University of Warwick & NIEPA Research Project

Widening Access to Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches

Assam State Report

Professor Polly Vauquline
Dr Chitrangkita Gayan
Dr Bornali Borah

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Polly Vauquline, ORCID: 0009-0005-2355-3956

Chitrangkita Gayan ORCID: 0009-0003-0644-0242

Bornali Borah ORCID: 0009-0001-7775-1203

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Accompanying resources for the project

In addition to this report, other resources about the project are available on the project website: www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI. This includes various project outputs such as project reports, training materials, and presentations, as well as other information about the project and the people involved.

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About this report

This report is a final State Report for the University of Warwick and NIEPA collaborative research project entitled Widening Access to 'Higher Education in India: Institutional Approaches' (WAHEI). The WAHEI project explored the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), Institutional Leaders, and Faculty Members in enhancing informed choice for young people as they make decisions about higher education. The project focused, in particular, on rurally situated and rural-serving, publicly-funded universities and colleges, given the role of these institutions in providing higher education to socio-economically disadvantaged students. Of key importance has been enhancing the familiarity of the term 'higher education outreach' in the terminology in higher education in India, within the scope of the study, as a key term denoting the activities that HEIs can undertake to guide and inform young people and their families about their higher education choices and admissions processes. WAHEI included a large-scale, multimethod empirical research study to explore existing higher education outreach practices across states and regions of India, followed by the co-development, implementation, and evaluation of a professional learning module for faculty members to learn about higher education outreach, and final dissemination of project findings and recommendations.

Project outputs can be accessed from the WAHEI website: www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI . The explanation of the background and rationale for the project can be found in CPRHE-NIEPA Research Paper 20, 'The Role of Higher Education Institutions and Faculty Members in Higher Education Outreach in India': https://cprhe.niepa.ac.in/assets/papers/CPRHE_Research_Paper_20.pdf.

The project is a four-year research project (2022-2026) funded by the Fair Chance Foundation and hosted by the University of Warwick's Doctoral Education and Academia Research Centre (DEAR). The DEAR Centre conducts specialist research on topics relating to doctoral education and the academic profession, with a focus on inequalities and inclusivity (www.warwick.ac.uk/DEAR).

The project has been led by Professor Emily F. Henderson (University of Warwick) and Dr Nidhi S. Sabharwal (NIEPA) as Co-Principal Investigators, and Professor Ann Stewart (University of

Warwick) as Co-Investigator. The project has been coordinated by Matt Phillips and the project has been supported by a number of colleagues, most substantially S. Arokia Mary, Arushi Painuly, Chandrika, Ragini Khurana, Denisse Lillo Sierra, Sejjal, Evan Zheng, Susan Deeb. The project has involved a significant empirical phase across HEIs located in five states of India: Assam, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Kerala, and Maharashtra. In each state, a team of three faculty members has led the empirical component, including collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Each State Research Team has consisted of two faculty members from a State University – the team lead and an early career faculty member, and a faculty member from a college in the same state (publicly-funded or aided, rurally located where possible). The State Research Teams were supported in the process through three two-day residential workshops at NIEPA which focused on (i) instrument development and data collection, (ii) analysis processes, and (iii) presentation and peer review of draft report material. In addition, field visits and monthly online meetings were held to bring together all team members across the central and state teams during the empirical phase.

This report showcases the State Research Team findings as part of a series of five State Reports for the WAHEI project. Links to access the reports include: www.warwick.ac.uk/WAHEI and https://www.niepa.ac.in/. The report has been entirely produced by the State Research Team, based on the empirical research conducted for the WAHEI project. The report structure and contents were guided by the central team to bring continuity between the reports. All chapters of the report have been thoroughly peer reviewed by Professor Emily F. Henderson and S. Arokia Mary, and additionally, a chapter of the report has been reviewed by team members of one of the other State Research Teams. The report was revised in response to the peer review process.

The final contents of the report have been prepared and finalised by the State Research Team, with editing support from Matt Phillips and Emily Henderson, Robyn Shreeve and Ann Stewart, and as such responsibility for the contents therein remains with the report authors.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context of HE Access and Choice at the State Level

The state report of the Department of the Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, GoI through the All-India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), of the Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) of Assam in the last 6 years (2016-17 to 2021-22) does not indicate a distinctive trend. In All category it was 16.8 in 2016-17 and has increased to 18.00 in 2018-19 and again fell to 16.9 in 2021-22. In the case of the SC students, it was more or less around 18 during these 6 years, except during 2018-19 where it increased to 19.8. Whereas, in the case of ST students it indicates a gradually growth from 22 in 2016-17 to 25.8 in 2021-22 (AISHE, 2016-17 to AISHE, 2021-22). However, its growth is not a steady one with a fall to 21.4 in 2019-20. The fall of GER during the period 2019-20 in all the social categories can be attributed to COVID-19 pandemic. It is interesting to note here that the overall GER of female students in Higher Education (HE) in all the social categories is higher than the male students during the entire study period. Table 1.1. provides a better understanding of the scenario.

Table 1.1: Gross Enrollment Ratio in Assam, 2016-17 to 2021-22

Year	ALL			SC			ST		
	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
2021-22	16.2	17.6	16.9	18.2	19.5	18.8	25.4	26.3	25.8
2020-21	16.8	18.4	17.5	17	19	17.9	23.8	25.6	24.7
2019-20	15.7	17.4	16.5	17.5	19	18.2	20.4	22.3	21.4
2018-19	17.4	18.6	18	19.3	20.3	19.8	23.3	23.6	23.4
2017-18	17.1	18.2	17.6	18.4	19.1	18.7	20.6	19.9	20.2
2016-17	16.6	17.1	16.8	18.1	19.0	18.5	22.1	21.8	22.0

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22

When compared between India and Assam, the data clearly indicated that the GER of Assam is lower than the national level in All categories and among the SC students from 2016-17 to 2021-22. Whereas, the GER of the ST students is higher than the national's ratio. Again, there is an gradual increase of the GER in India in All category from 24.1 in 2016-17 to 28.4 in 2021-22 however, there is very little change in the state of Assam, from 16.8 in 2016-17 to 16.9 in 2021-22. The GER among the ST students provides a different scenario. Assam has higher GER among the students than the national ratio, however the rate of increase of the national ratio is faster

(14.8 in 2016-17 to 21.2 in 2021-22) than that of Assam (22.0 in 2016-17 to 25.8 in 2021-22). GER of female students among All categories and ST is higher than the male students, except in 2016-17, and indicates an increasing trend both in the national senario and in Assam. As for the GER of female students is concerned it has been more or less lower than the male students and has increased both in the national scenario and in Assam from 2016-17 to 2021-22.

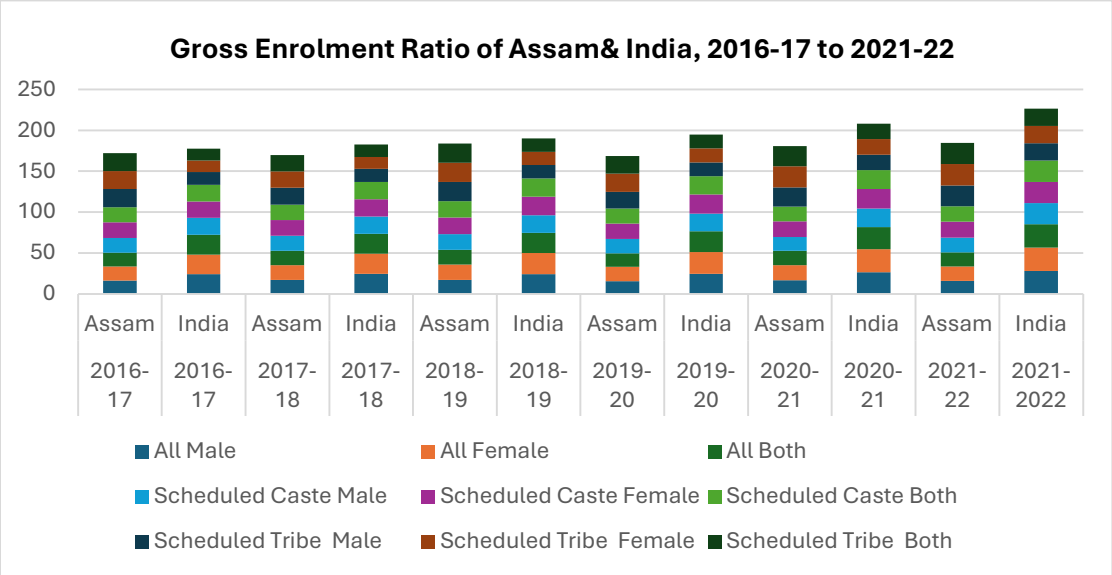
Table 1.2: Gross Enrollment Ratio in Assam & India, 2016-17 to 2021-22

Year	State	All			Scheduled Caste			Scheduled Tribe		
	Country	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both	Male	Female	Both
2016-17	Assam	16.6	17.1	16.8	18.1	19.0	18.5	22.1	21.8	22.0
2016-17	India	24.3	23.8	24.1	20.8	19.9	20.3	15.8	13.9	14.8
2017-18	Assam	17.1	18.2	17.6	18.4	19.1	18.7	20.6	19.9	20.2
2017-18	India	24.5	24.6	24.6	21	21	21	16	14.5	15.3
2018-19	Assam	17.4	18.6	18.0	19.3	20.3	19.8	23.3	23.6	23.4
2018-19	India	24.4	25.5	24.9	21.4	22.8	22	16.7	16.1	16.4
2019-20	Assam	15.7	17.4	16.5	17.5	19.0	18.2	20.4	22.3	21.4
2019-20	India	24.8	26.4	25.6	21.5	23.2	22.3	17	17	17
2020-21	Assam	16.8	18.4	17.5	17.0	19.0	17.9	23.8	25.6	24.7
2020-21	India	26.7	27.9	27.3	22.4	23.9	23.1	18.8	19.1	18.9
2021-22	Assam	16.2	17.6	16.9	18.2	19.5	18.8	25.4	26.3	25.8
2021-22	India	28.3	28.5	28.4	25.8	26.0	25.9	21.4	20.9	21.2

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education, Ministry of Education, GoI (2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20, 2020-21, 2021-22)

Graphical representation of GER of India and Assam according to the social groups as illustrated in Fig: 1.1 provides a proper understanding of the scenario.

Fig: 1.1: GER of Assam and India, 2016-17 to 2021-22



Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Higher Education of Assam according to AISHE during the period 2016-17 to 2021-22 is high in all the social categories except in 2016-17 and among the ST students in 2017-18. It was 0.97. Here too, it is indicating a gradual growth and is more distinctive among the GPI of ST students. Again, GPI of higher education of Assam is higher than all India index in all the social categories (refer Table 1.3).

Table 1.3: Gender Parity Index (GPI) in Assam and India in Higher Education, 2016-17 to 2021-22

Category/Year		2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22
India	**All categories (India)**	**.94**	**1.00**	**1.06**	**1.08**	**1.07**	**1.01**
Assam	All categories	.93	1.07	1.07	1.11	1.09	1.09
	Scheduled Caste	.95	1.04	1.06	1.08	1.11	1.07
	Scheduled Tribe	.89	.97	1.01	1.10	1.08	1.04

Source: All India Survey on Higher Education, Ministry of Education, GoI, 2016-17 and 2021-22

1.2 Rationale of the Study

This research study argues for recognising the potential role of rural-serving state universities and government colleges based in rural and semi-urban areas as HE knowledge hubs and

strengthening their efforts in delivering on the equity and social justice agenda for HE in India. Serving as 'HE knowledge hubs' means interacting with communities in rural and semi-urban areas surrounding HEIs to improve communities' knowledge about HE options. This is needed because there is often little direct knowledge and experience of HE in these communities from previous generations, more so in the rural and semi urban areas. Thus, choices about HE are often being made on the basis of hearsay and informal connections, which benefit those who already have a history of HE in their families or networks (Stewart et al. 2022). In order to develop HEIs as HE knowledge hubs, the project recognises that the institutional culture and functioning of HEIs and national/state policy contexts regulating the approach of faculty members and institutional leaders to HE outreach are influential and must be taken into consideration. At the same time, it is also important to develop structural intervention for social inclusion (Kottmann et al. 2019) in HEIs as an institutional approach.

The state universities and especially government colleges are prime sites for the strategic implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 (MHRD, 2020) equity goal of improving access for students from socially and economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs). Entry into quality higher education can open a vast array of possibilities that can lift both individuals as well as communities out of the cycles of disadvantage. For this reason, making quality higher education opportunities available to all individuals must be among the highest priorities. This Policy envisions ensuring equitable access to quality education to all students, with a special emphasis on SEDGs (Section 14.1, p. 41).

NEP 2020 has identified the role of government colleges, particularly in delivering on high quality, localised HE provision, which may include improving HE outreach practices (MHRD, 2020, 14.4.1, p. 41). It acknowledges a 'lack of knowledge of higher education opportunities' and 'admission processes' (14.3, p. 41) as substantial barriers for young people from disadvantaged socio-economic groups who are looking to access HE. It is therefore a highly promising time to both research and contribute to the proposed changes.

This project aims to explore, consolidate and maximise the role of HEIs through state university and college faculty members and institutional leaders in providing guidance on HE access and choice in the communities they serve, to ensure that young people entering HE for the first time in their families and communities are making informed choices about their futures.

Again, Section 2 highlighted the important contribution that a research project focusing on the role that rural serving state university and rural/semi-urban HEIs can play in improving HE access and choice in HEIs' local communities. With a view to developing the role of HEIs as HE knowledge hubs in their local areas, and to developing the capacity and motivation of faculty members to engage in a gender equitable and socially-just manner with local communities in relation to issues of HE access and choice, this project has the potential to transform aspects of widening participation in HE among disadvantaged communities in rural and semi-urban India.

The project is designed with a national focus, covering five states with a spread across the principal regions of India, in order to contribute to the national policy agenda, as well as contributing at state level to state policy and institutional-level policy and practice. The project is designed around three core phases. Each of the phases encompasses both fieldwork and impact activities. Rather than separating out research and impact, as is common in research projects, this project embeds impact in the research and research in the impact activities.

1.3 Objectives & Research Questions

Number	Project aims	Project objectives
(i)	To explore the potential for HEIs, their faculty members and leaders in rural and semi-urban India to contribute to enhancing knowledge of HE in local disadvantaged communities, and therefore contributing to the social justice mission of public HE.	To document, via meaningful, robust, mixed methods fieldwork across five states of India, current HE outreach practices and the motivations and/or resistance of various HEI stakeholders, such as the faculty members and institutional leaders, to contribute to HE outreach in the local communities surrounding the colleges.

RQ1: What is the current and potential role of HEIs based in rural/semi-urban India, their faculty members and institutional leaders, to engage in gender-equitable, socially just HE outreach for students in their local communities?

- RQ1a: Who is delivering HE in colleges and universities in rural and semi-urban locations? Who are the faculty members and the institutional leaders?
- RQ1b: What do faculty members in rural and semi-urban areas currently perceive to be the role of HEIs and their role/s in facilitating access to HE and HE choice in the localities of their workplaces? What are the existing practices of HE outreach?
- RQ1c: What do institutional leaders of rural and semi-urban colleges and universities perceive to be HEIs' role, their role and their employees' role in relation to facilitating access to HE and HE choice?
- RQ1d: Which students are receiving HE in rural/semi-urban colleges? How do they perceive the role of faculty members in facilitating HE access and choice?

1.4 Methodology & Sources of Information

The report has been developed from the primary data collected from the Institutional Leaders (ILs), and the Faculty Members (FMs) of the State University (SU), Government College In-depth (GCID) and the two Government Colleges, GC-A and GC-B taken for the study. The information relating to students is also primary data collected from the undergraduate students of the SU and the GCID. The data are then analyzed and represented in the form of tables for visual representation.

Institutional information

Consulting national, state and institutional documents and sources of available information with regard to HE at state level and the institutional profiles, the following information is provided. There are 30 universities (All India Survey on Higher Education, 2021-22) in the 33 districts in Assam. There are 5 government colleges, 321 provincialised colleges, 11 model colleges, 92 private colleges and 59 commerce colleges in Assam in 2022-23 (Statistical Handbook Assam, 2023). Except one district, Tamulpur, all the other 32 districts have at least one provincialised college.

Table 1.4: District-wise Number of Colleges in Assam as on 2022-23:

District	Govt. College	Provincialised College	Model College	Private College	Commerce College
Kokrajhar	1	8	-	3	1
Dhubri	-	13	-	-	1
Goalpara	-	9	1	3	-
Barpeta	-	16	-	2	1
Morigaon	-	7	-	3	1
Nagaon	-	21	-	3	3
Sonitpur	-	7	-	3	2
Lakhimpur	-	17	-	5	2
Dhemaji	-	15	-	8	2
Tinsukia	-	9	2	5	5
Dibrugarh	-	15	-	4	6
Sivasagar	-	15	-	1	3
Jorhat	-	16	-	-	4
Golaghat	-	15	1	1	4
Karbi Anglong	1	3	1	8	1
Dima Hasao	1	1	-	2	1
Cachar	-	13	1	8	2
Karimganj	-	7	1	3	2
Hailakandi	-	6	1	-	1
Bongaigaon	-	8	1	1	2
Chirang	-	4	-	2	-
Kamrup	-	26	-	2	3
Kamrup Metro	2	20	-	8	6
Nalbari	-	10	-	1	1
Baksa	-	5	-	6	-
Darrang	-	5	1	1	1
Udalguri	-	5	-	4	1
Biswanath	-	4	1	1	-
Charaideo	-	4	-	-	1
Hojai	-	4	-	-	2
Majuli	-	5	-	1	-
South Salmara	-	3	-	-	-
West Karbi Anglong	-	1	-	3	-
Tamulpur	-	-	-	-	-
Bajali	-	4	-	-	-
Assam	5	321	11	92	59

Source: Statistical Handbook Assam 2023

Institutional leaders (IL):

Table 1.5: IL interview participants – basic information

HEI: (state code_inst code e.g. 1_2)	Title and Pseudonym	Gender	Caste/Social group	Religion
SU: 1_1	IL 1	Male	General	Hindu
GCID: 1_2	IL 2	Male	OBC	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	IL 3	Male	General	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	IL 4	Male	General	Hindu

It is interesting to note that all the IL were heterosexual males and belonged to one religious community, Hinduism. Again, all of them were from the General Caste except one who belonged to Other Backward Caste (OBC). It clearly depicts the marginalization of women and marginal groups in leadership positions in the 4 HEIs undertaken for the study.

The ILs belonged to Geography, Political Science, Botany and Economics departments. The IL of the SU was a professor by designation and the ILs of the GCID and the 2 GC were the Principal of the college and were equivalent to the rank of a professor. They were within the age group of 47 to 57 years. None of them were differently abled and all of them were married. All of them had caring responsibilities. Two of the ILs had 2 children and the other two had only 1 child each. All of them were from urban areas of Assam and Assamese was their mother tongue. For the IL from the SU, his length of time as IL was 1 year, for the three ILs from colleges it was between 2 to 4 years. The current leadership role of the IL from SU was Deputy Director of Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC), and for the other 3 ILs it was Principal of the college. One of the IL has been serving in the current institution for 28 years, followed by the IL from SU who was serving for 20 years and the two other ILs have been serving for about 2 years. One of the IL was a professor and the other three were Principals of colleges. The nature of appointment of all the ILs was of regular basis.

Faculty Members (FMs)

Table 1.6: FM interview participants – basic information

HEI: (state code_inst code e.g. 1_2)	Title and Pseudonym	Gender	Caste/Social group	Religion
SU: 1_1	ULC 2	Male	General	Hindu
SU: 1_1	Women's Studies	Female	General	Hindu
SU: 1_1	Eco 1	Female	General	Hindu
SU: 1_1	Commerce 1	Male	General	Islam
SU: 1_1	ULC 1	Male	General	Hindu
GCID: 1_2	Gaurav	Male	General	Hindu
GCID: 1_2	Louee Adyasa	Female	General	Hindu
GCID: 1_2	Duffy	Female	General	Islam
GCID: 1_2	ZLG2	Male	General	Islam
GCID: 1_2	Suman	Female	General	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	Bora - 1	Male	OBC	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	Bora - 2	Female	SC	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	Bora - 3	Female	General	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	Bora - 4	Male	General	Hindu
GC-A: 1_3	Bora - 5	Female	General	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	Das - 1	Female	OBC	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	Das - 2	Female	OBC	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	Das - 3	Male	OBC	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	Das - 4	Male	SC	Hindu
GC-B: 1_4	Das - 5	Female	General	Hindu

When this study was carried out, efforts were made to interview equal proportions of male and female participants as far as possible and thereby 11 female and 9 male faculty members (FM) were interviewed. However, there are some variations in terms of their religious background and social category. Only 2 religious groups were represented of which three (3) of them were Muslims and the rest (17) of the faculty members were Hindus. Again 14 of the FMs belonged to General Caste, 4 from the OBC and 2 from SC and none from ST.

The 20 FMs interviewed for the study belonged to 13 different departments, namely, Education, English, Law, Women's Studies, Economics, Commerce, Political Science, History, Philosophy Geography, Mathematics, Chemistry and Zoology. They belonged to different age groups, almost all age groups, ranging from 59 years to 23 years. None of them identified themselves as differently abled or from other sexual orientation or identities. Six of the FMs were unmarried, 1 divorced and rest married, 13. Eleven of the FMs had caring responsibilities of which 4 had one child and rest of the 7 FMs had two children. Except one FM whose place of origin was from another state of eastern India, all of the FMs were from Assam. There were 9 FMs who were from rural areas and 11 FMs whose place of origin were from urban areas. Even though for the majority of the FMs (18) Assamese was their mother tongue, there were 2 FMs whose mother tongue was Bengali and a local language of an eastern state of India, respectively.

Their length of time of serving at the current institution was varied ranging from 32 years (2 FMs) to 1 year (4 FMs). There were 9 FMs who have been serving between 2 to 8 years, 1 FM who has been serving for 7 years and 5 FMs serving between 11 years to 28 years. There were 12 FMs who were Assistant Professor, 5 Associate Professor and 3 Teaching Associates. All the FMs were appointed through direct recruitment by the concerned educational institute. The nature of appointment of 3 Teaching Associates and 3 Assistant Professor of GCID were contractual and the rest 14 were regular.

FM survey has been conducted in SU (N=112), GCID (N=48).
Administrative data about FMs has been consulted in each HEI.

Undergraduate Students (UGs)

Table 1.7: UG FGD and interview participants – basic information

HEI: (state code_inst code e.g. 1_2)	Pseudonym	Gender	Caste/Social group	Religion	Interviewed [Yes/No]
SU: 1_1	FGD 1-1	Male	ST	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 1-2	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 1-3	Female	OBC	Hindu	No
SU: 1_1	FGD 1-4	Female	General	Hindu	No
SU: 1_1	FGD 1-5	Male	General	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 2-1	Male	General	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 2-2	Female	General	Hindu	No
SU: 1_1	FGD 2-3	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 2-4	Female	OBC	Hindu	Yes
SU: 1_1	FGD 2-5	Female	General	Hindu	No
GCID: 1_2	Sumon	Male	General	Islam	Yes
GCID: 1_2	Physics1	Male	OBC	Hindu	Yes
GCID: 1_2	ABCD	Male	General	Islam	Yes
GCID: 1_2	Nazish Khan	Female	General	Islam	Yes
GCID: 1_2	Maina	Female	General	Islam	Yes
GCID: 1_2	Chemistry1	Female	General	Islam	No
GCID: 1_2	Mr Commerce	Male	General	Islam	No
GCID: 1_2	Jiya	Female	General	Islam	No
GCID: 1_2	Priya Das	Female	General	Islam	No
GCID: 1_2	Zain Yusuf	Male	General	Islam	Yes

In this study, 11 female and 9 male students participated in the 4 FGDs. Here again efforts were made to interview equal proportions of male and female students. However, only 4 female and 8 male students were selected for individual interviews. The students who were vocal and were assumed to have more information to share were selected for the individual interview in the SU. Whereas, in the GCID the students who were quieter were selected for the individual interview. In terms of social category, larger number of students belonged to general category accounting

to 14, 5 students belonged to OBC, only 1 student belonged to ST and none from SC. 11 students were Hindus and 9 were Muslims. All the students from the SU were Hindus. 9 students from the in-depth college were Muslim and this college is located in a rural area.

From the State University (SU) 5 students were from first batch of Five Years Integrated Masters' Program (FYIMP). GU-FYIMP was introduced by the SU in 2023 with the introduction of the NEP2020 in the state of Assam. It is a 5 year master's programme only for the students enrolled in the SU campus. This programme has the option of lateral entries and exits. They were from Women's Studies, Economics, Journalism and Mass and Communication and Geography. One of these participants did not mention the course. 2 students were from Integrated Master in Commerce, 2 from LLB and 1 from B. Tec. On the other hand, from the In-depth College 2 participants was from Commerce, and 1 each from Botany, Chemistry, Physics, Economics, History, Political Science, Hindi and Food Processing and Quality Management (a B. Voc programme). Except for the two participants from the LLB program who were 25 years, the rest of the participants were 19 to 24 years. None of the participants were differently abled or identified themselves from the LGBTQIAP+ community. All the 20 participants of this study were unmarried and had no caring responsibility.

All of them were born in Assam of which 15 participants were from rural areas and 5 were from urban areas. These urban students were from SU. The mother tongue of 18 participants was Assamese, and 1 each was Bengali and Nepali.

UG survey has been conducted in SU (N=501) and GCID (N=500).
Administrative data about UGs has been consulted in SU and GCID

1.5 Chapter Scheme in the Report

Chapter 1 is the introductory chapter where a brief overview of access to Higher Education in the state, including e.g. GER, GPI, enrolment for different social groups, different distribution of HE access and HEIs across the state is provided.

In Chapter 2, the state policies regarding different aspects of HE of the study area are discussed. The information collected is from secondary sources. It discusses about the access of SEDGs across different social categories. The state level outreach strategies and activities which provides information about HE accesses and choices are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 3 consists of the profile information of the HE institutes; the SU, the GCID and brief information of the two GCs selected for this study. The information is based on both secondary data and primary data collected for the study. The profile of Institutional leaders, faculty members and the students are illustrated. The different types of faculty professional development opportunities availed by the ILs and FMs are highlighted. Again the existing institutional HE outreach strategies and activities availed from the secondary sources are described in this chapter.

Chapter 4 focuses on the demographic characteristics of faculty members at the SU, GCID and the 2 GCs. It examines key factors such as age, gender, caste, religion, disability, sexual orientation, relationship status, and more, providing a comprehensive overview of the personal and professional profiles of faculty members in these institutions. It highlights the varied experiences of faculty members to a broader understanding of how higher education is delivered in the region. This chapter explores the personal experiences of faculty members, including their higher education choices, family backgrounds, and educational histories.

Chapter 5 studies the motivation of the Institution Leaders' (ILs) and the Faculty Members' (FMs) of 4 HEIs for contributing to widening participation in the study areas. It intends to probe as to how the FMs and the ILs in rural and semi-urban areas currently perceive their role and that of the HEI in facilitating access to HE and HE choice in the localities of their workplaces. It illustrates the existing practices of HE outreaches in these HEIs and also the obstacles that exist in the HEI which prevent their contribution.

In Chapter 6 students of both the SU and the GCID are studied to dig out the areas for improvement deemed necessary to help them make informed choices vis a vis higher education. The demographic background of the students, their family background, their educational background and their family's financial background are discussed. The

involvement of faculty members with students' choices and decision making regarding higher education has been analyzed.

Chapter 7 is a synthesis of all the aspects taken for the study. The findings are discussed in relation to the study's research questions. Towards the end of this chapter suggestions are offered as to how the potentiality of FMs can be maximised in HE outreach and embedded in policy for sustainable changes in HEIs.

In Chapter 8 the team members have shared their experiences through their engagement in this project. They have expressed how this project has led to institutional and personal changes. The recommendations for institutions and policymakers relating to future HE outreaches potential are put forth towards the end of the chapter.

Chapter 2: State Level Profile of HE and Academic Profession

2.1 Introduction

This chapter, as a part of the State Report, explores the present status of Higher Education in Assam. The aim of this chapter is to look at the existing scenario of Higher Education access in the Indian state of Assam. While doing so three aspects are primarily dealt with: the institutions, government policies and status of academic profession.

To start with the Directorate of Higher Education (DHE), Government of Assam is the official body to regulate policies and their implementation in Assam. The post of the Director of Public Instruction was created way back in 1874, during the pre-independence period. This office managed all aspects of education: Elementary, Secondary, Higher, Adult and Technical. The position of the Director of Higher Education was created in 1989. This body was formed keeping in view a unified regulation body to ensure smooth functioning of the management of Higher Education in Assam. In the recent years, DHE has implemented many such policies for the betterment of higher education in Assam. All the higher education institutions come under the jurisdiction of this office. The existing Higher Education Institutes in Assam are mentioned below:

Table 2.1: Higher education Institutes of Assam

Type of HE	Total Number
Central University	2
State University in General Area	13
State University in BTAD	1
Private University	6
Government College	5
Technical University	1
Polytechnique Institution	26
Engineering College under PPP mode	1
Government Colleges offering Graduate/Post Graduate, Graduate /Ph.D program in Engineering	7
Medical College	13
Dental College	3
Research Institute	12
Institute of Management	21
Government Provincialized College	301

Source: Profile of Universities and Colleges, government of Assam, Higher Education, highereducation.assam.govt.in

According to the data published by DHE, Government of Assam, 2016-17, the total population of Assam between the ages 18-23 is 3,680,475 of which 402154 are enrolled in HEIs. There are twelve universities, three hundred and five colleges and 12972 teachers. The Pupil-Teacher-Ratio is 31 and Gross Enrollment Ratio is 17 (directorateofhighereducation.assam.gov.in). Assam has a mixed population of various socio-religious and ethnic communities. To achieve the desired goal of high enrollment and employability across these communities, it is of utmost importance to bring parity in opportunities. The State government has been proactive in this regard from the beginning. Yet there is a lot left to be achieved. In the subsequent parts of the chapter, these points are discussed at length.

2.2 Profile of the State in Terms of HE and Equity

As mentioned above, the DHE is the premier body to represent higher education in Assam. However, to ensure equity, access and to enhance the quality of higher education the Department of Higher Education was created on 16th August, 2005. This department has been working remarkably towards achieving its goals. In the recent years, six new universities were

established viz. K.K. Handique State Open University (2005), Bodoland State University (2009), Assam Science and Technology University (2009), Kumar Bhaskar Varma Sanskrit University (2011), Assam Women University (2013) and Cotton College State University (2017). Twelve Government Model Degree Colleges are being set up in 12 educationally backward districts of Assam (the first batch was set up in 2017, followed by the second batch from 2020). Similarly State Government has also increased the number of Engineering Colleges and Polytechnics. There are seven functioning Engineering Colleges viz. (i) Assam Engineering College (ii) Jorhat Engineering College (iii) Jorhat Institute of Science and Technology (iv) Bineswar Brahma Engineering College, Kokrajhar, (v) Barak Valley Engineering College, (vi) Golaghat Engineering College, and (vii) Dhemaji Engineering College. Twenty one new polytechnics institutes have been added to the existing ten polytechnics making thirty one in total, viz. (i) Assam Engineering Institute, Guwahati (ii) Assam Textile Institute, Guwahati (iii) Bongaigaon Polytechnic (iv) Dibrugarh Polytechnic (v) Diphu Polytechnic (vi) Prince of Wales Institute of Engineering and Technology, Jorhat (vii) Nagaon Polytechnic (viii) PCPS Girls' Polytechnic (ix) Residential Girls' Polytechnic, Golaghat and (x) Silchar Polytechnic, Cachar. Also, six Community Colleges have also been developed for skill development as per provision of NSQF (National Skill Qualification Framework) (Citizen Charter, Department of Higher Education, Government of Assam).

With special focus on the SEDGs in Assam, the Assam Government has launched several schemes. For Higher Education the most significant and noteworthy scheme is the fee waiver scheme. The Higher Education Department of Government of Assam offers fee waivers for students from families with a parental income below Rs. 2.00 lakh. This scheme is available for admission to the first year of H.S./B.A./B.Sc./B.Com and M.A./M.Sc./M.Com courses. Other initiatives include schemes for the development of infrastructure, wifi connectivity, students' excursions and introduction of vocational courses. There are various other grants provided to the universities and publication boards such as University Grants Commission and Rashtriya Utchatar Shiksha Abhiyan. These were the major schemes of the financial year 2016-17. The Department of Higher Education, Government of Assam offers the following scholarships:

A. Combined Merit Scholarship (Degree): Rs. 150 per month
B. Combined merit scholarship (Master Degree): Rs. 250 per month
C. Research Scholarship for PhD : Rs. 750 Per month
D. Scholarship for M. Phil: Rs.500 per month

E. PG LLM scholarship for Law: Rs. 400 per month

In the recent years the Government of Assam has launched the following schemes for the development of higher education:

1) **Pragyan Bharati Assam Scooty Scheme 2020-2021**: The Assam Government has launched a new Scooty Scheme for meritorious girl students who have secured 1st Division in class 12th Examination. This scheme was launched with the intention to help and encourage girls to enroll into higher education.
2) The Assam government has announced a new scheme **Mukhya Mantri Nijut Moina Asoni (MMNM)** to promote girl education and to end child marriage in the state. This was announced by the Government of Assam on 12th June 2024 after the Assam government cabinet approved the scheme. The MMNM scheme aims to empower girls of the state by promoting education amongst them through financial incentives and support from the state government. It is envisioned that through this scheme an empowered girl will help in reducing the incidence of child marriage in the state. The scheme is expected to benefit approximately 10 lakh girl students in the state**.** Girl students enrolled in higher secondary education will obtain Rs 1000 per month from the Government of Assam. A girl student admitted in a three year or four year under graduate course will receive Rs 1200 per month. A girl student enrolled in post graduation or B.Ed degree will obtain Rs 2500 per month.
3) The Government of Assam has approved 5% reservation of seats for Scheduled Tribes (Hills) and 10% for Scheduled Tribes (Plains), 15% for OBCs, 7% for SCs, 5% of the seats may be earmarked for outstanding sports persons, 2% seat reservation for NCC cadets and 1% seat reservation for ward of employee quota and for achievement in cultural activities. This is as per Office Memorandum of the Office of the Director of Higher Education, Assam, dated: 06-06-2014. No. G(B) Misc 75/2014/4.
4) There is also a policy for 2% relaxation of attendance for girl students as menstruation leave in the State University taken for this study.

It seems that most of the state sponsored policies focus on women vis a vis education, especially higher education.

The Pragyan Bharati Scooty Scheme and the MMNM are an addition to the state level affirmative action. Apart from that there is reservation for scheduled tribe category which is further divided into scheduled tribe (plains) and scheduled tribe (hills).

2.3 HE Access and Choice Strategies at the State Level

Assam is a rural state with a population of 25,372,000 inhabiting in rural areas, covering 98.4% of total area (State Profile of Assam, Directorate of Economics and Statistics). Most of the students come from rural or semi urban areas. Various issues hinder the aspiring young students to access institute and the subject of their choices. The first barrier for the students in the admission process is to gain information on the specific subject to pursue. Sometimes, time becomes a barrier, at other times financial constraints stop them from pursuing their dreams. At other times, lack of information on the part of the students creates difficulty. The reasons for this mostly are lack of information, poor educational background of parents, along with some other factors. Keeping in view all of these and in solidarity with central government policies, the Assam Government has launched Samarth portal in the year 2023. It is aimed at helping young students to be self-aware about the choices available for them before enrolling into higher education programmes. Samarth is a government of India initiative meant for higher education institutes to streamline their management across the country. Assam State Higher Education Admission Portal (Samarth) is a step ahead in the direction of achieving higher GER. The launch of NEP 2020 in 2023 is yet another achievement of the universities and colleges in Assam. With the special focus on Skill and Vocational Education, the rural students are and will be able to build their career in a more employable direction.

Another initiative by the Government of Assam is "Assam Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme". It was launched in the year 2019 by the Government of Assam (Assam Abhinandan Education Loan Subsidy Scheme). This provides a subsidy up to Rs. 50,000 on education loans to pursue higher education. The applicants can apply for the subsidy by paying 25% of their loans. This requires the student to be a permanent resident of Assam and the education loan should be for minimum of rupees one lakh.

According to the All India Survey on Higher Education, 2021-22, the Gross Enrollment Ratio for the state of Assam is 17.5% against the National GER 27.3%. This is an indication of severely

disadvantaged educational status in the state. Thereby, the State Government has been keen to improve this index. In accordance with the state government initiatives such as fee waiver, Nijut Moina Asoni, Assam Bikash Yojana (Chief Minister's Financial Assitance Scheme - DHE - OPERATIONS), colleges and universities are working towards increasing enrollment. At the same time, various measures are seen to be undertaken across the state by the colleges to incorporate innovative methods to their student outreach programmes. Here, mention should be made of launch of SAMARTH and AROHAN[1] . Apart from these, new model colleges and new state universities are established. These measures have been implemented with the goal of serving the educationally backward districts and to provide affordable education to the rural students. Several colleges are granted autonomous status. Vocational courses are introduced at UG level. For ensuring smooth conduct of college functions, wifi facilities, infrastructural development in rural colleges are given due priority by the government.

2.4 State of the academic profession at state level

The DHE, Assam has laid the regulation for recruitment of College Principals in the year 2019. One must have the required the minimum qualification for being an Associate Professor and any other additional qualification as mentioned by the UGC and Director of Higher Education, Assam. The advertisement for the post of Principal of Government Colleges is made through publicity in leading local and national newspapers or other means of mass media. The applications are invited by the DHE, Assam. For the Provincialised Colleges, the President of the Governing Body[2] is responsible for publishing the advertisement as per directions of the Director of Higher Education Assam. To apply for the post of an Assistant Professor and Librarian for different Government and Provincialised Colleges[3] of Assam the candidate must fulfill the latest eligibility criteria framed by the UGC and apply through the proper channel and norms as regulated by Director of Higher Education, Assam. For the post of Assistant Professor in Government Colleges applications are invited from eligible candidate by the Director of Higher Education, Assam, through publicity in leading newspaper advertisement/s and other means of

[1] This scheme was launched for the session 2022-23 by the Chief Minister of Assam. Through this scheme class 12th students are taken out to the best HEIs in the state to interact with the faculty members. This is aimed at motivating the young minds to pursue higher education and also to get the exposure.

[2] Governing Body is the highest administrative body of a college headed by a president. The body consists of the president, the Principal & Secretary, Vice-Principal, two teacher members, three guardian members, two ex-officio members, two nominee of the affiliated university, one donor member and one special member. The teacher members are elected for one year. The others are appointed for a period of three years. Presidents are selected by the Directorate of Higher Education.

[3] Provincialised Colleges are under the aegis of State Government for salaries, allowances, promotion.

mass media. And for the Provincialised Colleges the advertisement are published by the Principals of respective colleges as per the direction of the Director of Higher Education, Assam (Recruitment | DIRECTORATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION).

In Assam, the Assam Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Reservation of Vacancies in Services and Posts) Act, 1978, governs reservation in services and posts. A roster system is also in vogue to ensure equal representation of prescribed posts for all reserved categories. New recruitments, categories of reservation is determined by the Roster Register.

2.5 Summary and Conclusion

Assam is definitely lagging behind other states of India in terms of GER in Institutions. The reasons for this status are multifaceted although the rural economy plays a vital role. On the other hand, State initiatives to promote higher education have been robust from the 1980s. There are several new schemes implemented in the recent years to further improve the predicament. It has been observed that special schemes to encourage female students have been a key goal of the government. From 2024 onwards all higher education institutions are brought under a Government of India Portal named SAMARTH. This portal manages all aspects of students and employees of higher education institutes. In terms of FM and IL recruitment, UGC regulations are followed with minor changes. Today, the biggest threat to HEIs are lower enrollment, retention and drop outs.

So, to conclude it can be said that if the action plan is implemented properly, Assam can reach the desired goal of gradual growth in Gross Enrollment Ratio and to deter drop out from HEIs.

Chapter 3: Profile of the Case Study Institutions

3.1 Introduction to the Institutions

This study focuses on four selected higher educational institutions in Northeast India, including a State University (SU), one government college for the in-depth case study institution (GCID), and two additional government colleges (GC-A and GC-B). The State University (SU), established in the 1940s, is one of the region's oldest universities and is located in a somewhat central part of Assam. The in-depth case study institution (GCID), founded in the 1980s, is situated in a rural area, approximately 12 kilometres from the nearest town.

The two other institutions, College A and College B, are prominent government colleges affiliated with the State University. College A, established in 1961, serves a rural region in Assam, while College B, founded in 1972, emerged after a decade-long effort by the local community. These three government colleges—IDCI, College A, and College B—play a crucial role in addressing the higher education needs of rural populations, as the majority of their students come from rural backgrounds. The selected HEIs represent a diverse range of locations, those situated in forested regions, minority-concentrated areas, and tribal-dominated communities.

