

Panjab University, Chandigarh and UH Plan a Dual-Degree Program

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HOUSTON: Alumni Leaders from North America from the Chemical Engineering Department gathered in Houston, 16 -19th May, 2025, to help transform Panjab University and its Chemical Engineering Department towards a higher ranking, premium institution in India, with a slogan of “March to The Top”. The conference was a result of the vision and hard work of Dr. Arun Verma (and his team) who has been working tirelessly for past seven years to assist in this transformation; in addition to initiating discussion between Panjab University and University of Houston to collaborate in Joint research & Degree programs between their respective Chemical Engineering departments.



Panjab University team with University of Houston team at the UH campus

The conference kicked off on the morning of Friday, May 16th, with an introductory meeting at the University of Houston Campus, where UH Chemical Engineering Chairman Dr. Triantafillos J Mountziaris and about 12 faculty members met the PU team visiting from India. Both teams presented their undergraduate and graduate programs, areas of research, and also highlighted potential areas of cooperation.



Dr. Arun Verma, introducing Doctor Renu Khator for the dinner keynote on May 16th

The teams agreed to encourage direct faculty-to-faculty interaction and joint research between them. This meeting was followed by a Campus tour for the visiting team including all the UH undergraduate and graduate labs. Following this, a separate tour was given to the PU team by the Houston Alumni Leaders of the UH Campus shop, which assists with branding, marketing, and selling branded merchandise in the physical shop and its online shops to students, Alumni, and the general public. PU Registrar agreed to implement a similar setup back in Chandigarh as soon as possible, with a target date of no later than December 2025.

The Alumni Leader’s Conference component of the proceedings kicked off on the evening of 16th May at the Hyatt, Houston West. An evening reception for more than 50 Alumni Leaders, plus representatives from both universities, welcomed the evening’s special guest, Dr Renu Khator, the Chancellor of the University of Houston System and president of its flagship University of Houston campus, over the last seventeen years. Post dinner, Dr Khator shared her journey echelons of the US Research Universities. She talked about four essential components of transforming UH from a struggling school system to upper her strategy for this transformation:

- A bold vision,
- Buy-in from the community,
- Relentless change and
- Longevity for the new culture to take roots

These were highlighted by Dr. Khator as key ingredients to change the culture of any big organization. She talked about several instances from her tenure at UH where these essential ingredients helped her focus on the intended goal, raise funds for the University and start new programs at the University that helped it break into the top tiers of US Higher education. She has been also invited by the honorable PM of India Narendra Modi to study how her experiences can help Indian Universities.

In the Q&A session members of the PU community sought out her ideas on challenging the bureaucratic mindset, breaking through administrative barriers and implementing new ideas to help improve standards of education and student experiences. The evening concluded with a Vote of Thanks from the hosts and presentation of a memento from India to Dr. Khator.