Impact Assessment Report of CSR Grant to Ashoka University Contributed by SRF Foundation

Date: 23 December 2022

Submitted By

CSRBOX

Contents

Abbreviations

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BA	Bachelors of Arts
HoD	Head of Department
JD	Job Description
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual +
LPA	Lakh per Annum
MA	Masters of Arts
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NEP	National Education Policy
OSA	Office of Student Affairs
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
RA	Resident Assistant
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SRFF	SRF Foundation
STEAM	Science, Technology, Engineering Arts and Maths
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

Disclaimer for the Impact Assessment Report

- This report has been prepared solely for the purpose set out in the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Renalysis Consultants Pvt. Ltd. (CSRBOX) and SRF Foundation to undertake the Impact Assessment of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) projects implemented.

- This impact assessment is pursuant to the Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021, notification dated 22nd January 2021.

- This report shall be disclosed to those authorized in its entirety only without removing the disclaimer. CSRBOX has not performed an audit and does not express an opinion or any other form of assurance. Further, comments in our report are not intended, nor should they be interpreted to be legal advice or opinion

- This report contains an analysis by CSRBOX considering the publications available from secondary sources and inputs gathered through interactions with the leadership team of SRF Foundation, project beneficiaries, and various knowledge partners. While the information obtained from the public domain has not been verified for authenticity, CSRBOX has taken due care to receive information from sources generally considered to be reliable.

- In preparing this report, CSRBOX has used and relied on data, material gathered through the internet, research reports, and discussions with personnel within CSRBOX as well personnel in related industries.

With Specific to Impact Assessment, CSRBOX

- Has neither conducted an audit, or due diligence nor validated the financial statements and projections provided by the SRF Foundation.

- CSRBOX must emphasize that the realization of the benefits/improvisations accruing out of the recommendations set out within this report (based on secondary sources), is dependent on the continuing validity of the assumptions on which it is based. The assumptions will need to be reviewed and revised to reflect such changes in business trends, regulatory requirements or the direction of the business as further clarity emerges. CSRBOX accepts no responsibility for the realization of the projected benefits;

- The premise of an impact assessment is the objectives of the project along with output and outcome indicators pre-set by the programme design and implementation team. CSRBOX's impact assessment framework was designed and executed in alignment with those objectives and indicators.

Executive Summary

SRF Foundation is a Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) arm of SRF Limited, working on quality education and vocational skills across the country. The Foundation builds on the heritage of its founders, who have been instrumental in the establishment of institutions such as the Lady Sri Ram College, Shri Ram College of Commerce, Shri Ram Research Institute, The Anglo Sanskrit School, and many others.

Ashoka University is a liberal arts university that specialises in education in the humanities, social sciences, and sciences. Mr. Sanjeev Bikhchandani, Mr. Ashish Dhawan, and Mr. Pramath Raj Sinha founded it in Sonipat, Haryana, in 2014. The list now includes 160 founders who have aided in various multidisciplinary courses. The liberal arts emphasis at the university has been expanded to include courses in the humanities, social sciences, and core sciences. The founders of the university envisioned it as a place where management decisions are made based on the potential for social impact rather than politics. Ashoka is entirely funded by donations.

Ashoka University received a Rs 1 crore donation from the SRF Foundation to support its inclusive mandate. The main aim of this grant was to promote Education among students, the future citizens of the country. The Utilisation Certificate states that this grant was given in 2020-2021. The costs associated with maintaining the university's regular operations cover academic and other expenditures to support diversity and inclusion promotion. This enhances the standing of Ashoka University. CSRBOX conducted an impact assessment to assess the CSR contribution for 2020-2021.

Key findings from the assessment

Ashoka University received an unrestricted grant from the SRF Foundation. Untied grants account for between 28 and 35 percent of the total budget, or approximately Rs 50-40 crore. Several stakeholders stated that the SRF's CSR contribution was specifically used to pay faculty honoraria. The faculty and staff were in charge of various university functions. The following are the key findings from the various activities:

Parameters	Key Findings
Faculty and Admissions	250% increase in full-time undergraduate faculty from 33 to 125 between 2015 to 2021. 750% increase in the visiting faculty members from 16 to 136 between the years 2014-2021. 44% of the faculty constitutes female members. - Visiting faculty are representatives coming from 13 countries. - A healthy 7:1 student-to-faculty ratio. - Outreach team engaged with 980 schools across the nation in 2020-21. 798 students were admitted to the university via outreach initiatives. 59% of applications received were from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Parameters	Key Findings
Diversity and Inclusion	• 48% of undergraduates are on financial aid. 22% provided with a full scholarship. • 50% of women in the workforce. 63% of women are in positions of leadership. • 59% of women students in sciences and 44% of the women students on financial aid. • 6% of the students constitute international candidates, coming from 25 countries. • 35% of graduates belong to Tier 2-3 cities. • 6 different student and faculty-led collectives for making the campus diverse and inclusive.
Research	• 9 centres of excellence established by the University to nurture thought leadership and generate knowledge sources. • 4 books were published by the faculty members under major publishing houses. • More than 30 different grants are being provided by National and International organizations
Placement	• Placement committee providing training to students aligned to the 21st Century Skills. • Number of students placed rose from 151 to 304 during 2017–2021. • Placement companies ranged from the top Fortune 500 companies to consultancies, and major national and international companies participated in recruitment. • Students who opted out of placement pursued higher education at major national and international universities.
Student Learning /Facilities for Students	• The library has over 60000 books in print and over 396000 digital books and 18000 e-journals in its repository for the benefit of the students. • University subscribes to 30 print journals and four newspapers. • University has developed the Resident Assistant programme for students to be comfortable with their residential life. • University has many clubs and societies undertaking events and activities. University provides a budget of Rs 25000, and clubs receive Rs 15000.

Way Forward and Recommendations

Ashoka University in India strives to be the top institution for liberal academics. Both academic and non-academic workers are of the highest caliber. They have the skills and knowledge necessary to establish a top-notch institution. The team is very reflective, putting mechanisms in place to aid the management. Ashoka University can work with regional or state-level universities to conduct research programmes and deliver more concrete research outcomes. The ecology of higher education in India will benefit from this. Current educational offerings by Ashoka are not designed to serve adults from lower-middle-class backgrounds. This specific population focuses on pursuing education in a vocational space. In order to make progress in resolving this problem, Ashoka can do so by addressing the needs of this specific population.

CHAPTER 1 Project Overview

1.1 Overview of SRF Foundation

SRF Foundation is a Corporate Social responsibility (CSR) arm of SRF Limited, working on quality education and vocational skills across the country. The Foundation builds on the heritage of its founders, who have been instrumental in the establishment of institution such as the Shri Ram Research Institute, The Anglo Sanskrit School, and many others. It has setup the well known The Shri Ram Schools in Gurgaon and New Delhi in 1988, SRFF Vidyalaya in Chennai (1992) and Gurgaon (2020).

"Achieving quality education and training that inspires children and youth from all sections of the society to achieve individual aspirations and building a better society for tomorrow, through the knowledge, skills and values acquired."

Translating the mission into action, Foundation has launched its Rural Education Program in 2010 working with under privileged children and youth attending the government schools and passed out. To provide quality education and holistic development to children of rural areas, the Foundation aims to create 'Centres of Excellence' by transforming Government Schools into "Model Schools" through transforming them physically, academically, and digitally. Under its Rural Education Program, the SRF Foundation is providing quality education and is positively impacting the lives of 1,77,064+ students in 670 schools across 24 locations in 12 Indian states.

1.2 Ashoka University

Ashoka University is an Indian university specialising in liberal arts education in the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Sciences. It was founded in Sonipat, Haryana, in 2014. Mr. Sanjeev Bikhchandani and Mr. Ashish Dhawan founded the university after approaching the Indian School of Business's Dean, Mr. Pramath Raj Sinha. This university envisioned establishing a global standards institute on par with top-ranked universities such as MIT or Stanford University. Apart from the three individuals mentioned, 22 people came together to lay the groundwork for the university. Today, the list includes 160 founders who have assisted in various multidisciplinary courses.

The university's emphasis on the liberal arts approach was extended to various courses in the humanities, social sciences, and core sciences. This decision was made to cater to and instil value in the changing mindsets of Indian students and parents so that they see education as a means to an end rather than a means to a good job.

With no hierarchies in the founding group, Ashoka University is entirely supported through donations. The university's founders wanted it to be a place where no one person holds absolute authority and where management decisions are based on the potential for social effect rather than politics. A group of professors and researchers from several countries oversees setting academic standards for Ashoka. They also provide guidance on research, faculty hiring, and curricula. The current leaders of the university are:

- **Rudranshu Mukherjee- Chancellor**

   He is a well-known Indian historian and the author of several important history books. He was the first vice chancellor of Ashoka University and is now its Chancellor. He was also the Opinions Editor for The Telegraph in Kolkata.

- **Malabika Sarkar- Vice-Chancellor**

   She is the current vice chancellor of Ashoka University. She was an English literature professor. Before she became Vice Chancellor, she was the first Dean of Faculty and Research and the Principal Academic Advisor at Ashoka University.

