



## Promises made... And Delivered?

We (besides every other publication) have repeatedly been emphasizing the fact that India sends a very large number of students overseas for an education. In a mad race to maximize the influx of international students in their country, the governments of many developed and developing countries have created a support and assistance department in India so that the entire process is well streamlined to make it comfortable for students to apply. A noble idea indeed! Well, not really. It does bring in a lot of revenue for the respective countries through living expenses, tuition fee and other related expenses. How effectively do such departments discharge their duties; are they genuinely helpful and supportive without falling into the trap of inapproachability and high-handedness?

**Y**ou're going abroad and you need help ...no, not just any help but professional guidance. You have broadly figured out the country you can picture yourself studying in or think is the perfect match for you. What next? You cast around for help and through sources you hear of the education promotion wing of your tentative choice of destination(s). You rush to them with the hope and even conviction that, being the government's own representative or at least approved by them, you will get accurate, current and complete information. Thus far you may be correct in your estimation but when you actually step in to the sacred grounds of the consecrated agency, you meet with seemingly insurmountable barriers of coldness, rudeness, impatience and even dismissal. You might get inaccurate or inadequate guidance from a few of the more disinterested counselors employed by some of the agencies. On the other hand, you may come across a friendly and approachable group that goes out of its way to guide and assist you.

The bottom line, however, is that you have to ensure the dream of studying abroad and making it big in life is not jeopardized, come what may. Hence, read on and find out a few important things...

## WHO ARE THESE ORGANISATIONS AND HOW DO THEY HELP?

Let us first objectively consider precisely who these agencies are and what activities they perform towards their common end, which is to attract more and more students to their country.

## USEFI

USEFI was established 54 years back through an agreement between India and the United States to administer Fulbright fellowships fostering exchange between Indian and American scholars. Through the USEFI-EAS offices in Chennai, Kolkata, Mumbai and New Delhi and the USEFI satellite centres at Ahmedabad, Bangalore, Hyderabad and Manipal, you will get, "authentic, reliable, unbiased and up-to-date information" on higher education opportunities in the United States. The Executive Director of USEFI, Ms. Jane Schukoske elaborates, "USEFI provides educational advising services through an information desk, a reference library, group and individual advising sessions, administration of standardized tests and organization of, or participation in, U.S. university fairs. Separate group advising sessions provide information

on U.S. universities and their application procedures, student visas, pre-departure planning and specific fields of study." She goes on to add, "USEFI student advising centers are unique because they are the only self-help centers which offer affordable and authentic information and advice." If you're looking for financial aid, USEFI administers Fulbright fellowships for Indian students (and others) as well as other fellowship programs from time to time.

## BRITISH COUNCIL

The British Council is United Kingdom's leading cultural relations organization operating worldwide with India being their largest operation. Operating as a division of the British High Commission, they celebrated the 50th anniversary of their library network in India in the year 2000. Promoting UK education in India is one of the important functions of British Council.

The Education UK wing, which includes the website and magazine, is produced and managed by the British Council in an effort to assist international students who wish to study in the UK. The website itself will give you all possible information on the education system in UK - where, what, when and why you should study in the UK; types of courses available; where and how to search for courses; how to apply; detailed study advice; scholarships available; cost of education or fee charged by various institution; accommodation facilities; climate; work opportunities while studying; food and culture and educational events happening in India. For more personalized services, you can visit any one of their offices in four main metros as well as a network of 11 libraries.

## AEI

The Australian Department of Education, Science & Training is represented in India at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi and at the Consulate - General's Office in Mumbai. Through this Department's overseas arm, which is called Australian Education International (AEI), they promote Australian education and training in India by giving "comprehensive and objective" information to students who are desirous of studying in Australian universities. AEI has centres in Delhi and Mumbai where students can consult brochures, videos and CDs from Australian



British Council, Kolkata

education and training institutions. Students can also avail the advice of their staff in determining the best university options for them.

The official Australian Government website ([www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au)) will give you "impartial and reliable information about courses, institutions, study and living costs, the application process, visa requirements and more."

