

From the Principal's Desk

The year 2020 began with the Handique Girls' College community renewing its commitment to upholding the ideals of this august Institution and looking forward to some positive developments. But just two and a half months in to the new year, we were facing the COVID-19 pandemic and campus closure. We did not then realise that this was the beginning of what would be the biggest disruption of academic activity, and indeed of our lives, in recent years.

Aware that the continuity of learning had to be maintained, we responded to campus closure by shifting courses online, only to realise how poorly prepared we were. Our courses were designed for classroom teaching, faculty were unfamiliar with remote learning, and technology bottlenecks plagued both teachers and students. Our initial efforts at online learning, we realise, could not have been very satisfactory for both teachers and students, but they served a very important purpose; the College community remained connected during the anxiety-filled days of lockdown and punctuations of tentative relaxations.

Meanwhile, we were learning. Faculty members attended workshops and went online to find out about tools and techniques which would allow them to take learning more effectively to their students. WhatsApp was repurposed and, Google Meet and GoogleClassroom were deployed to take learning to the students. And the Generation Z of students responded with their characteristic familiarity with the social media and the internet. A recent in-house survey tells us that at least 90 percent of the student respondents have been able to continue their learning online, although most of them feel that in-person classes are better.

However, for students who are enrolled in on-campus courses, online learning cannot become the mainstay of their academic experience. This realisation has led to a very careful and gradual reopening of campuses, but we still have a long way to go to get back to the pre-Covid times or even a new normal where campuses are fully functional.

Handique Girls' College will not be stinting in its efforts to support the learning of its students in these difficult times and students will have to remain motivated in their preparation for the future, because this cannot wait.

Ujjal Dutta
25/11/2020