- **Rajesh Garodia – Pro Vice Chancellor (Administration & Finance)**

- **Eshwar Venkatesam- Pro- Vice-Chancellor (Development, Placement and Alumni Relations)**

Academic Programmes offered at the University

Degree Level	Courses	Disciplines
Under Graduation	BA (Hons) or BSc (Hons)	**Pure Manager** English, Economics, Psychology, History, Philosophy, Sociology & Anthropology, Political Science, Mathematics, Computer Science, Physics & Biology **Interdisciplinary Majors** Computer Science and Entrepreneurship, Leadership, Computer science and Mathematics, Economics & Finance, Economics & History, English and Journalism, History and International Relations, Politics, Philosophy and Economics, Politics & Society, English and Creative Writing
Post- Graduation	MA or MSc	Liberal Studies, English, Economics and Biology
Doctoral Studies	PhD	Biology, Chemistry, Computer Science, Economics, English, History, Physics, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology

1.3 Importance of STEM

Efforts to bridge the gap between arts and science education have grown significantly in recent years. This has been demonstrated by the transition in various countries from a STEM-based curriculum to a STEAM-based curriculum. STEAM is an acronym for Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics. The global approach to the liberal arts has evolved into a multidisciplinary one. Many international curricula are no longer limited to the traditional linear direction of taking courses related to pure science, purely humanities, or purely social sciences. These universities have allowed students to take courses outside of their major. This has helped students gain a better understanding of their courses and instil a desire to solve social problems through innovation.

The Government of India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 has placed a greater emphasis on liberal arts education. The restructured curriculum envisions an individual's holistic development through multidisciplinary learning approaches. By 2040, there will be a greater emphasis on developing multidisciplinary institutes. A liberal arts education provides students with skills that they can use for the rest of their lives. In today's ever-changing world, liberal arts education is seen as a game-changer because it helps students learn how to solve problems, think critically, and work together. It also encourages students to think outside the box and come up with new ideas.

The following are the benefits of taking courses at a university that takes a liberal approach to education -

- Modern liberal approach to education helps in democratizing the educational process. The curriculum is flexible and gives preference to students' choices. The student plays a critical role in shaping their programme.

- This approach also assists educational institutions in providing students with a variety of study options. This motivates the learner to develop a broader perspective on the field of their choice. It also helps people think positively, approach global issues with enthusiasm, and come up with new ways to learn.

- A liberal education encourages students to broaden their worldview. Curricula expose them to global events, and knowledge transfer between regions helps universities foster global academic partnerships. This helps learners adjust their knowledge lens, fostering an innovative approach.

- The approach promotes relationships with people from various backgrounds and social realities. This assists the learner in developing soft skills, which are essential in today's global workforce. This also provides the learner with extensive knowledge to deal with the social challenges that they face.

- The learner is constantly surrounded by innovative ideas, concepts, and one-of-a-kind experiences. The learner can benefit from community-based learning and peer-reviewed research. This allows them to experiment and explore their knowledge.

- Analysing information and processing it analytically leads the learner to reflect across disciplines. This will continue to be an important life skill that can be useful in a various situation.

Human capital is the sum of one's skills, knowledge, and social and personality traits. This has an impact on people's ability to generate economic value from their labour. India has a demographic advantage because it has a large young population that is ready to enter the labour force. Education reforms such as the NEP 2020 are aimed at assisting India in producing excellent assets for the national and international labour markets. Indian universities have adopted a liberal approach to student skill development. The combination of social science or natural science courses with humanities provides workers with versatility that makes them difficult to replace in the long run.

There has been a strong emphasis on technology-related studies, particularly data science, analysis, Artificial Intelligence, and Machine Learning. These fields are expected to permeate all areas of professional life in the coming decades. Universities are revising their curricula to create courses that meet the needs of the industry, so that graduates can be assets in their career pursuits regardless of their discipline, whether arts, pure science, or social sciences.

1.4 CSR Grant by SRF Foundation

The International Foundation of Research and Education (Ashoka University) received a Rs 1 crore donation from the SRF Foundation to support its inclusive mandate. The main aim of this grant was to promote Education among students, the future citizens of the country. The Utilisation Certificate states that this grant was given in 2020-2021. The costs associated with maintaining the university's regular operations cover academic and other expenditures to support diversity and inclusion promotion.This enhances the standing of Ashoka University. In this light, SRF Foundation envisages an evaluation of its CSR contribution through a third-party impact assessment.
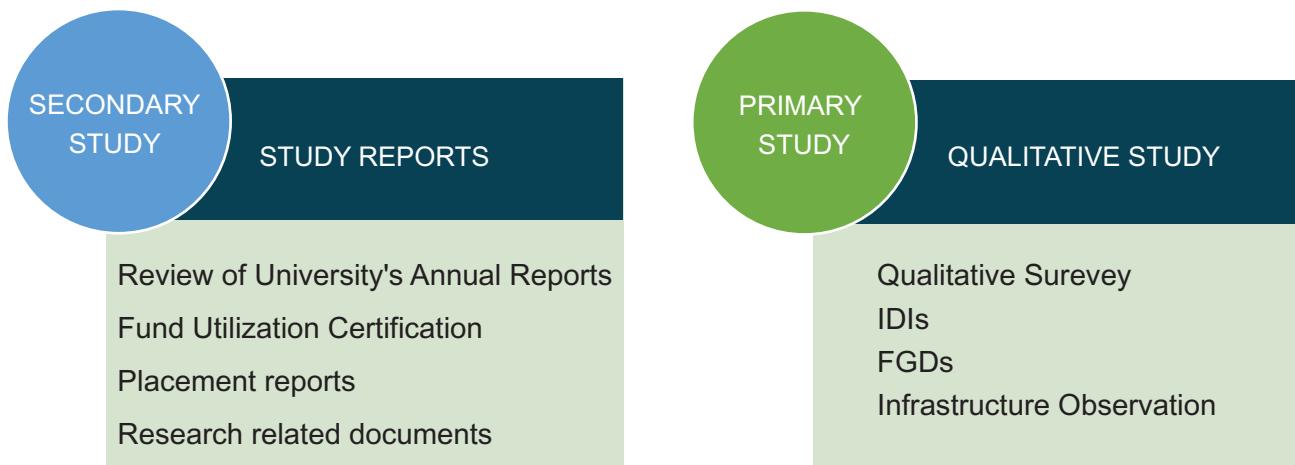
CHAPTER 2 Study Approach

2.1 Approach and Methodology

Utilizing primary and secondary data, the CSRBOX team initially suggested using a mixed-method approach to collect qualitative and quantitative data. The technique instead focused on qualitative contacts and a review of secondary data after Ashoka University and the SRF Foundation team discussed whether a quantitative survey was feasible. The team looked at the website, educational reviews that were available online, the DEI report, annual reports, and placement reports provided by the university team.

The team was able to collect quantitative study data through IDIs and FGDs while visiting the administrative office and university campus. The team engaged with all the stakeholders and departments pertinent to the study's goal in order to gather insightful data on impact from a -360degree perspective.

SECONDARY STUDY — **STUDY REPORTS**

Review of University's Annual Reports
Fund Utilization Certification
Placement reports
Research related documents

PRIMARY STUDY — **QUALITATIVE STUDY**

Qualitative Surevey
IDIs
FGDs
Infrastructure Observation
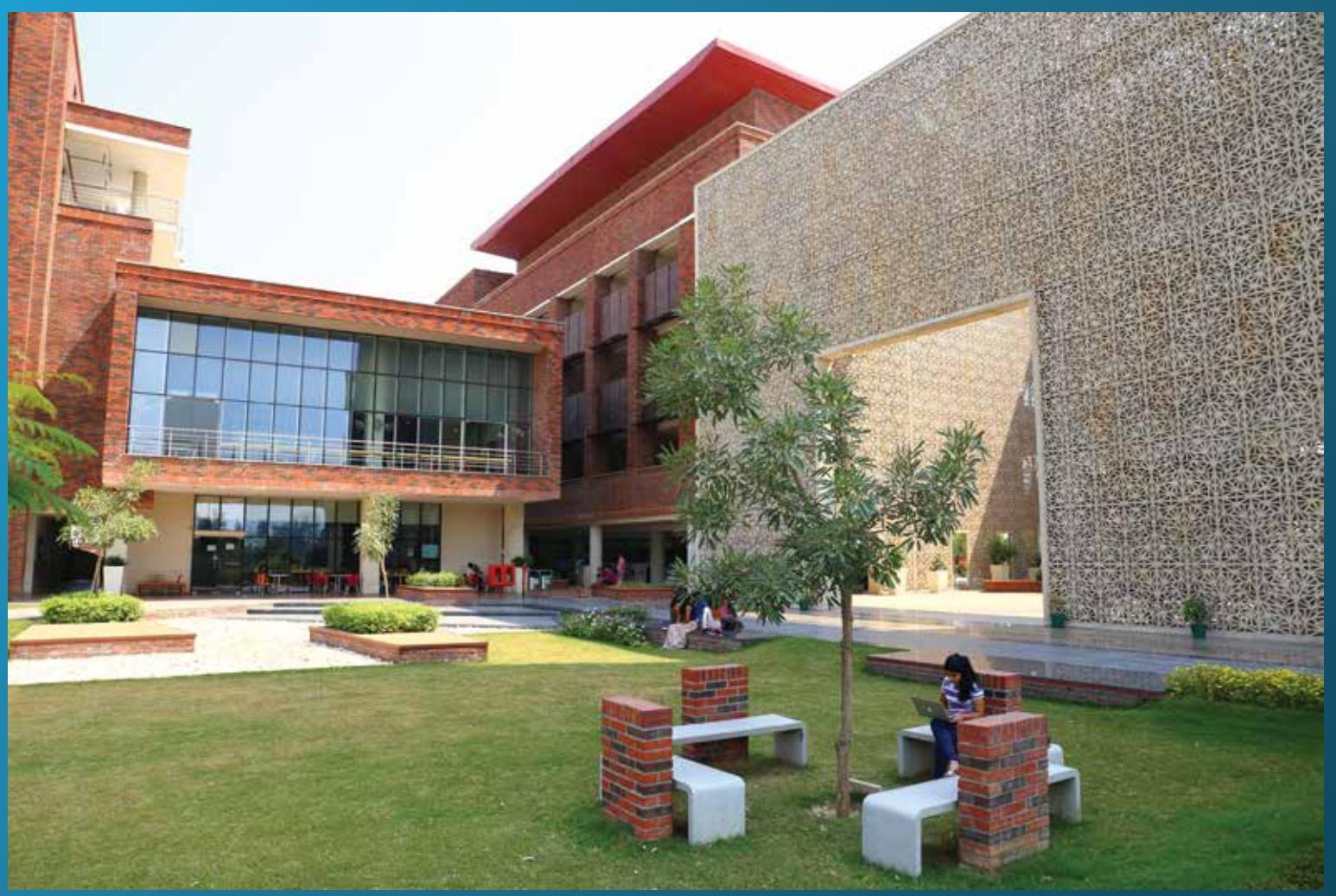
2.2 Sampling Plan

Though the initial sampling approach had a quantitative sample, it was changed to accommodate the reworked sample. The following list shows the change in the qualitative sample and the stakeholders interviewed-

Stakeholder	Methodology	Sample Size
Ashoka Finance Team	Key Informant Interview	1
Fundraising Team/ Corporate Relations Team	Focussed Group Discussion	5
Financial Aid Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
Outreach Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
Human Resource Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
OSA - Office of Student Affairs Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
OLS - Office of Learning Support Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
Career Development Office Member	In-Depth Interview	1
Alumni Interactions*	In-Depth Interview	4
Faculty Affairs Office Team Member	In-Depth Interview	1
Total		17

*Alumni interactions were done with those who are now employed as staff members at different offices of the Ashoka University.