## IDP

IDP Education Australia (IDP) is a global organisation which is owned by 38 prestigious universities in Australia; representing all education sectors, IDP is an independent, not-for-profit organisation. Himali Kothari, who had been working as a counselor in IDP office in Bombay (although she was a student of a university in UK) says, "Since IDP has no vested interest, we can give unbiased opinion to students, helping them choose a university objectively,

pressurizing them to go to any one or the other." It provides student services through 89 offices in 36 countries, and worldwide through its Global Apply Online system. Many of these offices also offer IELTS testing centres. Your local IDP office can also help you with your visa requirements. In India, IDP has offices in New Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai, Chandigarh, Bangalore, Ahmedabad and Hyderabad.

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Explaining the extent of IDP's activities, Mr. Henry Ledlie, Director IDP Education Australia, India says, "IDP Education Australia offices offer students free, unbiased, comprehensive information to help them choose the right course, the right institution and the right location to meet their

professional and personal needs. Our counselors guide students and parents through the entire process. Our services do not stop at giving advice about institutions and visas. We go further to make sure our students are well prepared, and taken care of, even after they have



Australian Interview Session hosted by IDP in New Delhi

also introduce students to alumni in the local country who can share their own experiences of studying in Australia. We also provide pre-departure seminars for students and their parents so that they know what to expect when they arrive in Australia. Our services to our valued students are free of charge."

## CEC

Canadian education is represented in India through the Canadian Education Center (CEC) - INDIA which was established in 1997 by the Government of Canada under the patronage of the Canadian High Commission. The idea behind starting this organization was to provide correct and comprehensive information on the various educational programs and training facilities in Canada. Interested students may also obtain counseling services from this source. There are about 17 CEC offices throughout the world. CEC also organises education fairs on a regular basis (Please refer to the Events section (Pgs 16-18) for details)

## DAAD

DAAD? Do you now ask yourself, 'What in God's name is DAAD'? Well, it stands for "Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst". Still doesn't make much sense, does it?! To make it simple, remember it as German Academic Exchange Service. It is a joint organisation of German institutions of higher education and student bodies. Once again, the aim is to promote academic co-operation world wide, especially through the exchange of students, scholars, academics, and scientists.

The DAAD Regional Office in New Delhi and DAAD Information Centres in Chennai and Mumbai offer Potential applicants information on why they should study in Germany, what and where to study, admission requirements, how to start the process, living in Germany, information on funding your education there, cost of living, accommodation, travel, insurance expenses and visa. Prospective students can contact the DAAD Offices by e-mail, telephone and visit (by appointment only) in order to receive the required information.

## STB

Singapore Tourism Board (STB) has set up Education Services Strategic Tourism Unit (STU) in order to promote Singapore Education (SE) among international students. SE aims to provide a bank of information and support services for international students which includes a list of all types of institutions in Singapore, types of courses available, how to apply, cost of education and living, financial aid and accommodation. They also facilitate a conducive environment for international students to learn, live, and enjoy in Singapore.

In order to raise awareness of SE in India, they organize roadshows, education fairs and seminars. (Please refer to the Events section (pgs 16 18) for details)

## NZTE

New Zealand Trade & Enterprise (NZTE), the trade arm of the NZ government, has the task of creating awareness about NZ Trade and education. Ms. Jugnu Roy, Trade Development Manager, NZTE,



Ms. Emmeline Tan, Marketing Manager Pacific UniCollege Pte Ltd with students at Ready To Go? studio

informs us, "NZTE doesn't provide any kind of counseling to students; however in our Delhi office we do have a resource centre which stacks prospectuses & Brochures of NZ institutions, to which students can refer to." "For counseling", she adds, "the students need to get in touch with the network of our approved advisors; they are present in all important cities in India. These advisors are regularly trained by the New Zealand Immigration Services on the visa policies and requirements, to enable the agents to provide the required information to the students." Elaborating on the activities of NZTE, she says, "(It) is mainly involved in raising profile of education in NZ by organizing: \* Annual Education Fairs in Sept (Please refer to the Events section (pgs 16 18) for details)\* Pre-departure briefings in January for students going for the Feb intake \* Organizing regular visits for reps from NZ institutions to India."