These selected institutions are in direct alignment with the WAHEI project's objectives, as they demonstrate the critical role of rural-serving state universities and government colleges in fostering access to higher education, enhancing the participation of rural youth, and empowering faculty members to contribute to social equity and justice. By focusing on these colleges, the study seeks to understand how their faculty members can help address the educational needs of rural populations, strengthen the capacity of these institutions as knowledge hubs, and further the agenda of equity in higher education in India.

3.1.1. State University (SU)

The State University (SU) began its journey in the late 1940s with approximately 20 affiliated colleges and 10 postgraduate departments. Currently, it comprises around 50 postgraduate departments, a Centre for Distance and Online Education, a constituent law college, and an Institute of Science and Technology.

The SU's vision is to foster regional transformation through academic, societal, and ethical contributions, preparing responsible citizens for the future. Its mission emphasizes academic excellence, empowerment of stakeholders, and the development of robust institutional structures. The University offers a wide range of undergraduate, postgraduate, PhD, certificate, and diploma programs. It employs the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, providing students with greater flexibility and adaptability. Furthermore, the University oversees more than 300 affiliated colleges offering undergraduate and postgraduate courses across various faculties.

The University has been proactively implementing the Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) across its 300+ affiliated colleges and institutions, following the NEP's launch in the state in 2023. Additionally, the university introduced new undergraduate programs as well as Five- Year Integrated Master's Program (FYIMP) on campus as part of its NEP implementation. The university's admission policy is transparent and fully online, with reservations for various categories in accordance with Government of India regulations, including SC (7%), ST (15%), OBC (15%), and EWS (10%). Tuition and hostel fees vary depending on the program, while state government initiatives ensure fee waivers for economically disadvantaged students.

The institute operates under the governance of the GU Act, and accreditation as an A + grade institution by NAAC in its 4th cycle. Funding sources include annual grants from the Government of Assam, support from the University Grants Commission (UGC), and contributions from national funding agencies such as the Department of Science and Technology (DST), the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), and the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR). Additionally, self-financed programmes along with the affiliating fees from the affiliated colleges provide supplementary resources.

3.1.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

The GCID began as a single-faculty arts institution with 10 departments in the early 1980s. Over the years, it expanded to include science and commerce streams, and now offers a total of 19 departments, including vocational and higher secondary courses. The college's vision is to create a conducive environment for students to reach their full potential while promoting values

of societal and national service. Its mission focuses on providing quality education and assisting students in accessing employment opportunities.

The college operates as an affiliate of the State University and received recognition under relevant sections of the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the late 2000s. It was incorporated into the state's grant-in-aid system in the 1990s and has been accredited with a B+ grade by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC).

Funding for the college is primarily sourced by the Government of Assam and RUSA (Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, which translates to "National Higher Education Mission"). The institution offers undergraduate degrees in Arts, Science, and Commerce, along with vocational courses and a postgraduate program in Arts. Admission processes are conducted online, ensuring transparency, and financial aid is available for economically disadvantaged students.

3.1.3. Government College-A (GC-A) and Government College-B (GC-B)

GC-A offers both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, with nearly 5000 regular students, approximately 100 faculty members, and approximately 50 non-teaching staff. The college provides undergraduate programmes in Arts, Science, Commerce, and vocational disciplines, and offers postgraduate programmes in Assamese and Zoology, along with a Postgraduate Diploma in Computer Science. The college's infrastructure spans roughly 3.5 hectares, featuring hostels, a library, laboratories, and sports facilities. In its second NAAC assessment cycle, the college was accredited with a B-grade.

GC-B, located in a semi-urban area, was accredited with a B++ grade in its third NAAC assessment cycle in the most recent assessment cycle to the time of writing. The college currently serves almost regular students and has a faculty of approximately 60 members offering courses in Arts, Science, Vocational, and professional disciplines. The total land area of the college is around 6 acres.

3.2 Profile of Institutional leaders and faculty members: faculty strength and composition

This section presents details regarding faculty strength and composition based on designation, gender, caste, religion, and place of residence, as obtained from secondary sources,

specifically the administrative records of the institutions. The data reported herein is derived from the available records maintained and provided by the respective administrative departments of the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).

3.2.1. State University (SU)

The administrative data from the State University provided information on faculty distribution by designation and gender. However, data on faculty members' caste, religion, place of residence, as well as details about Visiting Faculty, Temporary Faculty, PTA-funded faculty, and recruitment for the 2022-23 academic year could not be retrieved. Although these records exist, time constraints and the upcoming NAAC visit during the data collection period prevented us from acquiring the information in the required format. Additionally, data regarding faculty specifically involved in undergraduate programs is unavailable, as it depends on departmental work allocations, which vary across departments.

Faculty records for the year 2023 indicate that the university has 331 Permanent Faculty members, with a marked gender imbalance: 60.7% are men (201) and 39.2% are women (130). Among the 168 Assistant Professors, 57% are men (96) and 43% are women (72). Of the 53 Associate Professors, 60% are men (32) and 40% are women (21). In the Professors category, which includes 110 faculty members, 66% are men (73) and 34% are women (37). Additionally, the university employs 85 Contractual Faculty members, although detailed gender data for this group is not available. Notably, there are 128 vacant faculty positions across various categories.

3.2.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

The administrative records at GCID provide a comprehensive breakdown of the faculty composition, categorizing them by gender, religion, caste, residential location, and employment status. Out of the total 51 faculty members, 23 are permanent, making up 45.10% of the total faculty, while 28 hold contractual positions.

Table 3.1: Faculty Strength and Composition from Administrative Records at GCID

Category	Permanent Faculty	Contractual Faculty
Total Faculty Strength	23 (45.1%)	28 (54.9%)
Designation		
Assistant Professors	9	-
Associate Professors	14	-
Gender Distribution		
Male	8	20
Female	15	8
Social Category Distribution		
General	18	25
OBC	4	3
SC	0	0
Religious Composition		
Hindu	12	12
Muslim	11	16
Christian	0	0
Residential Distribution		
Urban	21	8
Rural	2	20

The gender distribution among the permanent faculty indicates a predominance of women, who make up 65.22% (15), compared to 34.78% men (8). In terms of social categories, 78.26% (18) belong to the General category, while 17.39% (4) belong to the OBC category. The majority of permanent faculty, 91.30% (21), reside in urban areas, with a small percentage in rural areas 8.70% (2). The institution has 9 Assistant Professors, comprising 17.65% of the total faculty and there are 14 Associate Professors, accounting for 27.45% of the total faculty. In terms of residential location, majority of the permanent faculty stay in urban areas.

The 28 contractual faculty members make up 54.90% of the total faculty. A large proportion of these faculty members, 89.29% (25), belong to the General category, while 10.71% (3) belong to the OBC category. The religious composition consists of 42.86% Hindus (12) and 57.14% Muslims (16). The gender distribution reveals a predominance of male faculty, with 71.43% (20) male and 28.57% (8) female. The majority of contractual faculty members, 71.43% (20), reside in rural areas, with 28.57% (8) in urban areas.

Regarding recruitment for the academic year 2022-2023, 10 new faculty members were hired, representing 19.61% of the total faculty. Of these, 80% (8) are from the General category and

20% (2) from the OBC category. The religious composition consists of 60% Hindus (6) and 40% Muslims (4). The gender distribution is balanced, with 50% male (5) and 50% female (5) faculty members. In terms of residential location, 60% (6) of the newly recruited faculty members reside in rural areas, while 40% (4) are based in urban locations.

The faculty composition at GCID highlights a notable gender disparity, with women predominantly occupying permanent positions, while men are more represented in contractual roles. This trend is unusual, as it reflects a stronger presence of women in more stable, long-term academic roles. In terms of social categories, the majority of faculty members belong to the General category, with limited representation from OBC and SC groups—particularly in permanent positions. Geographically, most permanent faculty are based in urban areas, whereas a significant portion of contractual faculty reside in rural regions. Recruitment data for 2022–2023 indicates a balanced gender distribution and a mix of candidates from General and OBC categories, with a majority coming from rural areas.

3.2.3. Government College-A (GC-A) and Government College-B (GC-B)

GC-A

At GC-A, the total faculty strength comprises 45 permanent and 18 contractual faculty members. There are no Professor, Visiting Faculty, or Temporary Faculty at present. Among the 45 permanent faculty, 21 serve as Assistant Professor and 24 as Associate Professor. In terms of gender distribution, 60% (27) of the permanent faculty are men, while 40% (18) are women. Among the contractual faculty, 61.1% (11) are men and 38.9% (7) are women.

Regarding social group representation within the permanent faculty, 6.7% (3) belong to the SC category, 22.2% (10) to ST, 22.2% (10) to OBC, and 48.9% (22) to the General category. Among contractual faculty, there was equal representation of 33.3% (6) each from the ST, OBC, and General categories. There are also five vacant faculty positions, with two reserved for OBC candidates and three for those from the General category. The religious composition of the faculty indicates that Hindus form the majority. Among permanent faculty, 91.1% (41) identify as Hindu, while Christians and Muslims each constitute 4.4% (2). All contractual faculty members are Hindu.

Regarding place of residence, most permanent faculty members are based in urban areas, while all contractual faculty members reside in rural areas. During the 2022–23 recruitment cycle, three faculty members were appointed—one each from the ST, OBC, and General categories. Of the new recruits, two were women and one was a man, and all were from Assam.

Table 3.2: Faculty Strength and Composition at GC-A as per administrative records

Category	Permanent Faculty	Contractual Faculty
Total Faculty Strength	45	18
Designation		
Assistant Professors	21	-
Associate Professors	24	-
Gender Distribution		
Male	27	11
Female	18	7
Social Category Distribution		
SC	3	-
ST	10	6
OBC	10	6
General	22	6
Religious Composition		
Hindu	41	18
Christian	2	0
Muslim	2	0
Residential Distribution		
Urban	52% (23)	0% (0)
Rural	48% (22)	100% (18)

The faculty composition at GC-A reflects a gender imbalance, with men outnumbering women in both permanent and contractual roles. Among permanent faculty, there is notable diversity in social category representation, while contractual faculty are evenly distributed across ST, OBC, and General categories. The religious profile is predominantly Hindu across both groups. In terms of residence, most permanent faculty members are based in urban areas, whereas all contractual faculty members come from rural backgrounds. Overall, the data highlights a significant degree of gender and religious homogeneity, alongside a clear urban–rural divide in employment status.

GC-B

At GC-B, the faculty composition across permanent, contractual, and temporary positions reveals several notable trends. The permanent faculty consists of 43 members, with a slight

majority being men (55.8%). Social category representation is diverse, with most belonging to the General category (51.2%), followed by OBC (23.3%), ST (16.3%), and a smaller proportion from the SC category (6.9%). In terms of religion, the faculty is predominantly Hindu (91.1%), with a small presence of Muslims and Christians (4.4% each). In terms of residence, permanent faculty are almost equally distributed between rural (48.9%) and urban (51.1%) areas, reflecting a balanced geographic representation.

The contractual faculty, comprising 13 members, reflect a gender imbalance, with 11 men and 3 women. The majority are from the General category, with representation also from the OBC and ST categories. All contractual faculty members are Hindu and reside in rural areas. Among the 16 temporary faculty members, women constitute the majority, with 13 women compared to 3 men. Half of this group belongs to the General category, while the remainder comprises individuals from ST and OBC backgrounds. The majority identify as Hindu (81.2%), alongside a smaller Muslim representation. Similar to contractual faculty, all temporary faculty are based in rural areas.

Table 3.3: Faculty Strength and Composition at GC-B as per administrative records

Category	Permanent Faculty	Contractual	Temporary Faculty
Total Faculty Strength	43	13	16
Designation			
Assistant Professors	29	-	-
Associate Professors	14	-	-
Gender Distribution			
Male	24	11	3
Female	19	3	13
Social Group Distribution			
SC	3	0	0
ST	7	0	0
OBC	10	2	5
EWS	1	0	0
General	22	11	11
Religion Distribution			
Hindu	40	10	13
Muslim	3	3	3
Christian	0	0	0
Sikh	0	0	0
Buddhist	0	0	0
Other (Specify)	0	0	0
Residential Location			
Rural	22	10	16
Urban	21	3	0

At GC-B, the gender composition in permanent and contractual positions reveals distinct patterns. Among the permanent faculty, gender distribution is relatively balanced, with men comprising 55.8% (24) and women 44.2% (19), indicating a more equitable representation in long-term, stable roles. A notable rural–urban divide also emerges in faculty residence. Permanent faculty are almost evenly split between rural (48.9%, 22) and urban (51.1%, 23) areas, reflecting a fairly balanced geographic distribution in stable positions. However, all contractual faculty (100%) are based in rural areas. This rural focus for contractual positions, contrasted with the balanced residential distribution of permanent faculty, highlights a significant rural–urban divide across GC-B, consistent with patterns observed at GC-A and GCID. One possible explanation for contractual and temporary positions being predominantly occupied by faculty from rural areas is that these roles are often filled by local candidates who prefer to work within their communities. Moreover, the substantial pay gap between permanent and temporary faculty may affect both the willingness and availability of candidates for these less stable, lower-paying roles in rural-serving higher education institutions.

3.3 Faculty professional development opportunities

This section examines the professional development opportunities available to faculty members across the higher educational institutions (HEIs) involved in the study. The analysis is based on primary data gathered through faculty surveys and interviews. Surveys were conducted at the State University (SU) and the In-depth Government College, while in-depth interviews were carried out with the 4 institutional leaders and five faculty members from each of the four HEIs included in the study.

3.3.1. State University (SU)

At the State University (SU), 108 valid responses were received regarding access to professional development programmes in the past year, representing 96.43% of the survey sample (112). Of these, 68.52% (74 respondents) indicated that they had accessed professional development opportunities, while 31.48% (34 respondents) reported not participating. The following table summaries the responses from the faculty survey:

Table 3.4: State University (SU) - Faculty Professional Development Opportunities

Criteria	Number of Valid Responses (N)	% of Valid Responses	Option	N (Number)	% of Responses
Accessed Professional Development?	108	96.43	Yes	74	68.52
			No	34	31.48
Location of Activities (Yes = 67)	67	59.82	In your college/university (not within HRDC)	71	51.45
			In another college/university (not within HRDC)	21	15.22
			HRDC within the state	28	20.28
			HRDC in another state	18	13.05
			Total	138	100
Types of Activities (Yes = 71)	71	63.39	Orientation Programmes	43	21.39
			Refresher Courses	42	20.89
			Staff Training (FIPs, FDPs)	39	19.40
			Writing and publication workshops	20	9.95
			Summer/Winter school workshops	19	9.45
			Short-Term Courses (STCs)	38	18.90
			Total	201	100
Reasons for Not Participating (No = 30)	30	26.78	No opportunities were offered	8	25.80
			Could not apply due to work status	5	16.12
			Could not apply due to teaching responsibilities	6	19.35
			Could not apply due to family responsibilities	2	6.45
			Did not want to apply	10	32.25
			Total	31	100
Other Responses	N/A	N/A	Online FDP, MOOCs, Refreshing Courses, SCERT Assam	N/A	N/A

Among those who participated, the most common venues for these activities were within their own college or university (51.45%), followed by HRDCs within the state (20.28%) and other colleges/universities (15.22%). Interestingly, 13.05% also attended HRDC programs in other

states. Additionally, a notable number of SU respondents also highlighted online professional development activities, including FDPs, MOOCs, and other online courses, which were not reported by GCID respondents. Regarding the types of professional development attended, Orientation Programmes were the most popular (21.39%), followed closely by Refresher Courses (20.89%) and Staff Training such as Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) (19.40%). A smaller portion engaged in Writing and Publication Workshops (9.95%) and Short-Term Courses (18.90%).

Among those who did not participate in professional development, eight FMs cited a lack of available opportunities, while five were unable to apply due to their work status. The most common reason for non-participation, reported by ten faculty members, was a lack of interest in applying. Additionally, some faculty indicated that they had already met the requirements in previous years.

The pre-diary interviews with faculty members at the State University (SU) revealed that most respondents (4 out of 5) were actively engaged in professional development activities. These activities included regular orientation and refresher courses, leadership development programmes, short-term courses, and online FDPs. Some faculty members participated in a range of professional development opportunities, including both in-state and online FDPs, focusing on research methodology and leadership training. Notably, one faculty member reported not engaging in any professional development activities, citing a lack of awareness about the available opportunities. The institutional leader at the State University also mentioned engaging in HRDC training and MOOCs, emphasizing alignment with institutional expectations and professional requirements.

3.3.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

The faculty member survey at the Government College ID (GCID) recorded 100% valid response to the question on accessing professional development activities in the past year. However, a smaller percentage of faculty members, only 33.33% (16 out of 48), participated in professional development opportunities, while 66.67% (32) did not. The following table summarises the responses of the faculty survey at the GCID:

Table 3.5: Government College In-depth (GCID) - Faculty Professional Development Opportunities

Criteria	Number of Valid Responses (N)	% of Valid Responses	Option	N (Number)	% of Responses
Accessed Professional Development?	48	100	Yes	16	33.33
			No	32	66.67
Location of Activities (Yes = 16)	16	33.33	In your college/university (not within HRDC)	7	26.90
			In another college/university (not within HRDC)	7	26.90
			HRDC within the state	5	19.30
			HRDC in another state	7	26.90
			Total	26	100
Types of Activities (Yes = 16)	16	33.33	Orientation Programmes	16	23.53
			Refresher Courses	14	20.59
			Staff Training (FIPs, FDPs)	12	17.65
			Writing and publication workshops	8	11.76
			Summer/Winter school workshops	4	5.88
			Short-Term Courses (STCs)	14	20.59
			Total	68	100
Reasons for Not Participating (No = 31)	31	64.58	No opportunities were offered	16	42.11
			Could not apply due to work status	7	18.42
			Could not apply due to teaching responsibilities	14	36.84
			Could not apply due to family responsibilities	1	2.63
			Did not want to apply	0	0
			Total	38	100
Other Responses	N/A	N/A	None	N/A	N/A

For those who engaged in such activities, 26.9% reported attending events within their own college/university, 26.9% at other institutions in their own state, and 26.9% at HRDCs in other states. HRDC programmes within the state were attended by only 19.3%. In terms of types of activities, Orientation Programmes (23.53%) and Refresher Courses (20.59%) were the most commonly attended, followed by Short-Term Courses (20.59%) and Staff Training (17.65%). A smaller number participated in Writing and Publication Workshops (11.76%) and Summer/Winter School Workshops (5.88%).

Among those who did not access professional development, the most frequent reason (42.11%, 16 responses) was the absence of opportunities, followed by 36.84% (14) who could not apply due to teaching responsibilities, and 18.42% (7) who were hindered by their contractual work status. These responses were from the faculty in contractual positions who were not yet a part of career advancement schemes of UGC. No one from GCID indicated that they did not want to apply, and no "other" reasons were provided.

The pre-diary interviews with faculty members at the Government College ID (GCID) revealed that 4 out of 5 respondents were actively involved in professional development. Two faculty members completed orientation and refresher courses at the state university, along with short-term courses in other cities and states, while two others participated in workshops, FDPs, and national and international seminars to enhance their teaching skills. However, one, who is in a contractual position, did not engage in any professional development activities, aside from presenting a paper during her master's degree studies. The institutional leader at the Government College ID (GCID) also reported attending orientation and refresher courses as a teacher, along with leadership training as a principal, aimed at enhancing the qualities necessary for effective institutional leadership.

3.3.3. Government College-A (GC-A) and Government College-B (GC-B)

The information on faculty development opportunities among faculty members at Government College A (GC-A) and Government College B (GC-B) is based on interviews with faculty members and the institutional leaders, as no surveys were conducted in these two institutions. Faculty members at GC-A demonstrated active participation in various professional development initiatives, with all respondents reporting involvement. Two members engaged in

multiple Faculty Development Programmes (FDPs) and orientation courses, while one focused specifically on e-content development and NAAC-related workshops to enhance teaching skills. Another faculty member actively organized and participated in FDPs, refresher courses, and seminars, particularly within the mathematics department. Another faculty member concentrated on e-content and course material development, aligning efforts with the National Education Policy (NEP) and Indian Knowledge Systems. The responses indicated a strong commitment to continuous learning and professional development amongst the faculty members at GC-A.

Similarly, faculty members at GC-B showed significant engagement in professional development. Multiple respondents participated in FDPs, orientation courses, refresher courses, workshops, and national seminars. One member stood out for their active involvement in academic committees, organising seminars, and contributing extensively to publications.

3.4 Student strength and composition

This section draws on secondary data obtained from the admission records of the State University and the Government College-in depth. The data pertains to student admissions for the year 2023. It is important to highlight that information on student enrollment and composition from two additional colleges was unavailable and, therefore, has been excluded from this analysis.

3.4.1. State University (SU)

In 2023, the SU introduced the 5-Year Integrated Masters Programme (FYIMP) under the National Education Policy 2020. Before this, the SU offered B. Tech programs at the Institute of Science and Technology, along with undergraduate programmes in Commerce and Law. The student admission data for on-campus programs in 2023, based on secondary records, is summarised below:

A total of 766 students were admitted across various courses. Of these, 378 students (49.35%) enrolled in the FYIMP program, 141 students (18.41%) in B. Tech courses, 68 students (8.88%) in the Integrated M. Com programme, 59 students (7.70%) in the BA LLB course, and 120 students (15.67%) in the LLB course.

For B. Tech admissions, the SU had a total enrolment of 141 students, with the following branch-wise distribution: 27 in Biotechnology, 33 in Computer Science and Engineering (CSE), 51 in Electronics and Communication Engineering (ECE), and 30 in Information Technology (IT). These admissions were based on CEE-2023 and JEE(Main)-2023 ranks, along with departmental entrance tests.

As data on caste, gender, and religion for B. Tech admissions were not available, the following discussion focuses on the gender, caste, and religion-related distribution for the 625 students admitted to the FYIMP, Integrated M.Com, BA LLB, and LLB programs. Among the 625 students, 364 were women (58.24%) and 261 were men (41.76%). In terms of caste, 317 students (50.72%) were from the General category, 177 (28.32%) from OBC/MOBC, 58 (9.28%) from SC, 17 (2.72%) from Scheduled Tribe-Hills (ST-H), and 56 (8.96%) from Scheduled Tribe-Plains (ST-P). Religious affiliation revealed that 531 students (84.96%) identified as Hindu, 78 (12.48%) as Muslim, 14 (2.24%) as Christian, and 2 (0.32%) as Buddhist. In terms of prior schooling, 188 students (30.08%) completed their education under the CBSE board, 5 students (0.8%) under other state boards, and 432 students (69.12%) under the state board (AHSEC). It is worth noting here that the dataset does not include information about students' residence type (urban or rural), family income, medium of instruction, or the type of institution attended before their admission.

Table 3.6: UG student strength and composition as per administrative records at SU

Category	Total	Percentage Distribution
Total Students Admitted	766	
Programs-wise distribution		
- FYIMP (5-Year Integrated Masters)	378	49.35%
- B.Tech	141	18.41%
- Integrated M. Com	68	8.88%
- BA LLB	59	7.70%
- LLB	120	15.67%
Gender Distribution (for FYIMP, Integrated M. Com, BA LLB, and LLB) Total = 625		
- Female	364	58.24%
- Male	261	41.76%
Caste Distribution (for FYIMP, Integrated M.Com, BA LLB, and LLB) Total = 625		
- General	317	50.72%
- OBC/MOBC	177	28.32%
- SC	58	9.28%
- Scheduled Tribe - Hills (ST-H)	17	2.72%
- Scheduled Tribe - Plains (ST-P)	56	8.96%
Religious Affiliation (for FYIMP, Integrated M. Com, BA LLB, and LLB) Total = 625		
- Hindu	531	84.96%
- Muslim	78	12.48%
- Christian	14	2.24%
- Buddhist	2	0.32%
Schooling Background (for FYIMP, Integrated M. Com, BA LLB, and LLB) Total = 625		
- CBSE	188	30.08%
- Other State Boards	5	0.80%
- State Board (AHSEC)	432	69.12%

Note: Data on caste, gender, and religion for B. Tech admissions was not available. Additionally, the dataset does not include information on students' residence type (urban or rural), family income, medium of instruction, or the type of institution attended before their admission.

3.4.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

The administrative data on undergraduate students for the year 2023 at GCID shows that a total enrolment of 1,189 across various courses. Of these, 943 students (79.3%) enrolled in the BA programme, 55 students (4.63%) in the B. Com programme, 114 students (9.59%) in the BSc programme, and 77 students (6.48%) in the B.Voc. programme.

In terms of gender, 485 students (40.8%) were men and 704 students (59.2%) were women. The caste composition revealed that 994 students (83.8%) belonged to the General category, 22 students (1.85%) to the OBC/MOBC category, 163 students (13.7%) to the Scheduled Caste (SC) category, 1 student (0.08%) to the Scheduled Tribe (Hills) (ST-H) category, and 9 students

(0.76%) to the Scheduled Tribe (Plains) (ST-P) category. Religious affiliation data showed that the majority of students, 967 (81.4%), identified as Muslim, while 221 students (18.6%) identified as Hindu, and 1 student (0.08%) identified as Christian, thus suggesting that the college caters to the needs of the ethnic and religious minority.

As per the administrative records, 100% enrolment in the year 2023 came from rural backgrounds, with their families earning less than 2 lakhs annually. Regarding the medium of instruction, 1,004 students (84.5%) used Assamese as their medium, though information for the remaining students was not available. Additionally, in terms of their schooling background, 1,083 students (91.1%) had completed their 12th-grade education under state syllabus (Assam Higher Secondary Education Council, AHSEC).

Table 3.7: Student Strength and Composition as per administrative records at GCID

Category	Total	Details/Distribution
Total Students Enrolled	1,189	100%
Programs-wise distribution		
- BA Program	943	79.3%
- B. Com Program	55	4.63%
- BSc Program	114	9.59%
- BVoc Program	77	6.48%
Gender Distribution		
- Male	485	40.8%
- Female	704	59.2%
Caste Composition		
- General	994	83.8%
- OBC/MOBC	22	1.85%
- Scheduled Caste (SC)	163	13.7%
- Scheduled Tribe - Hills (ST-H)	1	0.08%
- Scheduled Tribe - Plains (ST-P)	9	0.76%
Religious Affiliation		
- Muslim	967	81.4%
- Hindu	221	18.6%
- Christian	1	0.08%
Rural Background	1,189	100%
Family Income	1,189	All students' families earn less than ₹2 lakhs annually
Medium of Instruction		
- Assamese	1,004	84.5%
- Other Languages	Data not available	
Schooling Background		
- Assam State Syllabus (AHSEC)	1,083	91.1%
- Other Boards	Data not available	

Note: Data for some categories, such as medium of instruction for a few students and other boards, was not available.

3.5 Existing Institutional HE outreach strategies and activities

The institutions in this study demonstrate a mix of higher education and community outreach initiatives, although comprehensive documentation on higher education outreach strategies is limited. Nevertheless, the following details have been compiled and reported based on secondary data sources, including the institution websites, prospectuses, Annual Quality Assessment Reports (AQARs) mandated by the NAAC accreditation process.

State University (SU) has implemented efforts to enhance access for students in remote areas by conducting admission tests across Assam, providing dedicated helplines, and reserving seats in postgraduate programs for applicants from fringe villages.

At the Government College in Depth (GCID), the NSS Cell, in partnership with the IQAC, addresses societal challenges such as child marriage and promotes women's education through awareness campaigns in nearby village schools.

GC-A actively supports students' professional growth through its Career Counseling and Guidance Cell, organising placement drives, career workshops, and training for competitive exams, primarily benefiting enrolled students. As the college also offers higher secondary education, these initiatives extend support to students yet to begin undergraduate studies. In addition, GC-A has launched a forward-looking mentorship programme aimed at promoting quality education and literacy in the region. This initiative, led by faculty members, provides guidance not only to students but also to teachers, both within the academic framework and in related fields, to uplift the overall educational environment and ensure a better-prepared student intake in the future. Under the Unnat Bharat Abhiyan scheme, the college has also adopted five villages to foster sustainable development through awareness campaigns and Gram Sabhas.

Efforts specifically focused on higher educational outreach were not evident in the secondary data sources available for GC-B. However, the institution places strong emphasis on

community engagement through various environmental initiatives. GC-B emphasizes community engagement through environmental initiatives such as awareness campaigns, plantation drives, and the long-running “Green Earth Safe Earth” campaign. Projects like the Green Diary involve new students in tree planting and monitoring, fostering environmental responsibility. The college also manages biodegradable waste through composting and recycling, and contributes to academic and cultural life through publications like its magazine and departmental journals.

While community outreach activities such as village adoption and awareness campaigns are highlighted across all institutions, specific strategies for higher education outreach remain limited, except for GC-A, and hence not explicitly mentioned in the secondary sources, reflecting a common limitation across the other three institutions studied.

3.6 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter presents an overview of the higher educational institutions involved in this study, utilising both secondary and primary data sources. Sections 3.1, 3.2, 3.4, and 3.5 are primarily based on secondary data, including administrative records and other official documents, while Section 3.3 draws upon faculty surveys and interviews conducted across the four institutions.

In conclusion, the faculty composition across the State University (SU), Government College in-depth (GCID), Government College-A (GC-A), and Government College-B (GC-B) reveals important trends and disparities in gender, social category, religion, and residential distribution. While SU provides detailed data on designation and gender, limitations in data availability and administrative constraints hinder a full understanding of faculty diversity and recruitment patterns. GCID stands out for its comprehensive records, showcasing a higher proportion of women in permanent positions and significant rural representation among contractual faculty. GC-A reflects a more diverse social category composition among permanent faculty but shows a clear gender imbalance favouring male faculty, alongside a pronounced rural-urban divide in residential patterns across employment types. GC-B presents a relatively balanced gender distribution in permanent roles but displays a sharp skew in residence in contractual and temporary positions, with rural-based faculty predominantly occupying these less stable roles.

The analysis of professional development opportunities across the four HEIs highlights both promising practices and persistent gaps. At the State University (SU), a majority of faculty respondents reported engaging in diverse professional development activities, with in-house and state-level HRDC programmes being the most accessed. Online platforms also played a notable role in expanding access. In contrast, participation rates at GCID were considerably lower, with most faculty citing a lack of opportunities or workload constraints, especially among contractual staff not yet integrated into formal career advancement schemes. GC-A and GC-B, though lacking survey data, presented strong anecdotal evidence of faculty commitment to ongoing professional growth. Faculty members at both colleges reported active participation in FDPs, refresher courses, and seminars.

The student admission data from the State University (SU) and Government College in-depth (GCID) for the year 2023 offers valuable insights into the demographic and academic composition of the undergraduate population across these institutions. At SU, admissions reflect a balanced academic diversification, with nearly half of the students enrolling in the newly introduced 5-Year Integrated Masters Programme under the NEP 2020. The gender composition leans towards female students, and the student body is largely drawn from the General and OBC/MOBC categories, with Hindus forming the religious majority. The data also reveals a strong presence of students from state board backgrounds, though gaps remain in understanding their socio-economic context due to missing information on income, residential background, and medium of instruction. In contrast, GCID presents a markedly different profile—primarily rural, low-income, and Assamese-medium students, with a significant majority belonging to the General category and Muslim community. The institution appears to serve an important role in catering to the educational needs of a socio-economically and religiously marginalized population.

In terms of strategies adopted for higher education outreach across the institutions, secondary sources suggest that dedicated strategies aimed specifically at higher education outreach remain largely underdeveloped, with the notable exception of Government College-A (GC-A). GC-A stands out for its integrated approach, combining mentorship programmes, career counselling that directly support educational upliftment and prepare future students for higher education. Similarly, the State University (SU) has taken important steps to improve access for

students from remote regions through decentralized admission processes and reserved seats. GCID focuses its outreach on critical social issues such as child marriage and women's education, utilising NSS-led initiatives in nearby villages. In contrast, GC-B's outreach is primarily environmental, emphasizing sustainability and community-based ecological awareness, rather than educational access. Overall, while all four institutions demonstrate a commitment to community involvement, the limited visibility of structured higher education outreach efforts—particularly in secondary sources—signals a gap that calls for greater institutional focus and more systematic documentation in future planning and reporting.

Chapter 4: Who are the Faculty Members?

4.1 Introduction

Understanding the demographic background of faculty members (FMs) is crucial for assessing diversity and inclusivity within higher education institutions. This chapter focuses on the demographic characteristics of faculty members at State University (SU), Government College In-depth (GCID), and two other government colleges (GC-A and GC-B). It examines key factors such as age, gender, caste, religion, disability, sexual orientation, relationship status, and more, providing a comprehensive overview of the personal and professional profiles of faculty members in these institutions.

The analysis is based primarily on faculty member surveys and interviews, with a more extensive data set available for the State University and Government College In-depth (GCID). In contrast, the data for the other two government colleges is drawn primarily from faculty interviews.

Through this analysis, the WAHEI project seeks to highlight the varied experiences of faculty members to a broader understanding of how higher education is delivered in the region. This is particularly important for understanding who is involved in delivering higher education in rural and semi-urban areas, with a specific focus on faculty diversity and representation. Additionally, the chapter explores the personal experiences of faculty members, including their higher education choices, family backgrounds, and educational histories, which help to explain the factors influencing their professional paths.

4.2 Demographic background of faculty members

4.2.1. State University (SU)

The demographic profile of the faculty members surveyed at State University (SU) reveals a diverse group in terms of age, gender, caste, and religion. The survey sample consisted of 112 faculty members, drawn from the total faculty strength of 331 as recorded in the university's administrative data. However, the administrative records, as outlined in Chapter 3, do not specifically provide information on the faculty members involved in undergraduate (UG) programmes at the university.

As discussed in Chapter 3, prior to the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, only a few departments at State University (SU) offered undergraduate (UG) programs, specifically the departments of Technology, Commerce, and the Law College. However, after the launch of NEP 2020 in the state in 2023, there was a notable expansion of UG programmes offered at SU. This expansion, while beneficial, introduced a relatively new process for most departments. During data collection for the project, it became apparent that the majority of these newly introduced UG programmes had only two batches of students, each of whom had completed just their first two semesters, indicating their early stages of implementation. Furthermore, it was found that not all faculty members in the departments which did offer UG courses, were involved in teaching UG courses.

Given that the primary focus of the WAHEI project is to assess faculty involvement and choices related to higher education, particularly at the undergraduate level, we specifically sought information from faculty members who were engaged in UG teaching. To achieve this, we visited all departments offering undergraduate courses in the SU and approached faculty members involved in UG teaching. This process followed a purposive sampling technique, where faculty members were intentionally selected based on their involvement in UG programs. We successfully gathered completed questionnaires from faculty members across 24 departments, and the department-wise distribution of the sample is presented in the table below.

In terms of gender, men make up a larger proportion (56.2%) of the faculty members compared to women (43.8%), with no transgender faculty reported. This distribution aligns with the university's administrative data, which also records a higher percentage of men as faculty members.

Most respondents (33.9%) belong to the 41-50 age group, followed closely by those in the 31-40 age group (31.2%). Younger faculty members (20-30 years) represent 16.1%, while those over 50 years account for just 18.8% of the respondents.

In terms of caste, a significant majority (76.58%) belong to the General category, with smaller proportions of faculty from SC (1.8%), ST (5.4%), and OBC (15.31%) backgrounds. The religious composition is largely Hindu (88.2%), with a small percentage identifying as Muslim (10%). No

faculty members in the sample report being differently abled. Additionally, SU has a relatively high percentage of married faculty members (71.42%), and 57.14% of the faculty have children, with an average of 1.6 children per respondent. A small percentage of respondents (2 out of 111) from SU identified as LGBTIAP+. Most faculty members (95.45%) were born in the region, and an overwhelming majority (83.49%) showcased urban areas as their permanent residence. The mother tongue of most respondents is Assamese (86.49%).

Table 4.1: Demographic profile of the faculty members surveyed at SU (State University)

Survey Question	Options	N = 112	% of VRs
Age Group	20-30	18	16.1%
	31-40	35	31.2%
	41-50	38	33.9%
	51-60	16	14.3%
	60+	5	4.5%
Gender	Female	49	43.8%
	Male	63	56.2%
	Transgender	0	0%
Caste/Social Group	SC	2	1.8%
	ST	6	5.4%
	OBC	17	15.31%
	General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	85	76.58%
	EWS (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	1	0.9%
Religion	Buddhist	0	0%
	Christian	2	1.8%
	Hindu	97	88.2%
	Jain	0	0%
	Muslim	11	10%
	Sikh	0	0%
	Zoroastrian/Parsi	0	0%
Differently Abled	Yes	0	0%
	No	112	100%
LGBTQIAP+	Yes	2	1.8%
	No	108	97.3%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.9%
Relationship Status	Married	80	71.42%
	Unmarried	30	26.78%
	Divorced/Separated	2	1.8%
Do you have children?	Yes	64	57.14%
	No	48	42.86%
Mean Number of Children			1.6
Place of Birth – State	Assam	105	95.45%
	Meghalaya	3	2.75%
	Nagaland	1	0.9%
	Uttar Pradesh	1	0.9%
Place of Birth – Country	India	111	100%
	Other than India	0	0%
Place of Permanent Residence	Rural	18	16.51%
	Urban	91	83.49%
Mother Tongue	Assamese	96	86.49%
	Bodo	1	0.9%
	Bengali	8	7.2%
	Ao/Naga	1	0.9%
	Hindi	3	2.71%
	Manipuri	1	0.9%
	Nepali	1	0.9%

4.2.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

The faculty survey at Government College (GCID) included 48 out of a total of 51 faculty members, according to the institute's administrative records, indicating that the sample is highly representative of the population of the college. The following table shows the department-wise breakdown of the faculty members who participated in the survey.

The demographic profile of the FMs surveyed at the GCID reveals a relatively young workforce, with the largest proportion (41.7%) of faculty members in the 20-30 age group. The 31-40 age group follows closely at 27.1%, while there is a smaller presence of faculty in higher age groups, with only 4.2% in the 41-50 age group and again a notable presence of 27.1% in the 51- 60 years age category. Notably, no faculty members are above the age of 60, which is the designated retirement age for faculty at government colleges.

Table 4.2: Demographic profile of the faculty members surveyed at GCID

Survey Question	Options	N = 48	% of VRs
Age Group	20-30	20	41.7%
	31-40	13	27.1%
	41-50	2	4.2%
	51-60	13	27.1%
	60+	0	0%
Gender	Female	24	50%
	Male	24	50%
	Transgender	0	0%
Caste/Social Group	SC	2	4.16%
	ST	1	2.08%
	OBC	8	16.67%
	General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	37	77.09%
	EWS (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	0	0%
Religion	Buddhist	0	0%
	Christian	0	0%
	Hindu	24	50%
	Jain	0	0%
	Muslim	24	50%
	Sikh	0	0%
	Zoroastrian/Parsi	0	0%
Differently Abled	Yes	0	0%
	No	48	100%
LGBTQIAP+	Yes	0	0%
	No	48	100%
	Prefer not to say	0	0%
Relationship Status	Married	23	47.91%
	Unmarried	24	50%
	Divorced/Separated	1	2.09%
Do you have children?	Yes	21	43.75%
	No	27	56.25%
Mean Number of Children			1.6
Place of Birth – State	Assam	48	100%
Place of Birth – Country	India	48	100%
	Other than India	0	0%
Place of Permanent Residence	Rural	33	68.75%
	Urban	15	31.25%
Mother Tongue	Assamese	48	100%

Gender representation of FMs in GCID is balanced, with equal representation of men and women, each accounting for 50% of the respondents. In terms of caste, a majority of the faculty members belong to the General category (77.09%), with a small percentage from OBC (16.67%) and a negligible representation from SC and ST backgrounds. The religious composition of the faculty sample at GCID indicates an equal representation, with 50% identifying as Hindu and

50% as Muslim. No faculty members at GCID report being differently abled, and there are no responses indicating LGBTQIAP+ identification. Regarding marital status, 47.91% of faculty members are married, while 50% remain unmarried, and 2.09% are divorced or separated. Among those who have children (43.75%), the average number of children is also 1.6. All faculty at GCID were born in the region, and a significant proportion of respondents (68.75%) come from rural areas, indicating a notable contrast to SU's urban-based faculty. Like SU, the dominant mother tongue is Assamese (100%), reflecting the regional linguistic characteristics of the area.

4.3 Demographic background of institutional leaders

The demographic background of the Institutional Leaders was collected from the profile forms completed by the ILs of the four HEIs under study before the interviews were conducted. All four ILs were married men, aged 50 to 60, with children, and they lived in urban areas. Their native language was Assamese, and they belonged to the General/Unreserved category. Additionally, all of them followed the Hindu religion. This demographic profile highlights the broader societal trend of limited women's representation in leadership positions.