CHAPTER 3 Key Insights
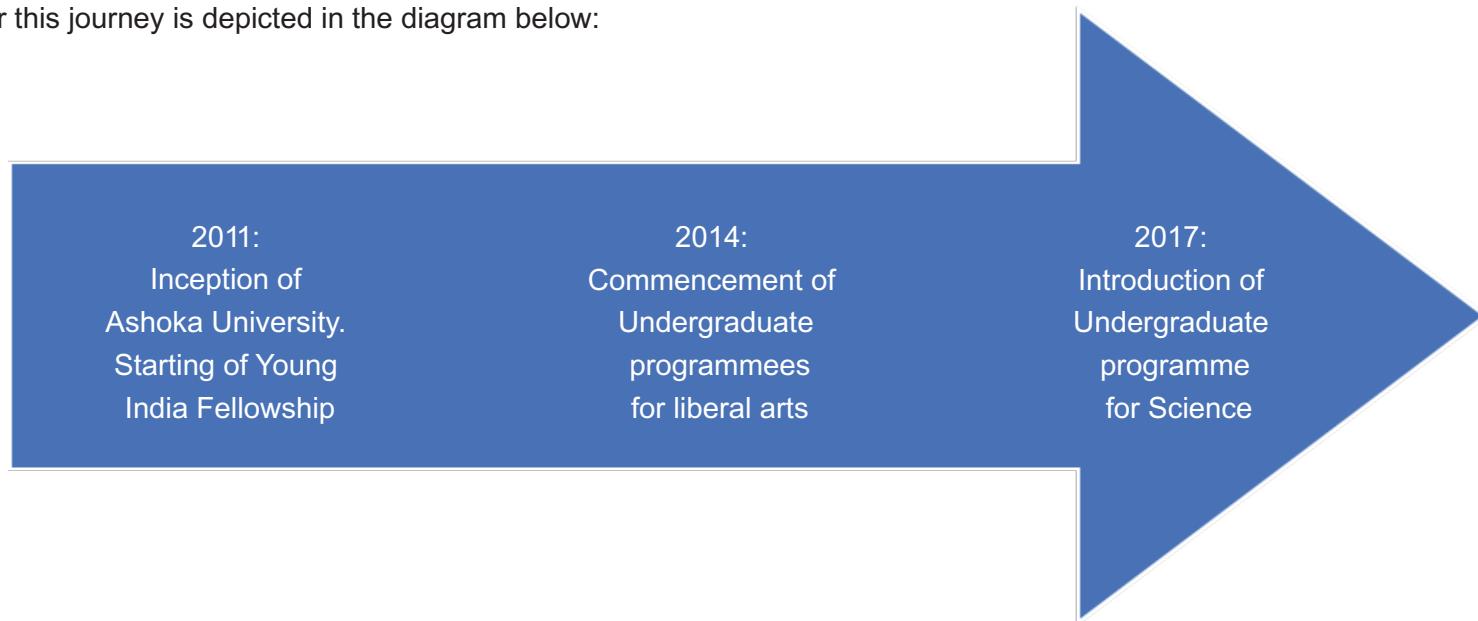
3.1 Key Insights

This section will contain key information about Ashoka University's use of the SRF Foundation grant. The SRF Foundation's grant qualifies as an untied grant. The total annual budget for Ashoka University's operating expenses is Rs 140 Cr. Untied grants provide between 28 and 35 percent of the total budget, or around Rs 40-50 crore. Untied grants do not have a specified goal or a list of activities for which the grant money must be used, according to the university's finance department. Hence, the institution uses these contributions in accordance with its needs. The SRF Foundation's contribution to the university was made as an unrestricted grant. According to the several stakeholders we spoke with, SRF Foundation's CSR contribution was specifically used to pay faculty honoraria, mainly for undergraduate instructors. Any university's daily operations rely heavily on its faculty. As a result, they influence every part of the university, such as the application process, research, job placements, and student learning.

Further sections will give insights into how the grant impacted all the different aspects of the university. Through the conversations with the Ashoka team members, it was deduced that even though the grant may not have directly benefitted the students, it was critical to ensure the recruitment of the necessary personnel responsible for facilitating critical functions at the university.
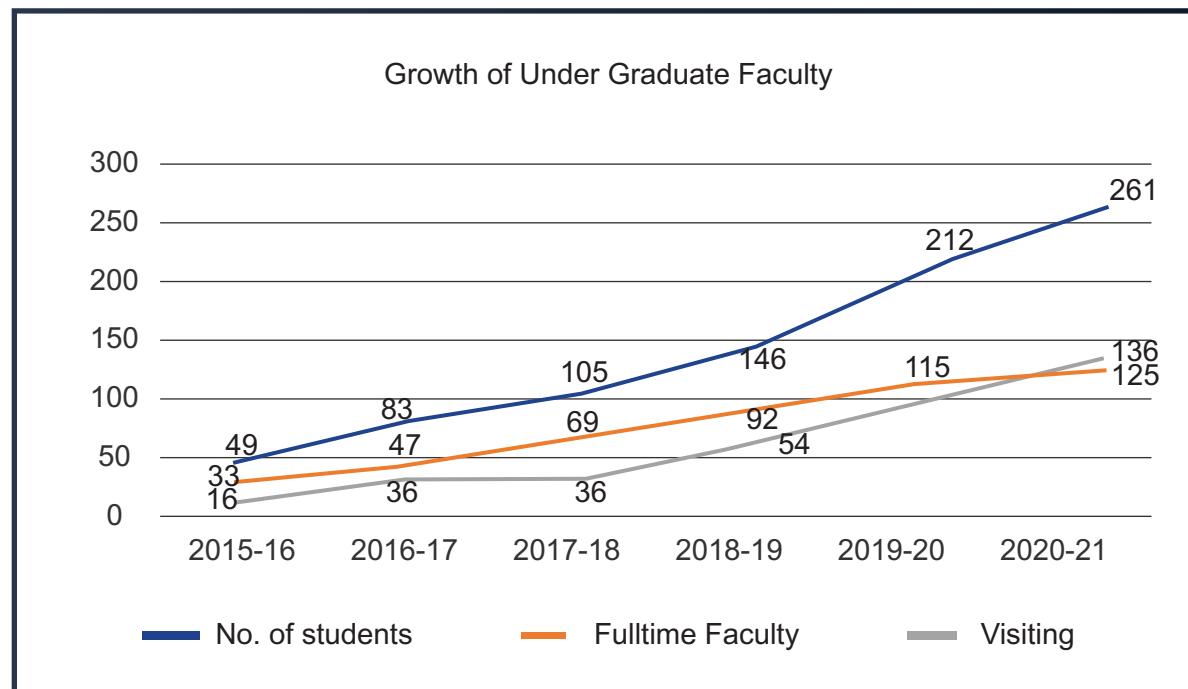
## 3.2 Academic Leadership and Faculty Honorarium

Ashoka University is one of the first universities in India to offer courses via integrated liberal arts and science pedagogy. The journey started in 2011 with the inception of the university and the Young India Fellowship (YIF) programme. After a three-year gap, Ashoka University introduced undergraduate programmes in liberal arts as well as science. The timeline for this journey is depicted in the diagram below:

