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10 Questions

Richard C. Levin

The president of Yale University on their recently announced India Initiative

NITYA RAO ON RICHARD C. LEVIN

Tell us about the Yale India Initiative.

It's an academic programme that attempts to enhance Yale's ties with India and South Asia through new curricula, faculty and student exchanges and leadership education.

When did the idea take shape?

It was first initiated in May 2008.

Why should an Ivy League school like yours choose to partner with India?

It's impossible to ignore India and the strong political clout it wields in South Asia.

Does Yale have any special historical connections with India?

The connections go back more than three centuries. Yale was the first to introduce Sanskrit to western academics in the 1840s.

Any specific disciplines that the programme will focus on?

No. We're offering a wide canvas from languages, literature, religion and politics to public health, anthropology and environmental studies.

How is the programme being funded?

Yale has earmarked \$30 million from its own funds. We hope to raise about \$20 million from donors by December 2009.

Who are the prominent donors so far?

Nandan and Rohini Nilekani and Dinakar Singh have helped kickstart the project.

What do you hope to gain in this initiative?

To prepare our students for leadership and service; attract to Yale the most talented scholars; and expand Yale's role as a global university of consequence.

What role do you play as president?

I help in developing our core strategy, raising funds, identifying academic and administrative leadership and executing the plans effectively.

Roughly how many Indian students will you be enrolling into the programme?

We have 135 Indian students pursuing undergraduate degrees in South Asian studies. But after this programme the numbers will increase.