4.4 Institutional Leaders and Faculty Members: residence and commute information

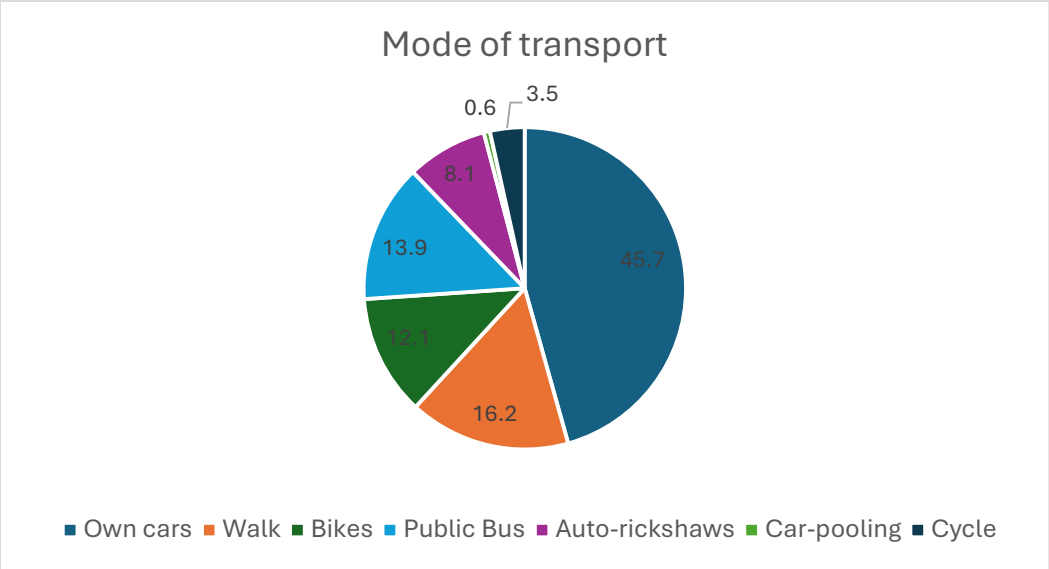
4.4.1. State University (SU)

The faculty survey data at State University (SU) shows that most FMs (89.29%) live in a single location during the week, while only 10.71% live in multiple residences. Of those with multiple residences, half (50%) reside in the same town or area as the university, 33.33% stay on campus, and 16.67% live in the same town /location during the workweek. When it comes to weekends and vacations, 50% of faculty with multiple residences report living in a different district within the same state, while 16.67% live in the same district but a different town. This pattern indicates that faculty members whose hometowns are in different districts might choose to live closer to the SU during the workweek, opting for accommodations near the university for convenience and to reduce commuting time.

Among faculty who stay in only one residence, 59% live in the same town or area as the SU, and 32% live on campus. A smaller portion (4%) resides in the same district but a different town, while 5% live in a different district within the same state.

Commuting preferences, reflect the variety of transport modes used by faculty members at SU. The responses indicate that 45.7% of mentions were for driving personal cars, while 16.2% of responses indicated walking as a common mode. Other frequently selected options include bikes or scooters (12.1%), buses (13.9%), and auto-rickshaws (8.1%). Less commonly mentioned were bicycles (3.5%) and carpooling (0.6%). Notably, no responses included trains or metro use, aligning with the reality that the city has no metro system, and the nearest train station is 7 kilometers away, while buses offer better local connectivity.

Figure 4.1: Mode of Transport Preferences Among Faculty Members at SU for Commuting to Work



Interviews with the faculty members and institutional leaders at the SU confirmed the survey findings, which indicated a preference for staying in a single residence. While the IL lived on campus, the faculty members also mentioned that they remained in one location throughout the week. Commute times varied widely, with some faculty members traveling by car, bike, or e-rickshaw, and their travel durations ranged from 5 minutes to over an hour.

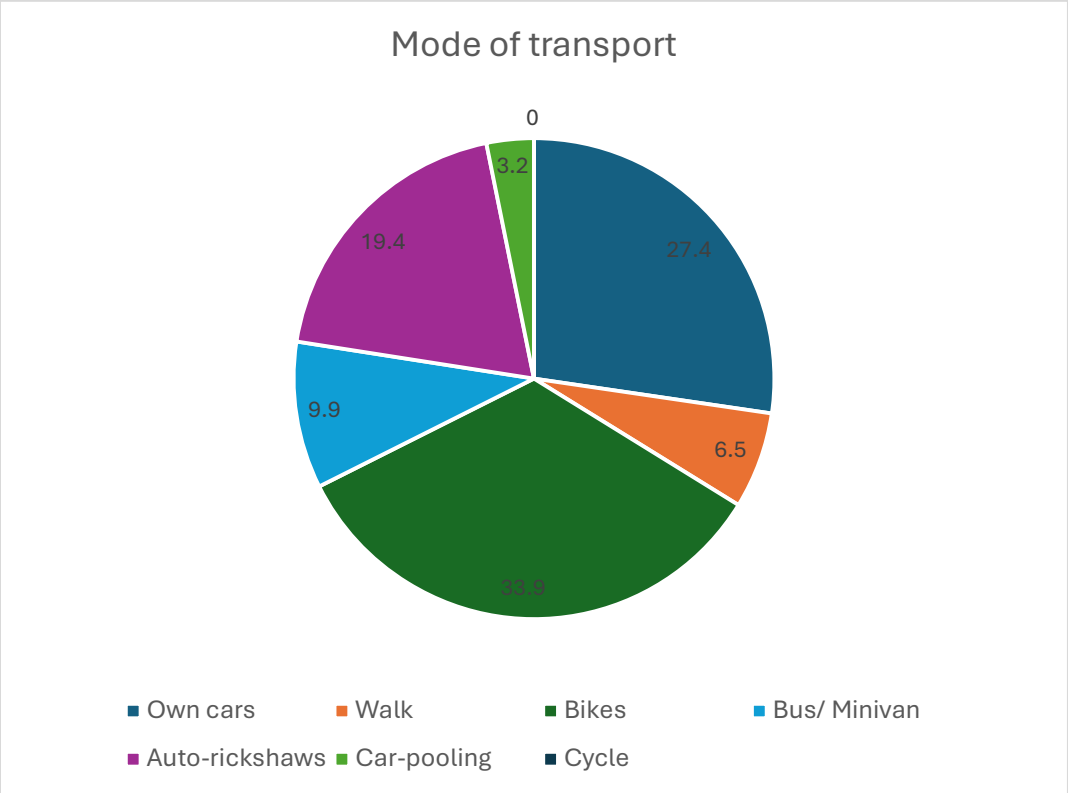
4.4.2. Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

At the Government College (GCID), 91.67% of faculty members live in one location during the working week, with only 8.33% staying in more than one residence. Of those who stay in multiple residences, most (66.67%) live in the same town or location as the college, and 33.33% reside in a different district within the same state. When asked about their living arrangements during

weekends or vacations, 50% of the faculty who stay in multiple residences live in a different district within the same state, while 25% stay in the same town or location. Among those who reported single residence, 45.45% live in the same district but not the same town as the college, 38.64% reside in the same town or location, and 11.36% stay on campus.

At Government College (GCID), faculty commuting patterns show a strong preference for personal vehicles, similar to those at SU. The most commonly mentioned mode of transport was bikes or scooters (33.87%), followed by personal cars (27.42%). Rickshaws or auto-rickshaws were also frequently used (19.35%), while bus use was less common (9.68%). Walking (6.45%) and carpooling (3.23%) were mentioned by only a few. As with SU, no faculty members reported using trains or metros, which is consistent with the lack of a metro system and limited use of trains in the area.

Figure 4.2: Mode of Transport Preferences Among Faculty Members at GCID for Commuting to Work



Interviews revealed that most faculty members of GCID reside in a single location, with commutes ranging from 2 km to 65 km. Those living closer to the college enjoy shorter commutes. The choice of splitting residence for the weekdays and weekends was often for

those whose homes were farther away, to avoid longer commutes. The variation in commute times, from 5 minutes to 1.5 hours, reflects different living arrangements based on the proximity to the college.

Government College - A (GC-A)

Interviews with institutional leader and faculty members at GC-A showed a mix of preferences for single residence and residence splitting. The IL mentioned long commutes, typically taking between 45 minutes to 1.5 hours, depending on traffic and the time of day, usually using a personal vehicle. Some faculty members reported staying in a single residence, while others split their residence to manage long commutes. Faculty living close to the college (2 km to 17 km) tend to have short commutes and seemed to prefer a single residence. However, faculty with longer commutes, such as those traveling 65 km, often chose to split their residence during the week to avoid long travel times.

Government College - B (GC-B)

Like other institutions, interviews at GC-B with the institutional leader and faculty members revealed that faculty members who live within a radius of 20-30 kms from the college tend to have single residence, while a few individuals, particularly those with very long commutes (e.g., 65 km), split their residence to make the long commute more manageable.

Across all the government colleges, single residence was a dominant choice amongst the faculty members. Interviews suggested that variation in commute times and distances underscore the need for flexible living arrangements, where shorter commutes tend to encourage single residence, while longer commutes often lead to residence splitting for convenience. While modes of transport vary, personal vehicles are most used, with some faculty members relying on public transport, or carpooling for longer commutes.

4.5 Institutional Leaders' and Faculty Members' Background

4.5.1 Educational and family background

4.5.1.1 State University (SU)

- *Highest educational level of mother, father, grandparents, siblings*

At State University, the education levels among family members show significant diversity, with a clear trend of generational upward mobility in education. Among mothers, 35% have completed a degree (e.g., BA, BSc), and 16% have achieved post-graduate education. For fathers, 50% have completed a degree, and 14% have pursued post-graduate education. A lower level of education is seen among extended family members, particularly grandparents, with many respondents indicating that 41% of grandmothers and 39.6% of grandfathers had no formal schooling. In contrast, the education of faculty members' siblings reveals a high level of attainment, with 44.53% completing a degree and 40.63% pursuing post-graduate education. A smaller percentage have completed high school (5.47%), PhDs (7.81%), or MPhils (1.56%), indicating that many faculty members' siblings hold at least a bachelor's degree, with many continuing to post-graduate studies. Regarding spouses, 40% have completed post-graduate education, and 32.5% hold an MPhil or PhD, while 16.25% have a degree education, and a few have completed 11^{th} to 12^{th} class (3.75%) or hold a Diploma/ITI/ITC (1.25%). The shift from limited formal education among grandparents to the higher educational achievements seen in their children and grandchildren underscores the generational progress in education within these families.

The interviews with institutional leaders (IL) and faculty members (FMs) highlight a shift from limited formal education in earlier generations to significant upward mobility through education in more recent ones. Many grandparents had little to no formal schooling, with some only completing primary education or Class 8, while others achieved higher education, such as Graduation. In contrast, parents and siblings have attained higher educational levels, including bachelor's, master's, and postgraduate qualifications, with some holding degrees in fields like law, education, pharmacy, and medicine. A noticeable gendered difference emerges in earlier generations, where many grandmothers had limited or no education. However, the educational qualifications of women in recent generations have notably improved, with many daughters and sisters now holding advanced degrees, including Ph.D.s and B.Ed.s. This change reflects a narrowing gender gap in education, as both men and women in these families now pursue higher education. National-level evidence confirms this shift, with the Gender Parity Index (GPI) in higher education reaching 1.01, reflecting near-equal participation of women and men in higher education institutions across India (Ministry of Education, 2023). This trend is particularly evident among couples where both spouses often hold advanced degrees, particularly in law,

education, and other professional fields, demonstrating a more equitable approach to education and partnership (Borkotoky & Gupta, 2016). Overall, the growing educational attainment across generations emphasizes the increasing value placed on formal education for professional and social advancement within these families.

- *Occupation of parents/spouses*

The survey data reveals notable intergenerational occupational patterns within the families of faculty members. While a majority of mothers identified as homemakers (57%), fathers show greater occupational diversity, with a notable concentration in government service (36.53%), followed by business and self-employment (25%) and teaching (14.42%). Spouses also demonstrate a strong presence in teaching (23.08%) and other professional fields (27.69%), reflecting patterns of educational and occupational homogamy common in India's educated middle class (Goel & Barua, 2023). The occupational patterns is also suggestive of the influence of family background, with possible intergenerational continuities in career choices-particularly in teaching and government services.

A significant proportion of spouses (10.28%) reported being homemakers, a role that is invariably filled by women, reflecting a traditional gender division of labour. Notably, no fathers in this survey identified homemaking as their occupation, highlighting a clear gender distinction in caregiving responsibilities.

Table 4.3: Occupational Distribution of Mothers, Fathers, and Spouses in Faculty Members' Families

Occupation Category	Valid Responses & Percentage (Mother)	Valid Responses & Percentage (Father)	Valid Responses & Percentage (Spouse)
Govt Service	20 (20%)	38 (36.53%)	4 (6.15%)
Business/Farmer/Self-employed	21 (21%)	26 (25%)	5 (7.69%)
Teaching	13 (13%)	15 (14.42%)	15 (23.08%)
Healthcare	6 (6%)	6 (5.77%)	5 (7.69%)
Engineer	2 (2%)	6 (5.77%)	2 (3.08%)
Homemaker	57 (57%)	0 (0%)	11 (16.92%)
Other	38 (38%)	13 (12.5%)	18 (27.69%)
Total	100 (100%)	104 (100%)	65 (100%)

- *Average monthly family income*

For FMs at SU, the majority of families have relatively high monthly incomes. 49% of respondents earn over 100,000 INR monthly, while 36% earn between 75,001 and 100,000 INR. This suggests that a significant proportion of families are in the higher-income brackets, with nearly half of the respondents falling into these categories. A very small percentage (1%) earn less than 25,000 INR, indicating that most families have moderate to high earnings. Overall, the income distribution at SU skews towards higher income levels, reflecting financial stability.

- *First person in family to work as a faculty member?*

At SU, 59.8% of respondents (67 out of 112) reported being the first in their family to work as a faculty member, while 40.2% indicated that they are not the first to pursue this career path. This suggests that while a majority of faculty members at SU are pioneers in their families when it comes to academic positions, there is a notable presence of established academic lineage pointing to both diversification and continuity within the faculty members' family backgrounds.

In the interviews, the IL at SU revealed that they are the first in their family to pursue a faculty career. Among the faculty members interviewed at SU, four were the first to hold faculty positions, which aligns with the survey findings. However, one faculty member mentioned that her sister was a faculty member and several aunts had careers in school teaching indicating a family tradition centred around teaching.

4.5.1.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

- *Highest educational level of mother, father, grandparents, siblings*

In the Faculty Survey at GCID, the educational backgrounds of family members show significant diversity. Among respondents' mothers, the highest proportion (29.2%) had completed graduation, followed by 22.9% who had studied up to 9th–10th class and 20.8% who had completed 11th–12th class. Notably, 8.3% had no access to formal schooling. Fathers also display a wide range of educational attainment, with 39.6% completing a degree and 20.8% finishing 9th-12th class. Many respondents were unsure or unable to report on their grandparents' education, especially among maternal and paternal grandmothers (41.7% and

37.5%, respectively). Regarding spouses, 52.2% have completed a degree, and 34.8% have pursued post-graduate education. It is worth noting that there is a consistent trend of higher educational attainment among parents and siblings, particularly when compared to grandparents. This trend is observed at both institutions. A similar pattern is seen with spouses, where a considerable proportion has completed a degree or post-graduate education, though this is more prevalent at the SU than at GCID. This suggests that the educational attainment of parents may play a role in shaping the educational opportunities available to the FMs, with State University showing higher educational levels among parents compared to GCID.

The interview responses on educational backgrounds of the institutional leader and faculty members at GCID show a similar trend to the SU group, with significant improvements in education across generations. In earlier generations, many grandparents had limited or no formal education, with some only completing primary school or basic schooling like Class 8. This mirrors the educational background in the SU group, where grandparents also had low levels of formal education. However, there is a noticeable upward shift in the educational qualifications of the parents and siblings. Parents in the GCID group have achieved higher education, including bachelor's and professional degrees, while siblings have attained graduation and even postgraduate qualifications in fields like law, medicine, and engineering. Additionally, at the GCID too, there is evidence of a closing gender gap in access to education. While women in earlier generations had limited access to educational opportunities, recent generations have seen an increase in women attaining higher degrees, signalling a move towards greater gender equality in education.

GC-A: The interviews with the IL and the FMs at GC-A demonstrate a notable shift in educational attainment across generations. While earlier generations had limited formal education, with many grandparents either not attending school or only completing primary education, the educational levels of subsequent generations have significantly improved. Parents in the family typically achieved at least higher secondary education, with some graduating. Siblings have advanced further, earning postgraduate degrees such as M.A., M.Sc., M.B.A., and Ph.D.s in fields like English, Law, Tourism, and Engineering. This trend extends to spouses as well, with many holding graduate or postgraduate qualifications. This upward progression reflects a

growing emphasis on the value of formal education, with both sons and daughters now pursuing higher education.

GC-B: The interviews at GC-B highlights a significant progression in educational attainment across generations. In earlier generations, many grandparents and parents had limited formal education, with some having no schooling at all, while others completed only basic education up to Class 9. However, the younger generations have made substantial progress in their educational achievements. Many siblings have completed higher secondary education, with several obtaining Graduation and PG degrees. For instance, multiple siblings have master's degrees in fields such as Engineering, Physics, and Business, and some have gone further to earn Ph.D.s and post-doctoral qualifications. Spouses in this group also have strong educational backgrounds, with many holding graduate or postgraduate degrees, including Ph.D.s and diplomas in specialized areas like agriculture. This trend signals an increasing focus on education as a key factor in achieving both professional success in these families.

- *Occupation of parents/guardians*

The occupational distribution among the FMs' families at GCID reveals distinct gender patterns and a mix of traditional and emerging roles. A significant proportion of mothers (80%) are homemakers, reflecting traditional gender roles in caregiving, while a small fraction (13.33%) is involved in teaching. Fathers, on the other hand, show a broader range of occupations, with a notable percentage working in government service (24.24%), and an equal representation in business/self-employment (21.21%) and teaching (21.21%). For spouses, 35% are homemakers, still indicative of the persistence of gendered caregiving roles amongst women. This data reflects a traditional gender division of labour, although teaching remains a common career for both fathers and mothers.

Table 4.4: Occupational Distribution of Mothers, Fathers, and Spouses in Faculty Members' Families

Occupation Category	Valid Responses & Percentage (Mother)	Valid Responses & Percentage (Father)	Valid Responses & Percentage (Spouse)
Govt Service	1 (3.33%)	8 (24.24%)	2 (10%)
Business/Self-employed	0 (0%)	7 (21.21%)	4 (20%)
Teaching	4 (13.33%)	7 (21.21%)	1 (5%)
Healthcare	0 (0%)	2 (6.06%)	0 (0%)
Engineer	0 (0%)	2 (6.06%)	0 (0%)
Farmer	0 (0%)	1 (3.03%)	0 (0%)
Homemaker	24 (80%)	0 (0%)	7 (35%)
Other	1 (3.33%)	6 (18.18%)	6 (30%)
Total	30 (100%)	33 (100%)	20 (100%)

- *Average monthly family income*

GCID displays a more diverse income distribution compared to the SU. While 39.6% of FMs reported their average monthly incomes to be more than 100,000 INR, a notable portion (20.8%) falls into the lowest income category, earning less than 25,000 INR monthly. Additionally, 16.7% of respondents earn between 25,001-50,000 INR, suggesting that a significant number of GCID families are in the lower-middle-income range. The income levels at GCID are more varied, with families represented across lower, middle, and upper-middle-class brackets, reflecting a wider socio-economic range within the group. This variation could also be attributed to the fact that while the majority of FMs at SU hold permanent teaching positions, around 50% of the faculty at GCID are in temporary or guest faculty roles, leading to disparities in earnings between the two groups.

- *First person in family to work as a faculty member?*

For GCID, a larger percentage of FMs, 75% (36 out of 48), reported that they are the first person in their family to work as a faculty member, while 25% have family members who have previously worked in academia. This indicates that faculty positions in academia are relatively new in the family backgrounds of GCID respondents, with a strong trend toward being pioneers in this field.

Interviews revealed that the IL at GCID is the first in their family to take up a faculty position. However, he mentioned that his father and brother were both school teachers, suggesting a gradual development of faculty positions within the family. Among the FMs, two were the first to pursue faculty positions. Of the three, reportedly not the first person to work as a faculty

member, one FM shared that their elder sisters held faculty positions, one had an uncle who was a faculty member while another mentioned that their parents were school teachers suggesting a confusion in perceiving the term “faculty member” to include any kind of teaching.

GC-A: Interview responses revealed that the IL at GC-A is not the first in their family to pursue a faculty career, as their elder siblings were the first to take this path. Amongst the FMs at GC-A, two FMs stated that they were the first in their families to pursue faculty careers, while three indicated they were not the first. One FM, however, mentioned that their parents were teachers, suggesting a potential confusion between the roles of faculty members and schoolteachers. This highlights some blurred perceptions in understanding the distinction between the two academic positions. The notable confusion in reporting faculty members within the family could be attributed to both factors: some respondents may have misunderstood the term to include any kind of teaching, including at the school level, while others may have been influenced by how +1 and +2 education is commonly referred to as “junior college” in the state. In such cases, even school or post-graduate teachers may have been considered “faculty members,” contributing to the ambiguity.

GC-B: The IL at GC-B stated that he was not the first in their family to pursue a faculty role, as his sister was already a college teacher. However, all the FMs interviewed were the first in their families to take up a faculty position.

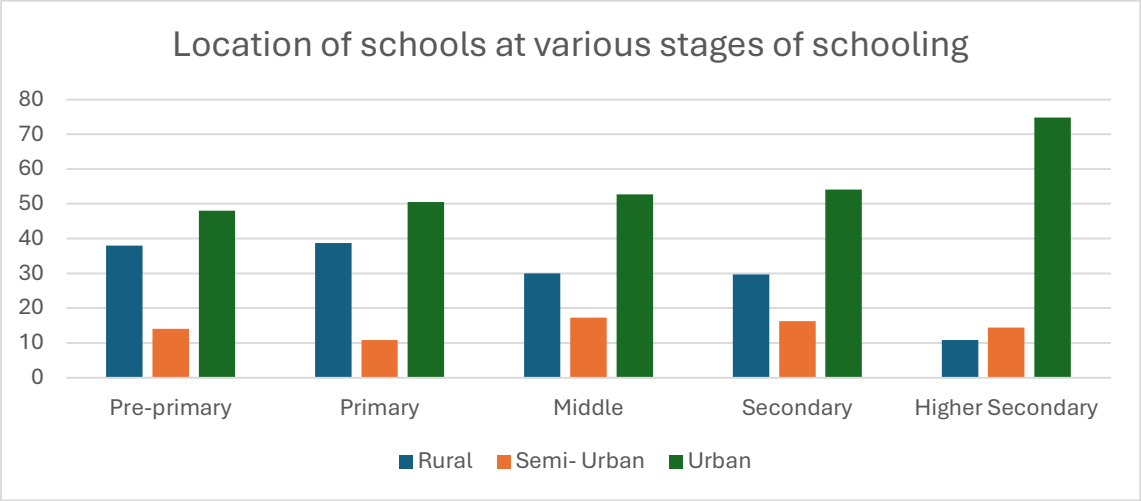
4.5.2 Schooling history

4.5.2.1 State University (SU)

The FM survey at SU reveals a clear trend in the location of schools attended by FMs, with a noticeable shift toward urban areas as their education level progressed. At the pre-primary school/Anganwadi stage, almost half of the Faculty Members (48%) attended urban schools, followed by 38% in rural areas and 14% in semi-urban areas. As their education advanced, the proportion attending urban schools grew. By the time they reached Higher Secondary School (11th-12th class), a significant majority (83%) were enrolled in urban schools, demonstrating a clear shift for urban institutions at higher education stages. This contrasts with earlier stages, such as primary school (1st-5th class) and middle school (6th-8th class), where a larger

proportion of FMs attended rural schools (43% and 33%, respectively). This shift toward urban schools in later stages may be attributed to the enhanced educational infrastructure, resources, and opportunities available in urban areas.

Figure 4.3: Percentage distribution of faculty members as per location of schools at various stages of schooling



FM Survey of SU results presented in the table below shows a clear tendency to go for co-educational institutions across both the 9th-10th and 11th-12th grade levels, with 66.1% of respondents attending co-ed schools in grades 9-10 and 92.9% attending co-ed institutions in grades 11-12. The data also reflects the predominance of government-run schools, especially during the higher secondary education level, with 60.7% of respondents attending government-managed institutions in grades 11-12 and 48.21% in grades 9-10. The majority of participants studied under the state syllabus (85.7% in grades 9-10 and 83.9% in grades 11-12), reflecting regional preferences. Interestingly, while the medium of instruction at the 9th-10th level was mostly in regional languages (49.1%), English instruction was more common in grades 11-12 (71.4%), which could reflect the greater influence of English-medium schools at the senior secondary level. Regarding residential arrangements, most respondents lived at home as day scholars (80.4% in grades 9-10 and 77.1% in grades 11-12), with only a small proportion residing in school hostels. Overall, the data reflects the prevalence of government schools with a focus on regional language instruction in early education, transitioning to English-medium instruction in higher secondary education.

Table 4.5: Schooling history of Faculty Members at SU

Criteria	9th-10th No. of VRs(%)	11th-12th No. of VRs(%)
Type of school attended		
- Co-education	74 (66.1%)	104 (92.9%)
- Single sex	38 (33.9%)	8 (7.1%)
Management of school		
- Government	54 (48.2%)	68 (60.7%)
- Government aided/Private-aided	15 (13.4%)	20 (17.9%)
- Private (unaided)	43 (38.4%)	24 (21.4%)
Syllabus		
- State	96 (85.7%)	94 (83.9%)
- CBSE	15 (13.4%)	17 (15.2%)
- ICSE	1 (0.9%)	1 (0.9%)
Medium of instruction		
- Regional Language	55 (49.1%)	30 (26.8%)
- English	53 (47.3%)	80 (71.4%)
- Hindi	4 (3.6%)	2 (1.8%)
Stream choice		
- Science	-	64 (57.1%)
- Commerce	-	3 (2.7%)
- Arts/Humanities	-	45 (40.2%)
Where did you reside		
- School hostel	-	11 (9.8%)
- Day Scholar living at home	-	90 (80.4%)
- Day scholar with relative/friends	-	4 (3.6%)
- Day scholar in rented accommodation	-	6 (5.4%)
- Day scholar in paying guest accommodation	-	1 (0.9%)

FMs from SU show a clear trend of attending urban schools as their education level advanced, with a tendency toward co-educational schools and government-managed institutions. The State syllabus and English as the medium of instruction were dominant, especially at higher education levels. The Science stream was the most chosen stream, and most FMs resided at home during their 11th-12th class years.

The interview responses from the IL and FMs also align closely with the survey results. The institutional leader attended state-run, rural, and semi-urban co-educational schools, with Assamese as the medium of instruction and SEBA (Board of Secondary Education, Assam) as the syllabus, a pattern consistent with majority of survey respondents. FMs, however, had more diverse schooling experiences, attending both government and private schools, often with English as the primary medium of instruction in higher education. While the survey showed a

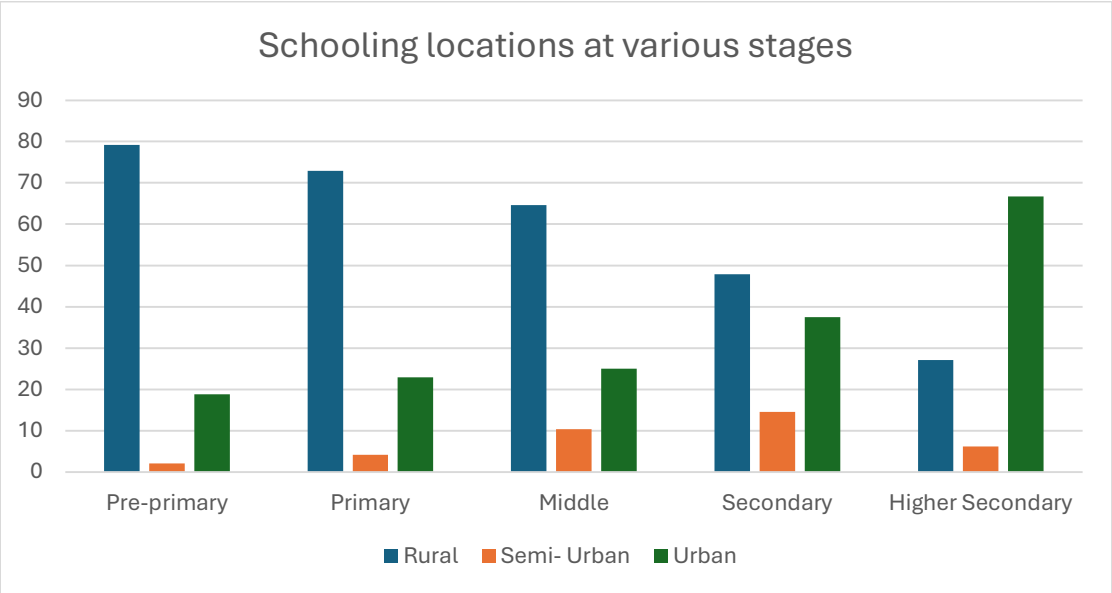
shift towards English-medium schools in grades 11-12. FMs interviewed also experienced bilingual education in their early years. Both the survey and interview responses indicate a pattern of attending government schools in early education and a transition to English-medium instruction at higher levels. In terms of residential arrangements, both the IL and FMs, like most survey respondents, lived at home throughout their schooling.

4.5.2.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) and Other Government Colleges

The educational background of FMs in GCID mirrors the same pattern as the SU regarding the location of schools attended, specifically in terms of rural, urban, and semi-urban schools. At the pre-primary/Anganwadi level, a majority of FMs in GCID (79.2%) attended rural schools, with smaller proportions attending urban (18.8%) and semi-urban schools (2.1%). This trend continued through the primary school years (1st-5th class), where 72.9% attended rural schools, followed by urban schools (22.9%) and semi-urban schools (4.2%). The pattern persisted in middle school (6th-8th class), where the majority (64.6%) attended rural schools, with a significant number attending urban (25%) and semi-urban schools (10.4%). As the FMs advanced in their education, a shift towards urban schools became evident. In Secondary school (9th-10th class), 37.5% attended urban schools, while 47.9% attended rural schools, and 14.6% attended semi-urban schools. By the higher secondary level (11th-12th class), there was a noticeable shift to urban schools, with 66.7% attending urban schools, 27.1% attending rural schools, and 6.2% attending semi-urban schools.

This trend of moving from rural to urban schools as education progressed is consistent with the pattern observed in the SU, where rural students tend to transition to urban schools for better educational resources and opportunities in higher grades.

Figure: 4.4 Percentage distribution of faculty members as per location of schools at various stages of schooling



Regarding the type of school, a clear tendency towards co-educational schools was observed, with 75% of FMs attending co-ed institutions during grades 9-10 and 91.7% during grades 11-12. This trend aligns with the broader educational preference for mixed-gender schools. Government-run schools were the most common educational providers, with 75% of FMs attending government schools in both grades 9-10 and 11-12, a trend that mirrors the SU's experience where government institutions also played a significant role. The survey also revealed that a large percentage of FMs followed the state syllabus, with 93.8% in grades 9-10 and 95.8% in grades 11-12, reflecting a pattern similar to that of the FMs of the SU, where many respondents adhered to the state curriculum.

Regarding the medium of instruction, FMs predominantly used regional languages during grades 9-10 (93.8%), but there was a shift toward English in grades 11-12, with 72.9% of FMs using English as the language of instruction. This transition from regional language to English aligns with the trend seen in the SU. When it comes to residency, most FMs were day scholars living at home, with 77.1% in grades 9-10 and 72.9% in grades 11-12. Only a small number lived in school hostels, rented accommodations, or paying guest arrangements, suggesting that, like the FMs of the SU group, most FMs of GCID were able to commute from home to attend school.

Table 4.6: Schooling history of Faculty Members at GCID

Criteria	9th-10th No. of VRs(%)	11th-12th No. of VRs(%)
Type of School		
- Co-education	36 (75%)	44 (91.7%)
- Single sex	12 (25%)	4 (8.3%)
Management of School		
- Government	36 (75%)	36 (75%)
- Government aided/Private-aided	4 (8.3%)	3 (6.2%)
- Private (unaided)	8 (16.7%)	9 (18.8%)
Syllabus		
- State	45 (93.8%)	46 (95.8%)
- CBSE	3 (6.2%)	2 (4.2%)
- ICSE	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Medium of Instruction		
- Regional Language	45 (93.8%)	35 (72.9%)
- English	3 (6.2%)	13 (27.1%)
- Hindi	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Stream Choice		
- Science	-	18 (37.5%)
- Commerce	-	4 (8.3%)
- Arts/Humanities	-	26 (54.2%)
Where Did You Reside		
- School hostel	-	1 (2.1%)
- Day Scholar living at home	-	37 (77.1%)
- Day scholar living away from home	-	1 (2.1%)
- Day scholar living in rented accommodation	-	6 (12.5%)
- Day scholar living in paying guest accommodation	-	3 (6.2%)

Interviews with the IL and FMs at GCID revealed common schooling backgrounds. All FMs attended state-run schools, with a mix of rural and urban locations. There was a mix of co-educational and single-gender institutions, though most were co-educational. The regional language was the main medium of instruction, though one attended a school where another regional language was used. The curriculum included 2 regional languages, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, and sometimes an elective language like Sanskrit or Hindi.

The patterns observed in the GCID group are strikingly similar to those seen in the SU. FMs of both the HEIs, as evident from survey findings as well as interviews, followed a consistent pattern of attending co-educational schools, government institutions, and state syllabi. The use of regional languages as the medium of instruction in earlier grades and the shift to English in

higher secondary education was also a common trend. Additionally, the majority of respondents in both groups were day scholars, living at home during their school years. These patterns highlight consistent educational backgrounds across both groups, reflecting broader regional educational trends.

GC-A: The IL at GC-A had a diverse educational journey, beginning at a private rural school with English and vernacular language as mediums, then attending a state-run, co-ed rural school, and completing higher secondary education in an urban government college with a bilingual approach to the regional language and English. The faculty members at GC-A also come from varied schooling backgrounds, with most attending government-run schools, though some attended private institutions. Most studied in co-educational schools, with the vernacular language as the dominant medium of instruction. Their schooling spanned both rural and urban areas, but all following the state syllabus. The core subjects included the regional language, English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Science, with electives like Sanskrit, Hindi, Biology, and Mathematics. Higher secondary education was pursued in both rural and urban settings, with some attending private urban schools. Most FMs lived at home during their schooling years.

GC-B: The interview responses from the IL and FMs at GC-B reveal that all participants attended state-run schools, whether in rural, semi-urban, or urban areas, highlighting a strong foundation in government institutions. Vernacular language was the primary medium of instruction, with English becoming more prevalent in higher education. Most followed the state-run syllabus in high school, and again some chose the state-run curriculum for their higher secondary education. Core subjects typically included the regional language, English, Mathematics, and Science, while some also studied specialised subjects like Political Science and Philosophy. The majority of participants lived at home during their schooling years, with one exception who resided in a hostel. Higher education marked a shift towards urban and bilingual settings, with English gaining greater importance.

The FMs from GCID, GC-A, and GC-B share several similarities in their educational backgrounds. All primarily attended state-run, government schools, mostly in rural or semi-urban areas, with the vernacular language as the main medium of instruction. Most lived at home during their schooling years and followed state education systems. In higher education, they experienced a

shift towards urban and bilingual environments, though their foundational education remained rooted in rural, government schools, aligning with the experiences of FMs from the SU, who also transitioned to more urban and bilingual settings in higher education.

4.5.3 Higher education history

4.5.3.1 State University (SU)

Motivation and help for Higher Education Access and Choice amongst Faculty Members

For the SU, 16.1% of the responses identified mothers as a motivating influence for pursuing higher education, closely followed by fathers (16.3%). Other family members also contributed, with siblings—sisters (5.6%) and brothers (6.2%)—playing notable roles. A considerable portion (15.1%) of responses indicated self-motivation.

Outside the family, college or university teachers were cited in 8.5% of responses, while schoolteachers accounted for 3.8%. Friends (5.6%), along with extended family members such as maternal and paternal uncles/aunts (2.8% and 2.4%, respectively), were also mentioned. The remaining responses referenced a variety of other personal and social influences, indicating the broad range of support systems shaping higher education aspirations.

In the case of choosing an undergraduate college or university, 19.7% of responses identified the mother as an influencing figure, while 22.6% mentioned the father. Siblings played a comparatively smaller role, with 4.4% of responses citing sisters and 6.2% citing brothers. A significant share (27.4%) of responses indicated that the decision was made independently by the respondent. College or university teachers were mentioned in 4.0% of responses, while friends influenced 3.3%.

Regarding the choice of undergraduate course or subject, 11.9% of responses noted maternal influence, while 17.0% cited paternal influence. Again, siblings had a smaller role, with 4.1% of responses pointing to sisters and 5.2% to brothers. A substantial 46.9% of responses indicated that the decision was made independently. Influence from college or university teachers was reflected in 5.7% of responses, and schoolteachers in 2.1%. Friends were mentioned in 4.1%.

No respondents reported the involvement of coaching centres or tutors in this decision-making process.

Institution type, location, funding – for Bachelors, Masters, MPhil, PhD

The survey on the higher education background of FMs at State University (SU) shows a distinct pattern in their choice of institutions for different levels of education. A significant majority, 84.8%, of faculty members pursued their undergraduate studies at affiliated colleges, while 15.2% attended universities for their UG studies. However, the data reveals a shift when it comes to postgraduate (PG), MPhil, and PhD education. At the PG level, a remarkable 94.6% of faculty members attended universities. At the MPhil and PhD levels, there was a clear inclination towards universities, with 100% of the faculty members attending universities for MPhil studies, and 96.7% for their PhD studies. This pattern aligns with the broader institutional framework of higher education in the region, where universities function as key centres for postgraduate instruction and research.

The survey data reveals a clear trend in the geographical distribution of higher education institutions attended by faculty members. A significant majority of students at all academic levels were based in urban institutions. Specifically, 79.5% of undergraduate (UG) students, 89% of postgraduate (PG) students, and 90% of PhD students attended urban universities. This highlights the concentration of academic resources, such as faculty, infrastructure, and research opportunities, in urban areas. Additionally, urban universities tend to be more popular among students due to their reputation, availability of advanced courses, and broader career opportunities, which further drives students from rural and semi-urban areas to seek education in urban centres. This trend underscores the disparity in access to higher education between urban and rural areas, highlighting the need for greater investment in and development of educational infrastructure in rural and semi-urban regions. Data from the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) reinforces this pattern, showing that a greater number of higher education institutions and higher Gross Enrollment Ratios are concentrated in urban settings (Ministry of Education, 2023).

In terms of funding, self-funding is the dominant source of financial support across all levels, with 93.2% of FMs in UG, 91.3% in PG, and 58.9% in PhD programs relying on personal finances.

Scholarships and fellowships provide some assistance, but their availability is limited, especially at the UG and PG levels. Fellowships are more common at the PhD level, with 27.8% of faculty members benefiting from them.

Overall, the survey indicates that faculty members at SU primarily attended urban universities for higher education, predominantly self-financed their studies, and had limited access to external funding sources such as scholarships and fellowships.

Table 4.7: Institution type, location, funding – for Bachelors, Masters, MPhil, PhD amongst the faculty members at SU

Criteria	UG (Undergraduate)	PG (Postgraduate)	MPhil	PhD
Institution Type				
Affiliated College	95 (84.8%)	6 (5.4%)	0 (0%)	3 (3.3%)
University	17 (15.2%)	106 (94.6%)	12 (100%)	89 (96.7%)
Location				
Rural	9 (8.0%)	5 (4.6%)	0 (0%)	5 (5.6%)
Urban	89 (79.5%)	97 (89.0%)	10 (90%)	81 (90%)
Semi-urban	14 (12.5%)	7 (6.4%)	2 (18%)	5 (5.6%)
Overseas	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.1%)
Funding Source				
Freeship (tuition waiver)	2 (1.9%)	1 (1.0%)	1 (9%)	1 (1.1%)
Fellowship	0 (0%)	2 (1.9%)	1 (9%)	25 (27.8%)
Scholarship	4 (3.9%)	4 (3.9%)	1 (9%)	6 (6.7%)
Self-funded	96 (93.2%)	94 (91.3%)	7 (63%)	53 (58.9%)
PTA Funding	0 (0%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Faculty/Staff Funding	1 (1%)	1 (1.0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

National Eligibility Test (NET) and State Lectureship Eligibility Test (SLET)

Amongst the FMs, 50.9% of respondents have cleared the NET, while 49.1% have not, showing a nearly equal distribution with a slight majority having passed. Regarding the SLET, 15.2% of SU respondents have cleared it, while 84.8% have not, highlighting a relatively low incidence of qualification through this route. It is important to note that the age distribution of FMs suggests that a significant proportion entered academia before eligibility criteria such as NET and SLET became mandatory—formally instituted in 2009 (University Grants Commission [UGC], 2009). Additionally, there is an exemption from the NET for those who completed a Ph.D. before July 2009, which means that some FMs who joined academia before this date may not have been required to clear the NET due to their advanced academic qualifications.