For all those who're keen to study in NZ, Ms. Roy has this to say, "we will be shortly launching our India specific site [www.mynzed.com/india](http://www.mynzed.com/india) " Hence, not to worry, specialized help is at hand!

## AGENCE EDUFRANCE

Agence EduFrance is a public interest group (groupement d'intérêt public) created by an inter-ministerial decree in 1998. EduFrance can assist you at every stage of planning your study and stay in France helping you analyze your study plans, choose and apply to programs, and improve your French. You can also count on EduFrance:

- For help with administrative and regulatory matters banking, residency permit, social benefits and assistance
- For help finding a room with a French family (in Paris), or a room or studio apartment in a university residence hall (outside Paris)

A prospective student can obtain personalized services and help on any aspect of studying in France from the well trained Edufrance counselors in the various

well trained Edufrance counselors in the various Edufrance desks in Alliance Francaise centres spread in major cities of India.

## WHAT DO STUDENT EXPERIENCES SAY?

Having understood the area of operations or the extent of activities of some of the important (country specific) education promoting agencies in India, let us open Pandora's Box...

Conversations with many students have revealed a mixed feedback. Their responses have ranged from sugary sweet eulogies on how everything was just perfect and the staff in (whichever) department was so helpful that I didn't even have to lift a finger to do a thing to, even the internet would have been more warm and friendly and inclined, even eager, to impart useful

information and correct advice to, they-were-totally-useless!-I-had-to-do-everything-myself-eventually.

**Manish Mehta** (name changed) wished to study Management but couldn't decide where to do it from. He decided he'd approach a couple of these organizations, get their feedback and decide. First he went to an AAERI member agent of an Australian University, got all the information he wanted from well-informed staff who were eager to help. Then he thought of approaching USEFI for a US centric education, particularly because he had heard it was

the best destination for his course. Manish recounts, "The lady there, who was supposed to be helping me, had major attitude problems. I was totally put off and since Australia too offers great management courses and their agent was genuinely helpful, I decided to go there." Since at the very outset the relationship with USEFI did not start on a right footing, this student opted for Australia. Well, one country's loss is another's gain, it seems!

25 year old **Rahul Singh** (name changed), who had gone to a university in UK about four years back, described his experience with the British Council with the expression "they were a tough nut to crack". He

“ The lady there, who was supposed to be helping me, had major attitude problems. I was totally put off and since Australia too offers great management courses and their agent was genuinely helpful, I decided to go there. ”

goes on to elaborate, "To begin with, they were very rigid, formal and not very approachable but once they thaw out, they can be quite helpful." For factual information on universities like university ratings and UK in general, there are few who can beat them, he feels. The pre-departure briefing, he recalls, was very good.

Putting his view in a nutshell, Rahul says, "They are NOT career counselors and don't claim to be. You have to find your own way. You will get as much information as will help you to decide but unlike many private counseling agencies, they don't make any decisions for you." "After all, you have to learn to start taking independent decisions once you reach your destination abroad, so why not start now!" he adds with great pragmatism. However, the only drawback, he felt, was that some employees of such organizations speak with a lot of attitude which can put off many a less determined individual, especially the totally raw ones at the undergraduate level.

24 year old **Shreya Mukherjee**, now working with the e-venture of TOI group India Times, had gone to Warwick in UK in 2001 to do an MA in Creative and Media Enterprises. She says she went through the British Council for her "research on universities in UK. (That) was year 2001. The BC staff only guided me as to which books had what sort of information during Stage One which is looking for the right university." After that Shreya went through some relevant books on rankings and courses and came up with Warwick and once she had decided on the course, she says, "It were the representative of Warwick in India that really helped me out with all the information that I needed and more." However, she does recommend their (BC's) seminar on visa.