2011:
Inception of
Ashoka University.
Starting of Young
India Fellowship

2014:
Commencement of
Undergraduate
programmees
for liberal arts

2017:
Introduction of
Undergraduate
programme
for Science
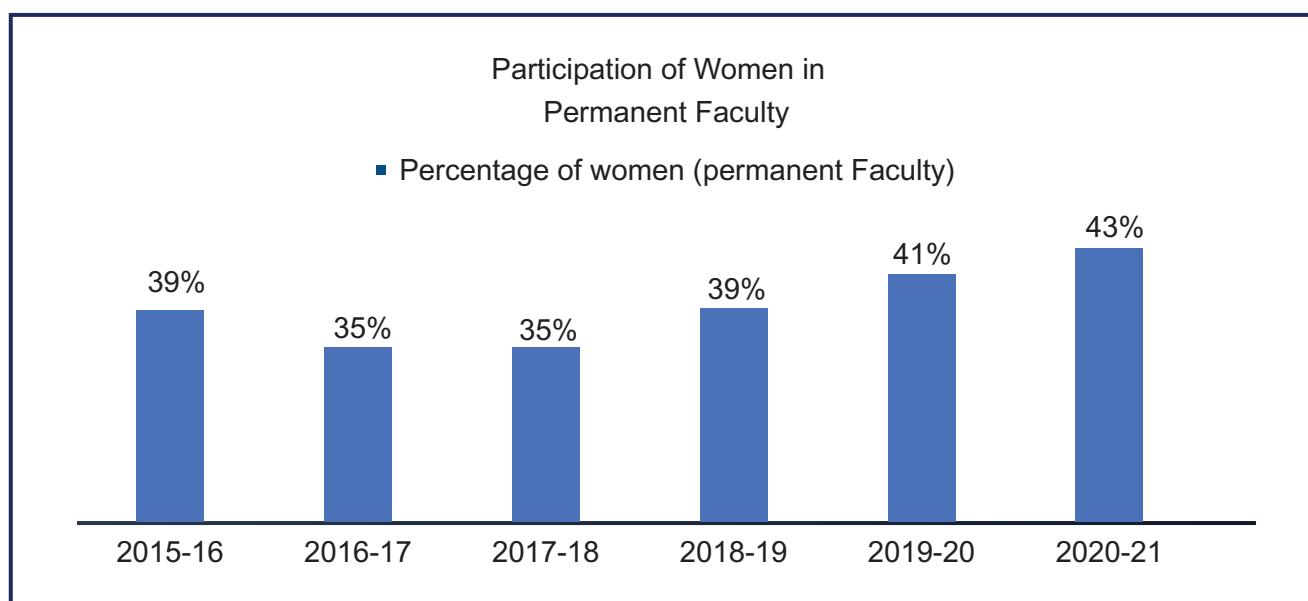
Throughout its history, Ashoka University has strived to recruit some of the best intellectual minds in the country and the world. Of the total faculty associated with Ashoka, 12% of the faculty members are heads of departments. Representatives from 13 countries are a part of the faculty teaching at the university.

Full time Faculty	125
Visiting Faculty	136
Total Faculty	261
Female Faculty Members (%)	44%

Growth of Under Graduate Faculty

Legend: No. of students | Fulltime Faculty | Visiting

The growth of the faculty at the university has been extraordinary. The number of full-time undergraduate faculty members increased by more than 250% in 5 years, i.e., from 33 in 2016-2015 to 125 in 2021-2020. During the same period, the visiting faculty went from 16 to 136, i.e., an increase of 750%. The increase in the number of faculty members shows the growing popularity of the university in academic circles in the country. The faculty has expanded to include some of the field's pioneers, who have been instrumental in developing various multi-disciplinary courses for the university.

Participation of Women in Permanent Faculty

Percentage of women (permanent Faculty)

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
39%	35%	35%	39%	41%	43%

As per the annual reports, Ashoka University has witnessed a steady increase in participation from female faculty members for undergraduate courses. This also reflects the importance of diversity and inclusiveness among the faculty and the way of life at the university. The student-to-faculty ratio among undergraduate courses is 7:1. This is a healthy ratio to foster a conducive educational environment.

Further discussions with the finance department revealed that the SRF Foundation grant was utilised to support honorariums of 30 Assistant professors (approximately) for a month. These professors were a part of the permanent faculty who taught undergraduate students. As per our interaction with Ashoka University, the faculty's core responsibility was to undertake academic work, teaching and evaluation. The faculty members were expected to take 2 courses engage in around 3 hours per week per course, i.e., 6 hours per week for a 3-month long semester.

7:1

Undergraduate
Student to Faculty Ratio

No. of Permanent Faculty supported	30 Assistant Professor
Teaching hours of Professors per week	6
Teaching hours for 1 Assistant Professor (1 month)	24
Total No. of teaching hours in a month (30 professors)	720 hrs

The professors also performed administrative tasks in addition to their academic responsibilities, which included-

- Institutional building is accomplished through participation in conferences, workshops, and seminars, as well as by assisting in the recruitment of new professors.
- Serving as the head of the department on a rotational basis for a minimum of 2 years.
- Development of course material and innovative pedagogy.

All the full-time faculty members hold doctoral degrees and, hence, conducted their independent research projects. Additionally, they have taken part in multidisciplinary research through Ashoka University's Centres of Excellence. The focus of this research is mostly on social problems and multidisciplinary approaches to solving them.

The list of undergraduate courses offered by the institution is shown below. The following courses were taught by faculty members who were part of a cohort whose salaries were supported by the SRF Foundation grant.

Undergraduate Disciplines	Course Details
Bachelor of Arts (Hons)	
Economics	This is the largest and oldest department at Ashoka, as it started in 2014 with the inception of undergraduate courses. The department houses internationally renowned scholars specialising in three areas of economics- microeconomic theory, macroeconomics, and applied and empirical economics. The department has also made significant contributions to social and public policy-related issues. Current HoD- Ratul Lakhar
English	The English department approaches the study of literature and narrative with a mindful awareness of the regional context. It explores different geographical regions, languages, and disciplines. The published work from the department includes books on Indian language and translation theory, histories of desire, the circulation of prose modernity, etc. Through its research, the department tries to connect world literature and digital humanities, religious mysticism, cinema studies, art history, etc. Current HoD- Jonathan Gil Harris
History	The History department seeks to instil in its students the spirit of inquiry, empathy, and creativity, which are vital for a researcher exploring worlds that are distant from their own in both time and space. With a concentration on histories of political violence, geographical histories, environmental and intellectual histories, current history and Indian Ocean studies, among others, faculty members' research interests span the modern Indian subcontinent. Current HoD- Sanjukta Datta
Philosophy	Philosophy was started initially by two professors, Alex Watson and Kranti Saran. It was a strongly student-driven interest that drove the department significantly. The department experiences a notable influx of visiting faculty members from internationally acclaimed faculty. The themes include a wide range, including research on Plato and earlier philosophers, metaphysical explanations, political philosophy problems, and theistic philosophical challenges. Current HoD- Raja Rosenhagen
Political Science	The Political Science department was established to promote the capacity to recognise, evaluate critically, and reflect on the pervasiveness of politics in the environment we live on. Political theory, constitutionalism, political economy, voter behaviour, minority politics, democratic theory, and political conflict is among the topics that the faculty members conduct research in. They are exposed to both qualitative and quantitative research approaches through the curriculum. Current HoD- Vinay Sitapati

Undergraduate Disciplines	Course Details
Sociology/ Anthropology	The Sociology Department was created to help the students understand the relationship between sociology and social anthropology, as these subjects have developed and flourished in India. The research and practices open possibilities for research in disciplines such as history, political science, psychology, linguistics, art, aesthetics, law, and media. They are engaged in fieldwork and ethnographic research across a range of subjects spanning different geographies. Current HoD- Swargajyoti Gohain
Bachelors of Science (Hons)	
Psychology	The Psychology department approaches the subject as a science. They look into cognitive processes, human development, human and animal learning, neuroscience and the neural basis of social influence, cross-cultural psychology, organisational behaviour, and psychopharmacology. Courses that have been offered to the students try to give them a critical understanding of statistics and research methods and cover five main approaches- biological, cognitive, social, development and counselling. Current HoD- Kaveri Rajaraman Indira
Physics	The Physics Department was established with a vision to provide world-class physics education. The curriculum is put together with great attention to its present-day relevance, with equal emphasis on classroom learning and hands-on experience. The research topics include soft matter physics, biophysics, infectious disease modelling, and quantum field theory. Current HoD- Somendra Mohan Bhattacharjee
Mathematics	The Mathematics department strives to be a centre of excellence in research. There are active researchers in the faculty studying algebra, probability theory, and topology. The department constantly tries to upgrade and expand its teaching activities with undergraduate courses in basic maths such as algebra, analysis, linear algebra, probability, and statistics. Current HoD- Rajendra Bhatia
Computer Science	The Computer Science department tries to assist by applying computation thinking to the natural and social sciences. It also gives space for fusing ideas across the discipline to define problems in computer science. The department focuses on diverse topics ranging from molecular and systems biology to quantum computing and cryptography. It also prioritizes research on AI, digitization and society, privacy, etc. Current HoD- Subhashis Banerjee

Undergraduate Disciplines	Course Details
Biology	The core areas of research range from biological processes at the cellular level to molecular environmental consequences of climate change linking it to epidemiology. The department has a research centre Trivedi School of Biosciences, which undertakes advanced research in synthetic biology, data science, and disease biology. Current HoD- Alok Bhattacharya
Chemistry	The department was created in 2019. By tying together, the study of chemistry with other scientific disciplines, including physics, biology, computer science, and environmental studies, it tries to teach chemistry collaboratively and comprehensively. Current HoD- Sourav Pal

3.3 Outreach and Admissions

3.3.1 Outreach

The university outreach team works on raising awareness of the school among prospective students. Their primary duty is to inform schools of Ashoka University's presence and its offerings among students currently enrolled in school who will be attending college (classes 11 and 12). Ashoka's approach to higher education is different from a traditional perspective, so it is important to tell students and teachers about the benefits of a varied curriculum for developing talent.

Outreach plays a significant role in attracting a diverse and inclusive undergraduate student cohort to the university. The team puts in a year's worth of effort to accomplish this. The outreach included organising 980 engagements with various schools across the nation in 2020-2021. The outreach team is divided into two verticals:

The outreach team has been working tirelessly to establish a presence in Tier 2 and 3 cities. The Ashoka team determined that these cities' schools have restricted financial budgets and technology access; hence they become the focus of outreach initiatives. The outreach team emphasises the availability of need-based financial aid to students when interacting with students attending Tier 2 or Tier 3 institutions. This is done to show prospective students that the university accepts students from all socioeconomic backgrounds and that the courses are affordable. Every year, the university receives 5,000-6,000 student applications from various Indian schools as well as a few from abroad. The outreach staff is not currently involved in the post-graduate programme and focuses solely on undergraduate students.