Any reservations availed for HE study

Only 16 respondents responded positively regarding availing reservations during their higher education. The distribution of faculty members who availed reservations during their higher education and exams is as follows: 18.8% of the FMs benefited from reservation during their undergraduate (UG) studies, 25.0% during their postgraduate (PG) studies, 6.2% during their M.Phil., and 12.5% during their Ph.D. studies. Additionally, 37.5% of respondents availed reservation for exams, indicating that exam-related reservations were the most common.

Higher Educational Choices of Institutional Leader and faculty members as revealed in the interviews

FMs at SU often made their higher education decisions based on a combination of practical and personal factors. Many respondents chose institutions close to home for reasons of affordability and convenience. One respondent, for example, selected a nearby university due to financial constraints and its strong reputation. In some cases, FMs were guided by personal recommendations from family or teachers, such as one individual who was encouraged by their father's friend, a college principal, to attend a particular college. Additionally, several respondents chose to stay within the same institution for their Master's degree, either due to the availability of a desired subject or for personal reasons, such as staying in a familiar environment. Subject selection was often influenced by personal strengths and interests, such as one respondent who chose accountancy and finance due to their proficiency in mathematics, while another pursued criminology after studying criminal law in their LLB course. Family support, especially from parents, played a significant role, with some respondents also making independent decisions based on their personal goals and motivations.

4.5.3.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

For the GCID group, similar motivational patterns were observed. Mothers and fathers were each cited in 15.7% of the total responses as key motivators for pursuing higher education. Siblings also contributed, with 7.0% of responses attributing encouragement to sisters and 9.2% to brothers. Notably, 11.4% of the responses indicated self-motivation. College and university teachers were cited in 6.1% of responses, and school teachers in 4.8%. Friends played a role in 7.9% of responses, while extended family members such as maternal and paternal aunts and uncles were less frequently mentioned.

Regarding the selection of an institution for higher education, in the GCID group, 17.8% of responses identified mothers as influencers, while 20.4% referred to fathers. The influence of siblings was also noted, with 6.4% of responses citing sisters and 10.8% citing brothers. Self-driven decision-making was reflected in 17.2% of responses. College or university teachers and friends each accounted for 5.1% of the responses. Other family members and connections played a minimal role.

When choosing an undergraduate subject or course of study, 14.4% of responses indicated influence from mothers and 17.5% from fathers. Siblings played a modest role (7.5% from sisters and 8.1% from brothers). A significant 21.2% of responses reflected independent decision-making by the respondents. College/university teachers were mentioned in 3.8% of responses, and school teachers in 5.0%. Friends were cited in 4.4% of cases, while extended family members had a negligible influence. Notably, no responses reported the involvement of coaching centers or tutors in course selection.

Subject, institution type, location, funding – for Bachelors, Masters, MPhil, PhD

The following table offers insights into the higher education background of FMs at GCID across various academic levels, including undergraduate (UG), postgraduate (PG), MPhil, and PhD. At the UG level, the majority of the FMs attended affiliated colleges (66.7%), with only 33.3% attending universities. As faculty members progress in their academic careers, the trend shifts towards universities, with 87.5% of PG faculty members attending universities, and 100% in both MPhil and PhD levels. This indicates a clear preference for university-based education as the FMs advance in their studies.

Table 4.8: Institution type, location, funding – for Bachelors, Masters, MPhil, PhD amongst the faculty members at GCID

Survey Question	Options	*UG (Undergraduate)*	*PG (Postgraduate)*	*MPhil*	*PhD*
Higher Education Institution	Affiliated College	32 (66.7%)	6 (12.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Type	University	16 (33.3%)	42 (87.5%)	6 (100%)	16 (100%)
	Government	39 (81.2%)	39 (81.2%)	3 (50%)	13 (81.3%)
	Government aided/private aided	7 (14.6%)	3 (6.2%)	1 (17%)	2 (12.5%)
	Private	2 (4.2%)	6 (12.5%)	1 (17%)	1 (6.3%)
Location	Rural	5 (10.4%)	3 (6.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Urban	37 (77.1%)	41 (85.4%)	5 (83%)	15 (93.8%)
	Semi-urban	6 (12.5%)	4 (8.3%)	1 (17%)	1 (6.3%)
	Overseas	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Funding	Freeship (tuition waiver)	5 (10.4%)	2 (4.2%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)
	Fellowship	0 (0%)	1 (2.1%)	1 (17%)	3 (18.8%)
	Scholarship	4 (8.3%)	7 (14.6%)	1 (17%)	0 (0%)
	Self-funded	38 (79.2%)	36 (75%)	3 (50%)	13 (81.3%)
	PTA (Parent-Teacher Association) funding	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Funding Pool (e.g., faculty/staff)	1 (2.1%)	2 (4.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

Similar to the State University (SU), government-supported institutions dominate across all levels in the GCID table, particularly at the UG (81.2%) and PG (81.2%) stages. This mirrors the trend seen in SU, where government-supported institutions remain the primary choice but there is presence of private institutions at higher levels.

In terms of location, urban institutions are overwhelmingly favoured, with 77.1% of UG faculty members attending urban institutions. This number rises to 93.8% at the PhD level, highlighting the concentration of academic resources in urban areas. This trend is similar to SU, where a significant portion of faculty members also come from urban universities.

The most common source of funding for faculty members in the GCID table is self-funding, with 79.2% of UG faculty members, 75% of PG faculty members, and 81.3% of PhD faculty members self-financing their education. Similar to SU, self-funding is the dominant source of financial

support, though in both cases, external funding sources such as scholarships and fellowships are limited. However, fellowships become more common at the PhD level, where 18.8% of GCID faculty members report receiving fellowships, a trend also observed in SU, though the proportion of PhD faculty receiving fellowships is higher in GCID.

The data from GCID reveals a shift from affiliated colleges at the UG level to universities at higher education levels, mirroring the trend at SU. Government-supported, urban-based institutions are prevalent, and self-funding is the primary financial support across all levels, with fellowships becoming more prominent at the PhD level in both GCID and SU. A slightly higher percentage of GCID FMs attending rural institutions (10.4%) compared to SU respondents (8%), suggests rural ties. The data does not, however, conclusively support that rural-background individuals are more likely to return as faculty members, and further research is needed to establish the same.

NET and SLET

Only 14.6% of respondents reported having cleared the NET in GCID, while 85.4% had not. Similarly, 16.7% of respondents had cleared the SLET, with 83.3% reporting they had not. A significant portion of respondents from GCID, similar to SU, have not cleared either exam. This could be attributed to the fact that NET was not a requirement for joining higher education institutions (HEIs) in earlier years. Additionally, relaxations may have been granted by GCID during appointment of temporary faculty members (50% of the FMs in GCID), further contributing to the lower clearance rates for these exams amongst the faculty members in GCID.

Any reservations availed for HE study

At GCID, the distribution of FMs who availed reservations during their higher education and exams is more evenly spread. 16.7% of respondents benefited from reservation during their undergraduate, postgraduate, M.Phil., and Ph.D. studies. Similar to the SU group, 33.3% availed reservation for exams, marking it as the most common form of reservation for GCID respondents as well.

Higher Educational Choices of Institutional Leader and faculty members as revealed in the interviews:

In GCID, faculty members' decisions regarding higher education were similarly shaped by various influences, including family support and personal interests. One respondent was deeply motivated by their mother's encouragement to pursue higher education and self-reliance. Another respondent, who initially enrolled in Economics, eventually switched to Political Science after realising that their skills were not suited for the former. The change in discipline came after discussing the matter with peers and teachers, with one of their friends at the time encouraging the FM to apply to a prestigious university in Delhi. The choice of Political Science was also influenced by the respondent's struggles with mathematics, which made economics, less appealing. Subject choice amongst the FMs in GCID, was influenced by personal experiences as well; one respondent, for instance, selected Zoology due to a long-standing fascination with animals, while another chose criminology for their LLM after developing an interest during their LLB studies. Most respondents received strong family support, with some gaining financial assistance from parents or family members for their studies, especially for private university. Additionally, the choice of institution often considered factors such as reputation, location, and available resources, with respondents choosing universities that aligned with their academic and career aspirations.

GC-A : The IL at GC-A shared his journey in higher education, describing a strong foundation built on both personal interest and practical considerations. He pursued Botany Honors with Chemistry and Zoology as additional subjects during his undergraduate studies, choosing an institution that was well-regarded, urban, and affiliated with a reputable university. His decision to stay in a hostel during their studies was influenced by the need for proximity to a good academic institution. Similarly, FMs at GC-A reported a preference for urban, state-run, co-educational colleges for both undergraduate and higher secondary education, which aligns with the institutional leader's own experience.

The choice of subjects by the FMs at GC-A was diverse, with respondents selecting from a range of disciplines such as Political Science, Education, Logic, Philosophy, Assamese, English, and Science, including Mathematics and pre-medical tracks. The medium of instruction across most of these institutions was primarily English, with local languages being used for everyday communication or secondary subjects. Regarding financial support, none of the respondents mentioned utilising scholarships or reservations, which suggests limited availability or access

or awareness of such programmes at their respective institutions. The trends, however, reflect a consistent preference for state-run, urban institutions with an emphasis on English-medium instruction, which suggesting a common thread for all FMs across the institutions in this study.

GC-B -The higher educational choices of both the IL and the FMs at GC-B, too, were shaped by a mix of personal interests, family support, and career aspirations. The IL's decision to pursue a master's degree in Economics and Statistics was strongly influenced by his father's encouragement and guidance from a teacher. Faculty members, on the other hand, made their decisions based on personal passions, academic strengths, and family influences. For example, one FM chose Chemistry due to a passion for science, while another selected Political Science after excelling in the subject during UG studies. Family played a significant role, with many FMs receiving advice or encouragement from their parents, such as in the case of a FM who initially faced opposition to studying Education but chose Political Science based on their aspirations. Overall, both personal interest and family guidance were key factors in their educational paths. The institutions were government institutions and located in urban areas as revealed in the interviews.

4.5.4 Involvement of Faculty Members in HE access

4.5.4.1 State University (SU)

Involvement of any FMs in HE access and Choices

The survey responses from FMs at SU regarding the involvement of faculty members in their higher education access and choices revealed that the role of faculty in their higher education decisions was minimal. Only 10% of FMs indicated that faculty members were involved, while the majority (90%) reported no faculty involvement in their decision-making process.

As this was a multiple-response question, among the 13 responses detailing how FMs were known, the most common pathways included family connections (4 responses), meeting faculty during college visits (4 responses), or through school visits (2 responses). Other mentions included identifying FMs as family members (2 responses), meeting them in community settings (1 response), during the admissions process (1 response), or through their roles in coaching or tuition (1 response). Regarding the timing of involvement, 9 responses

indicated that FMs were engaged during the decision-making process about pursuing higher education, while 1 response noted their involvement during the admissions phase.

In terms of the nature of their involvement, FMs primarily advised on course or subject selection (9 responses) and college or university choice (5 responses), with minimal input regarding entrance exams or financial guidance.

The interview responses showed a range of experiences on this topic. While the IL and three FMs reported no faculty member involvement in their higher education choices (mirroring the 90.1% of survey respondents), the rest described both direct and indirect influences from FMs. One FM recalled that their high school teachers were supportive, encouraging them to pursue specific subjects, although they ultimately followed their sister's choice, who was already a faculty member in a college. Another FM mentioned that a family friend, who was a faculty member, played a guiding role in their decision-making.

Activities engaged in before enrolling for undergraduate study

The data reflect multiple modes of engagement reported by faculty members (FMs) prior to enrolling in their undergraduate college or university. About 31.0% of responses indicated visiting the campus, while 11.1% reported visiting other colleges or universities to compare options. 22.1% of responses involved consulting college or university brochures, and 19.0% mentioned reading about the institution in newspapers. A smaller share engaged with digital media: 3.1% of responses used online platforms, 0.9% viewed YouTube videos, and 1.3% referred to social media. Additionally, 1.8% of responses attended college fairs, and 4.4% indicated no engagement with any of the listed information sources.

4.5.4.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Involvement of any FMs in undergraduate choices

At GCID, faculty involvement in the undergraduate college choices of the FMs was more pronounced compared to SU, with 31.2% of respondents indicating that FMs played a role in their decision-making process. However, majority (68.8%) of respondents stated that FMs were not involved.

Among those who reported such involvement, the most common form of connection was through family members (6 responses). Other significant pathways included meeting faculty during college visits (4 responses) or when faculty visited their schools (4 responses). A smaller number of responses noted connections through family acquaintances (1), tuition/coaching roles (1), or community settings (1). Additionally, 2 responses indicated that the faculty were met during the admissions process itself.

Regarding the timing of this involvement, 11 responses indicated that faculty were involved during the process of making higher education choices, while 6 responses noted their involvement at the time of admissions.

Faculty interviews at GCID, indicated no faculty member involvement in the HE choices. While the IL reported no direct faculty member's involvement, several others reported significant guidance from school teachers whether it be choice of subject or guidance in the admission process but no pre-admission advice from FM was reported.

Activities engaged in before enrolling for undergraduate study (e.g. visiting the college)

Regarding pre-enrolment activities, 36.4% of responses from GCID indicated visiting the college/university campus prior to enrolment, while 12.1% reflected visits to other institutions for comparison. A notable 7.5% of responses mentioned consultation with college/university staff. Additionally, 10.3% referred to brochures, and 12.1% cited newspapers as sources of information. Social media (4.7%) and YouTube videos (6.5%) were also mentioned, though less frequently. Engagement with NGO representatives and attendance at college fairs were limited (3.7%), and only 1.9% of responses involved seeking information from the local administration.

The relatively lower reliance on digital platforms such as social media may be attributed to the age distribution of faculty members, as these technologies gained prominence more recently. Overall, the pattern of pre-enrolment information-seeking behaviour at GCID closely mirrors that of SU, with slight variations in campus visits, digital platform use, and reliance on traditional media sources.

GC-A: The interview responses from the FMs at GC-A indicated limited involvement of faculty in their higher education decisions. The IL mentioned that school teachers provided guidance and motivation during the transition from school to college. Several participants reported making their higher education choices independently, with no faculty involvement. However, one FM highlighted the support and guidance they received from faculty members at various stages, including encouragement to pursue a Master's degree and apply for the NET. Despite this, the participant emphasized that family played a more significant role in influencing their subject and institution choices during higher secondary education.

GC-B: The IL at GC-B had more direct involvement from FMs during his undergraduate studies, particularly from the FMs at the college, who provided advice on academic matters and the admission process. While no faculty member directly assisted with the admission itself, seniors from the hostel played a key role in guiding him through the process.

Among the FMs at GC-B, there were varying responses on involvement of FMs in their higher education decisions. Except for one response indicating faculty advice on subject selection, the rest reported no involvement of faculty members in their higher education choices. One FM noted receiving no guidance regarding subject choice prior to college admission, as familiarity with faculty members developed only after classes commenced. Another highlighted that, during their time, faculty members were generally perceived as less approachable and not easily accessible for such guidance.

The pattern and level of faculty members' involvement in higher education decisions were consistent across FMs from various institutions indicating minimal involvement. However, a discrepancy arises when examining the interview responses regarding faculty members' participation in higher education choices. Despite the survey and interviews, when specifically asking about the role of college/university faculty member, many interviewees referred to the guidance they received from schoolteachers. Several participants highlighted the influence of their high school or even elementary school teachers on their decisions, rather than faculty members from their higher education institutions. This suggests that some respondents may have misunderstood the question, considering any academic figure, including schoolteachers, as relevant to their higher education decisions. Consequently, the responses blur the line

between the roles of schoolteachers and college faculty members, indicating a lack of clarity in understanding the question's intent.

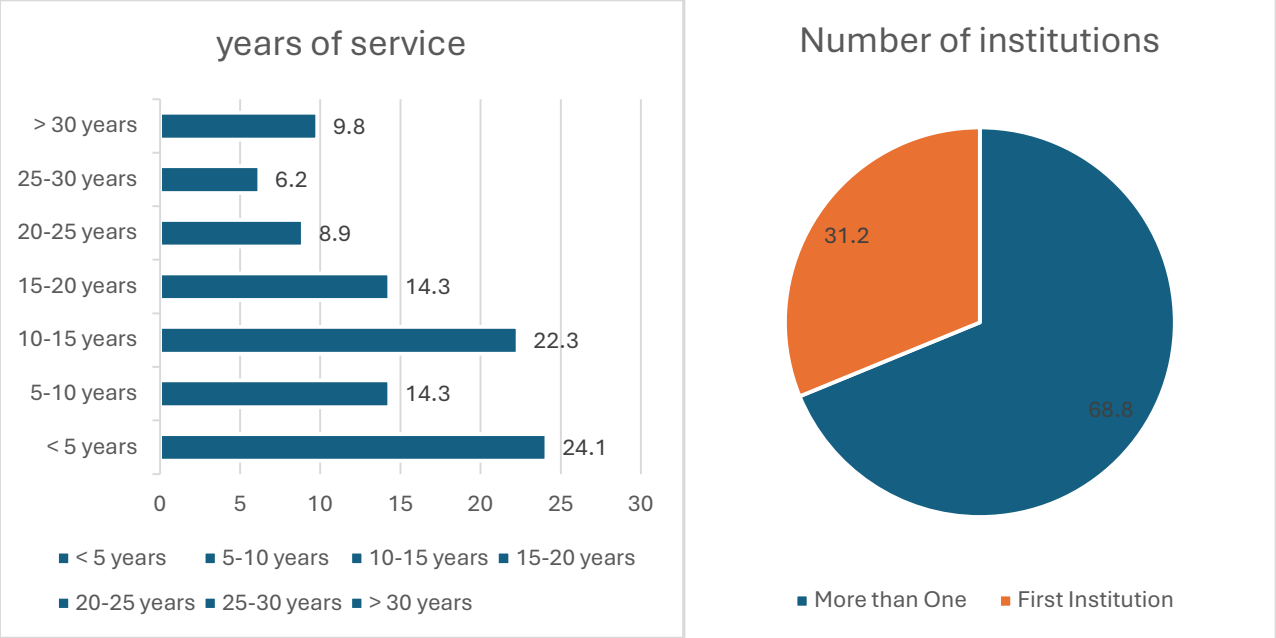
4.6 Faculty Members' professional trajectories

4.6.1 State University (SU)

Length of career to date and how many institutions worked in

Survey data on FMs' professional trajectories at the SU show a relatively diverse distribution in terms of length of service. The highest percentage (24.1%) of faculty members have worked for less than 5 years, with another significant portion (22.3%) having worked for 10-15 years. Other service lengths are more evenly spread, with 14.3% in the 5-10 and 15-20-year ranges, and 8.9% having worked for 20-25 years. A smaller portion of faculty members (6.2%) have worked for 25-30 years, and 9.8% have more than 30 years of experience. Regarding the number of institutions, 68.8% of faculty members have worked at more than one institution, with an average of 1.6 institutions per faculty member. Additionally, 31.2% of the FMs are working at their first institution. This indicates a mix of both experienced and somewhat mobile faculty members within SU.

Figure: 4.5 Percentage distribution of faculty members as per length of career and number of institutions worked



Professional career details at the current institution

Majority of FMs at the SU hold the position of Assistant Professor (48.1%), followed by Professor (14.8%) and Associate Professor (10.2%). Additionally, 29 responses were classified as "other," including 4 for "Guest" and 25 for "Teaching Associate." When asked about leadership responsibilities, most faculty members at the SU have not held any significant leadership roles, with 72.4% stating "None." However, a smaller number have held positions such as Head of Department (25.3%) or Dean of the School (2.3%). Regarding length of service, 43.8% of FMs at the SU have been with the institution for less than 5 years, 17.9% for 5-10 years, 22.3% for 10-15 years, and smaller proportions for longer periods, with 2.7% serving 20-25 years, 2.7% serving 25-30 years, and none having been at the SU for more than 30 years. In terms of appointment method, the vast majority (99.1%) were appointed through a Direct Recruitment Call by HEI, with just 0.9% being appointed through a state government examination. Additionally, the SU has a larger proportion of faculty with regular appointments (71.8%), while 24.5% are on contractual terms.

Table 4.9: Career Details at the Current Institution, SU

Survey Question	Option	Number of VRs	Percentage
Current Position (Designation)	1. Professor	16	14.8
	2. Associate Professor	11	10.2
	3. Assistant Professor	52	48.1
	4. Other (Guest, Teaching Associate)	29	26.9
Leadership Responsibilities Ever Performed	1. None	63	72.4
	2. Dean of the School	2	2.3
	3. Principal (college only)	-	-
	4. Head of the Department	22	25.3
Length of Service at Current University/College	Less than 5	49	43.8
	5-10	20	17.9
	10-15	25	22.3
	15-20	12	10.7
	20-25	3	2.7
	25-30	3	2.7
	More than 30	0	0
Appointment Method	1. Direct Recruitment Call by HEI	110	99.1
	2. Examination by State Government	1	0.9
	3. Transferred from Another Institution	0	-

Interview with the IL revealed that his career did not begin at the current university. Instead, he started in 2001 at an affiliated college, where he was appointed through an interview process. He later moved to the main university, securing a position through a direct recruitment interview. In 2023, he was appointed as the Deputy Director of the Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) after expressing interest in the role, following the establishment of a selection committee by the university administration. Similarly, the FMs at the SU have diverse career trajectories. One of the FMs started as a guest faculty in 2013 after completing their Master's degree, later working as a Teaching Assistant during their MPhil and PhD studies before becoming an Assistant Professor in 2016. Another FM began their career in 2019 at a different college, then moved to another institution for a year before joining the SU in 2023. A third individual began as a Teaching Associate at the university in 2023 after completing a year-long internship at an NGO. These varied career paths reflect different routes to permanent academic positions and align with the

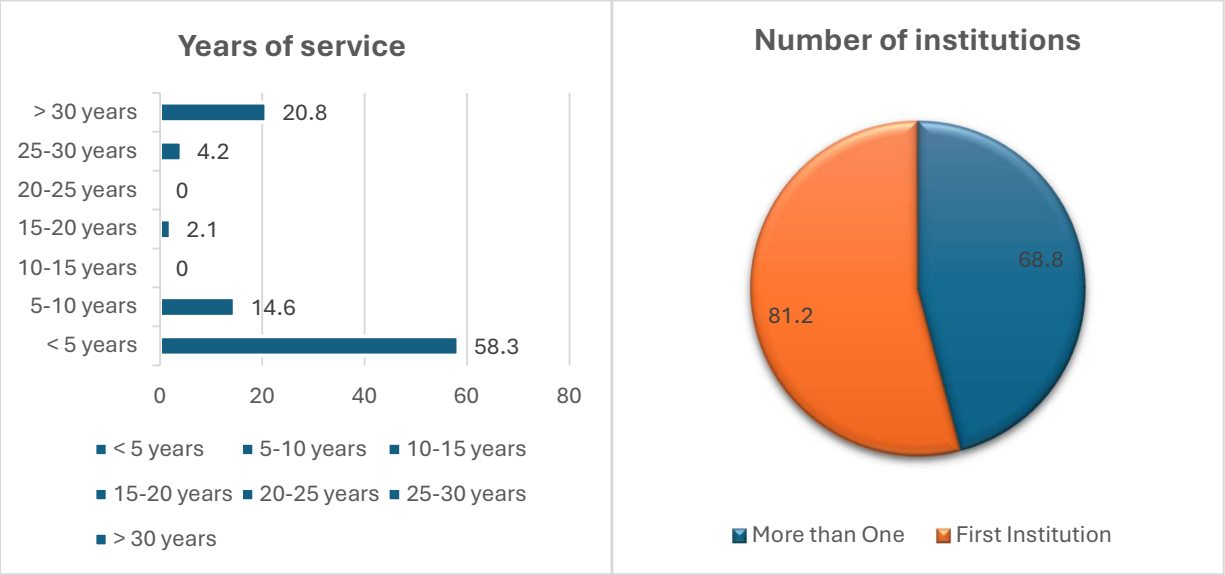
survey findings of faculty members having worked at multiple institutions and undergoing a direct recruitment process at the university.

4.6.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Length of career to date and how many institutions worked in

For GCID, the faculty member workforce is relatively young, with 58.3% of the FMs having worked for less than 5 years, and only 14.6% having between 5-10 years of experience. The remaining FMs are distributed across the other experience categories, with only 2.1% having 15-20 years of experience and 20.8% with over 30 years in the field. Notably, a large majority (81.2%) of FMs at GCID have only worked at their current institution, suggesting lower faculty mobility compared to SU.

Figure 4.6: Percentage distribution of faculty members as per length of career and number of institutions worked



Current position/designation

For GCID, the faculty composition mirrors that of SU in that Assistant Professors constitute the majority, with 77.1% of FMs identifying as such. Notably, there are no Professors at GCID, which aligns with the structure of the Government Colleges of the state where such positions are often less common. Regarding leadership roles, a similar trend is observed at GCID, with 57.8% of FMs reporting no leadership experience, while 42.2% have held the role of Head of Department. GCID has a notably higher proportion of FMs with less than 5 years of service (58.3%), and 20.8% have been with the institution for over 30 years, which contrasts with the composition at SU. All

FMs at GCID (100%) were appointed through Direct Recruitment Calls by the HEI, with no faculty recruited through state government examinations or transfers from other institutions. In terms of appointment types, GCID has a higher percentage of faculty on contractual terms (58.3%) compared to SU, where the majority hold regular appointments (71.8%).

Table 4.10: Career Details at the Current Institution of FMs at GCID

Survey Question	Option	Number of VRs	Percentage
Current Position (Designation)	1. Professor	0	0
	2. Associate Professor	11	22.9
	3. Assistant Professor	37	77.1
	4. Other	0	0
Leadership Responsibilities Ever Performed	1. None	26	57.8
	2. Dean of the School	0	0
	3. Principal (college only)	0	0
	4. Head of the Department	19	42.2
Length of Service at Current University/College	Less than 5	28	58.3
	5-10	7	14.6
	10-15	0	0
	15-20	1	2.1
	20-25	0	0
	25-30	2	4.2
	More than 30	10	20.8
Appointment Method	1. Direct Recruitment Call by HEI	48	100
	2. Examination by State Government	0	0
	3. Transferred from Another Institution	0	0

Interview responses on career trajectories of the IL and the FMs at GCID show a mix of long-standing and newer career paths, aligning with the quantitative data. The IL's experience, spanning over two decades with roles in multiple state institutions, contrasts with the more recent career paths of some FMs. Regarding FMs, the majority at GCID have worked at only one institution, reflecting the 81.2% of FMs who have remained at GCID. While there are FMs with longer service, such as those who started in 1992, there are also newer faculty, such as those starting in 2023. This aligns with the quantitative data that shows some FMs have been at GCID for over 30 years (20.8%) and others for less than 5 years (58.3%). These insights suggest that,

while the institution has a mix of long-serving and new faculty, there is relatively lower mobility compared to those at SU.

GC-A: Interviews at GC-A reveal a mix of fresh starts and long-term career progression, with many FMs building lasting careers at the same institution. The IL began his career in 1997 as a part-time contractual teacher at a local college, transitioning to a regular faculty position in 1998 in the present HEI, and has made significant contributions over the years. While one faculty member joined in 2020 as a first-time FM, others have worked at multiple institutions before settling at GC-A. Additionally, some FMs have had stable, long-term careers at the institution, with one joining in 2004 and showing steady growth ever since.

GC-B: The IL at GC-B began their career after completing their Master's degree, working in various roles before becoming the principal in 2022. FMs at GC-B have diverse career paths, with some moving between institutions and others starting with temporary positions before securing permanent roles. Responses reflected that FMs have built long, stable careers at GC-B, with several joining the institution after gaining experience elsewhere. These varied career trajectories reflect a mix of temporary roles, multi-institutional experiences, and long-term stability at the institute.

4.7 Summary and Conclusion

The surveys reveal that faculty members at both SU and GCID exhibit distinctive yet parallel demographic and professional characteristics. SU has a higher representation of men (56.2%), whereas GCID exhibits gender parity, with equal proportions of men and women among respondents. The age distribution also varies: the majority of faculty at SU fall within the 41–50 and 31–40 age brackets, while most GCID faculty are concentrated in the 20–30 and 31–40 age groups. Both institutions predominantly comprise faculty from the General category—76.6% at SU and 77.1% at GCID. SU, however, has slightly higher representation of OBC and ST faculty members. Religious composition differs more sharply: SU's faculty is overwhelmingly Hindu (88.2%), whereas GCID shows equal representation of Hindus and Muslims. Despite these differences, both faculties show linguistic uniformity, with Assamese being the dominant mother tongue.

Differences also emerge in marital status and family life. A greater proportion of faculty at SU are married (71.4%) compared to GCID (47.9%), though the average number of children per respondent (1.6) is similar in both. LGBTQIAP+ identification was noted by a small number of SU faculty, while none were reported at GCID. Neither institution reported faculty who identified as differently abled in the sample. In terms of residence, SU's faculty predominantly reside in urban areas (83.5%), while a significant proportion of GCID faculty (68.8%) are from rural locations, underscoring contrasting socio-spatial contexts.

A consistent pattern of upward educational mobility is observed across the faculty members of all four institutions, with family members from previous generations having limited education, while later generations have attained higher levels of education, including professional qualifications. A narrowing gender gap is also observed across institutions: while older generations of women (especially grandmothers) often lacked access to education, younger female family members today frequently hold higher degrees, contributing to more gender-equitable educational outcomes. Overall, the data underscores a consistent and significant intergenerational rise in educational attainment across institutions.

The schooling trajectories of faculty members show similar patterns marked by a gradual shift from rural to urban educational settings as they progressed through levels of education. At the pre-primary and primary stages, a larger proportion of GCID faculty attended rural schools, while SU faculty had a more even distribution between rural and urban schools. However, by the higher secondary level (11th and12th standard), a majority in both groups had moved to urban schools. Most faculty members studied in co-educational and government-run schools at the secondary and higher secondary stages. Both groups largely followed the state syllabus and began their education in regional languages, with a marked shift to English-medium instruction at the senior secondary level. This consistent pattern across institutions points to shared experiences shaped by the broader educational landscape; interviews with faculty members across all four institutions also reveal the same trend.

For higher education, family members, especially parents, were the primary motivators for the FMs across all four institutions, to pursue higher education. While parents played a significant

role in guiding choices regarding undergraduate colleges and courses, many FMs at both institutions made these decisions on their own.

The data from the faculty member surveys at SU and GCID reveal minimal involvement of faculty members in shaping their higher education decisions. At SU, interviews echoed this pattern, with most FMs noting little to no faculty guidance, though some recalled support from teachers or family acquaintances in academic planning. GCID showed slightly greater faculty involvement (31.2%), often through family links or prior interactions at schools or during college visits. While a few FMs mentioned guidance during decision-making or admissions, interviews suggested that school teachers—not faculty—played a more active role. Similar trends emerged at GC-A and GC-B, where most FMs described making higher education choices independently or with family support. Across all four institutions, interviews confirmed that faculty influence was generally minimal in pre-admission phases, with students relying more on personal networks or school teachers.

In terms of career trajectory, both SU and GCID have a significant proportion of faculty members who are relatively new to academia, with a substantial number in the early stages of their careers. Additionally, SU has a larger proportion of faculty on regular contracts, while GCID has a higher percentage on contractual terms. Interview responses regarding the career trajectories of ILs and FMs at SU, GCID, GC-A, and GC-B reveal a blend of long-term and newer career paths, with each institution exhibiting different trends in faculty mobility and stability. Regarding residence choices, FMs choice of living arrangements seemed to be influenced by commute times and distances.

Chapter 5: Institutional Leaders, Faculty Members and HE Outreach: Practices and Perspectives

5.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to study the motivation of the Institution Leaders' (ILs) and the Faculty Members' (FMs) of 4 HEIs in a specific geographic cluster of India for contributing to widening participation in the study areas. The specific focus of this chapter is to probe as to how the faculty members and the institution leaders in rural and semi-urban areas currently perceive their role and that of the HEI in facilitating access to HE and HE choice in the localities of their workplaces. It aims to illustrate the existing practices of HE outreach (HEO) in these HEIs. It also seeks to study the obstacles that exist in the HEI that prevents to their contribution in this regard.

Furthermore, it also intends to probe the perceptions of the ILs of the rural and semi-urban HEI regarding their role as ILs of HEIs and also the perceptions of FMs in relation to facilitating access to HE and HE choice. This chapter also reveals the current HEOs practices and challenges to HEO and presents the future potential for HEO in HEIs.

5.2 Facilitating access to HE: institutional level

According to the ILs interviewed for this study, the current representation of rural students in their respective HEI is relatively high. In the SU it is presumed to be around 70%, it being the lowest of the study area. In the GCID it is more than 90%. In GC-A it is assumed to be around 80-90% and in GC-B it is considered to be 100% by the IL.

The FMs of the SU could not clearly state the overall proportion of rural students in their university because they were more confined to the students of their respective departments. For four of the FMs it was expected to be within 40% to 50% and for another FM it was around 20% to 30%. This could not be verified with the administrative data of the SU as this data for the UG students of the SU were not segregated on the basis of urban-rural divide.

Three of the FMs of the GCID stated that the proportion of rural students in their college was around 80% to 85% and the other two FMs stated it was around 90% to 95%. As per the

administrative data of the GCID, 100% of its UG students were from rural areas. The high proportion of rural students in this HEI is because it is located in a rural area.

The FMs of GC-A and GC-B stated that the proportion of rural students in their institutions to be higher. In GCs, a few of the FMs stated that the proportion of rural students ranged from 80% to 100%. However, the majority of the FMs of both the GCs stated that 100% of their students were from rural areas. Both of these HEI are located in a semi-urban area and cater to the HE of the students of rural areas surrounding it.

5.2.1 State University (SU)

Feeling Comfortable: According to the IL of SU, the rural students felt comfortable in the SU. All the FMs of the SU interviewed for this study also responded that the rural students would be comfortable choosing the SU for HE.

110 FMs accounting for 98.2% of the FMs surveyed for this study responded to the question about the rural students feeling comfortable in the SU. 104 FMs (92.9%) perceived that the rural students would be comfortable choosing the SU for HE.

***Causes of Feeling Comfortable*:** According to the IL, the SU is considered as a people's university as it is very closely associated with the society and the fee structure is very low compared to other HEIs of the region. Thereby, the rural students would feel comfortable in the SU.

Among the FMs of SU interviewed, the causes of the rural students feeling comfortable was diverse. Entrance examination was considered as one of the factors as it provides a fair chance to all. They also stated that better educational opportunity, best faculty members of the region, better educational and future prospects and effective teaching-learning facilities provided by the HEI would make the rural student feel comfortable. However, affordable student-friendly tuition fees as well as the reservation policy followed by the HEI is considered to be a common cause among the FMs for making the rural students comfortable choosing the SU for HE. Adequate hostel facility was also considered as a major factor to make the rural students comfortable to choose the SU.

***Activities conducted by SU to attract rural students*:** According to the IL of SU, the institution does not conduct activities exclusively to attract rural students. However, entrance examinations were held in eleven centres across the state and the region for the convenience of the rural students as well as students from different parts of the region. Initiatives were taken by the SU to reach out its affiliated colleges and orient them about the New Education Policy 2020 through its UGC-Human Resource Development Centre. There was also direct collaboration with the affiliated colleges.

In the FM survey of the SU, 106 FMs accounting for 94.6% responded to this question of activities conducted by the SU to attract rural student, of which 54.5% FMs stated that the SU conducted activities to attract rural students and 40.2% stated that the SU did not conduct any activities to attract rural students to the institution.

Interestingly, all the FMs of the SU stated that they were not aware of any programmes conducted by the HEI to attract rural students which suggests that no such prominent programmes are conducted by the HEI. One of the FM felt that the SU is a premium HEI of the region. As a result, such awareness is not required as there are already high/huge rush of applicants for enrollment into the HEI. Another FM felt that rural students who have/had already taken admission in the SU have a snowball kind of effect on the rural students of those small town and villages which attract rural students in the SU. Another FM informed that their department were planning to visit rural areas and inform them about their courses to the aspiring students.

***Activities the SU could do to provide more guidance to attract/assist rural students*.** On the basis of the FM survey of SU, 110 out of 112 FMs (98.2%) mentioned that there are varied aspects that the SU could focus upon to attract rural students into HE. Guidence on choice of course/subject (8.69%) and employbility prospect of the course/subject (8.32%) were the most important guidence/information that could attract rural students (Table 5.1). On the other hand checking application form/other documents (3.14%) was the least. This maybe because the process is being carried out through online mode for the last few years in the SU. Transportation facilities were mentioned by 4.34%. Table 5.1 provides the complete picture.

Table 5.1: Activities the SU could do to attract rural students

SU: 1_1		
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1. Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	86	7.95
2. Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	79	7.30
3. Choice of course/subject	94	8.69
4. About the admission process	76	7.02
5.About covering tuition expenses/funding options	64	5.91
6. About HE entry exams preparation	78	7.21
7.About special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations	46	4.25
8.Checking application form/other documents	34	3.14
9.Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	59	5.45
10.Organising a visit to the college/university	53	4.90
11.Advice on accommodation	68	6.28
12.About college facilities/activities/provisions	71	6.56
13.About campus safety and security	64	5.91
14.About employability prospects	90	8.32
15.About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	73	6.75
16.About transport facilities	47	4.34
Total of Answer=Yes	**1082**	100.00

None of the FMs of SU provided any other advice other than those highlighted above.

5.2.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) and Other Government Colleges

Feeling Comfortable: The ILs of GCID and the GCs perceived that the rural students were comfortable choosing their HEI. However, the reason behind the students being comfortable choosing their HEIs and being comfortable in the HEI were varied.

48 FMs (100% of the FMs survey for this study) responded to the question about the rural students feeling comfortable in the GCID. All of them thought that the rural students would be comfortable choosing the GCID for HE.

All the FMs of the GCID and the GCs interviewed were also confident that the rural students were comfortable in their HEI. All the FMs of the GCs stated in their interviews that their rural students were comfortable in their HEI.

Causes of Feeling Comfortable (ILs): According to the IL of GCID, their college was the only option for the economically weaker and girls' students (they belonged to Muslim community) of that area and thereby these rural students felt comfortable there. The FMs of the both the GCs used to get completely involved during and even prior to the admission process. This was one of the causes for which the rural students felt comfortable in these HEIs. Hostel provisions, existence of feedback system and other facilities of the GCs also made the rural students comfortable according to the ILs of both the GCs.

Causes of Feeling Comfortable (FMs): The *FMs of GCID* stated that because of the supportive, nurturing and promoting a sense of community by the college, the rural students feel comfortable in their HEI. That feeling of comfort is also created by the parents of the students who are alumni of the college. The college provides wide range of course options, vocational courses, skilled based courses and quality education. The teachers are dedicated, provide personalised attention and guidance to the students and are supportive towards the rural students. Majority of the students come from socially and financially disadvantage groups. Since the GCID is located in a rural area, its easy accessibility saves their money and that has also attributed to higher enrolment of female students. The college is equipped with excellent infrastructure and well-maintained library. According to the FMs of GCID all these factors make their students feel comfortable in their HEI.

FMs of GC-A stated that as it is a rural college located in a tribal dominated region (the only options within 25 km) where many are first-generation learners they adjust to the college easily. The college has good academic records, provides skill-based courses like drone-pilot training courses, hands-on classes on rubber plantation and extracting banana fibres. It has different co-curricular activities and equipped sports academics; one for cricket and another for badminton. The faculty members consider themselves student-friendly and address the students' personal problems. They take extra classes and tutorials without any fees. The college is also easily accessible because it is situated near the highway. The FMs of GC-A stated that because of all these factors the rural students, almost 90-100%, feel comfortable in the college.

Along with the factors stated above, the *FMs of GC-B* added a few more reasons why rural students felt comfortable in their HEI including the existence of active students' union body and

regular classes. Easy accessibility to the college both by road and railways along with its strategic geographical location make the students comfortable.

Another major cause of feeling comfortable in these HEIs as stated by the FMs of GCID and the 2 GCs is the non-availability of any other HEI in close proximity for alternate or better option. Thereby, the rural students had to be comfortable with these HEIs.

Activities Conducted to Attract Rural Students, ILs: According to the IL of GCID, under his leadership, the FMs have been regularly conducting awareness programmes on pertinent issues related to the communities. The purpose is to create positive impressions, proximity and inspire the aspiring students to enrol in the institution. Faculty members and office staff visit the schools of the neighbouring districts to create awareness of the new skill-based courses. They also help their students financially if required.

