

## Final Report

### Cultural Experience:

As an Indian student, the opportunity to be an exchange student at the prestigious Indian School of Business (ISB) allowed me to gain a unique cultural perspective on my own diverse country. ISB has two campuses - one in Mohali, Punjab located in the north, and the other in Gachibowli, Hyderabad in the south. I spent my first semester immersed in the vibrant Punjabi culture of the north campus before transitioning to experience the rich traditions of the southern state of Telangana. Despite India's vast cultural differences between regions, one binding force is the use of English as a lingua franca across the nation. On my first day at the Mohali campus, the exchange coordinator provided guidance in English, introducing me to the rigorous curriculum structure and semester schedule while giving me a tour of the facilities. Anyone could communicate freely across this multicultural student body. However, outside the campus walls, Hindi is the predominant language understood by most north Indians. Simple conversations with autorickshaw drivers or at local markets required at least basic Hindi skills. Luckily, being raised in India, I had enough functional Hindi to get by comfortably in this region. One aspect that struck me was the prevalence of vegetarianism in the north, especially in the Punjabi community. As a non-vegetarian, I hadn't anticipated such a vast array of vegetarian cuisine on offer in the campus cafeteria and local restaurants. From sarson da saag to baingan bharta, I got to savor an incredible spread of veggie delicacies that were alien to my palette but absolutely delicious. The Punjabi community takes immense pride in their food, and I fell in love with their buttery dals, paneer curries and flavored lassis. Despite the intense MBA schedule, ISB students always made time to explore the region through various trips and treks. Within the first few weeks, a group of us traveled to the holy city of Haridwar in Uttarakhand. Witnessing the mighty River Ganges emerging from the Himalayas and flowing through the ancient temples and ashrams was a spiritually moving experience. We participated in the famous Ganga Aarti ritual along the ghats, where Hindu prayers are chanted to the rhythmic waving of lamps at dusk. Another memorable excursion was our trek to Manali, aptly called the "Swiss of India." As we ascended through the snowcapped Himalayas, the scenery became increasingly breathtaking - from pine forests and fruit orchards to Buddhist monasteries etched into the mountainside. We went river rafting, sampled local cheeses and explored Manali's tiny hippy culture tucked into the laps of these majestic peaks. Such trips into the rugged Himalayan terrain allowed me to experience the raw, untamed beauty of northern India. After completing my first semester at Mohali, I transitioned to ISB's Hyderabad campus in southern India's Telangana state. The cultural shift was immediately palpable as I was transported to the historic Deccan Plateau region. Hyderabad is a melting pot where Hindu and Muslim traditions have intermingled over centuries, creating a distinct culture evident in the city's Persian architecture, cuisine and language. While Hindi was commonplace in the north, Telugu quickly became the predominant language I heard all around me in Hyderabad's streets and bazaars. I thought I had to quickly pick up basic Telugu conversational skills through immersion and friends to be able to communicate effectively but people in Hyderabad were familiar with Hindi. The food scene in Hyderabad was a dream for meat-lovers like myself after being exposed to so much vegetarian fare up north. I feasted on the city's iconic Hyderabadi biryani and haleem dishes which highlighted the Mughal-inspired cuisine. From visiting Hyderabad's historic Charminar monument to haggling at the iconic Laad Bazaar, I got a first-hand taste of the city's rich Muslim cultural heritage which so seamlessly blended with Hindu traditions and sensibilities. One of the most fascinating experiences in the south was witnessing village life in rural Telangana up close through visits to places like Mulkanoor. Watching potters expertly shaping clay on their wheels or seeing artisan communities meticulously weaving the iconic

Pochampally silk, ikat sarees opened my eyes to the vibrant folk arts and crafts still thriving in these rustic corners of Hyderabad City. The countryside's simple hospitality, colorful culture and agricultural lifestyle was a stark contrast to urban Hyderabad.

ISB campuses also foster an entrepreneurial spirit among students by actively supporting and facilitating their ventures within the campus environment. Students are encouraged to develop innovative ideas that cater to the needs of the campus community. For instance, a group of students created Kook, a platform that allows users to order food, which is prepared using ready-to-make oat containers manufactured by the students themselves. Additionally, student-run cafes have been established, providing dining options and showcasing the students' entrepreneurial talents. The campus administration plays a crucial role in nurturing these student-led initiatives by assisting in their implementation and providing the necessary resources and guidance. This approach not only nurtures entrepreneurial mindsets but also contributes to the vibrant and dynamic atmosphere of the ISB campuses.