**Abhinav Badrinarayanan**, currently pursuing MBA from Monash University, Australia, has had a most pleasant experience with IDP as he says, "[Their] expertise, patience, professionalism and empathy went a long way towards making the process of applying for an MBA programmes in Australia an extremely pleasant experience, culminating with my eventual acceptance at Monash University. The individualized attention that [they] provided me throughout the application process was invaluable. [Their] prompt responses to my queries helped smooth the application process considerably and went a long way toward reducing the stress levels typically associated with this endeavour. [Their] thorough knowledge of the documentation, financial and legal requirements enabled me to meet all the application deadlines. This is despite the fact that I

started the entire application process relatively late due to my not even having considered Australian universities prior to meeting you." He finished with, "[They also helped in] arranging and coordinating my initial temporary stay and arrival in Melbourne, keeping in mind the short notice and my budget. It will be my pleasure to recommend IDP to any of my friends who wish to pursue a higher education in Australia."

**Himali Kothari** from Bombay and an alumna of Leeds University, UK, says she had first approached a local private counselor (name withheld) and even paid her for the services to be rendered. "Her team", she reminisces, a little despondently, "was not well versed with any aspect of studying in UK and all the information



they had seemed to have been obtained from the internet." Feeling totally wronged, Himali says that even I could've got that information without having to pay them for it! After this unpleasant episode, she decided to approach the British Council. "In my case, they too were not really helpful because I was certain that I wanted to go to Leeds; so they only checked my application. I didn't ask for any visa assistance and therefore was given none"

Himali, as mentioned earlier, had joined IDP Education Australia, Bombay on her return from UK. Having worked as a counselor there for a little less than a year, and being on the other side of the table (although the organization represented a different country), she presents a different view point. Narrating a particularly interesting incident, she recalls, "A student wishing to study in Australia came to me and said she would get everything done through us but I would also have to recommend a CA to her. Not being the practice at IDP, I firmly declined. She took off for another agency. A few weeks later, I saw the same girl back in my office; on



Ms. Emmeline Tan, Marketing Manager  
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asking she revealed that she had gone to an independent agent who was pressurizing her to join a smaller university which she felt was not right for her. So she left that place and came back to us." However, she does aver that there could be that odd case of an unhappy student with any of the organizations. After all, even the people working in these organizations are human beings!

**Vivienne Pareira, Senior Counselor, IDP Bombay**, in its defense says, "We are a very customer focused organization. Students have always wanted to be with our counselors and were always happy with their services." In fact, in an effort to pre-empt any isolated incident of a dissatisfied student, Vivienne says they recently introduced something called 'service cards' through which any student can lodge his/her complaint as to where they faced a problem and IDP would try to address those issues.

**Racquel Shroff, Manager, IDP, Chennai**, comments "IDP staff is friendly, approachable, polite, patient and caring... Every semester our customer satisfaction is measured through surveys conducted at Pre-Departure Briefings and our staff are rated very highly for their professionalism."

### OUR ADVICE:

The decision you make when you approach any counseling or information imparting agency will be instrumental in catapulting your career to dizzying heights (you hope fervently!). There will be all kinds of advice floating around and for you to even gauge whether it's good or bad, wrong or right, objective or vested interest, you must arm yourself with a certain amount of basic knowledge on your subject. Don't leave the entire task of enlightening you on the counselor.

Internet, (by now all of you certainly know), is a very useful tool, so exploit it to the fullest. All these

organizations have wonderfully detailed websites which give you extensive knowledge on every aspect of studying in their country. The content will undoubtedly be current and authentic (unbiased? I'm not too sure. After all they are trying to promote their country!). Familiarize yourself with the country (or countries, if you haven't decided which one) and its education system before going to anybody for help... even if you implicitly trust the sagacity and decisiveness of a friend, family or faculty member.

Knowledge is, after all, the most powerful weapon and commands instant respect! With this in tow, nobody in any agency, profit making or not-for-profit, could dismiss you with a quick wave of the hand or a curt response and you would know instantly if you're being advised correctly or not.

A proactive and dynamic YOU is, without a doubt, the sort of pupil most universities are looking out for!

### Some Important Websites:

Before going through anybody, it is advisable to go through the websites developed by the governments of all possible education destinations or their representatives.