On the other hand, the IL of GC-A stated that under his leadership, to attract rural students, he created good canteen facilities and tried to provide food at a very nominal price. Gender neutral toilets were constructed to provide space to the queer students. He enhanced the different facilities for the students such as a swimming pool and indoor stadium. He introduced new job-oriented self-financed courses at a nominal fee (for drone flying training).

Again, the IL GC-B stated that under his leadership, a number of schools and villages were adopted where different programmes according to their needs were conducted. The faculty members took classes and guided the students in these adopted schools; around 80 students visited the labs and the school teachers were provided training about NEP 2020. All these activities were funded by the college.

These constituted the activities conducted by the ILs in GCID and GCs to attract the rural and students from other disadvantage groups in their institutions.

Activities Conducted to Attract Rural Students, FMs: When asked in the FM survey if the GCID was conducting any activities to attract the rural students, all the 48 FMs (100%) of the institution responded to this query. 97.9% FMs (47) mentioned that the college was conducting activities

to attract the rural student whereas only 2.1% (1) FM stated that the institution was not conducting any activities to attract rural students.

The FMs of GCID in their interview also stated that they were actively engaged with nearby schools, junior colleges[4] and villages. They inform the students of their HEI courses, activities and facilities. They make extra efforts to assure that not only the students but also their parents are well-informed about the opportunities and support system provided by their HEI. Extension activities and awareness and orientation programmes about the significance of education are also organised in the local villages to encourage them to pursue HE and make informed decisions.

The FMs of GC-A stated that workshops on career guidance and skill development (in and off campus), seminars, awareness programmes through the National Service Scheme and different activates in nearby villages (donating items to schools; providing a variety of forms of assistance) are organised regularly to create bonds with the local communities. Different departments of the college have adopted different villages. The teachers and the students of nearly schools are invited to the college for different programmes. They have introduced a programme known as 'Tarang' to reach out the nearby schools. It is a website created by the IL of GC-A through which the teachers from nearby rural schools can seek assistance for training, additional classes, and information on the basis of their subject or for any matter related to academic study. Through Tarang, students of nearly schools obtain permission for free college science labs facilities, library facilities and sports trainings. Through this programme their enrolment has gone up substantially and a few students are also obtaining admission in premium HEIs like IIT on a regular basis. The college collaborates with the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship and provides training to students of 7 nearby colleges. Through these activities the FMs of GC-A are trying to attract the rural students.

Likewise, GC-B have also adopted rural schools and villages and carry out outreach programmes, including taking classes, providing career orientation programmes and orientation about the programmes of their institution. Students from the nearby schools are also invited to

[4] Junior College is a college in Assam comprises only Class XI and XII.

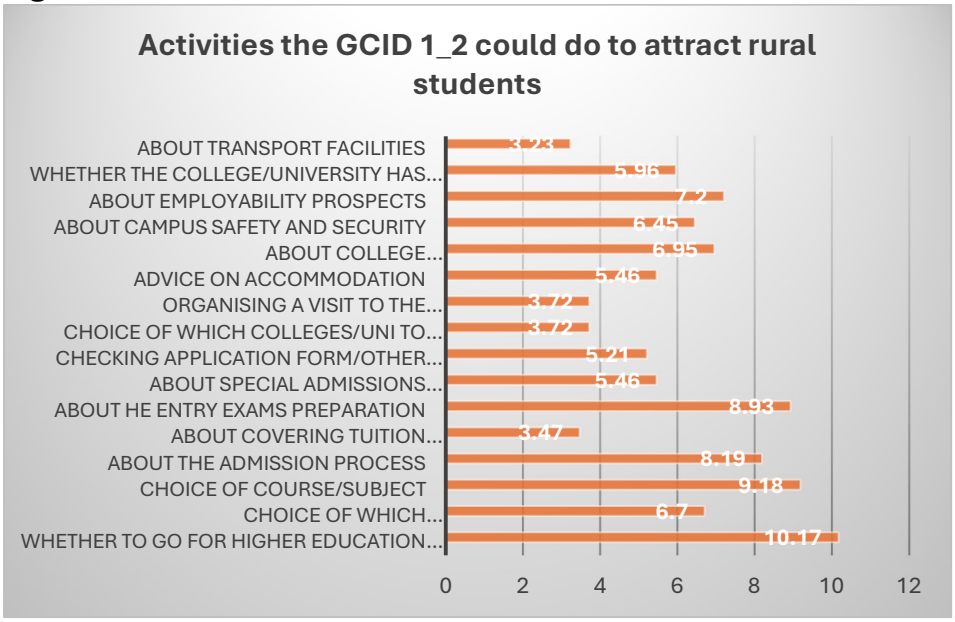
the college. Lab visits, library visits and workshops are arranged for the school students. The FMs expressed that they have not done anything exclusively to attract rural students because almost all their students are from rural areas. Their applications are already high for undergraduate courses and nearly 90-100% are rural students.

Activities the GCID could do to provide more guidance to attract/assist rural students. In the FM survey of GCID, 85.4% of the FMs agreed that guidance on varied aspects can attract more rural students into HEI. The FMs mentioned the guidance and effective advice to pursue HE is a major factor (10.17%) followed by guidance on choice of subject/course (9.18%) to attract rural students. Guidance on transport facilities (3.23%), tuition expenses/funding options (3.47%), choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one (3.72%) and organising a visit to the college/university (3.72%) were not seen as so important in attracting rural students in the GCID.

Table 5.2: Activities the GCID 1_2 could do to attract rural students

Option	GCID: 1_2	
	Answer = Yes (number)	Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)
1. Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	41	10.17
2. Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	27	6.70
3. Choice of course/subject	37	9.18
4. About the admission process	33	8.19
5.About covering tuition expenses/funding options	14	3.47
6. About HE entry exams preparation	36	8.93
7.About special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations	22	5.46
8.Checking application form/other documents	21	5.21
9.Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	15	3.72
10.Organising a visit to the college/university	15	3.72
11.Advice on accommodation	22	5.46
12.About college facilities/activities/provisions	28	6.95
13.About campus safety and security	26	6.45
14.About employability prospects	29	7.20
15.About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	24	5.96
16.About transport facilities	13	3.23
Total of Answer=Yes	**403**	100.00

Figure 5.1: Activities the GCID 1_2 could do to attract rural students



None of the FMs of GCID provided any other advice other than those highlighted above.

5.3 Facilitating access to HE: Institutional Leaders

All the ILs in their career as FM or IL have given advice to others. One of the IL was able to give advice from his professional position when he was a FM in another college.

5.3.1 State University (SU)

Information about the IL guiding students in enrolling in HE. The IL of the SU did give advice to UG students from hi professional position in meetings and get-togethers. Since he did not have direct access to UG students in his institution he could not provide guidance to the students of SU. However, he provided information in his personal capacity to high school students in his native village. The IL of the SU have been organising an annual children's festival in his native village since 2011 where he along with few of his childhood friends of his native village have been providing guidance and supports to high school children to enrol in HEI. They organise career counselling camps, science model camps and varied activities to nurture their natural traits of expertise. He organised these events because he felt that through this information and events the high school students would be empowered and enlightened about HE.

The IL informed that the SU have created an effective webpage of the HEI where wide range of information for aspiring UG students exist. At the same time online alumni portal of the university is created in the SU webpage so that the enrolled UG students can reach out to the alumni for advice and guidance. Advertisements regarding the admission in UG courses are published in eight leading newspapers of the region, 2 national newspapers and other social medias.

Information about the IL organizing for staff of the institution to engage in HE outreach. The IL of the SU who was the Deputy Director of Internal Quality Assurance Cell did not conduct any activities for the staff of the institution to engage specifically in HE outreach. There were few activities conducted for the staff for educational enhancement of the HEI (not specified).

5.3.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Information about the IL guiding students in enrolling in HE: The IL of GCID stated that he provided information to students from his professional position and guided students in enrolling in HE prior to admission. He even guided students on several occasion when he was a FM in another HEI. He provided information regarding admission process, curriculum and career options of different UG courses. He spoke of one particular student whom he successfully guided to obtain admission in one of the best colleges of the region in 2009. It was when he was a FM in a college. He felt that this particular student required better exposure and thereby guided him who later became a high ranking government official. After he joined GCID as an IL, he provided guidance regarding admission and course every year not only to the students but also to their parents. Since it was a rural HEI, all the guidance provided were for the rural students.

The IL from GC-A conducted around 25 to 30 academic outreach programmes over a period of 7 years when he was the Co-Ordinator of Bio-tech Hub[5] and DBT Star[6] College of the HEI. He was a FM then. As a part of the schemes of the Hub and being a DBT Star College, known as "Outreach Schools', he along with other FMs of the HEI visited rural schools regularly. During that time, it was his duty to visit rural schools, meet the students and conduct awareness programmes on different issues related to science subjects. He used to be accompanied by other FMs of the college. They used to provide information to the high school students about the programmes and courses that they could opt for after their Higher Secondary School (HS). After obtaining admission in HS, in the first month, students were provided with orientation about the different programmes offered by the HEI. Once in their HS, almost all the teachers orient them about the UG courses of the HEI. The IL of GC-A stated that it is a common practice of the FMs of the college to inform the students about higher education as there is no HEI within 25 km radius of this HEI. Such activities are organised as awareness programmes and career option programmes within the premise of the college. The IL from GC-A felt it was important to attract

[5] The Department of Biotechnology, Government of India initiated this scheme exclusively for colleges of North East India to promote, strengthen, create awareness and develop the subject Biotechnology. Bio-tech Hub is one of the schemes which GC-A availed.

[6] DBT Star College program was a pan India national flagship program introduced by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India to strengthen UG science programs in the UG colleges. The collages which were selected were provided funds to enhance their science departments. They used to be evaluated annually. If they sustain for a period of 5 years they become DRT Star collage. GC-A was the only college in the state of Assam to be upgraded to a DBT Star College.

the rural students because this was one of the most effective ways to increase the enrollment rate of the college. Another challenge of this HEI was the lower economic position of the students. 90% of the students are from Below Poverty Line (BPL). Thereby, to obtain good students in larger numbers, the college nurtures the students from the school level itself.

The IL of GC-B remembered giving advice to rural students when he was a FM in another college. Because of their rural background most of these students had no idea as to how to move ahead for HE. Those of them who were interested, the IL of GC-B provided information about scopes of different subjects and subject options. Whereas in the current HEI where he is the IL now, he provided guidance regarding the admission process so that students can make informed decisions. The college have a Career Guidance Cell and an Admission Committee. The Admission Committee in GC-B is constituted for a period of one year. The Admission Committee provides guidance and advice about the admission process, checking the forms and scholarships and so on to the students aspiring to take admission in the UG courses. Because of these guidances many of their students are now enrolled in IITs and other reputed HEIs of the region. Almost all the students are from rural background because the HEI is located in a rural area and is considered as one of the reputed HEI within its 25-30 kms radius.

Information about the IL organising for staff of the institution to engage in HE outreach: The IL of the GCID used to create a team every year to help the students during the admission process. However, in the last few years the entire admission process is controlled by the Government and takes place through the SAMARTH portal. As a result, the IL constituted admission help desks for the students immediately after the declaration of the class 12th examination. The objective of this help desk is to help the students as much as possible. Orientation programmes are held in the college premises to which the students are invited and detailed demonstration are provided regarding the choice of courses, subjects and the operation of the SAMARTH portal. Since GCID is located in a remote rural area and the students are mostly from disadvantaged economic backgrounds with no access to digital tools and infrastructure, such arrangements by the HEI help the students immensely.

The IL of GC-A, also creates an admission committee during the admission time to orient the students during enrollment into UG as well as Higher Secondary programmes. Alongside, there

also exists Open University, Study Centers, SAMARTH team, DARPAN team and WhatsApp groups (teachers, students and alumni). A team of dedicated FMs and staff are deputed for HE outreach for each. All these teams become active prior to the admission process. The IL sends notifications to their groups which makes the process and participation more efficient. He has also engaged some staff to create student friendly websites. The IL of this college has created an effective functional system in GC-A for HE outreach.

In GC-B there exist an admission committee which comprises of FMs and staffs who provide guidance to the students prior and during the admission process. The college has also adopted 3 nearby schools where different activities are conducted. FMs are engaged to take classes in Class IX and Class X of the adopted villages where they inform the students about their college, the programmes offered by the HEI and the prospects of these programmes. The FMs are encouraged to invite these students and also students from other nearly schools for Lab visits during summer vacation. 7 to 8 schools (70 to 80 students) visit GC-B every year. Of late trainings are also provided to the school teachers regarding their new and emerging subjects, digitalisation, admission process and NEP2020.

5.4 Facilitating access to HE: Faculty Members

Out of the 5 FMs interviewed, only 3 of the FMs from the SU gave advice to UG students from their professional position. The other two faculty members provided guidance to UG students from their personal position. On the other hand 14 of the 15 FMs from the GCID, GC-A and GC-B were actively involved in providing guidance regarding admission matters, extending support to the students as well as to their parents. In all these HEIs they have students enrolled in the Higher Secondary programme. The mentor-mentee system that exists in these HEIs facilitated them to provide guidance to these students. The FM who did not provided guidance from their professional position was because she did not have access to HS students. However, as she lives in a rural area she provided guidance from her personal position to students and neighbours living in her locality. She advised them regarding subject selection and courses. When compared between these 3 institutions, guidance provided in GC-B is less active in HE outreach than the other two HEIs.

5.4.1 State University (SU)

Information about the FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE: Information about various aspects were provided by the FMs of the SU. These were of a varied nature and were provided mostly through their personal contacts. One of the FM stated that she could not guide her students because she did not have direct access to students aspiring for HEI. However, she provided advice to Higher Secondary (HS) students in interactive programmes such as workshops and seminars on matters related to choice of subjects, programmes, job prospects in other universities and different colleges. These students were from rural areas from different parts of the region. She also provided advice personally to her relative. She feels it is her responsibility as a teacher to provide such guidance.

Another FM of the SU provided information to his relative regarding the choice of HEI and their requirements. However, he was not from a rural area.

Another FM provided guidance to his three students who were taking private tuition under him three years ago. He advised them regarding their choice of HEI. All of these students were from urban areas.

Again, another FM used to regularly guide her cousins and relatives regarding choice of subject/s, stream, career scope, choice of college and university, process of admission of colleges in Delhi as she studied there. She even advised her friend regarding these aspects. She also provided information regarding the rank of the college and the environment for girls' students (safety). All this information was provided through her personal network about HEIs under Delhi University as she is an alumnus of Delhi University. Those who were asking for information about Delhi University belonged to the privileged class living in urban area. However, she advised another cousin of hers who was from a rural area and who was seeking information about choice of subject and reputed HEI of the region.

Another FM provided guidance to the students in his locality regarding the choice of stream and selection of HEI. It happens during social gatherings or when some relatives pay him visit at home. Providing guidance from personal position does not happen on regular basis but occasionally. All of these students were from semi-urban area, his locality.

Information about the FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, Diary Studies: A total of 10 FMs, 5 each from SU and GCID participated in the Diary Study (DS). The DS took place over a period of three months and after every 2 week the FMs entered their experiences of guiding students in enrolling in HE. A total of 55 experiences were recorded by the 10 FMs in the two HEIs taken for this study of which 52 were valid entries. 3 entries were considered invalid for this study, as the advice was given to students who were already in HEIs. Of these 52 entries, 12 (13.5 %) entries were recorded in the SU and 40 entries (76.9%) were recorded by the FMs of the CGID which participated in this survey. The interpretation of the rest of the data of DS is based on the 52 valid entries/experiences.

A total of 15 experiences were recorded by the 5 FMs in the SU of which 12 were valid entries. 3 entries were considered invalid for this study, as the advice was given to students who were already in HEIs. The interpretation of the data of DS is based on these 12 valid entries/experiences of the SU.

Advice from 'personal/professional' position: Out of the 52 experiences, 35 pieces of advice were provided by the FMs from their personal positions, which accounts to 67.30% and on the other hand only 32.69% (17) were provided from the professional position of the FMs of both the HEIs. The classification of personal and professional advice was based on the perception of the FMs interviewed for the study.

From the Post Diary interview, it was found that the FMs of SU provided information to the students both from their personal and professional positions. Among the FMs from SU, more advice was provided from their personal position than their professional position. For one of the FM, it was a neighbour. She also advised two students from her professional position who obtained her contact details from a student of hers. She again advised another student from her professional position who visited the department for advice. Another FM from the SU provided advice from his personal position to two friends who wanted information about their relatives. The other two FMs also provided advice from their personal positions. The advice of one of the FM was invalid as it was provided to students already enrolled in HEI.

To whom the advice/guidance is provided: Most information was provided to their neighbours (4) by the FMs of SU in their Diary entries followed by to their friends (2). They also provided advice to a relative, a retired employee of the institution, students, family friends and to a colleague from another department of the university.

Table 5.3: Whom the advise/guide are provided

Advice given to	SU: 1_1
Neighbour	3
Relative	1
Friends	2
Retired employee of the institution	1
School Student	1
College Student (Higher Secondary)	1
Student	1
Family friend	1
Colleague from another department of the SU	1

Detailed understanding of the persons who sought advice is illustrated from the Post Diary interviews. As far the SU is concerned, one of the advice seekers was a neighbour who stays near Eco-1's residence. The other two were students from a rural HEI and were unknown to Eco-1. The fourth one was a student who paid a visit to her department for information. There were two students whose parents were known to the FM and Eco-1 talked to their parents over the phone. Eco-1 talked for more than half an hour with their parents and then with the students. Another FM provided information to two of his friends. One of them wanted information about his cousin and the other wanted some information for his friend.

The 3rd FM first provided information to her family friend who was seeking information for her daughter. Later on, her own cousin sought information from her.

The 4th FM provided information to one of his senior colleagues from another department who wanted information for his child. He also provided information to his father's colleague for his son.

Person from rural and/or disadvantaged background: In the SU, out of the 12 entries only 2 of them where from rural/disadvantaged background accounting to 16.7% of the total entries of the SU.

Information provided to person from rural and/or disadvantaged background: The 2 students who approached the Eco 1 were from rural area. The other 2 students whose parents talked with her were also from rural area as well as disadvantaged background. One of the students who approached the 4th FM (ULC-2) was from a rural area.

Information regarding the HE advice provided to students from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds: The parents of the two students wanted information about the courses, the cut-off marks and the process of applying for the programme. The other student wanted information about the entrance process, entrance examination and how to prepare for the entrance examination. The student who approached ULC-2 also sought information regarding the entrance examination, the probable questions of the entrance examination, the admission process and the quality of teaching of the SU. They wanted to know about the hostel facilities and the hostel fees of the SU.

Types of HE advice provided to rural students: The following table (Table no: 5.5) provides an understanding of the types of advice provided by the FMs of the SU especially to the rural students during the Diary Study. Information was provided about the admission process n to almost all the rural students (11). It was followed by information regarding the choice of which college/universities to apply to and about employability prospects (9) and information about higher education entry exams preparation (8). Two sought information about special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations and only one sought information regarding organising a visit to the college/ university.

Table: 5.4: Types of HE advice provided

Type of Advice	SU: 1_1 Number of experience entries
1. Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	4
2. Choice of which college/universities to apply to	9
3. Choice of course/subject	6
4. About the admissions process	11
5. About covering tuition expenses/funding options	1
6. About higher education entry exams preparation	8
7. About special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations	2
8. Checking application form/other documents	0
9. Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than one	4
10. Organising a visit to the college/ university	1
11. Advice on accommodation	3
12. About college facilities/activities/ provisions	6
13. About campus safety/security	7
14. About employability prospects	9
15. About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	3
16. About transport facilities	3
17. Other advice (see tables below)	0

Based on the post diary interviews of the FMs of the SU it is observed that most of the advice to the students concentrated around three aspects; entrance and admission, courses and their prospects and about the facilities provided by the SU. The types of HE advice provided were regarding the NEP2020 and the new courses and programmes offered under NEP2020 by the SU to HS students. This included the course structure, access to information regarding the admission and entrance exam (advertisement), preparation for entrance exam in SU, the cut-off percentage of different programmes, the entrance examination process of different programmes, the admission process, entrance and admission schedules (time), about the commencing of the regular classes and about information of other HEI. They also sought advice regarding the choice of HEI, information about the SU and the ranking of the SU in relation to other HEI in the region. One wanted to know if it would be better to study in the college or at the SU campus and the quality of teaching of the SU. Another wanted information regarding the hostel facilities and hostel fees. One of the guardians wanted advice on the subject options and the job aspects of those subjects.

Where the HE advice was provided and the context: The FMs of the SU provided advice mostly over phone (4) but also at home, and at a rural college, rural school and a family function see Table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Where the HE advice was provided

Location	SU: 1_1 Frequency of experience entries
Home	2
Telephone call/phone contact	4
Family function	1
Rural College	1
Rural School	1
University	2

In the Post Diary interviews it was observed that the majority of the FMs of SU provided information and advice at home and over the phone randomly without any prior appointment or notice except for one FM. This FM (Women's Studies) received messages over the phone, an appointment was fixed, later on had a conversation and provided advice. This student was well prepared with her list of questions. The FM later sent more advice and responded to her follow up questions through messages over her phone. For Eco 1 one of the calls lasted for about half an hour and for the others they were shorter calls of 6 to 7 mints duration. For the two students who came to the department for information, both the FMs accidently met them or bumped into them in the corridors of their departments.

FM motivations for the HE advice provided: The FMs of the SU had experience/knowledge of HEIs and processes. Six were motivated by this to provide advice regarding HE outreach. 2 considered it to be their professional responsibility. None of them provided advice out of interest or to support the individual.

Table 5.6: FM motivations for the HE advice provided

Motivation reason *(Code – note: more than one code can be used for a response if it is multi-faceted, e.g. 'personal relation with the person's father and a sense of social responsibility')*	**SU: 1_1 Number of experience entries**
1. Experience/knowledge of HEIs, processes etc	6
2. Professional responsibility	2
3. Family connection	1
4. Social responsibility	1
5. The students did not have much idea regarding the new admission process as per NEP2020	1
6. For helping in taking better decisions regarding her daughter's future prospects	1

In the Post Diary Interview, Eco 1 stated that she wanted to help the students because they were confused about the newly introduced NEP2020. ULC-2 felt motivated because he was resourceful and had the information that they wanted. He also felt that it was his duty and responsibility to provide information as he was a FM of that department. Another FM understood the importance of providing personal insights to make an informed decision and thereby provided the advice accordingly. She understood the importance of mentoring a person and it motivated her to provide advice. For another FM, the sense of satisfaction and happiness of helping someone motivated him.

Causes for asking for advice from FMs: Out of 12 valid entries, 7 FMs from the SU responded to this question.

While reflecting upon the Post DI, it has emerged that the FMs of the SU did not give a direct answer to this question. Based on their indirect answers, it can be stated that they felt that the person asked them for advice because the persons were confident that the FMs had the information, would be insightful and that the FMs would provide them with the right advice. The person might have felt that the FMs would be helpful and be willing to provide advice. The FMs assumed that they were approached by the students and their guardians because the students and the guardians perceived that the FMs had access to information regarding enrolling in HE and that the FMs were involved in giving such advice.

Participant profile of the most active participants of the Diary Study, SU: Following are the profiles of the two FMs of SU who had the highest entries in their diary studies.

PROFILE 1:

Eco-1, the FM from the SU made 5 entries over the period of 3 months. Two entries were made in the 1st week and 1 entry each in the 3rd, 4th and 5th week. She provided advice to 2 persons from her personal position. One of them was her neighbour and the other person was a parent of a student whom she happened to know from before. Again, she provided advice to 3 persons who were students of different HEIs wanting to pursue HE.

She provided the information to her neighbour in the University who happened to drop by. She advised her regarding choice of which college/universities to apply to and regarding choice of course/subject. Since this neighbour seemed to be confused, Eco-1 wanted to help and felt motivated to do so.

Her second experience was with two students who wanted to pursue their HE and who called her up over the phone when she was at home and sought advice regarding choice of which college/universities to apply to, about the admissions process, the higher education entry exams preparation, university facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security and regarding employability prospects of the course. Since both the students were unsure of the process and the prospects, Eco-1 felt motivated to help them so that they would be able to make a good decision about their college learning.

Her third experience was with a student from a different Higher Secondary School who visited her in her department. She advised on whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, admissions process, covering tuition expenses/funding options, choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one, advised on accommodation and regarding campus safety and security. The urge to help the student motivated the FM to provide information and advice.

Her fourth experience was with a school student in a Higher Secondary school itself. The FM advised her whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which

college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, admissions process, organize a visit to the college/university, about campus safety and security and about employability prospects.

The fifth and the last entry was an interaction with the parent of a student from a Higher Secondary school over the phone where she provided advice and information regarding choice of which college/universities to apply to about the admissions process, higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities. The student and her parents did not have the information of the admission process under NEP2020. As a result, the FM felt motivated to provide this information considering it as her professional responsibility.

PROFILE 2:

UCL-1 was the FM from the SU who had the 2nd highest entries of three experiences. One was provided from his personal position and the other 2 from his professional position. The entries were made in the 1st, 4th and 6th week of the diary survey.

The 1st entry was of a colleague from another department of the HEI who wanted information for his child. He visited him in the department. The person wanted information relating to the admissions process, to know about the announcement of the application process, about college facilities/activities/provisions, employability prospects and whether the college/university has good academic functioning. UCL-1 felt motivated to provide this information because he had such information and considered himself experienced in that field.

The 2nd entry related to a neighbour who made a call over the phone when he was at home and asked him a wide range of questions. He wanted information and advice on whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities. The FM felt

motivated to provide this information as he was from that department and had all this information.

The 3rd entry related to a retired employee of the SU who wanted information for her daughter. She visited the FM in his department. She sought advice and information whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities. The FM felt motivated to provide this information as he was from that department and felt it was his responsibility to help the retired FM's daughter.

Information about the other FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, ILs: The IL of the SU was not very certain about whether other FMs of the SU were guiding students in enrolling in the SU but presumed that they might be. He assumed that the Pre Examination Training Centre and Placement Cell of the institution may provide such information through different seminars, and individual interactions with the students. According to him the New Education Policy Co-ordination Centre may provide guidance to the students as they frequently conduct such activities.

Information about the other FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, FMs: Four of the five FMs of the SU interviewed for this study assumed that the other FMs of the SU were also engaged in such activities as they are resourceful, kind, cooperative and approachable. One of the FM has seen some of his colleagues providing information to the students. Such advice is presumed to be provided on individual basis.

Four of these FMs stated that the non-academic staff are not directly engaged in counselling the students. When the non-teaching staff in the department are approached, the students are observed to be redirected to the FMs of the department. Whereas, one of the FM was sure that the administrative staff provide information and guidance to students enrolling in HE because she herself as a student approached the administrative and office staff as they had vast

knowledge regarding the university's activities along with the programmes. However, these opinions are very specific to the department to which the FMs belonged.

Table 5.7 provides an understanding of the demographic profile of the FMs of the SU undertaken for the study. It is the prolife of the FMs who are engaged with the UG students of the different programmes and courses that are offered within the SU campus. 43.8% of the FMs were women and 56.3% were men. The highest representation of social group are the FMs from the General category (75.9%) followed by the Other Backward Caste social category (15.2%) and least by the Economically Weaker Section which is only 0.9%. The majority of the FMs were Hindus (86.6%) followed by the Muslims (9.8%) and only 1.8% by Christians. A large proportion of the FMs of the SU belong to urban areas (81.3%) and only 16.2% of the FMs were from rural areas.

Table 5.7: Demographic Profile of the FMs of SU

Options	SU: 1_1	
	Yes (given advice)	
	N=	% of VRs
Total VRs		
1.2 Gender		
Female	49	43.8
Male	63	56.3
Transgender	0	0
Other gender	0	0
1.3 Caste/Social Group		
SC	2	1.8
ST	6	5.4
OBC	17	15.2
General	85	75.9
EWS	1	0.9
1.4 Religion		
Buddhist	0	0
Christian	2	1.8
Hindu	97	86.6
Jain	0	0
Muslim	11	9.8
Sikh	0	0
Zoroastrian/Parsi	0	0
Other	1	0.9
1.9.3 Place of permanent residence		
Rural	19	16.2
Urban	91	81.3

From the FM survey conducted in the SU, it was found that, 110 FMs (98.2%) responded to the question if they ever during their career as a faculty member had given any advice to others about undergraduate higher education options and processes before admission. Of the 110 FMs, 100 (89.3%) responded that they have provided advice and on the other hand, a small proportion of FMs of 8.9% (10) did not provide any such advice to any student in their career as an FM.

There were 100 FMs from the SU (89.3%) who responded that they have given guidance to student during their career as a faculty member and have also given advice to others about undergraduate higher education options and processes before admission. The types of advice and guidance provided to the students are highlighted in Table 5.9. provided below. A total of 539 responses regarding HE advice were provided to the students. The highest amount of advice related to whether to go for higher education or other options and choice of course/subject (15.68%), followed closely by choice of college/universities to apply for (14.66%). There were 11.32% FMs who also provided information regarding the admissions process. The least amount of advice was provided regarding accompanying for a visit to the SU where the FM works (1.67%) followed by information regarding special admissions programmes/ processes (e.g. reservations) which accounted to 2.6%. There was one FM who informed the student about the Career Counselling Centre of the SU.

Table 5.8: Type/s of advice or guidance given by FMs of the SU

Option	SU: 1_1	
	Answer = Yes (number)	Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)
1.Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	86	15.96
2.Choice of which college/universities to apply to	79	14.66
3.Choice of course/subject	86	15.96
4.About the admissions process	61	11.32
5.About covering tuition expenses/funding options	31	5.75
6.Checking application form/ other documents	32	5.94
7. Choice of which college/university to enrol in if selected in more than one	50	9.28
8. Advice on preparing for HE entrance exam	45	8.35
9. Contacting college/university on behalf of applicants	15	2.78
10.Accompanying for a visit to the college/university where you work	13	2.41
11.Accompanying for a visit to another college/university	9	1.67
12.Advising via social networking e.g., WhatsApp	18	3.34
13. About special admissions programmes/ processes (e.g. Reservations)	14	2.60
Total of Answer=Yes	**539**	**100.00**

There were a total of 97 FMs (86.6%) from the SU who responded that they gave higher education advice or guidance in their personal network (Table 5.10). They provided information to 236 persons. There were also two students who were known to the FM personally and were given advice accordingly. One of the students was her cousin and the other was a family friend of the FM from Women's Studies. The most recorded information was provided to extended family members totalling to 84 (35.59%) followed closely by neighbours, 32.63% (77). The least recorded information was provided through local politics, 7 persons (1.27%) and through their own tutoring/coaching work, 6 persons (2.54%).

Table 5.9: Higher education advice or guidance in your personal network, SU

SU: 1_1		
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.Extended family (beyond nuclear)	84	35.59
2.Neighbours	77	32.63
3.Domestic staff	38	16.10
4.In a faith-based setting e.g. temple	5	2.12
5.In a community group	15	6.36
6.Through NGO work	8	3.39
7.Through local politics	3	1.27
8.Through your own tutoring/coaching work	6	2.54
Total of Answer=Yes	**236**	**100.00**

There were 83 FMs (47.1%) who gave higher education advice or guidance in their professional role as a faculty member at the SU. In this study, the FMs of the SU provided advice and guidance to 163 persons.

The highest recorded information was provided to students whom the FM met when they came to visit the SU, 33.13%. It is followed by advice and guidance to students when the FMs visited schools (22.9%). Least recorded was when they visited another community setting (12.88%) and when the SU organised or assisted with an open day/official visit/taster day for students to visit the HEI (14.72%). There were also occasions when the FMs provided advice from their professional position when they had visited other colleges, when friends from other institutions visited the FMs and also during the regular class hours.

Table 5.10: Higher education advice or guidance in your professional role as a faculty member at the SU

Option	SU: 1_1	
	Answer = Yes (number)	Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)
1.When you went on a visit to a school	36	22.09
2.When you visited another community setting	21	12.88
3.When you met with students who were visiting your college/university	54	33.13
4. When you organised or assisted with an open day/official visit/taster day for students to visit your college/university	24	14.72
5.When you asked some current students to advise other young people in their communities	28	17.18
Total of Answer=Yes	**163**	**100.00**

5.4.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Information about the FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, FMs: All the FMs of GCID who were interviewed for this study were actively involved in providing guidance to students before the admission process on varied aspects such as choice of subject, future prospects of the subjects, application of the courses, navigation through the completing the application forms and addressing their doubts. All of these students were from rural area. One of the FM from GCID mentioned about a particular female student who approached her to persuade her parents to allow her to pursue HE as they were planning to get her married. The FM intervened and was successful in persuading the student's parents. She even provided financial support for her studies. She again advised a student to enroll in a specific programme as he was good at it. She helped him to navigate through the admission process. Another FM who was from Philosophy was actively engaged with HS students and encouraged them to join Philosophy Department by organising seminars. She also provided extra support (not specified) to students who came forward to take the course. Another FM was a member of the admission committee and was closely associated with the students both before and during the admission process. He assisted the students in every step of the admission process. One of the FM used to advise the Higher Secondary students during the regular classes and the students of his neighborhood from his personal position. Another FM mentioned that he motivated one his student to pursue HE when he decided not to go for higher studies because of lack of self-confidence. All the students that the FMs of GCID advised were from rural areas.

All the FMs of GC-A interviewed for the study were engaged in providing guidance to student regarding enrollment in HE. The majority of the students of this HEI were from the rural area and did not have much knowledge about the importance of different programs. GC-A have collaborations with rural schools in the region. Students of this HEI, immediately after completing their HS join the defence services. Some of them are shy and hesitant to ask any questions. FMs provided information about the selection of HEI, selection of courses, course combination to crack competitive exams in the future, programmes which will benefit them in the future, and how to prepare for entrance examinations. The Career Guidance Cells of this HEI specially organises various activities and programmes to orient and guide the students regarding admission, courses and their benefits and to direct the students regarding the choice of subject according to their interest. The students are mostly from rural areas and belonged to tribal communities and are shy or lacks confidence to approach the FMs. Sometimes the students approach them but most of the time the FMs advise them on their own.

One of the FM mentioned that he does not have access to HS students, but his relatives often approach him for guidance before admission since he is an academician. Most of them were from a rural background since the college is located in the rural area.

Another FM from GC-A stated that he considers himself an expert in giving advice to students regarding admission process. He stated that they have an admission and college portal in the college website where videos and e-posters regarding admission are uploaded regularly. Hard copies are also distributed outside the college premise before the admission process starts.

Another FM mentioned about two particular students whom she mentored from Class XI onwards. She feared that these two students may discontinue their studies after Class XII. She helped them to improve their grades and also helped them to overcome their personal hardships. One enrolled in one of the best universities of the region and then did the B.Ed programme. The other student is a teacher now. All the students that the FMs of GC-A advised were from a rural background.

One of the FM from GC-A stated that they have tie-ups with rural schools. They also mentioned the TARANG program through which the schools are provided with mentorship by GC-A. The

students and teachers of these schools can reach out to GC-A, organize college tours, lab-visits, hold interactive sessions with the FMs and the school students and organise motivational sessions. All the FMs of the institution are actively engaged with TARANG.

The FMs of GC-B stated in their interview that they also provided guidance to HS students but their involvement varied. They provided advice regarding the scope of different courses, types of programme options, selection of colleges, the courses they can undertake, programmes suitable for them, new courses available not only to the students but also to their relatives. They also try to explore the students' interest and guide them accordingly. This information is provided through direct counselling, shared in WhatsApp groups of HS students and also discussed during regular class hours. Such types of constant guidance and advice helps to overcome their shyness and fear, motivates and inspires them to go for HE. Almost all the students in this college are from a rural background and many of them come with numerous personal problems because of their poor economic status. The FMs also engage their alumni to provide guidance. One of the FM could provide guidance only from her personal position as she did not have access to HS students. One of the FM provided guidance to two students from HS onwards on varied aspects. One of them is now a bureaucrat and the other an assistant teacher. Another FM stated that she advised occasionally because she thought that not many students in HS section in the college would proceed to higher education. The enrollment of students in Higher Secondary section has further reduced after COVID 19 pandemic. They hardly come forward for advice. The FMs informed that recently in June, 2023, the Career Guidance Cell of the college had published a book containing information on all the Arts and Science programmes including their scope and how to apply, It was provided to the students aspiring to go for UG programmes.

All the students were from a rural background. The students rarely come forward for help and guidance from the FMs. It is the FMs who approach them because the students lack knowledge of the UG courses and programmes. Another FM stated that in the place where he resides, most of the students are first generation learners. Their parents at times approach him for guidance for their children. Often, the students are not interested in higher studies because of their economic hardship and are inclined towards job-oriented programmes. The duration of the UG program (3 years) is also not appealing to them. They often withdraw or drop out from the

programme. Another FM guided a student to obtain admission in another university in another state and succeeded. This FM is young and the students feel comfortable to approach him. One of the FM mentioned guiding his own sister regarding the selection of the subjects at UG level. Another FM encouraged her students to explore non-traditional programmes.

Advice from 'personal/professional' position: The FMs of GCID advised students both from their personal and professional positions. From the Post-Diary interviews of the FMs of GCID, it was not clear what advice was provided from their professional and what from their personal position.

To whom the advise/guide is provided: From the tables provided below, the highest information/advice were provided to school students (13) followed by neighbours (7). Three types of students were mentioned by the FMs; school student, student and college student. A total of 22 students were advised. One of the FM advised a domestic helper and an alumnus too.

Table 5.11: Whom the advise/guide are provided

Advice given to	**GCID: 1_2**
Neighbour	7
Relative	2
Friends	0
School Student	13
College Student	4
Student	5
Domestic help	1
Did not mention	1
Alumni	1

The FMs from GCID provided information to wide range of respondents. One of them provided information to neighbours, relatives and former students who wanted information for someone else (relation not mentioned). She was also approached by the children from her neighborhood. Another FM was approached by a young girl, her uncle and her parents who was doing her Higher Secondary programme. She was also approached by children of her neighborhood. Another FM was approached by two female students for information. One of the FM made a number of visits to rural schools and the nearby area of the HEI. It was a duty assigned to him by the HEI. There

he interacted with the students and their parents. A programme was again organised in his department where in the interactive session he engaged with students from the neighboring areas.

Person from rural and/or disadvantaged background: In GCID, 21 of 40 entries were from a rural background (52.5%). Of the total valid entries only 3.8% were from rural areas in SU and 40.3% in GCID. Taking into consideration the rural geographical location of GCID, the proportion of rural students seeking advice is lower in the HEI.

Information provided to person from rural and/or disadvantaged background: In GCID 3 out of the 5 FMs provided information to the participants from a rural background.

Information regarding the HE advice provided to students from rural or disadvantaged backgrounds: The FMs of the GCID provided information regarding the admission process, detailed understanding about the entrance exam, subject selection, and the job opportunities of the courses. One female student approached another FM seeking advice from the FM to help her continue her education as her parents were against it. She also wanted to know which course would help her to obtain a job. Another FM was approached for information regarding opportunities of accessing higher education and job opportunities thereafter. The female student discussed with him the lack of support from her parents to pursue her HE and sought his advice and support.

Types of HE advice provided to rural students: The following table (Table no. 5.12) provides an understanding of the types of advice provided by the FMs especially to the rural students during the Diary Study in GCID. All the rural students wanted information/advice on whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to and about the admissions process (40) followed closely by choice of course/subject and about campus safety/security (38). The table also shows that the students of GCID had more enquiries, the FMs of GCID provided more information and in larger numbers of students in all the aspects than the FMs of the SU.

Table 5.12: Types of HE advice provided to rural students in GCID

Type of Advice	GCID: 1_2 Number of experience entries
Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	40
18. Choice of which college/universities to apply to	40
19. Choice of course/subject	38
20. About the admissions process	40
21. About covering tuition expenses/funding options	33
22. About higher education entry exams preparation	31
23. About special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations	29
24. Checking application form/other documents	27
25. Choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one	32
26. Organising a visit to the college/ university	20
27. Advice on accommodation	27
28. About college facilities/activities/ provisions	37
29. About campus safety/security	38
30. About employability prospects	37
31. About whether the college/university has good academic functioning	36
32. About transport facilities	30

The information and advice provided to the students by the FMs of GCID were similar to the information provided to the rural students and the other students as well. It is observed that along with the information regarding the admission process, choice of colleges, selection of subjects , advice was also provided to the students regarding the personal problems that they were facing at home. They looked towards the FMs of the college for advice and assistance to continue their HS. This advice was sought by the female students of the college. It is interesting to note here that one of the FM visited the rural schools and nearby areas and advised the school students and their parents. It was a part of an assigned responsibility by the college authority to the FM.