Overall, my year as an exchange student gave me an intimate exposure to India's kaleidoscope of cultural riches across the northern and southern regions. While there were such vast differences in cuisine, language, traditions and even the natural landscapes, I was struck by how warmly and curiously people across India embraced those from other cultures. At the end of the day, we are all united by our Indian identity and human experiences that transcend region or religion.

### **Academic Experience:**

The Indian School of Business (ISB) provides a world-class academic experience, facilitating cutting-edge courses aligned with current business needs and market trends. The flagship Post Graduate Programme in Management is an intensive one-year course divided into eight compact 5-6 week semesters. This focused system facilitates an intensive yet productive learning environment. Students take a full course load each term, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in the subject matter before moving on to the next set of classes. A unique aspect of ISB's curriculum is the course bidding system using points. At the start of each semester, students are allocated 3000 points to bid for the courses they wish to take. With limited seats and high demand for the most popular and unique electives, strategic bidding is required. Some of the most highly coveted courses see students deploying their full 3000 points to secure admission. This bidding process adds an element of competition while allowing students to craft their own personalized study plan based on interests and goals. Courses at ISB are taught in a compact twice-weekly 2-hour format, packing substantial material into highly focused sessions. The diverse student body hailing from all across India and over 20 countries creates a vibrant classroom atmosphere. As the top-ranked business school in India, ISB only admits students with exceptionally high GMAT scores and strong academic profiles. However, rather than fostering an overly competitive environment, this academic selectivity elevates the learning experience. Class participation is enthusiastically encouraged, with students drawing from their multidisciplinary professional backgrounds spanning industries like business, technology, healthcare, government, and more. Whether discussing a classic Harvard Business School case study or examining the latest developments at an Indian unicorn startup, the dialogue is consistently enriching and thought-provoking. By the end of each session, one feels overloaded with new frameworks, insights and perspectives gleaned from both the professor and fellow students. The case study method is widely

employed, with discussions diving deep into contextual analysis utilizing various business tools and strategies. Case selections are a thoughtful blend of time-tested Harvard cases providing fundamental concepts combined with recent, regionally-relevant cases tackling current challenges faced by Indian companies and emerging startups. This balanced approach imparts a solid theoretical foundation while ensuring lessons have pragmatic real-world applicability. Many professors have pedigreed academic backgrounds from globally prestigious universities, coupled with extensive real-world experience spanning C-suite leadership roles, entrepreneurial ventures, strategic consulting projects and more. Despite these remarkable credentials, the faculty maintains an approachable, down-to-earth demeanor dedicated to investing in students' development. Once taking a seat in their classroom, you cannot help but appreciate the faculty's mastery and teaching excellence. Lectures are never one-way monologues, but rather Socratic dialogues enriched by collaborative discourse. Beyond the classroom, professors remain dedicated mentors and guides. It's common for them to follow up after a stimulating case discussion by sharing helpful supplemental materials like research papers, industry reports, or expert commentary. These additional resources aid consolidating learning and developing more nuanced strategic perspectives on the topics covered. I had the privilege of taking three remarkable courses that left an indelible mark on my academic journey. The first course that stood out was "Strategic Innovation Management" taught by Professor Deepak Jena. This course provided a profound understanding of how to seamlessly blend innovation into strategic plans, tackle the complexities of innovation, and master the art of effective strategy execution. Professor Jena's insightful teachings emphasize the importance of having a clear vision and leveraging an organization's strengths to devise profitable and defensible advantages in the market. His famous quote, "It's important to know where to play and how to win," resonated deeply with me, underscoring the significance of strategic clarity and execution prowess for leaders. The second course that left an indelible mark was "Marketing for a Sustainable Planet" taught by Professor DVR Seshadri. This course explored the intricate relationship between sustainability and business operations from a multifaceted perspective. We delved into the critical issues surrounding sustainability, examining their impact on various aspects of a firm's functioning, including business strategy, finance, operations, and more. This course empowered me as a future marketing manager to provide high-quality inputs to organizations, addressing the demands of the marketplace regarding proactiveness on the sustainability front. The third course, "Generative AI," taught by Professor Vishal Karungulam, was a true game-changer. In this course, we adopted a leader's perspective in attempting to achieve success in the modern AI-enabled world. Through a unique blend of case discussions and hands-on labs, we explored cutting-edge AI tools like ChatGPT, Midjourney, and DALL-E 2, and their applications in building modern software products and solutions. The course delved deeper into the ethical considerations surrounding AI, equipping us with a well-rounded understanding of this rapidly evolving field. Certain unique elective courses exemplify ISB's focus on localized, India-centric learning. The "Sustainability" course examines sustainable business practices through the lens of Indian organizations and social enterprises. Similarly, "Healthcare Marketing" provides domain-specific strategies centered on India's healthcare sector and innovators. Professors go the extra mile, often inviting entrepreneurs, executives and other real-world protagonists as guest speakers to share candid first-hand accounts. These interactive sessions were among the most insightful and memorable. Beyond imparting academic concepts, ISB develops essential managerial skills like data analysis, strategic decision-making, communications and leadership. Global opportunities like international electives, exchange programs and even a