In Person Outreach	Digital Outreach
Engages with schools across the country Organise in-person meetings with school principal, education counsellors, and board members Aim to introduce, orient potential students about benefits of the programmes at Ashoka University Undertake sessions with students and teachers on admissions-related workshops, aspiration planning Focus on better understanding of admission process, and to acquaint the potential students with how the programmes will help them in the future	Involves engagement through technology mediums Aim to acquaint potential students and parents with different programmes Includes building presence on various social media platforms, emailers, hosting webinars and masterclasses

3.3.2 Admissions

The outreach team faces a significant challenge in mobilising students from all streams in grades 11 and 12. The team informed having limited interactions with the students' studying humanities as the teachers were not aware of the interdisciplinary approach of the university. The major misconception that the outreach team is attempting to dispel is that Ashoka University is a liberal arts university. They showcase and promote the multi-disciplinary approach to teaching science in undergraduate programmes, which helps them in meeting their outreach targets across the country. During the in-person outreach programs, brochures with information on courses, financial aid, and student life are distributed to students. Students can take these home to discuss them further with their parents.

The admissions team at Ashoka University works to ensure a smooth admissions process. The team is divided into two parts, depending on the tasks and responsibilities.

• Internal Administration- Looks at the day-to-day processes and administrative functions associated with admission processes.

• External Engagement- Works in tandem with the outreach team to undertake seminars and workshops in different schools. The aim is to inform the students about the admissions process at Ashoka. In addition to students, the team also conducts webinars on related topics.

The Admissions team consists of 14 people, with contractual workers hired frequently, especially during the admissions period. The university's admissions cycle typically begins in October and lasts until August. As the university recognises different stages of a student's workload, there are four admission rounds in one year. The admissions process is the same for all four rounds. The admission process consists of the following steps-

The student must fill out and submit the application forms before or by the due date.

Students give an online assessment exam to complete the process.

Application and the assessment results are reviewed for further selection. The students are selected for the next (interview round.)

Post the interview, all the aspects (academic, socio-economic, extra curricular etc) are reviewed by the decision making committee. The committee then takes the final decision on the admission of selected students.

Final list of selected students is displayed. Once the admisison is confirmed, the process of requirement of financial aid for the student is convened.

The application form is lengthy, as it requests information about students' household backgrounds, language knowledge, academic performance, scores on standardised tests, extracurricular activities, and so on. The initial admission form also contains essay questions for students to complete. Details are also requested on any assistance the student may require if they believe something is preventing them from excelling at university. The university provides support ranging from language to mental health and is based on the requirements of the Office of Learning Support.

In general, the assessment consists of two parts: aptitude and essay. These are done online on a specific day determined by the admissions team.

In keeping with its multidisciplinary approach, prospective students are asked to provide a list of preferences for three potential areas of study when filling out the admission application form. After being admitted, students can choose which field of study they want to pursue as a major. The final allocation of major and minor areas of study is made before the start of the second year, based on the student's academic performance in the foundation's first year. The collegiate system in the United States has an influence on this process.

According to the admission team, the unique division of the admission process into multiple rounds benefits both students and Ashoka staff. It benefits students by relieving the stress of being accepted into a higher education institute. The admissions team can predict the size of the incoming batch, which allows them to better prepare for the post-admission processes.

During the interview rounds, alumni serve as panellists alongside the university team. It is the admissions team's responsibility to prepare and build alumni capacity.
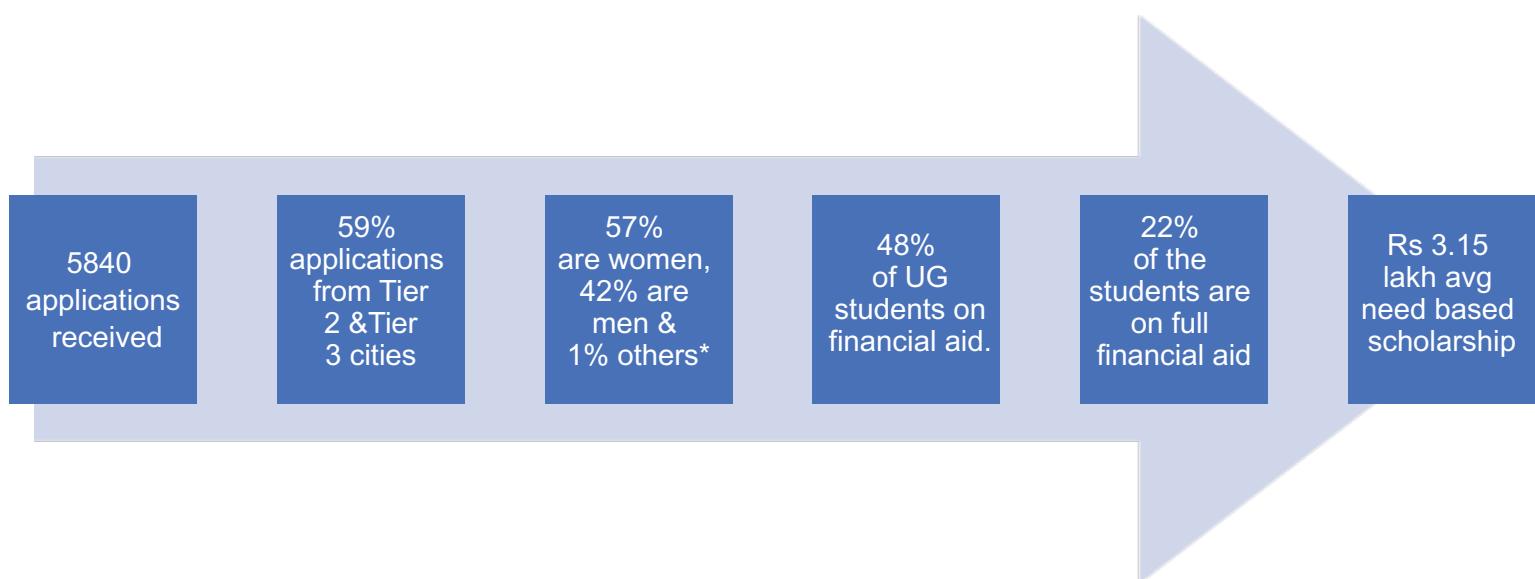
Untied grants, such as the SRF Foundation grant, assist the university in conducting seminars, webinars, and workshops to support the Ashoka University outreach and admissions staff in engaging and identifying potential students. The admissions and outreach journey lasts a year, and different engagement sessions require a significant amount of planning. Because the admission process for school students begins early, the Ashoka team organises regular workshops and seminars. These are aimed at students and parents in order to keep their interest in university culture alive. The funds were used for operational expenses, according to the utilisation certificate submitted to the Foundation. Organizing such workshops could be part of the operational costs the university incurs each academic year in order to admit the best students.

3.4 Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity and inclusion are critical components of a modern educational ecosystem and are required for the university to grow into a world-class institution. The SRF Foundation grant, though indirect, aided in the promotion of this process by supporting the honoraria of academic faculty members who are critical to the university's inclusivity activities. In 2021, the Vice Chancellor formed an interim diversity committee, which produced the following recommendations for the university's diversity efforts.

- New students to be educated on Ashoka's diversity and inclusion values. They should be aware of all Ashoka community members.

- The establishment of a formal office to address any cases of discrimination, offer conflict resolution, and serve as a space for all stakeholders to represent themselves in order to adjudicate any bigotry.

- Encourage collaboration among Ashoka and outside stakeholders to organise seminars and events encouraging people to discuss diversity.

- Purposeful recruitment of academic and non-academic staff members from diverse and underrepresented populations.

Diversity and inclusion are fundamental values upon which Ashoka University was founded. There are over 1860 undergraduate students in Ashoka pursuing courses currently. The diversity statistics are shown briefly below-

| 5840 applications received | 59% applications from Tier 2 &Tier 3 cities | 57% are women, 42% are men & 1% others* | 48% of UG students on financial aid. | 22% of the students are on full financial aid | Rs 3.15 lakh avg need based scholarship |

The numbers above show that the various diversity indicators have expanded since the inception year. The data indicate that efforts to improve diversity and inclusiveness are progressing in the right direction. All academic faculties and non-academic staff have been brought on board to help achieve this mission. To that end, the university has undertaken and intends to undertake specific activities. These past and future initiatives are listed in the table below:

Initiatives undertaken in the university

Inclusion of first generation and low-middle income students

- Creation of an annual fund- accumulation of money from this fund to be used as scholarship to support first generation students or students from low-income households

- Academic Bridge Program- A comprehensive training program for the incoming undergraduate classes, who may need extra support to improve their academic writing and reading skills

- Provision of technological equipment to students from low-income backgrounds to cope with the digital education aspect of the classes in the university

Student Diversity

- The design of the admission process has been curated holistically to ensure the incoming batches have a diversified cohort of students from different walks of life. The process carefully selects students based on multiple parameters

Initiatives undertaken in the university

Accessibility

- People with visual and hearing impairments, as well as those with dyslexia, can now use the university's application portal and website
- The campus infrastructure has been modified to facilitate ease of access for individuals in wheelchairs or individuals with a visual disability. A new, disabled-friendly campus has also been developed to promote inclusivity

Resources for the community

- The university provides support to the community through the provision of services like the Ashoka Center for Well-Being, which focuses on mental health issues
- Internal complaints committee to prevent and address sexual harassment and committees to prevent ragging on campus