US Education Foundation in India - Educational Advising Services (USEFI-EAS)

[Wwww.fulbright-india.org](http://www.fulbright-india.org)

British Council Education UK

[www.educationuk.org](http://www.educationuk.org) / [www.britishcouncil.org](http://www.britishcouncil.org)

IDP Education Australia

[www.idp.com](http://www.idp.com)

Australian Education International (AEI)

[www.studyinaustralia.gov.au](http://www.studyinaustralia.gov.au)

Canadian Education Centre

<http://www.studycanada.ca/india/>

Singapore Education

[www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/](http://www.singaporeedu.gov.sg/)

New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE)

[www.mynzed.com/](http://www.mynzed.com/)

Edufrance

[www.edufrance.fr/](http://www.edufrance.fr/)

DAAD

<http://newdelhi.daad.de/>

Although the number of international students heading to the US has declined and the tuition fee across all schools rose substantially this year, making it even more expensive to study in the US; it still remains the most popular destination amongst Indian students. In 2002-2003, the four advising offices of USEFI registered 328,127 contacts making one the most often approached education promoting agency. Ms. Jane Schukoske, The Executive Director of USEFI, the foundations initiatives and usefulness with **Ready To Go**



Ms. Jane Schukoske  
The Executive Director of USEFI

**Ready To Go**: What initiatives is USEFI taking for the remainder of this year and the year to come, to ensure maximum benefits and assistance to more and more Indian students?

**Ms. Jane:** USEFI is taking a number of initiatives to continue its effective assistance to Indian students. Here are a few examples:

### Outreach:

USEFI constantly strives to meet the high level of demand for information on higher education in the United States. Now that most institutions in India have begun their academic year, we are making a number of efforts to visit institutions, make presentations, display exhibits and answer queries. We are also participating in outreach efforts in collaboration with the Office of Public Affairs and the Consular Section of the U. S. Embassy and the American Consulates. We are consistently making efforts to reach under-served regions, especially in areas that do not have ready access to information on education in U. S. One of the special programs that we administer is the Ford Foundation International Fellowships Program ([www.ifpsa.org](http://www.ifpsa.org)). We are aiming to enhance our participation in career fairs. USEFI staff looks forward to increasingly contributing to interviews and articles, especially in professional journals and newspapers, to reach larger numbers of students. I am happy, doing this interview, since this is an opportunity for us to reach interested students.

### Services:

USEFI is planning to introduce on-line services for students. We have participated

in webchat sessions earlier. We are now planning to initiate interactive "e-advising" on-line.

USEFI plans to organize "Training of Trainers" programs, empowering staff at educational institutions in India to

provide information on higher education in the U. S. to their students.

We are enhancing opportunities for direct dialogue between Indian students with representatives from universities in the U. S. during their visits to various cities in India. We are encouraging U.S. universities to subscribe to USEFI's Institutional Membership Plan and intend to extend the membership to

renowned Indian institutions, too.

We will continue to assess our services to students through formal and informal surveys and customize our services to the ever changing needs of students.

### Staff Development:

USEFI provides professional development of all our advising staff so they are well trained to provide educational advising services to students. Programs include their participation in local, regional, national and international training opportunities, and sharing of real-life experiences with educational advisors from other countries.

### Resources:

USEFI regularly strengthens its library resources (print and audio-visual) to keep up with specific needs of students for information, for instance, on fields of study, on preparing strong application packets to U.S. universities and on practicing for standardized tests.

**Ready To Go**: How useful is USEFI, in general, for students particularly in view of the numerous education consultants cropping up everywhere, many of whom don't charge the students any money.

**Ms. Jane:** From student feedback, USEFI hears its services are very useful! USEFI offers unbiased and authentic information backed by the constantly updated professional training and reference materials from the U.S. Department of State as an official U. S. educational information center. USEFI's advisers are leaders in the field of international education in the U.S. and in India.

Free basic information and additional specialized services for a very nominal fee make our educational advising services package affordable and attractive. Many a time, we hear from students and parents how they have found our guidance through the application process very useful. Here is something a student sent to one of our advisors, "Your help really made a difference. Thanks a ton! Thank you! For all the kind words and selfless advices...". Such endorsements from students motivate our staff to continuously improve our services.