full-semester option to study at Northwestern University or Wharton provide further exposure and diverse perspectives.

In conclusion, The Indian School of Business stands out as a premier institution offering an unparalleled academic journey for ambitious management students. Through its meticulously designed one-year Post Graduate Programme, ISB provides a transformative learning experience that extends far beyond traditional classroom instruction. With a focus on cultivating essential managerial skills and a global outlook through international opportunities, the ISB experience prepares future leaders to tackle modern business landscapes with confidence and strategic acumen. The school's commitment to delivering a world-class academic experience aligned with current market trends makes it a premier destination for ambitious management students.

In conclusion, I extend my sincere gratitude to National Chengchi University (NCCU), Taiwan for providing me with this incredible opportunity to be an exchange student at India's #1 business school, the Indian School of Business (ISB).

### **For Future Students:**

Indian School of Business (ISB) is an exceptional institution that offers a transformative experience for exchange students. As an alumnus of this prestigious B-school, I cannot overstate the importance of networking during the MBA exchange program. ISB's recent ranking as India's #1 B-school in the FT Global MBA Ranking 2024 for alumni network and global research is a testament to the school's commitment to fostering strong connections among its students and graduates. One of the most remarkable aspects of ISB is the abundance of events organized to bring together alumni from diverse backgrounds and industries. These gatherings provide a wonderful opportunity for exchange students to connect with successful entrepreneurs, industry experts, and seasoned professionals who have established their own startups or achieved remarkable success in their respective fields. Networking with these accomplished individuals can offer invaluable insights, mentorship, and potential collaborations, making the exchange program an invaluable stepping stone for personal and professional growth. Beyond the alumni network, ISB offers a vibrant student life with over 15 clubs catering to various interests, from consulting to stand-up comedy. Participating in these clubs not only allows students to explore their passions but also provides opportunities to develop leadership skills, organize events, and collaborate with like-minded individuals. The experience of being part of these clubs is truly insightful and enriching, enabling students to broaden their horizons and cultivate valuable connections within the ISB community.

One of the standout features of ISB's exchange program is the comprehensive career counseling and professional development support offered to students. The institution's dedicated team of experts provides invaluable guidance on resume preparation, ensuring that students present their qualifications and experiences in the most compelling manner. Moreover, ISB facilitates a unique program called "Shadow a CEO," which offers an exceptional opportunity for students to interact closely with some of the country's most successful and accomplished managerial talents. This immersive experience allows



participants to gain firsthand insights into the decision-making processes, leadership strategies, and operational dynamics of top-tier organizations.

As India's top-ranked business college, ISB boasts an excellent reputation and extensive resources. The library's vast collection and access to cutting-edge research materials ensure that students have the necessary tools to excel academically. Furthermore, the school's strong relationships with industry professionals and esteemed faculty members facilitate seamless connectivity, enabling students to tap into a wealth of knowledge and expertise across various domains. The on-campus student dorms at ISB are truly outstanding, offering a fully furnished living experience with daily housekeeping services. These amenities ensure that students can focus on their studies and extracurricular activities without worrying about the hassles of daily chores. The dorms provide a comfortable and conducive environment for learning, socializing, and fostering lasting friendships with fellow students from diverse backgrounds. In addition to the exceptional living accommodations, ISB's location in the heart of the city provides easy access to a wide array of culinary delights and amenities. Students can indulge in custom-made meals prepared by the service staff or explore the vibrant local food scene, immersing themselves in the rich cultural tapestry of India.

In summary, for those who seek holistic development, encompassing personal growth and professional advancement, coupled with the invaluable opportunity to immerse themselves in an environment amidst some of the brightest minds, the Indian School of Business (ISB) should undoubtedly be the premier choice on their list of potential institutions.