Resources for the community
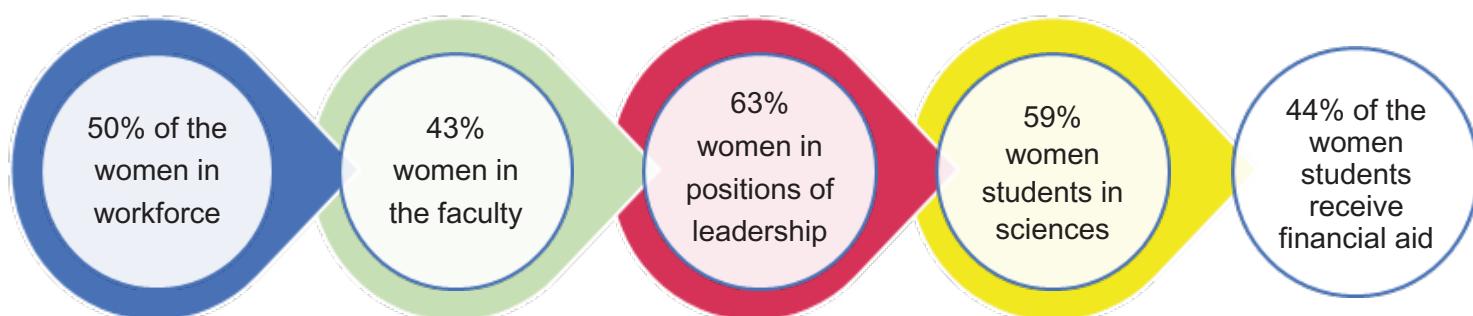
- The admission process is sensitive to the student's identity, providing them space to self-describe their gender identity. The students can mention their preferred pronouns on documents of importance, including the admission application form, recognizing their gender identity

Ashoka understands that in order to excel in academics, one must have a strong command of academic reading and writing skills. This is frequently determined by the student's command of the English language. Ashoka University has designed the Academic Bridge programme to promote this, specifically for students from low-income families, first-generation college students, or students who previously attended a non-English-speaking school. Students are taught not only English grammar and vocabulary, but also critical thinking, research methodology, and other aspects of academic writing. The programme is now in its fourth year and has benefited over 176 students as of August 2021.

3.4.1 Gender Diversity

Ashoka University has committed to making its campus a welcoming environment for the LGBTQIA+ community. The number of community members identifying as people of other genders at the university has grown over time. A specialised Center for Studies in Gender and Sexuality studies the intersections of gender, sexuality, identity, enjoyment, and inequity.
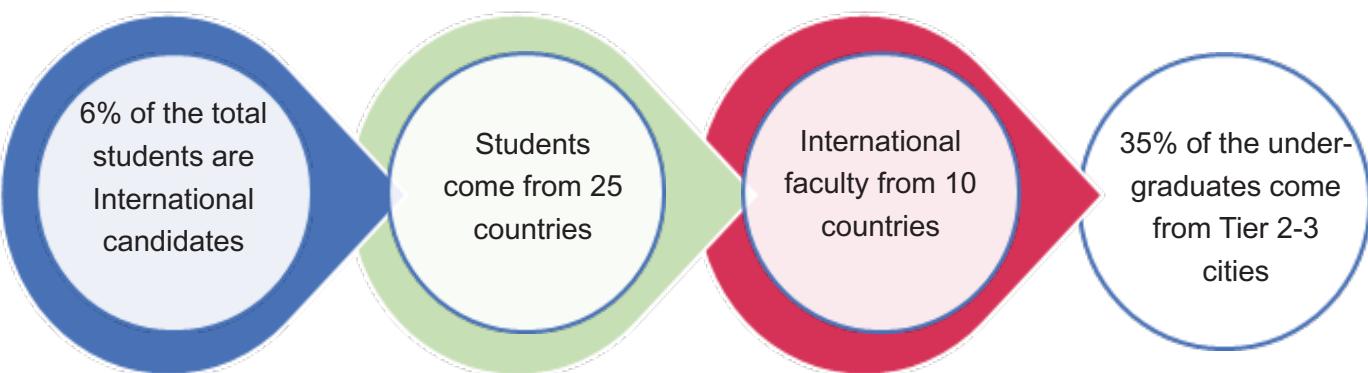
In 2020, only five students identifying as the third gender completed the academic programme. The representation has increased to 17 students, who will graduate in 2024. In terms of gender representation, women make up 50% of the workforce at Ashoka University. Women participation statistics at a glance are shown below-

| 50% of the women in workforce | 43% women in the faculty | 63% women in positions of leadership | 59% women students in sciences | 44% of the women students receive financial aid |

The higher percentages of female participation across faculty, as well as students, indicate the contributions of Ashoka University to women's empowerment as well as encouraging girls in STEM learning. The university is known for creating a diverse, gender-neutral workplace.

3.4.2 Cultural Diversity

Ashoka is quickly becoming a culturally diverse crowd, in addition to being a gender-diverse institute. This group brings a unique perspective to issues and thinking representative of their culture. International students make up 6% of the student body as of 2021. Domestically, the student body represents nearly 28 states and 265 towns and cities. The cultural diversity statistics of the university are as below-

| 6% of the total students are International candidates | Students come from 25 countries | International faculty from 10 countries | 35% of the under-graduates come from Tier 2-3 cities |

Student initiatives also create a strong presence through several peer support groups. Such initiatives take forward the mandate of making Ashoka an inclusive space. Some of the groups that are present are listed below-

• Kintsugi- The main aim of this group is to raise awareness of mental health issues, enable peer support and provide a safe space to release stress, and help build a healthier community.

• The Feminist Collective- They aim to create a safe, inclusive, and feminist space on campus. It is committed to raising awareness and bringing about change with respect to gendered issues on campus.

• The NorthEast Collective- This group provides a space for community members from the Northeast or those having roots there. They organise events to celebrate the culture, history, and diversity of the region. They also undertake activities to inform people about the socio-political realities of the region.

• Ashoka University International Students Association- This group represents the international students on campus. It organises multicultural events on campus. To promote a smooth transition for new international students, it also assists these students with their bank accounts, visa applications, and other tasks.

• Sandhi: This group facilitates the creation of space to engage with the various languages spoken on campus. This makes it inclusive for students coming from different regions.

All the student initiatives enable the students to create a wholesome learning environment on campus. Teachers and faculties play the role of a guiding force for the students, guiding and advising them to develop new ideas through a solution-based approach.

3.5 Investment in Research

Ashoka University aspires to be one of India's top universities. This indicates that the university's research will be heavily funded. Ashoka University and its faculty have invested significantly in establishing 9 Centres of Excellence in order to foster thought leadership and generate reliable knowledge sources. Furthermore, these centres contribute to the development of new research avenues in a variety of social sciences. The centres are typically sponsored by large donor foundations and multilateral organisations.

The research centres are significant to the SRF Foundation's CSR Grant because they house some faculty members whose honoraria were covered by the grant. Academic staff members contribute to ongoing initiatives by working independently or collaboratively. As a result, the study details numerous Centers of Excellence, as well as research projects carried out by various Ashoka University staff members.

Name of the Centre	Activities undertaken by the Centre
Centre for Economic Data and Analysis (CEDA)	This centre established in 2020 by the Department of Economics, aims to produce innovative research on socioeconomic topics with data-backed insights. Many journals, newspapers, and websites have published content produced by CEDA. Additionally, it has started development on the CEDA data portal, which will produce digestible data summaries on many socioeconomic topics. Researchers, students, policy activists, and policymakers among other stakeholders will gain from this. Students from the University gain valuable research experience by working as interns or research assistants with the centre.
Ashoka Centre for China Studies	This centre is dedicated to developing research on China as a crucial topic of study. The goal of this centre is to do in-depth research on China and create/offer academic programmes to support the growth of Chinese studies in India. The center started offering Mandarin language training and courses in Chinese to Ashoka University students in 2021–2022.
Centre for Social and Behaviour Change	Established in 2017 through a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, this centre focuses on fostering behavioural science capacities to lead policy advocacy and evidence-led communication interventions. This centre has set up behavioural insights units in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. The centre has pioneered different projects by creating effective behaviour change and communication material for multiple development organisations across different geographies in India. The centre has also partnered with various international institutions to undertake projects like those with the University of Chicago, the South Asia Learning Collaborative, and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, to name a few.
Centre for Social Impact and Philanthropy	This centre was established in 2016 as India's first academic research centre, focused on creating strategic and robust philanthropy for effective social impact. The research conducted in the centre aims to support the creation of a stronger social sector in India via its different initiatives. In 2020, the centre launched a research fellowship to strengthen its research capacity and produce high-quality outputs In 2020-21, it partnered with Harvard Business School and Dasra to create a programme for building resilience and re-imagining sustainability among non-profits of the country. It is engaged with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) as a member of the technical group on the Social Stock Exchange to develop guidelines to onboard non-profit and for-profit social enterprises.

Undergraduate Disciplines	Course Details
Centre for Studies in Gender and Sexuality	This centre was established in 2015 to undertake research exploring the intersections of gender, sexual desire, pleasure, and inequalities. This centre engages with students, scholars, and activists from across the world through lecture series, workshops, performance pieces, and internships. The centre has undertaken different projects to promote its mandate independently. It has developed a partnership with organisations like New York University and Governing Intimacies. The centre seeks to promote new scholarships on gender and sexuality in South and East Africa and India.
Trivedi Centre for Poiltical Data	This centre was established in 2016 to create and disseminate open-access political data through original research and research partnerships. This data is used by policymakers, journalists, political researchers, and analysts. During 2020–21, the centre mainly focused on rolling out new datasets on Indian presidents, governors, legislature, and various political parties. The centre has hosted two conferences, given 20 guest lectures, and co-hosted seven "Dialogues on Indian Politics" in partnership with the Centre for Policy Research.
Centre for Interdisciplinary Archaeological Research	This centre is unique in its operations as it seeks to create a state-of-the-art facility to find the coincidence between archaeology and science. The centre's activities aim to create a new perspective on studying the Indian past. The centre undertakes interdisciplinary field-based projects led by Ashoka faculty and students. It seeks to create a pedagogy that will draw upon both the natural sciences and the humanities for teaching courses on traditional and modern archeology. The centre also aims to impart field knowledge of archaeological sites and diverse Indian landscapes.
Centre for Entrepreneurship	This centre works as a creative hub for fostering entrepreneurial endeavours for the Ashoka community. The centre helps in assisting ideas to transition into business ventures. The centre conducts workshops, seminars, and campaigns conducted by or supported by some of India's most successful entrepreneurs. The enterprises are supported through inspiration, ideation, incubation, monetization, and internationalization.