Where the HE advice was provided and the context: It is interesting to note that the FMs of GCID only provided information/advice to the people at college/rural schools (25) and at home (15).

In the Post Diary interviews it was observed the FMs of GCID provided information/advice more at the college than at home. They had more of a face-to-face interaction with the students. Even

though this advice were provided in the institution to the students, the FMs stated that this advice was provided from their personal position. These students were from other schools, were personally known to the FMs and visited them in the college and also at their home. One of the FM also visited the home of the student and advised her parents and uncle who were against her pursuing higher studies. For another FM he provided advice in a rural school in a nearby village to the students and the parents/guardians of the students. He also provided information to the students (and their guardians) from the neighboring HS schools and Junior Colleges in a informative workshop organised by his department.

FM motivations for the HE advice provided: The sense of social (15) and professional responsibility (14) towards the students motivates the FMs of GCID the most to provide information and advice in the 40 Diary Entries. Their knowledge and experience, disseminated through this advice, motivated them too. It was the 3rd major reason for advising the students (8).

Table 5.13: FM motivations for the HE advice provided, GCID

Motivation reason *(Code – note: more than one code can be used for a response if it is multi-faceted, e.g. 'personal relation with the person's father and a sense of social responsibility')*	**GCID: 1_2 Number of experience entries**
1. Interest in advising/supporting the individual	1
2. Experience/knowledge of HEIs, processes etc	8
3. Professional responsibility	14
4. Personal connection (not family)	1
5. Social responsibility	15
6. Others	1

During the Post Diary Interviews, the FMs of the GCID stated that it was a sense of satisfaction in helping others that motivated them to advise the students. One of the FM felt it was her professional responsibility to guide the students as she had the knowledge and the experience to help them to make informed decision relating to their future paths. One of the FM stated that such work provides him fresh perspective and renewed enthusiasm for helping students and thereby gains motivation to do more such work. One of the FM stated that the students are able to make more informed decisions about their academic futures through such advice and information.

Causes for asking for advice from FMs: Out of 51 valid entries, in only 23 entries the FMs responded to this query of which 16 were from GCID.

From the narratives from the personal diary interviews of the FMs of GCID, two broad causes emerged as to why people approached the FMs of GCID. One of the factors was educational purpose. It was assumed by the FMs of GCID that the people were aware that they would be provided with counselling in their native language with no language barriers, would benefit from the advice provided, be given useful insights and new ideas, enabled to make informed decisions, be provided with comprehensive guidance and opportunities to succeed by making best use of their educational experiences.

The other factor was personal. The students were facing various personal issues which affected their ability to pursue HE. The students felt that a supportive network would be created, a personalised approach would be applied to address to their issues, that they would be provided with guidance according to their diverse needs, and would be provided with consistent support and belief in collaborative efforts. For all these reasons, they approached the FMs of GCID for advice.

Participant profile of the most active participants of the Diary Study, GCID: Following are the profiles of 2 FMs of GCID who had the highest diary entries, 10 each, in the Diary Survey.

PROFILE 1:

Gourav, the FM of GCID made a total of 10 entries, 2 each in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th week of the Diary Study. 9 of the pieces of advice were provided from his personal position and only one from his professional position.

It was a school student who approached the FM at his home. He happened to know this school student personally. She sought advice and information whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic

functioning and about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses/funding options, checking application form/other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one, organise a visit to the college/university and advice on accommodation. Gaurav felt motivated to advice the student considering it as his social responsibility.

The 2nd entry of Gaurav related to a neighbour who visited him at home. Here again he provided a wide range of advice and information to his neighbour including whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses/funding options, checking application form/other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one, organise a visit to the college/university and advice on accommodation. Gaurav felt motivated to advise his neighbour considering it as his social responsibility because the person lacked knowledge of enrolling in HE as he was from a rural area.

The 3rd entry related to a school going student who first came to his house and later on to his college for advice. He happened to know this student personally. She too asked for varied advice and information including whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses/funding options, checking application form/other documents, choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in if selected in more than one, organise a visit to the college/university and advice on accommodation. Gaurav felt motivated to advise the school student because he wanted to help her so that she will benefit from his advice.

The 4th entry related to a neighbour who visited Gaurav first at the college and then at home. The neighbour asked for the same information and advice as the 3rd entry above. Gaurav felt motivated to advise his neighbour because he knew that the neighbour would benefit from his advice.

The 5th entry relate to a neighbour who visited Gaurav at the college. The neighbour asked for the same information and advice as for the 3rd entry above. Gaurav felt motivated to advise his neighbour because he knew that the neighbour would benefit from his advice.

The 6th entry of Gaurav related to a student who visited Gaurav at his home. The student asked for the same information and advice given to the 3rd entry above. Gaurav felt motivated to advise this student because he knew that the student would benefit from his advice.

The 7th entry of Gaurav related to a school student who visited him at his home but Gaurav provided his advice from his professional position on this occasion. The school student asked for the same information and advice given to the 3rd entry above. Gaurav felt motivated to advise this school student because he knew that the school student would benefit from his advice.

The 8th entry related to a neighbour who visited Gurav at his home. The neighbour asked for the same information and advice given to the 3rd entry above. Gaurav did not state why he felt motivated to advise his neighbour.

The 9th entry related to a school student who visited him at his home. The school student asked for the same information and advice as the person in the 3rd entry above. Gaurav felt motivated to advise this school student because he knew that the school student would benefit from his advice.

The last and 10th entry related again to a student who visited Gurav at his home. The student asked for the same information and advice as the person in the 3rd entry. Gaurav felt motivated to advise this student because he knew that the student would be benefit from his advice.

PROFILE 2:

The 4th profile is of a FM, ZLG2, from the GCID who also made 10 entries over a period of 3 months. All the advice was provided by the FM from her personal position but in the college. The entries of the FM were consistent throughout the study period. There were entries almost in all the weeks.

In the 1st entry the advice was provided to a school student whom he happens to know personally. The FM provided information on whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning, about transport facilities and about covering tuition expenses/funding options. Since the FM knew this student and about her lack of knowledge about HE, he felt motivated to advise her.

In the 2nd entry the FM provided information and advice regarding whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses/funding options, organise a visit to the college/university and advice on accommodation. It was the sense of satisfaction, happiness to support his own student and to convince her parents to allow her student to pursue HE that motivated the FM to do this act.

In the 3rd experience the FM provided all the advice that he could. The sense of satisfaction, happiness to support his own student and to pursue HE motivated the FM to do this act.

In the 4th experience the FM provided information to his neighbour. The neighbour who is also his student wanted all the information except choice of which colleges/universities to enroll in

if selected in more than one. It was the sense of satisfaction, happiness and eagerness to convince his student to pursue HE that motivated the FM to do this act.

In the 5th experience the FM provided information to his neighbour at her college. He provided all the information that he could to his neighbor. Since the FM knew this neighbour, and her lack of knowledge about HE, he felt motivated to advise her.

In the 6th experience the FM provided information to a school student at his college. He provided all the information that he could to this school student. Since the school student was a first generation learner, he felt motivated to advise her. He also felt motivated to help her because he had provided her with tuition and was known to him.

In the 7th experience the FM again provided information to a school student in his college who is also know to him through his tuition classes. The FM provided information and advice regarding whether to go for higher education or other options, choice of which college/universities to apply to, choice of course/subject, the admissions process, about higher education entry exams preparation, special admissions programmes/processes e.g., reservations, college facilities/activities/provisions, campus safety and security, employability prospects, whether the college/university has good academic functioning and about transport facilities, about covering tuition expenses/funding options etc. It was the sense of satisfaction, happiness to support the school student to pursue HE that motivated the FM to do this act.

The rest of the 3 experiences for which the FM provided information related to school students in his college. He provided all the information that he could to these students regarding enrolling into HE. He felt motivated to advise them because they were girls from rural areas, were first generation learners and were known to the FM. He wanted to help by giving information and advice on how to pursue HE.

Information about the other FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, ILs: The ILs of GCID, GC-A and GC-B were aware of other FMs of their HEI guiding students in enrolling in HE. The IL of GCID was also aware that a few FMs of the institution were also providing financial assistance to some students.

The IL of GC-A stated that 2 to 3 FMs of each department of his institution are deputed for HE outreaches activities. They pay visits to rural schools to provide guidance to Higher Secondary students in enrolling in UG programmes. The FMs are regularly entrusted with responsibilities in Helpdesks to assist the students directly during admission time. The FMs and administrative staff also reply to the messages and calls from the admission helpline numbers of the HEI. He was aware of these activities of the FMs and office staff of his institution.

The IL of the GC-B was also aware that, not all but many of the FMs of his college were engaged in guiding students in enrolling to HE.

Information about the other FMs guiding students in enrolling in HE, FMs: The FMs of the GCID were aware and observed the FMs of the college providing information and guidance to students in enrolling in HE. According to 4 FMs interviewed in this study, the senior FMs are more engaged in such activities and one of their FM plays a very significant role in helping the rural students. She has been consistently supporting them over the last few years. Few of them also provide financial support to the students. One of the FM interviewed stated that he was not aware of such activity as he is new to GCID. Most of the guidance in GCID, though intensive, is given in an individual capacity.

The FMs of GC-A mentioned about the institutional approach of guiding students in enrolling in HE in the HEI. They mentioned about the seven-member Career Guidance Cell which organises workshops and provides advice to students as well as to their guardian. The FMs mentioned about another institutional approach, the TARANG project, through which they visit rural schools and orient them about HE and HEIs. Large number of FMs and office staff are engaged in the TARANG project. They were also aware of individual FMs providing advice in their classes during regular class hours. According to the FMs of GC-A almost all the FMs of the HEI are engaged in such activities. One of the FM mentioned about the engagement of alumnus too in such activities. One of the FM mentioned that because of the existence of the practice of student centric approach almost all the FMs in the college are actively engaged in guiding students in enrolling in HE in the HEI. Two of the FMs mentioned that since some of the FMs are originally from that area, they feel it is their responsibility to advise the students and are more actively involved and engaged. The FMs also mentioned about the active involvement of the

office and administrative staff in providing information regarding the admission process, quotas, fee structure, fellowships, and providing help with processing documents.

In the interviews with the FMs of GC-B, they stated that the other FMs of the college are also actively engaged in advising the students through day-long pre-admission workshops organised by the Career Guidance Cell of the HEI. One of the FM mentioned that almost all the FMs were individually engaged in such activities in their classes with the HS students[7]. Two of the FMs mentioned about two specific FM of the institution who were very actively engaged with the students and motivated them, for which the enrollment rate has gone up high in those departments in the recent years. He mentioned that one of these FM was like a role model for the students because of his unique, informal and friendly interaction with the students. The FMs were also aware of the office staff providing advice on the admission procedures and requirements.

The following table 5.14 provides some interesting facts about the demographic profiles of the FMs who were surveyed in GCID. 50% of the FMs are men and 50% women. Like SU, here too a large proportion of the FMs belonged to general social group followed by OBC. There is only 1 FM who is a ST and 2 from SC. The FMs of GCID were only from two religious groups, Hinduism and Islam and were equally represented, 50%. Most interestingly, 68.8 of the FMs are from a rural background and only 31.2% from the urban areas.

[7] All the provincial colleges in Assam (Grant-in-aid) have the Higher Secondary section. Majority of the FMs of these colleges need to teach students from HS upto UG students. GCID, GC-A and GC-B are provincial colleges.

Table 5.14: Demographic Profiles of the FMs of GCID

Options	GCID: 1_2			
	Yes (given advice)		No (not given advice)	
	N=	% of VRs	N=	% of VRs
Total VRs				
1.2 Gender				
Female	24	50		
Male	24	50		
Transgender	0	0		
Other gender	0	0		
1.3 Caste/Social Group				
SC	2	4.2		
ST	1	2.1		
OBC	8	16.7		
General	37	77.1		
EWS	0	0		
1.4 Religion				
Buddhist	0	0		
Christian	0	0		
Hindu	24	50		
Jain	0	0		
Muslim	24	50		
Sikh	0	0		
Zoroastrian/Parsi	0	0		
Other	0	0		
1.9.3 Place of permanent residence				
Rural	33	68.8		
Urban	15	31.2		

From the FM survey conducted in the GCID, it was found out that all the 48 FMs (100%) responded to the question if they ever during their career as a faculty member have given any advice to others about undergraduate higher education options and processes before admission. Of the 48 FMs, 42 (87.5%) of them responded that they have provided advice and on the other hand a small proportion of 12.5% FMs (6) did not provide any such advice to any student in their career as an FM.

In the GCID 48 FMs (100%) responded that they provided different types of advice and guidance to students. They provided 229 pieces of advice to 48 students. The types of advice and guidance provided are reflected in the Table 5.15 below. The proportion of advice and guidance provided by the FMs in GCID is higher than that of the SU. Here too highest levels of advice were

provided relating to choice of course/subject (15.72%), followed by advice on whether to go for higher education or other options (14.41%), about the admissions process (11.79%), choice of college/universities to apply to (10.92%) and advice on preparing for HE entrance exam (10.48%). Here again like the SU, the least level of advice was provided on special admissions programmes/processes (e.g. reservations) which accounted to 1.75% followed closely by accompanying for a visit to the GCID where the FM works (2.18%).

Table 5.15: Type/s of advice or guidance given by FMs in GCID

GCID: 1_2		
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	33	14.41
2.Choice of which college/universities to apply to	25	10.92
3.Choice of course/subject	36	15.72
4.About the admissions process	27	11.79
5.About covering tuition expenses/funding options	10	4.37
6.Checking application form/ other documents	21	9.17
7. Choice of which college/university to enroll in if selected in more than one	17	7.42
8. Advice on preparing for HE entrance exam	24	10.48
9. Contacting college/university on behalf of applicants	7	3.06
10.Accompanying for a visit to the college/university where you work	7	3.06
11.Accompanying for a visit to another college/university	5	2.18
12.Advising via social networking e.g., WhatsApp	13	5.68
13. About special admissions programmes/ processes (e.g. Reservations)	4	1.75
Total of Answer=Yes	**229**	**100.00**

A total of 40 FMs (74%) from the GCID responded that they gave higher education advice or guidance in their personal network (Table: 5.16). They provided information to 82 persons from their personal network. The highest volume of information was provided to neighbours, 46.34% (38) followed closely by extended family members totalling to 24 (29.27%). The least volume of information was provided through NGO work and in a faith-based settings e.g. temple and mosque, 2 each (2.44%).

Table 5.16: Higher education advice or guidance in personal role as a faculty member at GCID

	GCID: X_X *(state code_inst code e.g. 1_2*	
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.Extended family (beyond nuclear)	24	29.27
2.Neighbours	38	46.34
3.Domestic staff	4	4.88
4.In a faith-based setting e.g. temple	2	2.44
5.In a community group	6	7.32
6.Through NGO work	2	2.44
7.Through local politics	0	0.00
8.Through your own tutoring/coaching work	6	7.32
Total of Answer=Yes	**82**	**100.00**

There were 42 FMs (87.5) from GCID who gave higher education advice or guidance in their professional role as a faculty member at the GCID. In the GCID they provided advice and guidance to 112 persons.

Here, highest volume of information was provided when the FMs of GCID asked some current students to advise other young people in their communities, 28.57% followed by when the FMs met students who were visiting the GCID (25.89%) and also when they visited schools (23.21%). Least volume was when the GCID organised or assisted with an open day/official visit/taster day for students to visit the college (6.25%).

Table 5.17: Higher education advice or guidance in professional role as a faculty member at GCID

	GCID: X_X *(state code_inst code e.g. 1_2*	
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.When you went on a visit to a school	26	23.21
2.When you visited another community setting	18	16.07
3.When you met with students who were visiting your college/university	29	25.89
4. When you organised or assisted with an open day/official visit/taster day for students to visit your college/university	7	6.25
5.When you asked some current students to advise other young people in their communities	32	28.57
Total of Answer=Yes	**112**	**100.00**

5.5 HE Outreach: current challenges and future opportunities

5.5.1 HE outreach: current challenges

5.5.1.1 State University (SU)

Challenges/barriers to engaging in HE outreach, IL: The IL of the SU stated in his interview that the non-existence of any such structural mechanism to attract rural students into the institution is one of its greatest challenges. Most of the FMs and the other staff perform this task as a personal responsibility and moral duty. There exists an Office of Director of Students' Welfare which looks into the cultural activities, extension and social outreach programmes and co-curricular activities of the students of the SU. On the other hand, the Office of the Secretary, University Classes looks into the academic affairs of the students as a whole but no specific attention is provided to rural students. The IL stressed that a separate office to look exclusively into attracting rural students is very essential in HEI.

Challenges/barriers to engaging in HE outreach, FMs:

Need for HE Counselling Centre

According to the FMs interviewed, the non existence of any counselling centre in the SU is one of the major challenges in attracting rural students into the HEI. There are FMs who provide counselling on a personal basis because of the non-existence of a formal set-up. The students union body sets up counselling centres during the admission time. Instead of depending on the students union body to carry out such activities, the SU should have a centre of its own where one to one counselling can be provided to rural students relating to HE outreach. It is achievable if desired.

Financial constraints: According to another FM, the financial constraints of the economically backward students acts as a barrier to study in the HEI. The cost of living in the SU is higher for students coming from rural areas. Smooth and regular provision of financial assistance to economically weaker rural students can aid and help them to overcome their financial constraints. At the same time lack of visits to rural area and the absence of organised counselling sessions in villages is another barrier.

According to another FM, the advertisements published in the newspaper often do not reach the rural students. There is an absence of representation of the SU in the nook and corner of the state and the region, unlike the private universities whose offices and centres are more visible. The lack of making such efforts are the challenges. As a result, the majority of the eligible students often do not obtain notifications of the admission process, courses and facilities offered or obtain notification after the admission processes are over. Another FM stated that there are already too many applicants and aspirants seeking enrollment in the SU. This itself is a challenge. On the other extreme, one FM felt that attracting rural students to the SU is not a challenge for the university.

On the basis of the post diary interviews, the FMs of the SU stated that the introduction of the NEP 2020 is becoming a challenge because the information received by the students of the new system is vague, clueless and not clear. With the HEI going digital, there are students with good academic records who are not able to take admission in HE because of their digital illiteracy[8]. The digital divide between the rural and the urban acts as a barrier and has made the gap wider.

[8] These students have access to the digital device but do not know how to use it effectively.

On the other hand, devoting time by FMs to overcome the digital divide, which is entrusted to them as part of their workload, is a challenge because of the crunch and shortage of FMs in HEI. The FMs are already busy with their teaching, research and administrative responsibilities. Fewer numbers of permanent FMs are making the situation more difficult.

Another FM stated that engaging in HE outreach should not be a challenge because such activites are already being carried out by the student bodies. How and what advice is provided is more important. Conducting awareness programmes in rural colleges by the SU is a challenge.

Table 5.18: HE outreach: current challenges, SU

SU: 1_1		
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.There is not enough funding availability for extra activities	69	42
2.Staff workload means that people do not have time	43	26
3.Faculty members are not aware of the issues that young people are facing in accessing higher education	28	17
4. Faculty members do not live near the college so do not know the local community	7	4
5.This is not a priority for this college/university	17	10
Total of Answer=Yes	**164**	**100**

There were 101 FMs (90.2%) who responded to the query regarding the challenges to SU providing more guidance and advice about higher education. According to 42% of the FMs inadequate funds (non-existence) for such extra activities is one of the major challenges for the SU followed by workload of the FMs and the other staff (26%). 17% of the FMs also felt that FMs were not aware of the issues that young people are facing difficulties in accessing higher education. Only 10% of the FMs felt that access to HE by the rural students is not a priority for the SU.

Suggestions for overcoming these: According to the Post-diary interviews of the FMs of SU, reaching out to the students both directly and indirectly will be beneficial to them. Strengthening the alumni network will help in reaching out to different kinds of students from different parts of the region. One of the ways of reaching out through the alumni is by uploading the alumnus personal IDs and emails on the institution's website. Or a separate webpage can be created only

for this purpose through which the aspiring students can reach out the alumni of the HEI for information because subsequently the students of the SU are becoming digitally literate and there is an increase in the usage and access to digital devices among the present generation. Making visits to rural colleges and HS schools in a formalised way can help to overcome the challenges. There should be counselling sessions within the HEI where the FMs can be assigned a few students prior and during the admission process or immediately after the declaration of the HS results.

5.5.1.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Information on challenges/barriers to engaging in HE outreach, ILs. The NEP2020 advocates an increase in the proportion of enrollment of students in HEI. As such all the HEIs, both from rural and urban areas, are trying their best to attract more students. The aspiring students in and around where the GCID is located are also now reached by other HEIs located elsewhere by offering them attractive incentives. Syphoning off the local students by such HEIs (more so private HEIs) is one of the major challenges for GCID. NEP2020 was introduced in the HEIs of the region in the year 2023. During the study period (2023), the students were not aware of the changes in the admission brought in by the NEP2020 which involves an online admission process through SAMARTH portal. Even after the students were reached through WhatsApp messages and direct contacts, many students turned up after the admission process was over. Fewer students were enrolled in B.Com and B.Sc programmes and more on BA programmes. But there are limited infrastructure and human resources for BA programmes. This poses a challenge for the HEI. Another major challenge of GCID is the high dropout rate of the students. GCID is situated in a rural area where the majority of the population is from the minority community with a conservative outlook regarding women's education coupled with poor educational and economic backgrounds. The problems associated with the socio-economic background of the parents is a huge barrier for the education enhancement of the students, particularly for the education of female students.

In GC-A, 40-45% of the students are first generation learners. Most of the students come from very interior parts of the region and they often fail to continue their studies because of the poor financial circumstances. If their parents fall ill or if any personal hardships arise, the socio-

economic responsibilities are transferred to these students. During awareness programmes or parent meets, the representation of the parents is very low. These acts as challenges for GC-A. In the last few years, the education system is becoming digitalized. However, many of the students cannot afford to have smart phones and often do not have enough money to recharge them. As a result, it becomes impossible at times for the college authority to contact the students or their parents for any matters relating to attendance and so on. These are the other challenges that the GC-A is facing and acts as barriers.

In GC-B the FMs are already overburdened with their regular classes. As a result, extension activities and devoting time for academic outreach activities makes FM feel exhausted. The IL of GC-B stated that they are able to enroll rural students, thereby, it is not a challenge for them.

Information on challenges/barriers to engaging in HE outreaches, FMs. According to the FMs of GCID, the challenges for the HEI are the lack of comprehensive pre-admission guidance, advice and counselling services, lack of effective dissemination of the information system and communication barriers. As such the students lack awareness of the courses, institutions, the opportunities, are unable to make well-informed decisions and lack effective guidance. On the other hand, the parents and guardians are also not well informed and are seen as conservative because of their poor socio-cultural and economic position.

According to the FMs of GC-A, even after applying innovative measures like TARANG and DARPAN, the outcome is not satisfactory because the majority of the students are first generation learners. Because of the socio-cultural and economic backwardness of the area, the students and more so the parents do not understand the importance of HE. There is no encouragement or motivation from their guardians to enhance their performance, thereby retention of students is a major challenge. GC-A is located within an agrarian society and many of them own farming lands. The students are more involved in varied farming activities or in small scale jobs to provide a livelihood than their education. There are some students who are actively engaged but cannot attend all their regular scheduled classes (up to 4 pm) because they commute from distant places with inadequate transport facilities. The transportation cost often becomes a barrier for them. Some of them even have to cross forest lands and encounter

human-animal conflicts (elephant). As a result, regular attendance by the students is another challenge for the institution.

The FMs of GC-B stated that the courses offered by the HE are not job oriented and act as a barrier to enrollment into HE. The students become demotivated and the parents do not encourage them to go for HE. The lack of provision for informed knowledge regarding programmes and courses, both at the HEI and within the domestic settings of the students (first generation learners and otherwise) and lack of support adds to their demotivation and act as barriers too. One of the FM stated that managing time for outreach programmes, home visits, and community engagement with rural students is a challenge because the FMs are overburdened with many activities. Motivating HS students of the college is not enough.

On the basis of the Post-diary interviews, the FMs of the GCID stated that the major challenges are ineffective communication and inadequate transport network connectivity between the institution and the students as they come from remote places. As such, the students are not aware of the scope and opportunities of different courses. This hinders their ability to stay informed about available educational opportunities. Because of their poor economic position early marriage of the female students is common. These female students are thereafter not allowed to attend classes. On the other hand, the male students are compelled to take up petty jobs in the informal economic sector such vending or agricultural labour to support their family members leading to drop out and irregularities in their attendance. It is a widespread and complex issue. The lack of modern infrastructure and facilities (digital devices and gadgets) in the institution to attract students also acts as a barrier to engage in HE outreach.

Table 5.19: HE outreach: current challenges, GCID

GCID: 1_2		
Option	**Answer = Yes (number)**	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.There is not enough funding availability for extra activities	34	52
2.Staff workload means that people do not have time	11	17
3.Faculty members are not aware of the issues that young people are facing in accessing higher education	5	8
4. Faculty members do not live near the college so do not know the local community	6	9
5.This is not a priority for this college/university	9	14
Total of Answer=Yes	**65**	**100**

There were 42 FMs (87.5 %) who responded to the query regarding the challenges to GCID providing more guidance and advice about higher education. According to 52% of the FMs inadequate funds (non-existence) for such extra activities is one of the major challenges of the GCID followed by workload of the FMs and the other staff (17%). 14% of the FMs felt that access to HE by the rural students is not a priority for the GCID. Only 8% of the FMs felt that the FMs were not aware of the issues that young people are facing in accessing higher education.

Suggestions for overcoming the challenges/barriers to engaging in HE outreach, FMs: The FMs of GCID in their Post-diary interviews stated that to overcome these challenges, internal education quality should be developed by organising comprehensive orientation programmes for new students. It would significantly improve their transition into college life. These programmes should provide guidance on academic expectations, campus resources, and personal development. By addressing these areas, HEI can create a more supportive learning environment and better equip the new students with the skills and knowledge they need to succeed in HEI environment. Upgrading the infrastructure facilities and campus resources will create a more conducive learning environment. There should be more frequent home visits to the students and discussion with their parents to address the issues students face and thereby foster better support for their education. The government policies and related initiatives for the students should be effectively implemented to help students overcome obstacles and achieve their educational goals. Additionally, efforts should be made for better use of social media to reach and engage with students. By leveraging these platforms effectively, communication can

be enhanced and provide valuable support to the students. By providing transportation facilities the students from the remote area can be reached and that would boost the student admission process.

5.5.2 HE outreach: future potential

5.5.2.1 State University (SU)

Ideas on what the institution could do for future HE outreaches, IL. According to the IL of the SU, the achievements of the institution; improvement of NAAC accreditation, enhancement of NIRF ranking of the last few years, the rank of the institution in the region, research publications and the patents should be publicised more. There is enough scope to provide this information to the general public which can then attract rural students from different parts of the region.

Ideas on what the institution could do for future HE outreaches, FMs. One of the FM from the department of law from SU stated that the Government should establish more Law Colleges in the far-flung districts of Assam as there are ample opportunities to create job options. Such HEIs generate employability and will attract rural students. Easy access to text books on varied subjects will make access to knowledge in respective fields easier. These can lead to fewer dropouts in HE. He mentioned that at times the students in certain districts of the study area need to travel around 50 km to buy books. Fee exemptions according to their economic background can be initiated to enhance enrollment of rural students, retention of rural students and reduce dropouts. Reservation of hostel seats for rural students can be initiated.

Strengthening the alumnus network was also suggested by the FMs. Collaborative workshops, career counselling programmes, shorts events with university, colleges and schools can be initiated to broaden the range of participants. Frequent visits by the FMs to the rural areas should be carried out and information about the courses, programmes, schemes, facilities of HEI should be disseminated among the prospective students and their family members.

Pre-admission guidance, orientation and awareness programmes should be provided in a systematic and comprehensive way. To develop the social skills of the students, co-curricular activities, physical training and cultural activities should be a part of the academic calendar.

Leveraging social media platforms (videos), mass media, advertisement (posters and banners both physical and digital) for awareness campaigns can effectively reach a broader audience and inform prospective students and their families about the opportunities available in HEI. Such publicity should be intensive and carried out far ahead of the admission procedure. Prospectus of the HEIs should be made easily available to the students and their guardians and it should be attractive. Academic extension and outreach programmes should be made a part of the HEI regular activities. Student exchange programmes and study tours to HEI should be initiated to inspire students and enable them to understand the significance of HEI. Showcasing the achievers of the institution should be carried out and shared within the community.

In the Post-diary interviews, the FMs stated that reaching out to the students should be done through an institutional framework (both formal and informal), through the conscious efforts of the FMs, students and administrators. This can lead to effective outcome of these initiatives. Alongside, the website of the HEI should be more informative, simple to handle, user friendly and inclusive. The FMs from the SU emphasised that academic outreach and extension programmes should be an essential activity of the SU. Active participation of the alumni for rural outreach programmes were again emphasised where they can share their experiences about HE in the SU. The alumni can create a bridge between the HEI and the community. Even though the tuition fees of the SU are low, further financial concessions or financial assistance can enhance HE rural outreach. Effective dissemination of information among the FMs is important for fruitful distribution of information to the students.

Inspiration from other institutions as to what they are doing for HE outreaches, IL: The IL of the SU was aware about other institutions organising different programmes for HE outreach such as education fairs and offering tailored scholarships.

Inspiration from other institutions as to what they are doing for HE outreaches, FMs: The FMs of the SU mentioned that the private universities advertise their courses more attractively and intensively by using billboards and hoardings. Such visibilities in the form of advertisements, about SU in the print media as well as social media, of the new courses offers, new programmes and achievements of the SU are important to attract rural students. Some HEI uses videos to provide virtual tour of the institution on social media or on their website for HE outreach. Some

institutions arrange tours of the whole institution to the aspiring students to make them aware about the study environment and to enable them to know more about the institution and thereby motivate them. In some HEI, rural visits as a form of HE outreach are institutionalised and carried out regularly (once a month) and systematically. There are provisions for tuition concessions and fee exemption (on case basis). Most of these initiatives are made by HEIs. Establishing administrative offices or branches of HEI across the state as well as the region is important for HE outreach. The FMs stressed in their interviews that such initiatives can also be adopted by the SU to attract rural students.

5.5.2.2 Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

Ideas on what the institution could do for future HE outreaches, ILs. According to the IL of the GCID, he intends to take serious measures to resolve the high dropouts of UG students within the HEI.

The IL of GC-A intends to make the DARPAN programme stronger where the students and teachers from rural schools are mentored from the school level through various activities. Now, along with rural schools, GC-A, are mentoring other nearby rural colleges through consultation programmes. The IL is working to make GC-A, the Model College of the area. The IL was awarded the Innovation in College Education and Innovative Literacy Award. The IL wants to make the Alumni Forum of the HEI stronger.

IL of GC-B also intends to strengthen feeder rural schools and the alumni association of the college. He intends to work on the feedback system of the HEI. For those rural students who are from the economically weaker sections, he intends to work more on the fee waiver policy and implement the government schemes effectively, like the Assam Pragyan Bharati Scooty Scheme which has empowered girls' students in the region.

Ideas on what the institution could do for future HE outreaches, FMs. GCID, GC-A and GC-B being located in an agrarian society, more agriculture-related degrees and diplomas should be introduced to bring in employability and retain the students in UG programmes. Since the region has a rich tribal culture, degrees and diplomas courses on Performing Acts and cultural

workshops can attract more student. Such initiatives can help in the retention of the students. Courses related to life skills and practical knowledge should be introduced with which the students can associate themselves. Tailored courses according to the needs of the students and the community should be framed and floated. The government policies should be more rural-centric and inclusive to address the issues of diversity and problems faced by rural students.

The FMs of GCID in their Post diary interview stated that awareness camps in the communities regarding the importance of education is of utmost important both for the students and their parents. This will not only enhance retention of the students but will also lead to societal advancement and transform the future prospects of the students in the long run.

Inspiration from other institutions as to what they are doing for HE outreaches, ILs. The IL of GDID stated that the urban HEIs are now visiting the rural areas and attracting the rural students with financial aids. Collaborative programs with government organization and NGOs are organized in urban HEI where students of rural HEIs are invited and then oriented about the educational facilities of the HEI. IL of the GC-A also mentioned about offering scholarships to selected students from rural areas to attract them to HEI. Such initiatives can also to undertaken by GCID and GC-A, the ILs emphasized.

Inspiration from other institutions as to what they are doing for HE outreaches, FMs. The FMs informed that other HEI conduct awareness programmes on various aspects of HE, HEI, courses and also regarding the benefits of education. College tours, Lab visits and library tours are also conducted. They organise frequent parent-teaching meetings. It is more in the junior colleges where they have students studying only in Class XI and Class XII and in private colleges. Sports events are also conducted regularly. In one rural college of the region, 22 different skill-based courses (according to the demand of the region) were floated. Alongside practical classes and workshops on these skills were also held. These changed the entire ecosystem of that HEI by attracting large number of rural students for these courses. Some HEIs create a data base of the aspiring rural students through the household survey to make correct decisions and improve their policies. These initiatives can be taken by the GCID and the other two GCs.

5.6 Summary and Conclusion

The ILs of the HEI taken for this study have an understanding of the representation of rural students of their respective institutions. According to the ILs there is high representation of rural students in these institutions. However, their perceptions were based more on their assumptions than on some data-based information. The ILs of all the 4 HEIs assumed that the rural students would feel comfortable studying in their institutions. The causes for feeling comfortable as perceived by the IL and the FMs of the SU was diverse. One of the major reasons was high quality education imparted with minimal tuition fees. But no there are no activities exclusively targeted on rural students in the SU and majority of the FMs. As a result, there is scope for such activities in the SU with focus on the choice of subjects and courses and their potential for employability.

The perceptions of the FMs of the SU regarding enrollment of rural students in SU did not tally much with that of the IL of the SU. Few of them mentioned that they did not have much knowledge about this issue because their interactions with students were more or less confined to their own departments. On the other hand, the FMs of the GCID and the GCs clearly demonstrated their awareness of the high proportion of rural students in their HEIs just like the ILs. The majority of the FMs felt that the rural students would feel comfortable in the institutions but the reasons were varied from that of the SU. It was more to do with the socio-cultural and economic factors like FM-student relationship, accessibility and close proximity of the GCs and also because the students are left with no other alternate choices. GCID and the GCs have carried out varied activities for the rural students as well as for their parents institutionally and in an organised way. One of the GC is very active and has moved ahead in a strategic way by designing their own modules. Some of the FMs of these 3 HEIs are personally involved and have also financially helped the students to pursue HE. All of these institutions feel that they still have potential to do more.

All the ILs of these HEI also provided advice to the students but for some of them their direct involvement reduced after they became ILs. The involvement of the IL of the SU was more personal and circumstantial. Whereas for the ILs of the GCID and GCs the involvement was both personal and professional. For two of the ILs providing information to rural students was more

of situational and compulsion. They have involved the other FMs and the office staff through the existing institutional mechanisms. Whereas one of the IL, along with these factors, had designed strategic plans to advise rural students because he had understood the importance of it. This intrinsic involvement is because he was involved with such works when he was a FM of the same institution.

The FMs of the SU is less involved in advising the students. On the other hand, the FMs of the GCID and the GCs were actively engaged in advising UG students before admission. However, the FM survey revealed that around 89% of the FMs of the SU and 100% in GCID have provided advice to UG students before admission. Again, the in-depth study revealed that the FMs of SU are involved more from their personal positions than professional maybe due to lack of access to UG students because SU only introduced some ug programmes on the campus in 2023. Keeping in view the rural background of GCID, the proportion of advice provided to rural students in the HEIs is observed to be less (52.5%). However, the FM survey reveals that highest information was provided in the department when the students paid a visit or when the FM visited schools. The SU have more access to urban students; the other 3 HEIs to rural students. The advice provided were also less in the SU. The advice provided in the SU was course, program and HE centric and more through a media (phone and messages) than personal interactions. On the other hand, the advice provided by the other 3 HEIs was both academic and also addressed students' personal concerns relating to their education. For those students who were from the rural areas and approached the FMs of the SU, the advice were more related to the entrance examination, its preparation and hostel facilities. The FMs felt motivated to help more so because they saw it as their professional responsibility as they have the experience and knowledge regarding these aspects which were reciprocal as to why the students approached.

The IL of the SU did not have a clearer assumption than other FMs providing advice to UG students whereas the ILs of the other 3 HEI were not only aware but also engaged the FMs in these activities through different programmes and activities. The IL of the SU mentioned about the units which he assumes would do such activities. In this regard the FMs mentioned not only about the FMs but also of the office staff who are engaged in such activities.

The FMs of GCID and the GCs were involved in providing informed choices to the rural students before admission because of the existing institutional mechanisms. The highest and most effective involvement in this process is observed in GC-A. Almost all the FMs and the office staff are involved in diverse ways in disseminating the information to rural students. Whatever initiatives were taken in these HEIs were all for the rural students. The advice provided by the FMs of GCID to the students was far more than that provided by the FMs of the SU to their students. In GDID the advice was provided either from home or in the HEI. In addition to being a professional responsibility, the FMs of GCID felt it to be their social responsibility too.

As for the challenges, the IL and FMs of SU perceive the following to be the major challenges and barriers within the SU: the non-existence of any institutional mechanism; the nonexistence of an effective and operational counselling unit within the HEI; the lack of emphasis on advertising the SU and its courses and programmes; the nonexistence of a mechanism to provide special financial assistance to rural students; and with HEIs and the SU becoming paperless, the growing digital divide within the urban and rural students. Lack of funds and time constraints of the FMs are also considered as challenges in the SU. But some FMs felt that they could still achieve much.

Strengthening the alumni networks and creating a student friendly website are considered as suggestions to overcome the barriers.

As for the GCID and GCs, the introduction of the NEP2020 in HEI and the transformation thereafter is acting as a major challenge. The conservative outlook regarding women's education coupled with the poor educational and economic circumstances of the parents and the guardians of the students in these HEIs provide other barriers which have multiple impacts on the education of the students.

It would be possible to address the need for HE outreach through the following: establishment of more HEIs offering professional and job-oriented courses in different districts and remote areas of the state; strengthening alumni networks; providing easy access to books and teaching materials; initiating collaborative ventures with varied organisation and rural-student centric HE policies and programmes.

Thus, it can be concluded that the ILs and the FMs of the HEIs were aware of the practices of HE outreach in their institutions and others too. For many of the FMs such activities did not have a name, were a casual practice and understood more as a social responsibility. Only for one HEI, GC-A, was it one of the major and intensive institutional programmes. The magnitude at which HE outreach is carried out varies according to the institutions. Since HE outreach is already in practice in all these HEI, to institutionalise it specifically for the rural students to upheld the principal of social inclusion as envisaged in the NEP2020, is achievable. The challenges need to be worked out and the barriers removed. However, these challenges are complex and diverse because the socio-cultural and economic positions of the students are strongly intertwined with their participation in HE. The HEI may not have control or have limited avenues to enhance HE outreach. Large number of students, both urban and rural, are seeking information and guidance on whether to go for HE and the likelihood that the courses they are advised to take will make them economically independent or assure them some form of employment. These concerns pose more challenges to HEIs when they are reworking their courses and programmes. These along with the other challenges like digital divides, no budget allocation for HE outreach, and shortage of human resources require serious consideration to make wider access to HE fruitful.

Chapter 6: Who are the students and what is their experience of and perspectives on HE outreach?

6.1 Introduction

Students of both the State University (SU) and the Government College In-Depth (GCID) are studied here to dig out areas deemed necessary to help them make informed choices *vis a vis* higher education. As the research objective is to find out areas where improvements could be made to help rural students, the SU and GCID were particularly chosen for the study. The demographic background of students in both the institutes is quite different. Keeping in mind the objective of the study for this chapter, the demographic background of the students, their family background, their educational background and their family's financial background are discussed. In the later sections, the involvement of faculty members with students' choices and decision regarding higher education is analysed. Whether students are making informed choices or not is the focal point of investigation here. In addition to that, the role of the faculty members is also explored. To write this chapter UG student surveys were conducted in the SU and the GCID with a total of 1001 students studying in the first year of UG surveyed. These students were selected from across departments to make the survey more inclusive. Apart from that, two Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were taken in each of the institutions. Each FGD included 5 to 6 students. Subsequently, three students from each FGD were selected for personal interviews. These interviews have been translated and transcribed. Thus, to write this chapter we have used UG survey data; transcripts from the FGDs; and the personal interviews of the UG students.

