First Alumni Advisory Board Meeting on 09.03.2025 at 9.00 am (IST) in an Online Mode

Following members were present.

1. Mr. Sunil Sibal
2. Mr. Alok Jain
3. Mr.Neeraj Bagai
4. Mr. Ashok Dembla
5. Mr Manvinder Singh
6. Dr. Amrit Pal Toor
7. Dr.Anupma Thakur
8. Dr.Anupama Sharma, Chairperson
9. Dr. Ritu Gupta

Dr.Arun Verma had informed about his unavailability as he had another meeting at the same time.

After a brief ice breaking session amongst the members, the meeting started.
Dr.Sharma discussed the purpose of the Alumni Advisory Board, emphasizing the importance of alumni engagement to improve the department's standing citing a significant donation from Dr. Arun Verma as a catalyst for revitalizing the department.

Dr.Thakur raised concerns about the decline in the departmental ranking, citing faculty vacancies and competition from private institutions.

1. Discussion on Charter and Board Composition

The Charter for the Alumni Advisory Board (draft) was discussed with the members. Mr. Dembla and Mr.Sibal shared their thoughts on its adequacy. Dr.Sharma outlined the organizational structure of the alumni association, which aims to operate independently from the university while ensuring continuity through a core committee. Mr.Sibal proposed the inclusion of a university administration representative on the board. The group discussed the potential involvement of a university representative to enhance collaboration and support. It was decided this University representative may be invited to some of the meetings as and when required but may not be a permanent member of the Board.
Dr.Sharma outlined the formation of the alumni association, noting that it includes members from the Department and the alumni, with a maximum term limit of two years for board members to encourage fresh ideas. Mr. Bagai raised the need for establishing communication with university authorities to facilitate support. Dr.Sharma confirmed that Professor YP Verma's (Registrar, PU) involvement has been instrumental in securing office space for the association within the department.

It was decided that all members can go through the Charter once again, and if any suggestions, may be informed to the Chair. The Charter will be then finalized.

2. Funding Model for Department Improvement

Mr.Alok Jain elaborated on a funding model aimed at improving the department's ranking, indicating that the department currently lacks sufficient funding. The model suggests that alumni, industry, and government should each contribute one-third of the necessary funds, with the alumni advisory board ensuring transparency and proper allocation of resources.

3. Discussion on Industry Collaboration and Research Competency

Mr. Bagai discussed the potential for Punjab University to enhance its research capabilities by collaborating with industries, citing the successful funding model of the Indian Institute of Chemical Technology. He pointed out that IITs utilize corporate relations departments to connect with industry. Dr. Sharma proposed incorporating industry professionals to help faculty create projects that align with industry needs and mentioned the ongoing efforts to publicize research through newsletters. She also indicated plans to enhance outreach via a website.

Dr. Toor suggested utilizing guest faculty for industry engagement and research, while also recognizing the value of experienced professionals to enhance the department's capabilities. Using the resources of guest faculty will give them a financial incentive as well as they are not paid for four months in an academic year.

Dr. Thakur gave a suggestion on involving Post Graduate students in industry-institute interaction for industry research projects. Accordingly, the students would work under the mentorship of faculty as well as industry based supervisor and this would serve as a platform for enhancing collaboration.

4. Department Ranking Challenges

The declining ranking of the department was discussed at length. The members requested the chair, Dr.Sharma to share the various parameters on which the NIRF rankings are based at.

5. Department Funding and Budgeting

Mr.Dembla questioned the university's funding allocation process in relation to student numbers and faculty requirements, while Dr.Sharma noted that funding has not changed significantly over the years and is largely directed towards salaries. Mr.Sibal proposed that alumni could help establish endowments to support faculty hiring. Dr.Gupta highlighted the lack of industrial projects in their area compared to other institutions, suggesting that alumni could assist with operational funding and research initiatives. The members proposed that Dr.Sharma will calculate the total budget required for the department and shall share the figures with the group.

It was decided to have the next AAB meeting in the month of May 2025. Dr.Sharma informed that efforts will be made to bring more board members for the next meeting.

The meeting ended with the thanks.