In addition to participating in these centres, the faculty conducts independent interdisciplinary research. Many faculty members have received external grants, published articles, and even written books. Several books and research papers were published by Ashoka University faculty members in 2020-2021. Among the notable mentions are:

- **Jugalbandi- The BJP before Modi** - *Vinay Sitapati*

- **Archaeology and the Public Purpose**- *Nayanjot Lahiri*

- **My Son's Inheritance- A Secret History of Lynchings**- *Aparna Vaidik*

- **International Aid and Democracy Promotion: Liberalization at the Margins**- *Bann Seng Tan*

In addition, faculty members have received numerous research grants from organisations such as the Research Council of Norway, the International Growth Centre India, the University of Pennsylvania, the Department of Biotechnology Government of India, Welcome Trust, Mphasis Foundation, IIT-Delhi-DRIIV, and SERB-POWER.:

Faculty members improved students' critical thinking abilities through consistent research, either through centres or independent projects. Students who work on these projects benefit from interdisciplinary research because it helps them develop research aptitude and capabilities.

3.6 Placement Support

Ashoka University has a dedicated Career Development Office. This office has been responsible for building partnerships with companies to undertake recruitment drives on their campus. The university's unique interdisciplinary curriculum makes it a unique prospect for companies looking to hire students.

According to the Career Development Office, the team documents the following as the main reasons for recruitment from Ashoka University-

● **Critical Thinking**- Ashoka graduates develop critical thinking capabilities from a multidisciplinary perspective. Such thinking capabilities are largely absent in students with a specific course specialization.

● **Leadership towards social impact**- The Ashoka students have a keen focus on bringing about social impact and change.

● **Problem Solving**- Coursework and assignments prepared by the faculty members develop students as problem solvers capable of taking on challenging work.

● **Communication Skills**- The students are developing into strong communicators having clarity and clear presentation skills.

● **Self-starters and team players**- The students are exposed to significant workshops, seminars, and sessions supported by world-renowned business leaders to develop their entrepreneurial drive.

● **Diverse Backgrounds**- Ashoka students come from diverse backgrounds and constantly engage with peers and faculty members outside their socio-economic realities. This helps them to keep their perspectives fresh and keep up with the ever-changing dynamics of the corporate space.

The Career Development Office helps students prepare for internships, placements, and other career opportunities. They have created the Career Preparatory Programme to ensure students are prepared to embark on a long-term career path. This programme prepares students for a career in business. Senior industry professionals, Ashoka founders, and alumni who are experts in their fields participate in the modules of this course. This programme, which began in 2020, has assisted the graduate cohort in upgrading their skills in order to gain a competitive advantage. The following three topics are covered in the course modules:

Professional Communication

Business Communication, Resume, and Profile Building, Networking on LinkedIn, Interview Preparations, Decoding JDs
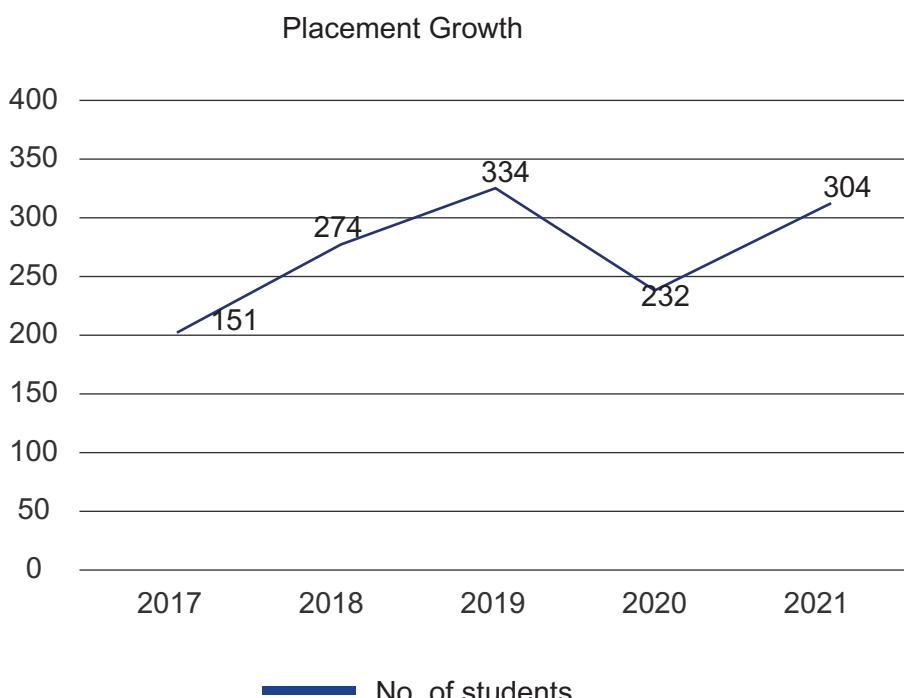
Professional and Leadership Skills

Masterclass with senior leader from industry, Industry, and role overview workshops

Technical Proficiency

Finance, Stats and Accounting, Guesstimates and Case Studies, MS Office Suite, Data and Predictive Analysis and Business Analytics

In terms of recruitment, the university has consistently received support from corporate and social sector organisations. Relevant information about recruitment statistics is provided below.

Placement Growth

Line chart titled "Placement Growth" showing No. of students: 2017 = 151, 2018 = 274, 2019 = 334, 2020 = 232, 2021 = 304.

Top Recruiters at a glance

Innovati, Deloitte USI, Genpact, Zinnov Consulting, IIFL, Egon Zehnder, Vayana Network, Deustche Bank, Antara Foundation, BAIN, BCG, Fractal Analytics, Indus Insights, Leap Club, Sattva Consulting, Convergence Foundation, Google, Goodera, Arthur D Little, Adam Smith International, Dalberg, TATA Trusts, Technoserve Consulting, Samagra Foundation, J-PAL, Centre for Civil Society

The placement figures show an increase for the 2020-2021 school year. The COVID19- pandemic was the primary cause of the drop the previous year. However, the placement rate increased significantly the following year, for the 2020-2021 batch. The university's recruiters are drawn from all major corporate and non-profit sectors. Faculty members contribute significantly to a student's future, regardless of the future career choices he or she makes after completing the undergraduate course.

21st-century critical thinking skills and critical aptitude- recognised as a USP of an Ashoka University student- are a direct result of faculty members' continuous efforts throughout the course length. Thus, SRF Foundation's CSR contribution indirectly impacted the lives of the students pursuing their undergraduate degrees at Ashoka University.

It is critical to recognise that Ashoka is primarily an academic institution. The goal is to improve students' academic standing so that they will choose to continue their education after finishing their undergraduate studies. As a result, although placement services actively engage with businesses, a sizable portion of students prefer to pursue or prepare for higher education.

Irrespective of the future career choices that a student makes, after completing the undergraduate course, faculty members contribute significantly to their future. 21st-century critical thinking skills and critical aptitude-recognised as a USP of a student from Ashoka University are a direct result of the continuous efforts by faculty members during the course length. Thus, SRF Foundation's CSR contribution indirectly impacted the lives of the students pursuing their undergraduate in Ashoka University.

3.7 Building knowledge resources for students

The procurement of subscriptions to global knowledge resources such as journals, books, e-databases, and reference sources is included in the operational expenses of any educational institute. These resources are beneficial to both students and faculty members on campus.

The Ashoka library has a large collection of books and information sources. The library management system ensures that journal subscriptions to international academic publications are updated regularly . Students can use the library 24 hours a day, seven days a week, except on Fridays. In terms of print books, the library has 60,000 print books that were curated based on faculty and well-known donors' recommendations. The library is regularly updated in response to student requests. The library had subscriptions to approximately 30 print journals and four newspapers.

Book borrowing, interlibrary loans, reading, reference services, and document supply are the primary services. Students can also gain remote access to a wide range of online journals, books, and databases. The library provides a relaxing environment for study and research. The library subscribes to approximately 18000 e-journals, 3,96,000 books, and a variety of global leaders' resources. All of these resources are also available to students online.

A library is essential in the lives of faculty and students. The quality of reading materials in the university library is a direct reflection of faculty input. The extensive resources available in Ashoka University's library reflect faculty members' active efforts to provide extensive materials for improving student learning outcomes.

3.8 Student Life and Activities

The Office of Students Affairs(OSA) is generally responsible for overseeing student life on campus. The office examines all the extracurricular activities, organisations, groups, housing, and other non-academic factors. This office looks primarily at three verticals-

- Student Life
- Residence Life
- Sports and Cultural Activities

This office is led by Dean Doboshruti Roychowdhury. She heads all three aspects, as the three verticals are interrelated. Hence, for ease of logistics, these three verticals fall under the dean's management.

At the university, there are both academic and extracurricular clubs. The OSA is in charge of the extracurricular clubs. In addition to the 39 groups under the student life division, the university currently has four clubs for sports-related activities. The Office of Academic Affairs is also in charge of 8 to 10 academic clubs. The non-academic staff has mentors who are either faculty or staff for an overview of how each club operates.