6.2 Demographic background of Undergraduate Students

6.2.1. State University (SU)

The students enrolled in various UG programmes at the SU are of different age groups. The highest number of students surveyed are between 18-20 years of age. The lowest age is 18. Surprisingly there were about 20 students who are over twenty-four years old. Usually, 18-19 years old students enroll into UG programs. These older students are assumed to be the students from the University Law College who are undertaking LLB after completing their graduation or post-graduation in some other subject. Overall, female students outnumber male students with a close margin of 53.3% and 46.5%. 45% of the students surveyed belong to the

General category followed by Other Backward Classes (26.7%), ST (12%), SC (8.4%) and Economically Weaker Sections (7.2%). 85.4% students are Hindus, 12% Muslims, 1.4% Christians, 0.2% for Jain and Buddhist each. Only 1% of the total number of students are identified with Physical Disability. Two students out of 500 (0.4%) identify as LGBTQIA+. 12 students (2.4%) prefer not to comment on their sexuality. There are no recorded married students. 18 students have avoided being identified as unmarried. They recorded in the 'other' category: 'single', 'committed', 'in a relationship' and 'dating'. One student identified as divorced or separated. No student recorded having children. They were born in various states of India. It is interesting to see that one student has written Bodoland as their place of birth although Bodoland has not yet been granted statehood. There is an administrative division called BTC (Bodo Territorial Council) only. The rural/urban divide is evenly distributed with 48.1% rural and 47.7% urban students studying currently in the first year of UG program (as recorded in the survey). Assamese, Bodo, Bengali, Hindi, Deori, Dimasa, Karbi, Kokborok, Kuki, Manipuri, Mising, Nepali, Odia, Rajnanshi, Saangtam, Telegu, Tiwa and Vishnupriya were their mother tongues.

Table 6.1: Gender SU (Source: UG survey)

Gender	Number	Percentage
Female	267	53.3
Male	233	46.5
Transgender	1	0.2
Total valid responses	**501**	**100%**

Table 6.2: Social Category SU (Source: UG survey)

Social Category	Number	Percentage
SC	42	8.4%
ST	60	12.0%
OBC	134	26.7%
General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	229	45.7%
EWS ((Non-SC/ST/OBC)	36	7.2%
Total Valid responses	**501**	**100%**

Table 6.3: Mother Tongue SU (Source: UG survey)

Mother Tongue	Number	Percentage
Assamese	403	82.7%
Bengali	41	8.41
Bodo	17	3.4
Hindi	11	2.2
Karbi	6	1.2
Deori	1	0.2
Dimasa	1	0.2
Mishing	1	0.2
Tiwa	1	0.2
Kuki	1	0.2
Kokborok	1	0.2
Sangtam	1	0.2
Rajbonshi	1	0.2
Manipuri	1	0.2
Vishnupriya	1	0.2
Oriya	1	0.2
Telegu	1	0.2
Total Valid Responses	**487**	**100**

6.2.2. Government College in-depth (GCID)

As with the State University, the maximum number of students enrolled in the UG first year are aged between 19-21 years. There is only one student over 24 (as per the survey data). Female students outnumber male students by a huge margin (69.8% females and 30.2% males). This data is aligned with the administrative data. No one identified as transgender. In terms of caste/social group of the students, there is distinctively less diversity as compared to the State University. The following table (Table 6.4) will illustrate the point further.

Table 6.4: Social Category (GCID)

Social Category	Total Number	Percentage
SC	76	15.2
ST	6	1.2
OBC	10	2.0
General (Non-SC/ST/OBC)	395	79.0
EWS	13	2.6

The area where the college is situated is largely inhabited by Muslim population. There are a few villages of Bengali people, belonging to the SC category. There is only a couple of villages of Bodo community, a tribal community, in the larger area where the college is situated. This data from the UG survey is an apt demographic representation of the GCID. In terms of religion also, there is a clear majority of Muslim students. 81.2% of the total surveyed students are Muslim. Administrative data also corroborates this. The rest (18.8%) of the students follow Hinduism. The population in this part of Assam uses one particular dialect of Bengali in their day to day conversation. But the students are educated in vernacular medium schools with Assamese as their medium of instruction. So, when we conducted our survey, we noticed that students were quite confused about how to define their mother tongue. They had approached the research team about this confusion. But we believed that rather than guiding them about which language should ideally be called their mother tongue, it would be more appropriate to let them decide which language best resonates with them. The resulting data is given below:

Table 6.5: Mother Tongue (GCID)

Mother Tongue	Total No.	Percentage
Assamese	351	70.34
Bengali	135	27.05
Local Language	13	2.60

It is interesting to see that 70.34% of the total surveyed students claim Assamese to be their mother tongue. The 2.60% of the students who wrote 'local language' as their mother tongue constitute a mixture of both Bodo language speaking students as well as Bengali dialect speaking students. They, in all probability, confused the meaning of mother tongue.

We surveyed 500 students in GCID of which only 3 students (0.6%) were physically disabled. In terms of sexuality, we are surprised that 4.8% of the students ticked 'prefer not to say'. It could be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, due to religious constraints, students usually were reluctant to speak about sexuality. Secondly, it could be looked upon as a bold statement by the students. It is a socio-economically backward area. Early marriage and use of *hijab* is a common practice here. Under such socio-religious scrutiny it is only possible that the students feel threatened to be speaking about homosexuality even though they very well knew that this survey is anonymous. In any case, this was an interesting revelation for all the research team members.

To have a better understanding of the socio-economic background of the students, it is important to look at their customs and practices. The population here depends entirely on agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone their economy. Most of the students are of the first generation to go to higher education institutions. Economic and educational backwardness has resulted in the prevalence of certain regressive social practices. Besides poverty, early marriage, for both young men and women is the most worrying cause of drop out in the college. In this survey, we have found out that ten out of the five hundred students are married. And, three of them have children. This is in sharp contrast with the data found in the SU.

All the surveyed students are born in Assam. They reside in the neighboring villages. Until the Bachelor in Vocation Programme was started, only students from the neighboring area took admission in this college. This made this population quite exclusive. But, of late, students from other districts also are taking admission into the B.Voc programmes *viz*. Medical Laboratory Technician and Food Processing & Quality Management. This has resulted in residential students. The college hostel was renovated in 2023 to accommodate the students coming from far away. This will be discussed further in the next section.

6.3 Undergraduate Students: residence and commute information

6.3.1. State University (SU)

The SU is a premier institution for Higher Education in the North East region of India. It is one of the oldest universities in the region. Students flung from all areas of the state as well as from other states of NE India take admission in the SU. In our survey we have found that 15.2% of the students split their residence on a weekly basis. Of this 15.2%, 6.2% stay on campus, 4.4% stay

in the same state but in a different district. 5% stay in the same town, 0.8% stay in same district but not the same town. During vacation or other times, 8.4% of this 15.2% of students stay in the same state, 3.4% stay in the same town, another 3.4% stay in the same district but not the same town. Only 0.6% students stay in a different state during vacation.

On the question of residence, 31.5% of students stay on campus. 40.9% of students stay in the same town, 1.6% of students stay in the same district and 8.4% of students stay in the same state but a different district.

The mean distance from weekly residence to the university is 7.72 kilometers with the minimum distance being 1 km. The mean travel time from weekly residence to the university is 23.47 minutes.

The most popular mode of transport is walking (41.9%), followed by bus (23.2%) and then rickshaw (13.8%). The least popular mode of transport is carpool (0.1%). But 3 students out of the 501 have mentioned other modes of transport too. Two of the three hire cab services and the third one mentioned the university bus.

From the interviews we have come to know that out of the 6 UG students only one student lives at a distance of about four kilometers from the SU and as such that student uses a rickshaw or auto to commute. The remaining five students said that they live in a radius of one kilometre from their classes and they prefer walking.

6.3.2. Government College in-depth (GCID) & Other Government Colleges

The GCID has students mostly coming from its neighboring villages. According to the survey data, only 4.0% of the students stay in more than one residence on a weekly basis. Of this 4.0% of students, 0.2% stay on campus, 3.6% stay in the same town, 0.2% stay in the same district but not the same town. During vacation also, 0.2% stay on campus, 3.6% stay in the same town, 0.2% stay in the same district but not the same town.

480 students out of 500 mentioned that they do not split their residence on weekly basis. So, out of these 480 students, 479 (95.8%) stay in the same town. Only one student (0.2%) stays in the same district but not the same town.

The mean distance from their weekly residence to HEI is 13.7kms. The mean travel time from weekly residence to HEI is 32.34 kms. So, we can see that student populace is local to a large extent.

The demography of students can further be illustrated by their chosen mode of transport.

From the survey we see that highest number of students use auto/rickshaw (52.5%) followed by bus/minivan (20.4%). 15.3% students use bike/scooty. Two students have marked tractor as their mode of transport. 5.2% students come by walking.

Table 6.6: Mode of Transport from Weekly Residence to HEI (GCID) Source: UG Survey

	Answer = Yes (number)	**Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)**
1.Walking	27	5.2
2.Cycle	20	3.8
3.Rickshaw/Auto	275	52.5
4.Bus/Minivan	107	20.4
5.Train	8	1.5
6.Bike/Scooty/Scooter	80	15.3
7.Carpool	-	-
8.Personal Car	5	1.0
9.Metro	-	-
10. Tractor	2	0.4

Source: UG Survey

From the survey it is seen that a majority of the students commonly used rickshaw/auto (52.5%) as their mode of transport. 20.4% used bus/minivan. Scooty/Bike/Scooter is used by only 15.3% of the students under survey. This is in sharp contrast to what we see or believed. The least favorite mode of transport used is tractor.

Out of the six UG students interviewed, only one resides in the college hostel which is situated in the campus. She mentioned that it takes only 2-3 minutes to reach her department. She walks to her class. Three students said that they use scooty/bike to commute. Two students use public transport or tempo to come to college. These five students live at a distance between 3-15 kilometres away from college.

6.4 Undergraduate Students' Background

6.4.1 Educational and family background

6.4.1.1 State University (SU)

Parents: From the first Focus Group discussion, one student said that her mother undertook a BA in Education and her father is Higher Secondary pass and engaged in business. The second one had lost their father who had a Bachelor's degree. This student's mother had completed HSLC (10th standard). The third interviewee from first FGD said that their mother held two PG degrees: one in Home Science and the other in Social Work. While the father is a Graduate. He completed his B.Sc in agriculture from Assam Agriculture University. The first interviewee from the second FGD mentioned that their mother studied up to 12th standard and she studied BA but she could not complete it. While their father has a B.Com degree. The second interview from the FGD reveals that the mother is a housewife. She completed her BA. The father completed his class 12 and completed his ITI degree and he is currently working in a public enterprise. The third interview from the FGD revealed that the mother completed her studies till class X. Their father has cleared his higher secondary examination.

Grandparents: About grandparents the first interviewee said that their grandmother completed BA (General) and grandfather studied up to class XII. Their paternal uncle undertook a MA in Political Science and LLM, and aunt undertook a MA in Mathematics. The second student said that their grandfather was a political leader and he studied up to class 8. The third student

mentioned that their paternal grandfather is a Graduate in History and their paternal grandmother is a class 10th pass. After completing her 10th, she directly obtained a job. Their maternal grandmother was a nurse. She completed a BSc in Nursing and their maternal grandfather also had BA degree in Political Science.

From the second FGD one student mentioned that they did not know about their grandparents. The third student from second FGD said that they were clueless about maternal grandparents' education and their paternal grandparents did not have any formal education. Students seem to know about the educational background of their respective families. And, in some cases we see that these students are third generation learner in their families to go for higher education.

Analysis from the survey:

The UG survey shows that 40.1% students mentioned that the highest educational qualification of their mother is Degree Education, followed by HSSLC (22.8%) and Post Graduation (15.6%). Similarly, for father's highest education we see that 42.1% students mentioned that the highest education is Graduation followed by Post Graduation. Only 3 (0.6%) students said that their mothers studied up to Ph.D. and 16 (2.4%) students said that their fathers studied up to Ph.D. 12.6% students said that their Legal Guardian studied up to Degree Education.

Table 6.7: Educational Background of Family Member (SU), source UG Survey

Highest Education	Mother (% of Total Valid responses 501)	Father (% of Total Valid Responses	Legal Guardian (% ofTotal Valid responses 216)
1. Do not know	3.0	2.6	12.6
2.Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)	0.2	0.4	—
3. Did not access formal schooling	0.4	0.4	0.2
4.1st to 5th class	0.4	1.4	0.2
5. 6th to 8th class	1.8	0.2	0.2
6. 9th to 10th class	13.6	7.0	1.8
7. 11th to 12th class	22.8	16.8	3.2
8. Diploma/ITI/ITC	0.2	2.4	0.4
9. Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	40.1	42.1	12.6
10. Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	15.6	22.0	9.6
11. MPhil and/or PhD	0.6	3.2	2.4

Table 6.8: Education level of Grandparents (SU) source: UG Survey

Highest Education	Maternal Grandmother (% of VRs of total 479)	Maternal Grandfather % of VRs of total 478)	Paternal Grandmother (% of VRs of total 472)	Paternal Grandfather (% of VRs of total 473)
1. Do not know	66.7	64.7	70.7	68.7
2.Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)	0.2		0.4	0.4
3. Did not access formal schooling	3.6	1.8	4.2	2.8
4.1st to 5th class	3.6	1.8	2.8	1.0
5. 6th to 8th class	1.0	0.8	1.4	1.6
6. 9th to 10th class	7.6	4.2	6.0	3.0
7. 11th to 12th class	5.0	5.2	3.2	3.8
8. Diploma/ITI/ITC	0.4	1.0	—-	0.8
9. Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	6.4	10.4	4.2	9.0
10. Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	1.0	5.2	1.4	3.2
11. MPhil and/or PhD	0.2	0.4	—	0.2

Highest Education of Grand-Parents :

The table above shows that the largest section of the student under survey are unaware of their grand parents' highest educational qualification. 0.2% students agreed that their maternal grandmother studied up to Ph.D and 0.4% students said that their maternal grandfather studied up to Ph.D. 0.2% of students mentioned that their paternal grandfather studied up to Ph.D. From the survey we see that those students who are aware of their grandparents' educational background have marked Degree Education as highest level of education for their grandparents.

Occupation:

Table 6.9: Occupation of Family Members (SU) Source: UG Survey

Occupation	Mother Valid Response: 472	Father Valid Responses: 474	Occupation
Self Employed-Agriculture	2	21	3
Self-Employed- Non Agriculture	10	119	24
Wages Worker	1	2	
Salaried	105	328	59
Unemployed/No Occupation	—	4	15
Housewife	354		3
Scholar	—		

The above table shows the various occupations of mother, father and legal guardian of the students of the SU. Since no student under survey from the SU is married, spouse's occupation is not included in this table. The largest number of students (354 out of 472) included their mother's occupation under the category 'housewife'. Whereas 328 out of 474 responses for father's occupation were various salaried jobs. 105 responses were for mothers as salaried persons. Four responses are recorded unemployed. From these four, three students indicated that their father was retired. One student mentioned that their father had died. In terms of legal guardian, 59 are salaried, 24 are self employed (mostly business), 15 unemployed, 3 each for agricultural worker and housewife.

Table 6.10: Monthly Family Income (SU) Source: UG Survey

Monthly Income In INR	N=	% of VRs
Less than 25,000	54	11.3
25,001-50,000	165	34.5
50,001-75,000	58	12.1
75,001-100,000	75	15.7
More than 100,000	126	26.3
Total	**478**	**100**

The monthly family income shows the difference of access to wealth and income. From this table it is seen that only 11.3% family earn below Rs. 25,000 per month. 12.1% families earn between Rs.50,000-75,000 thousand per month. 15.7% earn between Rs.75,000-1,00,000. 26.3% earn more than one lakh rupees per month. 34.5% of families earn between 25,001-50,000 INR per month. Access to higher education or choice of higher education is highest in the monthly income group of INR 25000-50000. Only 54 students out of 478 respondents are from families with less than 25,000 monthly income.

The mean number of total people supported by this income is 3.8. Total valid response in 481 (96%) out of 501.

6.4.1.2 Government College in-depth (GCID)

Education of Parents (GCID)

The table below reflects the highest education of parents and legal guardian. The maximum number of responses for both parents' highest education is indicated at HSLC (mother 38% and father 23.8%). This is followed by 1st- 5th class and 6th -8th class. 10% of the respondents did not know both parents' highest education. 4.2% students said that their mother's highest education is Degree Education. 8% students mentioned that their father's highest education is Degree Education. 6.2% said that their mother did not access formal education while 5.6% said that same about their father. The highest education selected by students in general is Post Graduation. 1.4% students said that their mother studied up to PG and 2% said that their father studied up to PG.

Table 6.11: Education of Parents (GCID)Source: UG Survey

Highest Education	Mother (% of Total Valid	Father (% of Total Valid Responses 499)	Legal Guardian (% of Total Valid responses 6)
1. Do not know	10.0	10.0	0.6
2.Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent household)		0.4	0.2
3. Did not access formal schooling	6.2	5.6	
4.1st to 5th class	15.4	17.6	0.4
5. 6th to 8th class	15.4	15.8	
6. 9th to 10th class	38.0	23.8	
7. 11th to 12th class	8.8	15.2	
8. Diploma/ITI/ITC	0.6	1.4	
9. Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)	4.2	8.0	
10. Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)	1.4	2.0	
11. MPhil and/or PhD			

Education of Grand Parents (GCID)

The highest education for grandparents shows a very interesting picture. An average of 85.6% students responded that they did not know about their grandparents' highest education. An average of 2.8% students mentioned that their grandparents did not have access to formal education. An average of 3.4% students mentioned that their grandparents, both maternal and paternal, studied up to 1st-5th class. This is the highest response level among all the options. 0.4% students said that their grandfathers attained Degree Education. 0.6% said that their maternal grandfather studied up to PG and 0.2% said that their paternal grandfather studied up to PG.

Table 6.12: Education of Grand Parents (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Highest Education	Maternal grandmother Total valid Response: 487	Maternal grandfather Total valid Response: 487	Paternal Grandmother Total valid Response:	Paternal Grandfather Total valid Response: 486
1. Do not know	84.4	85.0	87.2	86.0
2.Not Applicable (e.g. You are from a single-parent	0.4	0.2		
3. Did not access formal schooling	2.6	2.4	3.6	2.8
4.1st to 5th class	4.2	3.8	3.2	2.4
5. 6th to 8th class	2.8	2.0	1.0	2.0
6. 9th to 10th class	1.6	2.2	1.8	2.0
7. 11th to 12th class	1.0	0.8	0.4	1.4
8. Diploma/ITI/ITC				0.2
9. Degree education (e.g., BA, BSc)		0.4		0.4
10. Post-Graduate education (e.g., MA, MSc)		0.6	0.2	
11. MPhil and/or PhD				

We took six interviews of UG students. The information about highest education of the family members found from the interviews are discussed here. The information is aligned with the survey data. Students seem to be unaware of their grandparents' education. The following table will give information from the UG students interviews.

Unlike the students from SU, GCID students did not speak much or give long answers for questions relating to their family background. Two students said they do not have any knowledge about their maternal grandfather's educational background. One said he passed HSSLC, one passed class 10, one studied up to class 8 and one studied up to class 4. Three responses had no idea about paternal grandmother's education. One said she did not have formal education. Two interviewees said that their grandmothers studied up to class 5. Two students mentioned that their paternal grandfathers studied up to class 6. One said that he

studied up to class 8. Three students did not know about their paternal grandfather's educational background.

Occupation of Family Members (GCID)

Table 6.13: Occupation of Family Members (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Occupation	Mother VR=479	Father VR=485	Spouse VR=4
Self-employed (agriculture)	14	293	—
Self-employed (non-agriculture)	1	116	1
Wages Worker	1	20	—
Salaried	28	56	3
Unemployed/No Occupation	—	—	—
Housewife	435		
Scholar	—	—	—

Out of 479 valid responses for mother's occupation, 435 respondents mentioned that their mothers are housewives; 28 are salaried persons; 14 are associated with agriculture; one each for wage worker and self-employed (non-agriculture). For father's occupation 293 responses are categorised as self-employed (agriculture); 116 are associated with business/shopkeeper; and 20 wage workers. In the wage worker category, we have found the maximum number for carpentry. Only 56 are salaried persons including both private and government jobs. None of the students mentioned the occupation of their legal guardian. Out of the four responses for spouse's occupation three are salaried persons and only one has mentioned her spouse as a business man (self-employed (non-agriculture). The occupations originally listed by students included: teachers, private job, carpenter, driver, social worker, farmer, worker, doctor, agriculture and business for fathers. For mothers: housewives, anganwadi teachers, teachers, shop and agriculture. This analysis brings to light the foundation of the economy in this very rural area of Assam. The highest share in economy comes from agriculture. Business, ranging from farm-based to brick industry is most widely prevalent business choices for the people living in the adjacent area of the GCID. The number working woman is very low.

What we see in contrast with the SU is that highest education of parents and grandparents is limited to high school level for the maximum number of cases. In terms of jobs also, we do not see much variation. Salaried persons are mostly limited to private job and teachers. 435 out of 479 respondents mentioned their mother's occupation as housewife indicating a noteworthy marker of rural economy.

Monthly Family Income (GCID)

The tables and the discussion above related to the highest education and occupation of family members of the UG students under survey. Each of these tables and data sets are interlinked. Education is yet to be acknowledged as a benchmark for development. A large number of students enroll every year into the GCID. Although we see huge number of students enrolled into UG programmes every year, the dropout rate stood out as the biggest challenge. Gradually from the 2nd semester of UG the numbers decline. The most important problems affecting this are lack of education and poverty. Both the aforementioned data set and the post diary interviews of the Faculty Members supports this presumption. So, under such socio-economic circumstances, monthly family income was not expected to be satisfactory. This is in sharp contrast with the SU. The following table shows the economic status of the families of students who took part in the survey.

Table 6.14: Monthly Family Income (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Monthly Income in INR	N=	% of VRs
Less than 25,000	322	65.2
25,001-50,000	142	28.7
50,001-75,000	17	3.4
75,001-100,000	8	1.6
More than 100,000	5	1.1
Total	**494**	**100**

Out of 500 students 494 have provided valid responses. Of this 65.2% students said that their families earn less than 25,000 rupees per month. Only 1.1% students said that their families earn more than one lakh per month. 28.7% said that the monthly average income of their

families is between 25,001-50,000 rupees. 1.6% responded that the monthly average income of their families is between 75,001-1,00,000. This data is a testimony to the fact that people living nearby the GCID are living below the poverty line.

The mean number of total people supported by this income is 1.4. Total valid response in 494 (98.8%) out of 500.

6.4.2 Schooling history

6.4.2.1 State University (SU)

Table 6.15: Location of Schools Attended (SU) Source: UG Survey

Location	Anganwadi VR=476	Class 1-5 VR=492	Class 6-8 VR=492	Class 9-10 VR=493	Class 11-12 VR=493
Rural	34.5	31.9	29.1	27.1	17.8
Urban	46.9	52.3	53.7	56.7	68.7
Semi Urban	13.4	14.0	15.4	14.6	12.0

Out of 476 valid responses, 46.9% completed their pre-primary education in urban areas, 34.5% undertook it in rural areas and 13.4% undertook it in semi-urban areas. In terms of primary education more than half of the sample (52.3%) said that they studied in urban schools. 31.9% said that they studied in rural schools and only 14% studied in semi-urban areas. Middle school locations also project the same picture. 53.7% students under survey studied in urban schools, 29.1% studied in rural schools and 15.4% studied in semi-urban schools. 56.7% students responded that they completed their High School in urban areas. And, 68.7% students said that they completed Higher Secondary Education in urban areas. This picture shows a gradual increase in urban schooling from preprimary to higher secondary.

School History:

Table 6.16: Types of School (SU) Source: UG Survey

Types of School	9th-10th Class VR=492	Class 11th-12th VR=493
Co-educational	95.0	95.6
Singe Gender	3.2	2.8

Single gender or single sex schools are seen not to be a popular choice. 95% students studied High School in co-educational institutions and 95.65 students studied higher secondary in a co-educational institution.

The survey data suggests that private schools are preferred for High School education over government schools. In terms of management of schools also, private schools are seen to more student friendly than government and government aided. 71.7% students said that they studied high school at private schools. Whereas 67.1% said that they completed their Higher Secondary Education from private schools. Urban private schools is clearly a priority for parents. Since the SU is the premier Higher Education institution, this data is indicative of the some of the best students in the state.

Table 6.17: Syllabus (SU) Source: UG Survey

Syllabus	Class 9th—10th VR=495	Class 11th—12th
State	58.3	62.9
CBSE	39.9	35.1
ICSE	0.6	0.4

58.3% of the students completed high school from the State Board (Secondary Education Board of Assam). 62.9% of the students under survey said that they studied in the State Board from HSSLC. 39.9% studied High School in CBSE and 35.1% studied Higher Secondary in CBSE. Only 0.6% of students studied High School in ICSE and 0.4% of students studied Higher Secondary in ICSE. The State Board in Assam is trusted by parents, mostly in towns and rural areas. More so, there is emotion attached with HSLC and HS State Ranks. Holding Rank in HSLC and HSSLC is considered very prestigious.

Table 6.18: Medium of Instruction (SU) Source: UG Survey

Medium of Instruction	Class 9th—10th	Class 11th-12th
Regional language	31.0	18.5
English	67.3	80.0
Hindi	1.6	1.4

Coming to medium of instruction, 67.7% of students studied High School in English medium and 80% of students studied Higher Secondary in English Medium. 31% studied High School in regional language schools and 18.5% studied Higher Secondary in regional language schools. Hindi medium schools are apparently least popular as only 1.6% students studied High School in Hindi medium and 1.4% studied Higher Secondary in Hindi medium.

Table 6.19: Stream Choice (SU) Source: UG Survey

Stream	Total VRs= 497	%VRs
Science	244	48.7
Commerce	46	9.2
Arts/humanities	207	41.3

Since UG courses are new to SU, the data to be analysed here will not show a very clear picture of choices. However, according to the data collected we have found that Science and Arts are almost equally represented by the students. 48.7% students are from science stream, 41.3% students are from Arts or Humanities and only 9.2% students are from Commerce stream.

Coming to the data collected from the UG interviews we find varied information about UG students' schooling history. Among the three students from FGD 1, two have studied in semi-urban and rural Assamese medium schools. These schools are state run schools. The third student from FGD1 has studied in English medium school, state board. From FGDs2, the first student said that they studied in Vivekananda Kendriya Vidyalaya, government CBSE school, later for higher secondary shifted to private English medium school. The second student from FGD 2 said that they studied in the same school from nursery to HS. It was an English medium private school. The third student from FGD2 had a very interesting schooling history. They had changed school three times due their father's occupation. Firstly their education started in Kendriya Vidyalaya in Delhi with Hindi medium. Later, they shifted to Boko, Kamrup (rural) where they studied in a missionary school with English as medium of instruction. It is really a good cross-section.

Residence During Higher Secondary Education:

76.2% students responded saying that they were day scholars. 11.8% lived in a school hostel. 5.4% were day scholars living in paying guest accommodation. 4.2% of students said that they lived in rented accommodation. Only 1.6% of students lived away from home with relatives.

6.4.2.2 Government College in-depth (GCID)

Table 6.20: Location of Schools (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Location	Anganwadi VR=499	Class 1-5 VR=500	Class 6-8 VR=500	Class 9-10 VR=500	Class 11-12 VR=500
Rural	98.6	98.0	96.8	94.6	85.4
Urban	0.4	1.4	2.4	3.6	10.4
Semi Urban	0.8	0.6	0.8	1.8	4.2

Students under survey in the GCID live in villages. But some of them have studied in urban schools or junior colleges for their Higher Secondary. The data given in table no. 6.4.16 shows that 98% of students studied in rural schools for their pre- primary and primary education. 96.8% of students studied middle school in rural areas. 94.6% of students completed their high school from rural areas. 85.4% of students studied higher secondary in rural schools. Students live in villages and they come from economically weaker sections. As a result, the majority of them completed their education in rural areas.

Table 6.21: Types of School (GCID)Source: UG Survey

Types of School	Class 9th—10th VR=500	Class 10th—11th VR=500
Co-Educational	91.0	92.6
Single Gender	9.0	7.4

Although there are a lot of challenges for dissemination of education in this area, one progressive aspect is the fact that parents are not hesitant to send their girls to co-educational institutions. As mentioned above, all the UG students who were interviewed had attended co-ed schools. The data above also show that more than 90% students studied their high school and higher secondary in co-ed schools. This might be because of the non-existence of

women/girls only education institutions in close vicinity. This could also be affected by the smaller number of single gender schools.

Interestingly all the UG interviewees have studied in rural private schools. If we look at the neighboring area of the GCID, we see that private Assamese medium schools are mushrooming. Students mostly prefer to go to these private schools or junior college for the higher secondary stage. One student mentioned that they had studied in two different districts due to their father's occupation. All of them have studied in co-educational schools.

Table 6.22: Management of School (GCID) Source; UG Survey

Management of Schools	Class 9th—10th VR= 500	Class 11th—12th VR=499
Government	62.6	55.0
Government Aided	1.4	1.4
Private	36.0	43.4

Although government schools still comprise more than half of the total responses for High School and Higher Secondary School choices, the percentage of private schools is also growing significantly. As we can see private schools are clearly a growing choice among students for pursuing higher secondary education.

Table 6.23: Syllabus (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Syllabus	Class 9th—10th VR=500	Class 11th-12th VR=499
State	99.8	99.6
CBSE	0.2	0.2
ICSE	—-	—

State Board is again a dominant choice for school education here. Barring one student, all studied in government schools. This is probably due to the absence of CBSE or ICSE schools in the area. There is only one CBSE school in the entire local clusters of schools. In the rest of the neighbouring cluster there are no CBSE school available.

Table 6.24: Medium of Instruction (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Medium of Instruction	Class 9th—10th VR=500	Class 11th-12th VR=499
Regional Language	99.4	98.4
English	0.6	1.2
Hindi		0.2

The medium of instruction is predominantly the local language. Only a tiny portion (0.6%) of students studied High School in English medium. For Higher Secondary 1.2% studied in English medium. Only one student mentioned that they studied in Hindi medium school during their higher secondary.

Table 6.25: Stream Choice (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Stream	N= VR=499	%of Vis
Science	78	15.6
Commerce	29	5.8
Arts/Humanities	392	78.4

During the survey it was kept in mind that students should be selected from all streams. The Arts stream of the GCID is provincialised. Commerce, Science and B.Voc are self-financed. Until 2016 the college was an Arts College. So, the number of students in Arts is more than the rest of the streams. 78.4% of students are from arts stream, 15.6% from science and 5.8% of students are from the commerce stream.

Residence During Higher Secondary Education:

93% students said that they were day scholars living at home. 2% of students lived at relatives' home. 2.8% lived in rented accommodation. 1.6% lived in a school hostel and only 0.6% lived in paying guest accommodation.

6.4.3 Higher education history

6.4.3.1 State University (SU)

State University students seem to be motivated by wide range of people. The maximum number of responses came in support of fathers followed by mothers and self. The least number of students said that their neighbours helped them. But the most interesting finding here is that only 2.8% of students responded that they were motivated by college or university teachers. 2.9% students said that tutors helped them. There were three responses in the 'Other' category. Students mentioned brother-in-law, everyone and role model in this category.

Table 6.26: Motivation for Higher Education (SU) Source: UG Survey

Who Motivated	N= VR=495	%0f VRs
1. Mother	394	13.8
2. Father	380	13.3
3. Sister/s (sibling)	146	5.1
4. Brother/s (sibling)	142	5.0
5.Maternal grandmother	113	4.0
6. Maternal grandfather	79	2.8
7.Paternal grandmother	77	2.7
8.Paternal grandfather	58	2.0
9. Maternal aunt/s	99	3.5
10. Maternal uncle/s	98	3.4
11. Paternal aunt/s	81	2.8
12. Paternal uncle/s	89	3.1
13. Cousin/s	136	4.8
14. School teacher/s	133	4.7
15.College/university teacher/s	81	2.8
16.Friend/s	157	5.5
17.Senior student/s	90	3.2
18.Neighbour/s	63	2.2
19.Coaching/tutor	83	2.9
20.Yourself	346	12.1
Total of Answer=Yes		**100**

Selection of HE Institution

Similarly in terms of choosing which institution to choose for higher education students have given maximum responses to self (21.3%) followed by mother and father. The least is grandparents. College or university teachers also is significantly low (1.3%) and school teachers is 2.4%. Here also we found two responses of others: brother-in-law and career counsello**r.**

Help for Choosing Subject:

The responses for selection of subjects shows that students decided themselves as to which subject to be studied in UG. Their parents helped but their choices and decision were given precedence. The role of teachers from both schools and colleges is negligible.

Table 6.27: UG Choices (SU) Source: UG Survey

Subject VR=408		**Location of HE VR=496**	
1.Science	15.2	Rural	1.8
2.Humanities/Arts	28.9		
3.Social Sciences	2.2	Urban	96.4
4.Commerce	8.6		
5.Management			
6.Engineering/Technical	26.3	Semi Urban	0.8
7.Medical			

96.4% students said that their HE is located in an urban place. Only 1.8% considered it rural. The SU is situated in the State Capital. So, the location is urban. Here 26.3% of students who participated in the survey are from engineering and technical courses. 28.9% of students are from humanities, 15.2% of students are from science, 2.2% of students from social science and 8.6% of students are from commerce. The selection of students included students from across all the streams.

Funding:

In terms of funding, it was found that the SU students pay fees by themselves. 96.4% of the students agreed that their fees are paid by the families. 0.4% said that they took a loan. 0.6% werengaged with job to support their education.

Table 6.28: Source of Funding(SU) Source UG Survey

Source	N= VR=	% of VRs
1.Fees paid entirely by family	478	96.4
2. Fees paid partly by family	9	1.8
3. Fees paid with the help of a scholarship	4	0.8
4. Fees paid by taking a loan	2	0.4
5. Fees paid by taking up a job	3	0.6

Reservation:

160 responses out of 501 are within reservation categories. The maximum number of students are from OBC category (36.2%) followed by ST (24.4%). ST includes both ST(Plains) and ST (Hills)[9]. They are clubbed together as some of the students did not mention whether they belong to Plains or Hills. Two students gained admission in NCC[10] category, five in fringe village category and one in sports category. The result of the survey shows that the SU follows the guidelines of reservation laid by the State Government which is elaborated in Chapter II.

Table 6.29: Reservation (SU) Source UG Survey

RESERVED CATEGORY	N= VR=160	% OF VRs
Employee	3	1.9
EWS	22	13.7
SC	25	15.6
ST	39	24.4
EX DEFENCE	1	0.6
OBC	58	36.2
PWD	2	1.25
SPORTS	1	0.6
NCC	2	1.25
FRINGE VILLAGE	5	3.1

[9] In Assam, there are two separate categories of Schduled Tribe.One is Shedule Tribe living in Plain districts and the other is Scheduled tribe living in Hill districts.
[10] One person seat are reserved for National Cadet Corps.

Analysis of the UG Interviews:

The State Research Team SU conducted six interviews. When asked about their HE choices one student who pursued Women's Studies said that she was motivated by her brother's friend to pursue this subject. She also mentioned that she always had that zeal inside her to do something to uplift women's position in society. She found the advertisement of the SU CUET in a newspaper. She faced opposition for choosing the subject as this subject is not so commonly pursued, but due to her family's support she proceeded with her choice anyway. Another student mentioned that she had an inclination towards creative writing since her high school days. She used to write articles in an Assamese newspaper. That was her motivation to pursue English literature. She came to know about the SU from her neighbours. About the entrance examination, she found the information from a newspaper. She was supported by her mother in her choice. One student said that she took admission in another reputed State University located in Guwahati itself. She took admission in Geology but she found it difficult to do well in that subject. There she helped by one of the Faculty Members from Physics to pursue the newly opened FYIMP at the SU. There is one student who initially wished to pursue a career in the merchant navy but could not clear the entrance. She took admission into the SU as suggested by her uncle as a back up option. However, the most interesting interview was with a female student. She was opposed by her whole family to pursue higher education. She was also shamed for participating in NCC and Scout and Guide camps. Her own father was not in support of her. But she stood on her own. She selected English literature. The reason was simple; she obtained excellent marks (more 80%) in that subject. Her mother supported her throughout. She said that later her father too realised that she should be allowed to study.

6.4.3.2 Government College in-depth (GCID)

Motivation for Education:

It is observed that the SU students were self-aware. They agreed that they were self-motivated and they chose their subject and HEIs themselves. But the GCID draws a different picture. Here parents seem to be the biggest encouragement. Next to parents are siblings. And then comes friends and school teachers. The following table will make the point even clearer. Apart from the list given below one student mentioned that she has been motivated by her husband to pursue higher education, and in selecting the institution and the subject.

Table 6.30: Motivation for Higher Education (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Who Encouraged for HE	N= VR=489	% of Vis
1. Mother	401	18.8
2. Father	404	19.0
3. Sister/s (sibling)	160	7.5
4. Brother/s (sibling)	190	8.9
5.Maternal grandmother	57	2.7
6. Maternal grandfather	53	2.5
7.Paternal grandmother	70	3.3
8.Paternal grandfather	53	2.5
9. Maternal aunt/s	77	3.6
10. Maternal uncle/s	74	3.5
11. Paternal aunt/s	51	2.4
12. Paternal uncle/s	61	2.9
13. Cousin/s	52	2.4
14. School teacher/s	78	3.7
15.College/university teacher/s	53	2.5
16.Friend/s	76	3.6
17.Senior student/s	47	2.2
18.Neighbour/s	45	2.2
19.Coaching/tutor	26	1.2
20.Yourself	98	4.6
Total		**100**

Motivation to select HE:

Again, we can see that maximum number of respondents received support from parents and siblings. Although, this time 9.4% of students mentioned that they were self-motivated to choose the HEI. 2.4% of students said that college teachers also encouraged them. 3.3% of students said that their friends also helped them. Maternal uncle and aunty also seem to be a bigger influence among students.

Motivation for Selecting Subject:

Again, the maximum responses are for parents. Next to parents is self and siblings. 23% of students said their fathers encouraged them. 23.8% of students said that their mothers influence them. 9.4% said that they selected the subject themselves. An average of 8.5% of students agreed that they were helped and encouraged by their siblings to choose their subject for UG. Here again 2.4% said that college teachers have helped them.

Table 6.31

Subject VR=475		**Location of HE VR=500**	
1.Science	10.2	Rural	97.6
2.Humanities/Arts	58.4		
3.Social Sciences	17.8	Urban	
4.Commerce	6.0		
5.Management			
6.Engineering/Technical Sciences	0.2	Semi Urban	2.4
7.Medical	2.4		

UG Choices:

97.6% of students identified the GCID as a rural institution. Only 2.4% called it semi-urban. This is due to the fact that the GCID is situated on a highway and students come from interior villages. Also, the surroundings of the GCID is crowded with shops giving it a semi-urban atmosphere. 58.4% of students under survey are from humanities. The reason is explained in the previous section. Commerce students comprise only 6%. The 2.4% of students who said that they are pursuing Medical Education are actually Bachelor of Vocation students. Their subject name is Medical Laboratory Technician.

Funding:

Most of the students of GCID come from a poor financial background. They make use of the Fee Waiver Scheme benefits given to students coming from families whose annual income is below 2 lakhs rupees. 29.6% of students agreed that they had taken this benefit. 49.9% of students

said that they are supported entirely by their families for the education. 2.2% said that their fees are paid by the parent-teacher association. 2.2% of students agreed that they had taken a loan. This loan is not necessarily a student loan. It could be a loan taken from local money lender. 3.4% of students said that they work while studying. There are many students who are part-time workers. They either work with their parents or in other workplaces.

Table 6.32: Source of Funding for UG (GCID) Source: UG Survey

Source	N=. VR=496	% of VRs
1.Fees paid entirely by family	392	49.9
2. Fees paid partly by family	93	11.8
3. Fees paid with the help of a scholarship	5	0.6
4. Fees paid by taking a loan	17	2.2
5. Fees paid by taking up a job	27	3.4
6. Fees paid by a freeship (tuition waiver)	232	29.6
7. Fees paid through funding from the PTA (Parent-Teacher Association)	17	2.2
8. Fees paid through the allocation of funds from the Faculty Pool (e.g., faculty/administrative staff)	2	0.3

Reservation:

A total of 98 students out of 500 said that they took admission under reserved categories. Of this 84.7% belong to SC category. 11.22% belong to OBC ad 4.8% belong to ST category. The lower number with reserved admission is due to the fact that the majority of the students are Muslim who belong to General Social Category.

Table 6.33: Categories of Reservation (GCID) Coded by SRT Source: UG Survey

RESERVED CATEGORY	N= VR=98	% OF VRs
SC	83	84.7
ST	4	4.8
OBC	11	11.22

Analysis of the UG Interview Data:

In GCID, the students did not give long interviews. Their answers are crisp. When asked about their higher education motivation or any opposition faced one student said that he received opposition for choosing science. But he was very attracted to the GCID website. He visited the campus before admission. He liked the greenery and the serenity in the surrounding areas. He also said that he was inspired by one of the faculty members from the Science stream at the GCID to pursue his subject of choice. However, his family supported him throughout.

