

Yale launches 'unprecedented' initiative in India

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Yale will commit itself to an unprecedented series of academic expansions designed to bolster the University's ties with India, University President Richard Levin said in New Delhi today.

The Yale India Initiative boasts a \$75-million **endowment** dedicated to the growth of **faculty** and curricular programs in Indian studies at Yale. The University will also augment its efforts to attract students and scholars from India, all in an effort to accelerate the University's India-related programs so that they can be comparable to those in China.

"The scale of what Yale has developed for its Indian studies program," the president said Monday, "is unprecedented."

It is difficult to put an exact price on Yale's engagement with China, in part because so many of the more than 80 **research** and educational programs between the two have been developed over many decades. In contrast, Levin said, the Yale India Initiative will be implemented almost all at once.

"We've put a lot of emphasis in the last few years on building relationships with China," Levin said by phone before the announcement. "But India is emerging as one of the leading economic powers in the world, and it seems like a natural extension of our global efforts."

Of the \$75 million allocated for the initiative, \$30 million will come from Yale's unrestricted endowment resources, while \$20 million more will be raised from donors in the next year. Gifts already made and planned expansions of the program bring the University to the \$75 million total, which is nearly 3.75 billion Indian rupees at current exchange rates.

George Joseph, assistant secretary of the University in charge of relations with South Asia, said the funds associated with the India initiative will be used to create new professorships and curricula across the University, from Yale **Law School** and Yale College to the Yale School of Nursing, for example.

K. “Shivi” Sivaramakrishnan, chair of the University’s South Asian Studies Council, will direct the initiative, though he emphasized that much of the immediate growth will be driven by individual schools and departments.

“It will take a few years’ time to develop a systematic initiative,” Sivaramakrishnan said. “The first thing we have to do is build up our faculty strength, and we will rely on the departments and schools to initiate that.”

Aside from new faculty appointments, the initiative will also support an increase in the number of visiting faculty and post-doctoral fellows in South Asian studies. Yale aims to have the largest such program of any American university by next year.

Economics professor T.N. Srinivasan, who formerly chaired the South Asian Studies Council, said Yale’s commitment to India is remarkable for an American liberal-arts school.

To begin with, he said, Yale and other American schools have historically been at a disadvantage in recruiting Indian students and professors because of the strong colonial legacy of Oxford and Cambridge universities.

“Most of the elite in India, whether in politics or administration, were trained at Oxford or Cambridge,” Srinivasan said. “Or they were trained by those who were trained at Oxford or Cambridge.”

But, Srinivasan said, the influence of Oxford and Cambridge has begun to ease in recent years as interest in **business** and **engineering** has grown in India, now Asia’s third-largest economy. This has been a boon, Joseph said, for schools like Stanford University and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both of which are traditionally strong in these fields.

Yale has lagged behind, he said, because it has less prestigious programs in management education and engineering studies. The new initiative aims to capitalize on Yale’s historic strengths in the **arts** and sciences, as well as in leadership cultivation, Joseph explained.

Sugata Bose, a well-known professor of modern South Asian history at Harvard University, said he welcomes Yale’s new initiative because it transcends any single educational discipline.

“There is a desperate need for Indians to get liberal, well-rounded educations,” Bose said. “We need training of students from India in the arts and sciences.”

As Yale aims to expand its focus on developing leaders in and from India, Levin said, it is also building on the smaller, existing programs that the University has initiated in recent years.

The India-Yale Parliamentary Leadership Program has brought members of India’s parliament to Yale in the past two years to engage in programs organized by Yale faculty. And while there are roughly 130 students from India currently enrolled at Yale, the University sent more than 150 students to India on a variety of service, internship and study trips last year.

But even as Yale redoubles its efforts to cultivate interest in India, it is not forgetting about the rest of South Asia, University officials added.

Srinivasan, the economics professor, said he expects that Yale’s work with India will also spark interest in the study of Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

“It is extremely likely that the spillover effects will be significant,” he said, noting that professors hired as part of the Yale India Initiative might also teach courses on those other nations. “But it’s very logical to start with India, because it’s the largest country and it’s much more on the **international** scene than the others.”

And important as India has become in international affairs, it is also becoming a strong force within the University’s highest governing body. Indeed, two of the 19 members of the Yale **Corporation** — Indra Nooyi SOM ’80, chairman and chief executive officer of PepsiCo, and Fareed Zakaria ’82, an editor and columnist at Newsweek — trace their roots back to India.