The resident programme, modelled after the American college system, is also unique to Ashoka University. Every hostel floor has a senior student (usually a student in their penultimate/final year) acting as a designated point of contact through the Resident Assistant (RA) programme. The RAs are chosen through an interview process and then

go through a training programme to prepare them for this role. The programme aims to help the incoming cohorts settle better at the residence. The assistant is in charge of organising activities for the floor students to get to know one another better. The RA's goal is to create a safe space for new students to discuss any concerns they may have. Currently, 50 RAs are in their third or fourth year of study. This role is critical, particularly in assisting students from low-income backgrounds to mingle with crowds at university.

Among all the events that are organised on campus, there are three major events that personnel from the Student Affairs office expect students to take an active part in.

Clubs and Societies Fair	Jashn-e-Jazba	Annual Production Fortnight
Organised at the start of the Semester Incoming cohorts get acquainted with the different societies and clubs in the campus Induction of cohorts into clubs/societies Introduction to the cultural diversity of Ashoka University	New members are encouraged to showcase their talent	Finale where different clubs put out their final work which they have done the entire year

The organisation has an Rs. 25,000 budget, while the clubs typically receive Rs. 15,000. Clubs and societies differ in that society has multiple verticals under it, whereas a club is a stand-alone organisation. Faculty involvement in these clubs and societies is viewed as an advisory responsibility.

Faculty members participate in a variety of events that clubs and groups host. Students are encouraged to participate in various extracurricular activities through their active participation in them. Such initiatives foster a sense of ownership among students and foster a sense of community , demonstrating leadership from professors through their activities.

3.9 Alumni Testimonials
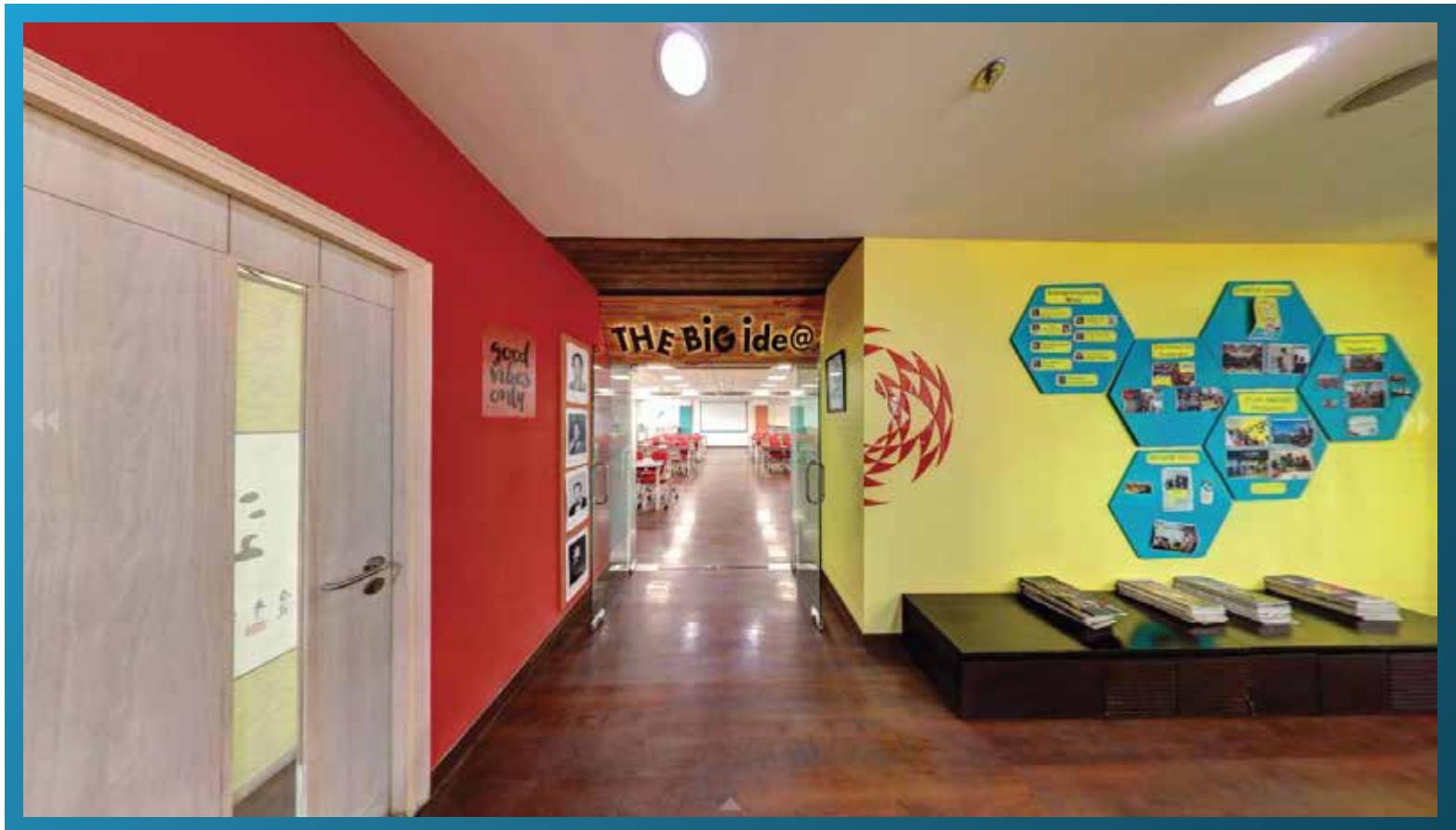
"I was a student at Ashoka and had been a part of the Young India Fellowship. I was part of a lot of fun activities at Ashoka and wanted to make a career out of it, so I joined the Ashoka Student Affairs team. Ashoka is very conscious of the different background's students come from, and we ensure that they feel comfortable in this space by taking all necessary precautions."

Office of Student Affairs Team member and YIF Alum

'I pursued my BA in Psychology. I was involved in a lot of research project with my professor. I was interested in disability related projects. I got to know about an opening in the office of Learning Support for a role in exploring how to make the Ashoka campus more disability friendly. I had excellent experiences at Ashoka and was happy with the role that was offered to me'

Office of Learning Support and BA (H) Psychology Alum

CHAPTER 4 Alignment to SDGs

4.1 Sustainable Development Goal Alignment
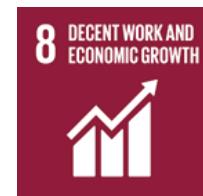
SDG -4 Quality Education

Ashoka University has been expanding on the principle of providing its students with inclusive and world-class quality education. Because of its extensive focus on student financial aid, Ashoka aims to provide access to education for the country's most underrepresented and marginalised populations. It aims to eliminate gender and wealth disparities while assisting the marginalised in gaining access to high-quality higher education.

SDG -8 Decent work and Economic Growth

The courses at Ashoka University take a multidisciplinary approach to industry-related subjects. Ashoka graduates have gone on to work for some of the most prestigious corporations and non-profits. The Ashoka curriculum also includes programmes to assist graduates in remaining sustainable throughout their careers. In the first three months, graduates have a 60% placement rate. The other students continue their education at some of the world's best universities.

SDG -16 Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

Ashoka regularly conducts its own social science research. They have created Centres of Excellence that produce data-driven policy briefs to drive meaningful social impact. Researchers, policymakers, analysts, and journalists use these materials and databases to demonstrate and find solutions to some of the most difficult problems, as well as to improve the institutions that are attempting to solve these problems by providing ongoing research support.

CHAPTER 5 Way Forward

5.1 Highlights and Strengths of Ashoka University

According to the admission team, the unique division of the admission process into multiple rounds benefits both students and Ashoka staff. It benefits students by relieving the stress of being accepted into a higher education institute. The admissions team can predict the size of the incoming batch, which allows them to better prepare for the post-admission processes.

- The curriculum is distinctive in that it uses a multidisciplinary approach to education, which is crucial for acquiring 21st Century Skills.

- The university is well on its way to having a positive sex ratio among students, as seen by the year-over-year improvement in diversity data.

- 50% of the workforce at the university is made up of women. 63% of the leadership positions are occupied by women.

- Excellent academic faculty were recruited from top universities in India and globally. a strong contingent of international faculty members.

- Partnerships with global universities to foster a healthy exchange of knowledge are actively promoted.

- The outreach team wants to build strong ties with all the geographical regions in India. They want to reach out to the most marginalised populations of the countries.

- Strong institutional support is given to student-led clubs, helping build ownership and increasing conversations among the Ashoka community about critical developmental issues.

- Well-equipped infrastructure with excellent facilities provided to the students. The library is especially well-equipped, lending students access to over 3 lakh digital resources.

- The students are able to take steps in the right direction toward becoming leaders in their respective fields thanks to strong corporate connections with top businesses and non-profits.

5.2 Way Forward and Recommendations

Ashoka University aspires to be India's leading liberal arts university. Academic and non-academic employees are of the highest calibre. They have the skills and knowledge required to establish a world-class institution. The team is very reflective, putting mechanisms in place to assist the university's management in charting a path toward growth. As a result, the study team recommends the following to Ashoka University-

- Fostering Partnerships with Regional Universities

Ashoka has thrived as an organisation by conducting excellent research in varied fields. However, Ashoka University can collaborate with regional or state-level universities to conduct research programmes and deliver more concrete research outcomes. As a result, regional universities will be better able to share knowledge, foster inter-university relationships, and develop scholarly discourses on the Indian subcontinent. This will benefit the ecology of higher education in India. Examples from the American University system, where many colleges collaborate to perform cooperative research on a related topics of interest, demonstrate this.

- Creation of Vocational and Adult Education courses

The programmes are currently not designed to serve adults from lower-middle-class backgrounds who were unable to complete their education. Skill development and adult education are frequently overlooked by the university system. Such alternatives are provided by a very small number of universities across the country, and the value of such degrees is below average. This limits the opportunities for advancement for many workers who would not have pursued higher education otherwise.

Ashoka has established itself as a cutting-edge institution with a distinctive strategy for solving academic issues. In order to make progress in resolving this problem, Ashoka can do so by addressing this specific population group.