under the purview of the Gymkhana and hence the decisions shall be binding. It is to be noted that CoFA shall be subordinate to the Students' Senate in all matters. Minutes of CoFA shall be sent to Students' Senate for ratification. On all issues where the CoFA is unable to take a decision shall also be referred to the Senate along with the discussion in CoFA. All meetings of CoFA shall be open to the general body.

Role of Members



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The roles and nomination process of Chairperson, Convener and Senate nominees shall be same as the corresponding roles in CoSHA. The finance convener shall be independent of all festivals and is expected to keep a direct check on the committee members and indirect check on festivals.

Student Advisors to each festival shall be nominated by the previous Core Team. He/she shall not be a member of the festival team in any capacity except STF. The student advisor is expected to guide the festival on lines with its vision, however, the interaction shall remain informal and not be binding on both. Their experience will help CoFA in complying with its mandate.

The committee recommends that members of the Finance committee shall be empowered and replace the Finance convener as the authority for signing bills for festivals. This would also ease the current load borne by the Finance Convener and prevent the delay caused by the same. It is expected that they keep a check on other members of the committee (including Convener) as well. The GRC overall felt that finances are very critical and shall not be left upon an individual - in theory, or in practice.

The General Secretaries currently associated with the Festivals shall be ex-officio members of the Core Team of that Festival. It is to be noted that the responsibilities of the General Secretary towards the festival shall be limited to his duties as the General Secretary (such as representing the Festivals in Senate and the Institute, ensuring that Festivals follow all the regulation as directed by the Senate, discuss and resolve issues faced by festivals with various stakeholders etc.) The President shall be kept in the loop with all the discussions/decision pertaining to the festival in light of the powers invested in him/her by the Constitution under the clause 2.21.

All the agendas that were earlier required to be discussed in wings of CoFA (standing committee) shall first be discussed in a meeting of the Core team. The Chairperson Students' Senate and members of the CoFA (standing council) associated with the festival shall be permanent special invitees to meetings of the Core team.

Pre-Conduction/Marketing/Finance/Security Reports

The committee recommends that the above reports shall be prepared in a fixed prescribed format and be discussed in a meeting of the Festival Core team. These reports shall then be discussed in the CoFA at least 5 days before the first day of the festival. The reports shall then be forwarded by CoFA to the Senate and FAC along with a record of discussion for ratification. This record



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shall also include any deficiencies found or matters referred by CoFA upon which the Senate shall take the final decision. The same procedure shall be followed for Post-Conduction, marketing and finance Reports.