Another student said that though his father supported his decision to study Physics, he still received some opposition from his father's friends who have a say in educational choices. Despite that he stood by his decision. He chose this GCID for the convenience of its location as it is situated nearby his residence. One female student said that it was her childhood passion and dream to pursue higher studies. Her family always supported her. But then her neighbours posed opposition. She initially wanted to study at Aligarh Muslim University but did not score adequate marks. She selected the GCID for its location and conducive environment.

The fourth interviewee also mentioned that the neighbors opposed her to study at this GCID. But she went ahead anyway. She chose Hindi as her subject as she always had a passion for the subject. It was entirely her decision. One student said that he was confused after his higher secondary examination as to what to study next. But some teachers from B.Voc stream had come to his school when he was in class 12. They talked about Food Processing and Quality Management. The subject was new to him. When the results came out he decided to pursue this particular subject. He convinced his parents. He said he was motivated by the PPT presentation of the FM at his school. The last interviewee said that he wanted to study Medicine but it was his father who encouraged him to study History. Now, he wants to appear in competitive examinations. He selected the GCID for its convenient location.

6.4.4 Involvement of Faculty Members in HE access

6.4.4.1 State University (SU)

Involvement of FM in Undergraduate Choices:

93.4 % of the students said that no faculty member was involved in their UG choices. Only 5.8% said yes. The FMs were as follows in relation to the students: 28.6% family members, 25.7%

family connection, 17.1% tuition teachers, 11.4% met the FMs during college visit, 2.9% met them during school visit and admission time. 66.7% said FMs helped during making choice about higher education, 33.3% said they helped them during admissions. Involvement was mostly for advice on whether to go for higher education or other options (14%); choice of which colleges/universities to apply to (19%); choice of course/subject (19%); about the admissions process (16%); and about HE entry examination (9%).

Table 6.34: Activity Undertaken Before Admission (SU), source: UG Survey

1. Visited the college/university, i.e., physically stepped to the campus you pursued	249	20.4
2. Visited other college/universities to compare options	111	9.1
3. Discussed options for higher education study with other college/university staff (e.g., administrative staff)	42	3.4
4. Explored various online platforms, such as College Dunia, as well as your current college/university website	165	13.5
5. Referenced the college/university brochures for detailed information	148	12.1
6. Watched informative videos on YouTube related to college/university	200	16.4
7. Used social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) to gather information and insights about college/university	122	10.0
8. Read about college/university in newspapers	126	10.3
11. Consulted with representatives or designated contact persons from various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for advice related to higher education study	4	0.3
12.Visited College Fairs	8	0.7
13. Obtained information from the local administration, such as Gram Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat, Village Administrative Officers, Municipal Councils/Corporations and District Administration	3	0.2
14. None of the above	39	3.2

Analysis of Data from UG interview and FGD:

About involvement of FM in HE choices, one student said that they did not receive any particular advice or motivation from any faculty member. Another student said that Higher Secondary teacher and Principal helped to choose the course. They encouraged the student to go for Five Year Integrated Masters Programme as it seemed 'hassle free' in the sense that the student will not have to sit for the entrance exam again after completion of UG. They provided information about admission counseling which attracted the student. The student who changed her HEI was influenced and motivated by the Geology teacher who provided information about GUIST and

suggested that subject will suit their aptitude. The student mentioned that the FM detected their disinterest in Geology and hence, suggested that they pursue Electronics. Another student was entirely guided by their uncle who is FM at a university. This student said that they had received complete guidance from this family member who is an FM. One student said that one of their cousins is FM at a college who inspired and helped them to gain admission into Commerce at the SU. One more student said that they were guided by one FM from the SU itself in every step of choosing their Higher Education options.

By analysing the data from the first FGD we can say that students gained motivation through newspaper advertisement. One student said that their father encouraged them to study at the SU. Another student was guided by their teacher at the University. In terms of subject section we see that students are quite clear about the choices. Barring only one student who not only changed the institution but also the subject, the rest have made their decision on their own with a small amount of guidance and stood by their informed decisions.

From the second FGD we find that four out of five students have received guidance from FMs. These FMs are either family members or teachers of the particular students. Only one who is pursuing LLB said that they did not receive any such help from FMs. The guidance was about subjects, institutions and the process of admission.

6.4.4.2 Government College in-depth (GCID)

In the GCID 83% of students said no while only 17% said yes to having received guidance from FM. 28% met the FMs while visiting the college. 25% said that they know these FMs as neighbours. 15% of respondents indicated that they had met the FMs while visiting the HEIs. The least number of students have mentioned that they met the FMs in community gatherings. About the guidance, a large number of students (75.3%) said that they received advice during the admission process while 24.7% said while making HE choices.

Activity done before admission:

From the data presented below the maximum number of responses came in support of visiting the campus before admission. The next activity by students is watching YouTube for information.

Social media does play a significant role. Moreover, visual representation works like a physical visit and is easily accessible. Nowadays most educational institutions have their own YouTube channels which draw the institution closer to the young students. 10% of responses came for social media and print media. Virtual platforms and websites/prospectus also play a crucial role in making informed choices for students.

44% of students said that they had visited the GCID before admission. The GCID forms an admission help desk each year to help students during the process of admission. From 2023 onwards NEP2020 has been launched and implemented in the SU and its affiliated colleges. Since then, the entire process of admission has been made online. So, the college authority needed to be take extra care of the rural students, most of whom lack technological knowledge. Teachers and office staff provide hard copies of forms which are later verified and uploaded online. So, almost all students need to visit the campus two to three times before admission. This helps both the teachers as well as students to interact which inadvertently helps the students clear their doubts regarding subject selection. Moreover, they get to see the campus and become familiarised with it. 11.7% of students agreed that they had visited other campuses. 13.4% have discussed with other college staff. 9.5% responses are in favour of help from online platforms. 5.8% said that they obtained the information from local bodies such a gram panchayat. 5.3% agreed to have gained information from YouTube videos. The least responses are for FM and common service centres.

Table 6.35: Activity Undertaken Before Admission (GCID), source: UG Survey

Activities	Answer = Yes (number)	Answer = Yes (% of answer=Yes)
1. Visited the college/university, i.e., physically stepped to the campus you pursued	396	44.0
2. Visited other college/universities to compare options	105	11.7
3. Discussed options for higher education study with other college/university staff (e.g., administrative staff)	121	13.4
4. Explored various online platforms, such as College Dunia, as well as your current college/university website	86	9.5
5. Referenced the college/university brochures for detailed information	16	1.8
6. Watched informative videos on YouTube related to college/university	48	5.3
7. Used social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram) to gather information and insights about college/university	20	2.2
8. Read about college/university in newspapers	13	1.4
9. Listened to radio FM providing information about higher education institutions	7	0.8
10. Visited Common service centres (e.g., Akshaya Kendra/e-Kendras, Saral, etc.,) to inquire about higher education options	5	0.6
11. Consulted with representatives or designated contact persons from various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for advice related to higher education study	10	1.1
12.Visited College Fairs	18	2.0
13. Obtained information from the local administration, such as Gram Panchayat, Nagar Panchayat, Village Administrative Officers, Municipal Councils/Corporations and District Administration	52	5.8
14. None of the above	4	0.4
Total		**100**

Analysis of data from UG interviews and FGDs:

From among the six interviews conducted at the GCID five students have agreed to have received guidance from FM and teachers. Three of them were guided by their school teachers while the remaining two students were guided by the FM of the GCID. FM have helped them or guided them about the subject. The school teachers have guided them about the subjects as well as the GCID. The location of the GCID has also helped them to choose it as it is conveniently located around the villages of the neighbouring area. Communication is also good from the district headquarter.

In the first FGD students were quite vocal. They expressed themselves eloquently. They all said that teachers have guided them. Four students said that they received guidance from FM of the GCID before and during admission. The student from FPQM (B.Voc course) mentioned about FM visit from the GCID to their Higher Secondary School. The remaining four students met the FM when they visited the college before admission. They said that the FM here were helpful and they provided information about subject choices and the admission procedure.

The second FGD was a little quieter than the first one. Three students said that there were no FM or school teacher involved in their higher education choices. The remaining two students said that they received some guidance about the subject from their HS teachers.

6.4.5 HE Outreach: current and future opportunities

6.4.5.1 State University (SU)

Presence of Rural Students in the SU and are they comfortable and why:

In the survey 91.8% of students agreed that rural students are comfortable in this institution. Only 7.4% of students said that the SU is not rural student friendly. On the other hand, 54.9% of students said that the institution conducts activities to attract rural students. 44.1% said no to this.

Upon asking whether rural students will be comfortable in the SU or not, students provided insightful and very beautiful answers. The first one said that because it is a state university

students are more or less homogenous. The SU gives ample opportunities to these students so rural students are quite comfortable here. The second student illustrated how the SU is making rural students comfortable. They said that students in the SU come from various socio-economic-cultural backgrounds. They get to represent their own unique culture during the cultural programmes which makes them feel included. FMs are extremely helpful. They always welcome students. They repeat lessons and use vernacular medium if they see students struggling. But they pointed out that the fees for FYUGP (Four Year Undergraduate Programme) and FYIMP (Five Years Integrated Master Degree Programme) are a little higher which makes it a bit inconvenient for rural students. Generally, form fill up and registration for the even semester starts in the middle of April or end of March, which again is an inconvenient timing. The student mentioned that although the SU is situated in the state capital, its precise location gives a rural feeling and that helps rural students feel at home. The third interviewee also mentioned that SU has more rural students than urban students. The campus, the greenery, the senior students everything is welcoming for the rural students. The fourth student said that since the SU is situated at the capital, communication is very good from almost all places. They spoke about the opportunities rural students can avail, especially, in terms of cultural activities.

They spoke about the network of the alumni and said that it helps rural students to connect to the larger masses. The fifth student spoke about the fee structure and said that it helps rural students. The sixth interviewee spoke about reservation and explained that since the SU implements reservation rules strictly it helps students from marginalised backgrounds to come and study here. They also spoke about the Youth Festival where students coming from rural areas have a platform to represent their culture. So, according to them the SU is ideal for the rural students.

Any activities that the university could conduct to attract rural students:

One student said that the university could conduct some promotional activities like spreading of knowledge relating to what a university course is like, and what kind of scholarship it can provide, and what kind of future job prospects will be available for them after pursuing various courses. It is believed to help to attract more students from rural areas. Another student said that the SU should form connections with the nearby colleges and the newly opened junior colleges. They should take measures to facilitate communication with those rural students who

are good at their studies or who are interested in higher education. They should advertise so that rural students become aware, because many students are not aware that the SU has such courses. A lot of students did not join because they did not know. If they can create more awareness, it will be better. The ones who are interested will be more motivated if they get to know that there is a five-year course at the SU. The third interviewee said that the SU should organise internships for its final year students in rural areas. This could help rural students to connect with the university. This particular UG student raised the issue that the SU does not publish its admission advertisement on various media platforms unlike other universities or colleges. The SU could work on that.

Another student mentioned other areas where the SU could work on. These include: better advertisement, better placement and collaboration with other colleges. These measures are believed to be bringing more rural students to the SU. One student spoke about connecting with schools and bringing students to the SU for an excursion. This way students will be acquainted with the SU from an early age. One student spoke about NCC and said that more such programmes could be organised to attract rural students to the SU. However, in the first FGD we found that one student said the fees are high. So, sometimes it becomes difficult for rural students. The SU can work on that. Another student said that the SU should work on promotional activities on course, fees and scholarships. In the second FGD none of the students mentioned anything in this regard. Students also mentioned about school visits to the SU. They also mentioned about newspaper advertisement.

Any activities that other universities/colleges conduct to attract rural students:

Students mostly spoke about advertisements published by other universities. One mentioned about educational camps organised by Cotton University. These camps were held in rural areas and helped rural students to come closer to the institution and its values. Another student mentioned the colleges in their local area where FMs go to visit schools or Junior Colleges. They provide benefits for BPL students to help them study with fewer expenses. One student mentioned something very interesting about Kalinga Institute of Technology. There is a sub-branch of this institute called Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences. From what is told in the interview, students who gain admission in KIT pay a certain amount as admission fees. Half of this amount goes to KISS. Then KISS uses this money to fund free education for students. They

also arrange placements. This particular student says that the SU could work in similar ways to attract more rural students.

In the FGD students mentioned about some private universities who advertise with 100% placement guarantee. Another student mentioned about the college where her cousin is studying and said that certificate courses are offered there. This seems beneficial to the students. One studens mentioned about Skill Based Courses offered in colleges. They also spoke about educational tours and youth festivals.

Topic on which the university could provide more guidance:

The responses here have almost equal weightage. Though the highest number of students have said that they need more guidance on whether to go for higher education or not. Second highest response is for choice of subject. Third highest response is for the admission process. Fourthly, students need more advice on campus safety and security. Guidance on entrance preparation and academic background of the institution comes next. The least guidance according to the data is needed for application checking and form filling. Students seem to need guidance on potential employability too.

6.4.5.2 Government College in-depth (GCID)

Presence of rural students in this College:

97.4% students said that rural students would be comfortable in the GCID. Only 2.6% said that rural students will not be comfortable there. From what we have gathered from the interview students believe that the representation of rural students is between 75-90%. And all of them have agreed that they met each other at the college, had conversations and learnt that they all have come from neighbouring villages. One student said that it is a matter of pride for them to study in the GCID.

Topic on which the college could provide more guidance:

Table 6.36: Areas of Guidance(GCID) Source UG Survey

Advices	N=	%of VRs
1. Advice on whether to go for higher education or other options	196	10.4
2. Choice of which colleges/universities to apply to	194	10.3
3. Choice of course/subject	158	8.4
4. About the admission process	214	11.3
5.About covering tuition expenses/funding options	71	3.8
6. About HE entry exams preparation	105	5.6
7.About special admissions programs/processes e.g., reservations	86	4.6
8.Checking application form/other documents	94	5.0
9.Choice of which colleges/universities to enrol in if selected in more than	66	3.5
10.Organising a visit to the college/university	122	6.5
11.Advice on accommodation	78	4.1
12.Advice about college/university facilities, activities, provisions	182	9.6
13.About campus safety and security	127	6.7
14.About employability prospects		
15.About whether the college/university has good academic functioning		
16.About transport facilities	194	10.3
Total of Answer=Yes		**100**

For the GCID, we see that the maximum number of students believe that they need more guidance on the admission process. Since the launch of NEP2020 all student-related matters are handled online. Moreover, students are required to do everything on their own with their personal email address. This has been a challenge for the rural students. Second concern for the GCID students seems to be their choice regarding whether to go for higher education or not, about transport facilities and choice of institution. Thirdly, the students think that they should be aware of the availability of various facilities in the institution before admission. The least number of responses related to choice of institution to enroll in if selected in more than one. They are also asking for more advice on choice of subject and campus security.

Would rural students be comfortable choosing this college?

97.4% students believe that rural students would be comfortable in the GCID. From the interviews and FGDs we collected some interesting and valuable information on this point. One student said that rural students would find this college or university comfortable to choose. From high school to degree journey, many rural students struggle to adapt to new environments. However, the GCID is situated in a rural setting, and most students come from rural areas. This allows new students to connect easily with the environment. Moreover, faculty members are very supportive and always guide new students. Many students have expressed their feelings that the institution has a calm and peaceful environment away from the hustle bustle of the town. The rest of the students said that the college itself is located in a rural area so students will definitely feel at home here. They also mentioned about the faculty members' friendly approach towards students. They also mentioned about the location of the college which is very serene. In the FGDs too students agreed that the college is ideal for rural students because of the teachers and its rural setting. They also said that rural students will be really comfortable here because they come from villages. In GCID the medium of instruction is English for B.Sc. It can be understood that at times language becomes a barrier for them. Especially, during the first two semesters' students face the maximum difficulty in coping with the subject and the medium of instruction. But they find the teachers very considerate. Teachers are said to have explained the subject both in English and in Assamese. Besides academics, the college offers wonderful opportunities for students who are interested in music and culture making them very comfortable to pursue their higher studies here.

Any activities that college conducts to attract rural students:

Students who have come from various neighbouring villages find sports and cultural activities very interesting. One of them mentioned that he was surprised to see competitions on traditional games such as banana tree climbing and pot breaking during annual sports week. He says that it is a matter of pride that culture and tradition is kept alive here at the GCID. He also says that the cultural competitions help young rural students to showcase their talent. Another student mentioned about the NAAC Peer team visit in September 2022. He says that the accreditation has been a matter of pride for the villagers and that attracted rural students to trust the institution even more. They all said that students love the cool and calm environment. There are trees everywhere. There is a pond right in the middle of the college. These provide relief

during summers. One female student talked about the Value Added Course named "Sports and Fitness". There they obtained training with martial art. She also spoke about the various literary competitions and cultural programmes. She said that these activities have attracted rural students immensely. Observation of various days of state/national/international importance also attract rural students to the GCID.

Any activities that other universities/colleges conduct to attract rural students?

One student said that he had seen in YouTube that the universities, the larger ones, celebrate various important *Divas,* days such as Science Day. He suggested to celebrate some cultural Days like Sankaradeva Tithi, Madhavadeva Tithi to educate the younger generation about the cultural heritage of the state. The attendance on these occasions should be made compulsory for the students. He also said that various workshops such dance workshop, drama workshops should be organised. One woman student said the college has skill-based courses like tailoring but they need more such technical courses. She thinks the girls need to learn about technology to secure jobs nowadays. The college should work in this direction. Then another student mentioned something which actually is important yet missing in the GCID. It is the National Cadet Corps Unit. The student feels an NCC unit will attract even more students. He said that it might even attract students from urban areas to this college. Then two students mentioned about better arrangements for ICT enabled classrooms. One student said that although classes are taken using ICT, sometimes electricity is disturbed and sometimes the projector does not work. As a result, they believed that such ICT rooms should be properly equipped. The GCID is lacking in the above-mentioned facilities. From the students' prospective we can say that the infrastructure of a campus can have a large impact on the students' choices of higher education.

Any activities that the college could conduct to attract rural students:

Almost all the students at the FGDs said that the students lack discipline here. They mentioned about the cultural procession of other colleges situated at the district headquarter. They particularly mentioned about a few colleges and said that it looks so professional when students maintain discipline during cultural events. They believe the GCID could work towards laying down a strict code of conduct. They consider this non-negotiable to be at par with colleges in urban areas. One girl student who had been vocal said that parent-teacher meetings should be held regularly. She says that guardians of students in higher secondary usually seek

advice from those parents whose children are already studying in the GCID. So, it is pertinent that the parents are aware and updated about the overall well-being of their children. To achieve that, regular parent-teacher meetings are deemed absolutely important. The rest of the students agreed with this point.

6.5 Summary and Conclusion

To find out who are students at the SU and the GCID, we have relied on the data collected from the UG survey, administrative data, Focus Group Discussions and UG interviews. The results provide an enormous set of information. There are over a thousand students whose survey data have been analysed here. Apart from that, twelve standalone interviews and four FGD have been taken into consideration. To summarize this chapter, we will begin with the students' demographic information. For the SU, students are coming from various districts of Assam. Besides some students were born in different states of India such as Rajasthan, Telengana and other states of North East India. But the GCID students are more homogenous compared to the SU. All GCID students under survey are born not only in Assam but in the same district too. A few of them may have lived in other places temporarily, but they all belong to Nagaon district. In terms of rural and urban divide also, SU has a mixed population but the GCID again has more than 90% rural students. The rest of the students who identified as semi-urban dwellers are actually village-dwellers. These are developed villages located nearby semi urban centre. Another important aspect found out during the survey is the mother tongue of the students. In the SU we found seventeen different languages listed under mother tongue and the GCID has only three languages. The SU being the oldest university in the region has been attracting students from across NE India. The list of mother tongue is a testimony to that. Coming to the gender divide we see that both the GCID and the SU has more female students than male students. The GCID has a few more female students as compared to the SU. In terms of residence, we saw that SU students are again coming from various parts of state. So, weekly residence of the students consists mostly of hostel or paying guest accommodation (this excludes the day scholars).

Students in the SU are coming from families with better exposure to higher education as compared to the GCID. In the SU we noticed most students claimed that their parents' highest

education is Graduation. But in case of the GCID it is either class 10 or class 12. Students are mostly unaware of their grandparents' education in the GCID. We see a very clear picture of the urban-rural divide in the occupation of family members. Agriculture is a dominant occupation for the GCID and salaried jobs for SU in terms of father's occupation. But in both the institutions maximum responses for mother's occupation are 'housewives'. When we analysed the average monthly family income we again found out that most families of the students under survey in the GCID earn less than 25,000 rupees per month. In the SU it is between 25,000-50,001 rupees.

Coming to the focal point of this research i.e higher education choices among students, we found that students were motivated by themselves and their parents in the SU. In the case of the GCID they are more reliant on their parents and siblings. Faculty members have been helpful to the students who participated in the SU interviews and FGDs. But in the GCID we found that the role of FM is not as evident as compared to the SU. It might be because of the socio-economic background of the families and also due to the lack of exposure. Students in both the institutions have spoken about how the respective institutions can work better to provide more help to students seeking information about higher education choices. In the SU it is mostly about better advertisement and collaboration with rural colleges and schools. Students in the GCID spoke about loopholes in the infrastructure and discipline among students.

Chapter 7: Discussion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is a synthesis of all the aspects taken for the study. The findings are discussed on the basis of the research questions which this study focused upon. Towards the end of this chapter efforts are made to offer suggestions as to how the potentiality of FMs can be maximised in HE outreaches and embedded in policy for sustainable changes in HEIs.

7.2 Synthesis of RQ1a: who are the faculty members and institutional leaders?

Faculty members (FMs) and institutional leaders (ILs) at SU, GCID, CG-A, and CG-B exhibit a range of diverse yet overlapping characteristics shaped by demographic, educational, and professional trajectories that reflect both local contexts and broader societal changes. While demographic profiles—such as age, gender, and urban-rural background—vary across institutions, a common thread uniting all four is a marked pattern of upward educational mobility. The ILs and many FMs come from families with limited educational backgrounds, with several being pioneers in their families to enter the academic field. This shift highlights a broader societal trend of viewing education as a key driver of social advancement and career development (Lin, 2020; Froerer, 2011).

The educational pathways of the ILs and FMs show notable consistency. As they progressed to higher education, more and more of them relocated to urban areas and government institutions where English was the medium of instruction, even though many of them began their education in rural and semi-urban schools that followed state curricula and used vernacular instruction. These facts also indicated that the ILs and most of the FMs were from middle and lower economic classes as they studied in vernacular rural and semi-urban schools than in English medium private school of urban area. These commonalities point to regional patterns in access to education. Representation of the Christian FMs as minority communities is very low where only 1.2% of Christian FMs in SU and 0% in GCID are employed as compared to 10% of Muslim FMs in SU and 50% in GCID.

Parental involvement played a crucial role in shaping the academic decisions of both ILs and FMs, particularly at the undergraduate level. While parents often influenced choices of institutions and courses, many faculty members made these decisions independently. For some involvement of school teachers, family members from academia, seniors from colleges/university etc. also played as crucial roles in shaping their academic decisions. Faculty involvement in career guidance was found to be minimal, and often arising through informal networks or family connections.

Career trajectories differ slightly between institutions. SU had more faculty on regular appointments, GCID has a higher number of faculty on contractual terms. The FMs of GCID are appointed on contractual term for the self-finance courses of the HEI. The position of these FMs are in the process of being sanctioned by the concern government authority. When it comes to living arrangements, faculty members generally reside in nuclear families around 10 km radius from their HEI, with location choices shaped largely by commuting time and distance from work. This reflects practical considerations involved in managing work-life balance within the institutional and geographic context.

7.3 Synthesis of RQ1b & RQ1c: what do institutional leaders and faculty members perceive to be the role of HEIs in HE outreach?

The perceptions of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) regarding their role in outreach activities vary among Institutional Leaders (ILs). As for the IL of the SU was concerned, toward the initial part of his interview regarded higher education outreach as a personal and social responsibility. However, towards the end of the interactive session with him, he recognised that it should be institutionalised. As for the other 3 ILs of were concerned, they already have HE outreach programs in places in their institute. In GC-A it is very intensively and systematically practised by the institution namely the IL, FMs, Office bearers, alumnus etc. They have WhatsApp group of the alumni and prior to the admission process start sharing information about the courses and admission process. In the GCID and GC-B, ILs perceived it as a part of the institution's outreach program. However, with the introduction of the National Education Policy, 2020, (NEP, 2020) HE outreaches is now perceived as an essential requirement by the ILs of GCID and GC-A to basically enhance the enrolment of the students. That urgency for HE outreach is not

reflected in the narratives of the ILs of the SU and GC-B because they already have sufficient students enrolled and there have always been huge rush of aspiring applicants in their HEIs over the years.

As for the FMs of all the HEIs taken for this study are concerned, again there are variation in their perceptions. The FMs of the SU perceive HE outreach to be more of a social responsibility and performed this duty sincerely whenever approached for any information. For the FMs of the GCID, GC-A and GC-B, it is perceived both as a social as well as professional responsibility. The FMs of GCID and GC-A are more involved and some of the FMs of GCID have even gone beyond their professional responsibilities and provided financial assistance to few of the students. The FMs who are native to those places where the HEIs are located, they perceived HE outreaches as a moral responsibility. It is important to note that majority of the FMs of the GC-B considers HE outreach as a professional obligation than a professional responsibility.

The ILs and the FMs of all the HEIs perceives that their HEI are not doing enough of HE outreaches and there are plenty of scopes for more and intensive HE outreaches.

7.4 Synthesis of RQ1b (second part): How much HE outreach activity is already happening?

On the basis of the data collected from the ILs and FMs it can be stated that HE outreaches activities are prevalent in all the HEIs undertaken for this study in different capacity. Some of these activities are prevalent because of personal initiatives and engagements and some are carried out through institution initiatives.

The institutional HE outreaches programs conducted by the SU is through advertisement of the entrances process in print media. Again, the SU have provided trainings, orientations and disseminated information of NEP2020 and the HE outreaches programs associated with it to the ILs and FMs of the affiliated colleges of the SU. The impact of these trainings and orientations are observed in the activities of the HEIs taken for the study. An office exclusively to address the needs and enquiries of the UG courses was established in the SU with the introduction of Five-Year Integrated Master's Degree Program (FYIMP) in 2023. These activities are carried out more

as administrative responsibility rather than HE outreach initiative. In the SU, institutional involvement of the FMs in HE outreach is essentially non-existent and usually carried in personal capacity.

Institutional HE outreaches activities in the three 3 HEIs; GCID, GC-A and GC-B are more distinctive. It is more intensive and institutionalize in GC-A followed by GCID. All of them have admission committee which assist the students in various aspects prior and during the admission process within the institute. Along with that visits to nearby rural schools and interacting with the school students and teachers both for social and HE outreaches are practiced. College visits, Lab visits and Library visits to these HEIs by the students of the nearby rural schools are some of the common practices that exist in these institutions. However, the intensity of engagement through their activities varies within these HEIs. In GC-A, the IL have designed few programs for effective, systematic and sustainable HE outreaches by engaging all the stakeholders of the HEI. GC-A have conducted around 25 to 30 academic outreach programs in 7 years through a DST scheme, “Outreach School”. In GCID, in-campus HE outreaches programs both with the students and the parents and visits to the rural schools of nearby districts are also initiated. The engagement of the FMs of GCID and GC-A in the HE outreaches activities are more intensive than of GC-B.

HE outreaches activities are comparatively lesser than community outreach. HE outreach activities as a social obligation is carried out both by the IL of the SU and FMs of all the HEIs taken for this study through their personal initiatives and engagements. They provided advice regarding HE to students as well as to their guardians whenever they were approached at their workplace, social gatherings or when at home. The FMs of the SU provided HE outreach advises when they got opportunity to interact with students from other HEIs. They were at times personally approached or were contacted over the phone. It is lesser through personal interaction and more through virtual medias in the SU and vice versa in GCID and the 2 GCs. Few of the FMs of GCID and GC-A even provided financial assistance on their own to the financially weaker students to support them to pursue their HE. Out-campus outreach activities by the HEI in the form of school visits, adopting villages and in-campus HE outreaches activities in the form of campus tours, lab-visit, library-visit, museum-visit (museum within the HEI) and so on are common practices across the HEIs. It is more so to earn extra points in NAAC

assessment. In the last few years, with the implementation of NEP 2020, it intensified to increase the enrollment rate of the HEIs. However, such activities were referred to as 'outreach activity' than 'HE outreach activity'. This study clearly distinguished between the two in Indian context.

7.5 Synthesis of RQ1d: who are the students and what are their experiences/perceptions of HE outreach?

The students in the SU were diverse and from different geographical backgrounds. Some of the students were born in different states of India and North-east India. As many as seventeen mother tongues have been identified to be spoken by the students in the SU. In the SU 85.4% students were Hindu. The rest of the 15% were represented by Muslim, Christian, Jain and Buddhist. Although the students in the SU studied in English medium schools from HS onwards, their education till 10th Class had a significant representation from vernacular medium schools. Occupational backgrounds of the fathers of the students in SU were diverse and of wide ranged. Majority of mothers of the students were housewives.

On the other hand, the students in the GCID were all from rural areas and from Assam. Although a few students have identified with living in semi-urban areas, but were from rural areas. For majority of the students of the GCID Assamese was their mother tongue besides Bengali and Bodo. Majority of the students were Muslim, 81.2% and 18.8% were Hindus. More than 90% of the students in GCID studied in vernacular (Assamese) medium institutions throughout their education journey. Majority of the fathers of the students of GCID were engaged in agricultural activities and were into small business and the mothers were housewives. The GCID students' mostly belonged to families from lower economic groups.

The students of SU were composed of a heterogeneous socio-cultural, economic and linguistic background. Whereas, the students of the GCID were lesser diverse, they were from the rural areas more so of the place where they resided, were mostly representatives of one religious community with agriculture and agro-commercial economic activities etc. Majority of them were from lower income financial background too. Thereby, sharp distinction of representation of students on the basis of religious background, language spoken, economic background,

mobility, geographical distribution and so on are observed in these two HEIs. Interestingly but surprisingly, one common aspect observed in both the institutes is that majority of mothers of the students were housewives.

What are the students' experience and expectation?

Based on the UG surveys, personal interviews and FGDs of students the experiences and expectations on HE outreaches of the students were analysed. The GCID students assumed that a well-documented and visually attractive prospectus could attract students to the institute and that it should be uploaded in the college website well ahead of time. Only the other hand, the students of the SU students mentioned and perceived that the SU should emphasis more on the advertisement of its admission related information than what it was currently doing. They strongly stated that social media platforms/handles should be used for advertisement and publicity of the scopes (skills/employability) of the different programs and courses offered by the SU. They cited examples of other universities from across the country using these practices. They mentioned that students living in interior villages will also be informed about the admission process through more advertisements and publicities and thus HE accesses. The study revealed that irrespective of the socio-cultural and economic backgrounds, currently students rely on information from online platforms to get access to HE. The students were more or less equipped and acquainted with basic technological knowledge and digital devices and relied on them to collect information. Thereby, HEI can reach out to students through digital platforms in an easier way. Another interesting finding that emerged was that, students in both the institute requires more guidance on whether to opt for HE or not. This aspect received maximum number of responses in both the HEIs. They also sought information for skill and job-based programs and courses.

7.6 Preliminary views on RQ2: How can the potential contribution of rural and semi-urban college faculty members to fair HE access and choice be consolidated and maximised?

With the introduction of the common platform (SAMARTH) to initiate digital HEI campuses in the state of Assam, the students aspiring for HE encountered difficulties in every step of the digital admission process in both the HEIs. The finding also revealed that majority of the students

required assistance with choice of subject, process of admission, filling up of application, transport facilities, availability of scholarships and choice of institutes. Lack of proficiency in English deterred students from being confident about the admission process in the rural areas. The admission committee of the institutes provide counseling and assistance to the students in the admission process. This committee takes care of the entire admission process, from the time admission notifications are served till the commencement of classes under the new session. Majority of the students had to rely entirely upon the FMs or the office staffs during these processes. In each of these processes and activities the FMs of rural and semi-urban HEIs can be potential contributors to HE accesses. The ILs can organize orientation programs and counselling sessions both for the FMs and the students to enhance the potentially of the FMs and to ease the admission process for the aspiring students.

It is observed in this study that the HEIs are carrying out the HE outreaches activities primarily to increase their enrolment rates with lesser understanding to the deeper social causes and justice to socially and economically backward students. On the other hand, the involvement of most of the FMs were like a social responsibility (emotional) towards their students. Few of the FMs considers it as a professional responsibility and some as an obligation. Interestingly all the ILs and majority of the FMs were potential contributors in HE outreaches in their own capacity.

To maximise their contribution in this regard,

- Firstly, it is important to institutionalise and consolidate HE outreaches in HEIs by clearly stating its significance and its larger causes. It can be stated as one of the objectives or mission of the HEI. It can also be stated as a policy of the HEI.
- Secondly, the ILs and FMs should be oriented regarding the significance of HE outreaches as a mean to social justice to the marginalised groups of the society. Such orientations can be provided through UGC Human Resource Development Centre of HEI (HRDC).
- Thirdly, adequate training should be provided of the different ways of achieving effective HE outreaches. To achieve the same, faculty members can be trained and designated as Higher Education Outreach Coordinators, acting as key liaisons between schools, and higher education institutions. Strengthening their capacity through regular training in counselling, career guidance, and the NEP, along with designing and providing digital toolkits and

multilingual resources to enhance their outreach impact. In National Education Policy, 2020 it is mentioned that Gender Inclusion Fund (GIF) will be allocated for socio-economic marginalised section of the society. Implementation of this provision of the policy can assist in the funding of such initiatives. Again, this training programs can be a part of UGC, HRDC program. Simultaneously Government and non-governmental funding agencies can be approached for financial assistance. Separate budget can be assigned for such activities by the SU for it's affiliated colleges.

7.7 Preliminary views on RQ3: How can a consolidated HE access/choice role for faculty members be embedded at a policy level to ensure sustainable change?

Higher education outreach activities should be made a part of the activity of the HEIs. The level and nature of participation can vary according to the position of the FMs. There should be scope for collaboration and joint venture of the FMs and students.

Participation of the ILs and FMs for HE outreaches activities should be acknowledged and accredited for their professional enhancement. Acknowledging these contributions and incorporating them into faculty appraisal and promotion system can incentivise sustained engagement of the faculty members in HE outreaches.

A blanket policy will not be sustainable in this regard. There should be scope for flexibility to address the diverse needs of the marginalized sections of the society. Thereby, the policy should be framed keeping in mind the diverse nature and background of the students in HEI. The intersection of varied geographical, socio-cultural, economic and political factors requires upmost importance in the policy. Incorporation of rural centric approach to the policy can ensure sustainability changes.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

Outreach activities (OA) is a common practiced across HEIs of Assam. This study revealed that higher education outreach (HEO) activities were also carried alongside OA by HEIs to a certain extend in Assam without emphasising or realising the socio-cultural and economic significance of HEO or the implication of 'informed choice' of aspiring students to venture into HE. This study reveals that through institutionalisation of HE accesses it will further strengthen the goal of social justice of the socially and economically marginalised groups of the society.

8.1 Conclusions

Participation in the WAHEI project, particularly during the data collecting and analysis phase, has brought to the forefront a critical issue that has not been institutionally addressed, that is, higher education outreach. While access to HE has been recognized as a major issue, and policy changes have been implemented to ensure that higher education is accessible in rural and underserved areas, as well as an emphasis on increasing gross enrollment in higher education at both the national and state levels, the issue of making an informed choice in higher education has received less attention. Leading the Assam-based component of this project made us realise this.

Moreover, at a personal level, we gained firsthand experiences of meticulous execution of the trans-national and a mega project. We learned about a new and evolving methods, Diary Method and it's applications. This project has brought us closer to the students' perceptions and their needs vis a vis access to higher education which will help us to better apprehend the multifaceted responsibilities of an FM in HEI. Through their participation in this project as participants, the FMs and ILs, have definitely found new directions for their plans of actions in terms of student outreach/higher education outreach activities. It was expressed by few FMs during the diary study. Above all, it made us realize the significance of team work and team ethics and the importance of taking everybody along in the entire research process to make it a successful and enriched journey.

Secondary sources reveal that dedicated strategies aimed specifically at higher education outreach remain largely underdeveloped. However, GC-A stands out for its integrated approach, combining mentorship programs, career counselling that directly support educational

upliftment and prepare future students for higher education. Similarly, the State University (SU) has taken important steps to improve access for students from remote regions through decentralized admission processes and reserved seats. Online platforms played a notable role in expanding access. However, the UG students involved in this study stressed that there are ample scopes of digital mode of disseminating information on HE in Assam which are still left unexplored. They emphasised that application of virtual mode of HE outreaches will reach out to remote students and help them to have access to informed choice of HE.

While all four institutions demonstrate a commitment to community involvement, the limited visibility of structured higher education outreach efforts—particularly in secondary sources—signals a gap that calls for greater institutional focus and more systematic documentation in future planning and reporting. One notable theme emerging from the qualitative data, especially in the context of the SU, was the word-of-mouth promotion and informal guidance from alumni or current students. This highlights the significance of peer networks in higher education outreach.

8.2 Recommendations

Following are the recommendations of the study:

1. It is observed that limitations in data availability and administrative constraints hinder a full understanding of faculty diversity and recruitment patterns. Lack of adequate information of the family income, residential background, and medium of instruction of the students created gaps in understanding the socio-economic context both of the students and FMs. Thereby, it is recommended that socio-cultural and economic data of the FMs and students across all the HEIs should be meticulously maintained and compiled. It will provide a complete picture of the HEIs and assist the policy makers to the HE policies effective to the socio-economic marginalised students.
2. To leverage this organically developed system, it is recommended that institutions formalize such peer-based (alumni to student & student to student) outreach through structured mechanisms. Additionally, under the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP2020) provision for undergraduate internships, enrolled students could be encouraged to undertake internships in schools, particularly in rural or underserved

areas. During these internships, they could curate tailored catalogues of higher education institutions and available courses, aligned with the interests and aspirations of prospective students. This initiative would serve both as a career exposure for the interns and a targeted outreach tool for HEIs.

3. Furthermore, it is recommended that institutional outreach activities be recognized as a formal evaluative criterion within frameworks like the NAAC accreditation process. Institutions could be graded on the quality and effectiveness of their outreach strategies, thereby incentivizing proactive engagement with potential students from diverse backgrounds.
4. the participation of the ILs and FMs for such activities should be acknowledged and accredited for their career advancement and professional progression. It should be recognised in their workload too.
5. The other challenges like no budget allocation for HE outreaches, shortage of human resources etc. requires serious speculation to make wider access of HE a fruitful one.
6. Additionally, inadequate mechanism to provide special financial assistance to rural students need to be worked out. However, these challenges are complex and diverse because the socio-cultural and economic positions of the students are strongly intertwined with their participation in HE, of which the HEI may not have control over or have limited avenues to enhance it.
7. Large number of students, both urban and rural, were seeking information and guidance whether to go for HE or will the courses they were advised to take would make them economically independent and assuring them some form of jobs. These poses more challenges to HEIs to rework on their courses and programs. To cater to the immediate economic needs of the students and to lessen their dropout rates, it is recommended that more emphasis should be given to the introduction of skill-based courses and programs tailored according to the economic needs of the students.
8. Sharp distinctions of representation of students were observed between the students of the SU and the other 3 HEIs, GCID, GC-A and GC-B. These differences on the basis of religious background, language spoken, economic background, mobility, geographical distribution etc. clearly emerged in the findings of the SU and GCID. Again, with the HEIs gradually becoming paperless, the threat of gradual escalation of the digital divide among the students from diverse socio-cultural and economic background in these HEIs

is an issue of concern. At the same time HEIs need to keep pace with the modernisation processes and the needs of the time. Thereby, it is recommended that online platforms/handles, user friendly and informative websites, virtual prospectus and programs should be uploaded in the HEI's websites.

9. The programs and courses offered should have detailed explanations of the Program Outcomes and Course Outcomes. These can answer many questions and clear doubts of the students regarding the prospects of the programs/courses. Keeping in mind the diverse socio-cultural, linguistic and economic background and the existing digital divides of the students of the region, websites searches should be student user friendly.

Innovation ways of engaging the FMs can be designed like the 'Tester Day' and 'Open Day' as practiced in some HEIs. Keeping in view the socio-economic and mobilities constrains for various reasons such 'Tester Day' and 'Open Day' can be streamed live and floated in social platforms.

All FMs involved in the study expressed a common preference for government-supported institutions in urban and semi urban areas for higher education. They demonstrate a preference for government-supported institutions throughout their schooling and higher education. In the present context, one of the major reasons for the students for choosing these HEIs was because of the high-quality education imparted with minimal tuition fees. Thereby, establishment of more HEIs in different districts and remote areas of the state is highly recommended. This will lessen the diverse problems faced by the students from the social and geographical periphery.

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