

Indian Students Association

University of Houston - Clear Lake

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SMRITI - 2004



NOVEMBER 2004

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Indian Students Association

The Indian Students Association is an organization formed by the Indian students of University of Houston – Clear Lake for the Indian student community. We are an independent association recognized by the University. Our primary aim is to help the Indian students in every step of the journey they go through while going to school here. We also keep the Indian cultural heritage alive in the hearts of the people here by organizing special events and festivals. Helping each other in times of need is what brings us together and aids us in strengthening our community. Ours is an ever-expanding community comprised of not only Indian but of several other origins as well. Students, faculty and staff alike participate in our events.

The ISA (Indian Students Association) thrives to achieve its goals by keeping the year filled with events.

EVENTS

New Students:

The primary purpose of ISA is to help new students. We strive to begin helping them right from the moment they consider UHCL as their prospective school. Our website, www.isauhcl.org is designed to give the students as much information as possible, answer all their questions, and to provide them the relevant links to the UHCL website and other necessary information. If the query they have is not covered in the online material, we even have a discussion board where they can post personalized queries. This discussion board is open to all, and a query is usually answered promptly by anyone who feels they can help. The council has also posted their personal email addresses on the website and the students are encouraged to e-mail them with questions and requests for help. This help can include finding out admission status to the school and other information.

After a month in UHCL I got another admission <to another University> with full funding and RA position. This was one offer which I couldn't let go. But I had a problem with my transfer and I was not allowed to leave UHCL. But things

changed after I requested for help from ISA. I met Dr. Sameer Pande, President Ankit and Vice President Murali and explained my problem. They took this as their own problem and assured me that I would get the transfer. They coordinated with the UHCL staff and because of their sincere effort and the tendency to help me, got me the transfer. Now here I am writing this from <the new University>. I can never forget this help which ISA has done and I am sure ISA will continue their good work.

-- Bhargav, ex-UHCL student

Current Students:

After the new students are helped out in their initial days, they become a part of the family here. Many of the students start working for ISA almost as soon as they have recovered from their jet lag!

ISA-UHCL: The True Spirit of Indians

- Satheesh ILU, Current Student, Fall 2004

"A lift when you are weary,
A help when you falter,
A song when you are glad
and A word when you are blue"

This is what every one expects in his life. I am glad to be a part of the community which lifts, helps, sings, guides and leads you to destiny.

ISA, the Indian community at UHCL, was my mentor since the day I started applying to grad schools in USA. I used to browse the ISA web pages for all sort of info. The

discussion board is very much helpful for sharing student's ideas. I really appreciate the team which came up with wonderful idea of having a web page for ISA to share all of our ideas. In India, the thought of staying away from all my family totally in a new world, I have never seen, used to leave me in bewildered state. But, after coming here I feel as if I am in home. The Indians here are very helpful and they made me adjust to this new way of life.

I really appreciate ISA for organizing welcome party for new students. Welcome party gave me a chance to break the ice and make new friends. Apart from this many other events like Independence celebration, Navaratri and Dandiya (till now) made me feel as if I was in home. I am very much impressed with the activities ISA takes up to help various people in need by fundraising and helping for many charity trusts. ISA scholarship, free furniture, airport pick up, free membership...like this many things make ISA my choice of best organization in UHCL. Above all, it showers the true spirit Indians on all those who live away from their home county.

"The shared time of today is the Beautiful meaning of tomorrow"

ISA makes the above statement true by the variety of events it organizes all through the year. Lastly, 3 Cheers to ISA in her perennial journey on glorious path at UHCL.

I have volunteered for ISA events and it is fun to work with such a talented group of people. Of all the events, I loved working for New Students Welcome party. I got to learn how to organize such big events and at the same time have fun. The rehearsals for the cat walk were hilarious to say the least. Even working to set up some lightings and running to get some food was enjoyable as I always had good company to share the work. Now that Diwali is the next big ISA event, all ISA members are gearing for some more fun and I am eagerly waiting for the event to come up.

Working for ISA have been a wonderful experience and I am very grateful to ISA for letting me part of such an excellent group of people.
 -- Naresh Voota, Current Student, Fall 2004

Goodwill Activities:

The ISA tries to rise to the occasion every time a disaster occurs, and tries to help in every way possible. We perform fund raising activities at UHCL, and send support to the needy in whichever form possible, like money, other necessities, and wishes.

I met with an accident. I had a major injury and there were no relatives in US to look after me. Fortunately, being a ISA member, I received great help from Dr. Sameer Pande (Advisor, ISA), Ankit (President, ISA), Neelima (PRO, ISA), Dr. Mitesh, Moid Khan and my roommates.

During that time, I

was taken good care by ISA members, especially Amit Kumar Singh (Ex Vice President) helped me by giving rides to the hospital. I was advised by Murali, Vice President--to take the school insurance, otherwise I would have faced many monetary problems
 -- Suman Tedla, current student, Fall 2004

Other issues:

Several students are faced with issues at various times in their education. These can range from major problems related to International status, health difficulties, insurance problems, to other minor issues. The ISA has always been open and helpful in these situations. All students have been made to feel comfortable to come to any ISA council member and discuss the problem. The council does their utmost to help them, and if the issues are beyond their realm, they are directed to the school officials who can.

Festivals:

One of the main aims of ISA is keeping the Indian students here in touch with their culture. The primary means of doing this is to celebrate the festivals as they are done in India. In order to incorporate all religions and festivals, we celebrate a wide range of festivals throughout the year.

Significance

Holi heralds the beginning of spring. Arrival of new season represents new beginnings, new hope and a fresh start, welcomed by playing with many colors

ISA Celebration:

ISA celebrates Holi in much the traditional way. The students get together, usually in the UHCL soccer field, and play with dry and wet colors. Typical Holi songs are played and we also provide Holi traditional snacks and home-made thandai, the Holi drink made from milk and dry fruits. We dance the day away. A traditional showering down with a water hose follows.

Summer/ Cricket Tournament



One of the longest events organized by any organization in UHCL, the cricket tournament is organized during summer. Apart from UHCL teams, players from different schools like San Jacinto, UH main campus and Alumni teams participate in this tournament.

These games are held over weekends and evenings. Women's series is also a part of this tournament. This year more than 140 players took part in this one month long tournament.

Holi



New Students Welcome Party/ August



To welcome new students into our ISA family, we have an informal welcome back party. This party aims at making them acquainted with the current students and alumni. The students put up skits, songs and dances, and the new students are encouraged to participate. We are proud to say that many of the performances are by the students who have just arrived in UHCL.

With a constant pressure of finding a job after my graduation, three courses as well look like a mammoth mountain. And then add to it President ship of ISA, vice President ship of Student Alumni Organization, 20 hours of on-campus job, missing home and a girl friend.

So your life looks like a platform which is never stationary.

But still I love working for ISA. It is tough and I have to concentrate hard so that I do not deviate from it. Many a times my heart tells me other way round and then what helps me to calm it down is what ISA does for others.

The way we celebrate our programs and festivals is amazing. I talk to my friends in Chicago and Boston and they are amazed to hear how much our ISA work. They have

not celebrated Diwali, Holi or Navratri ever since they left India. I feel like Onida TV's advertisement "Neighbor's envy Owner's pride".

I thank people like Sameer, Rajesh, Aparna, Kashif, Amit and Alphy who are still working for ISA. They are not getting anything in return but they are so much attached to ISA that they can't go away. If you start working for ISA, it will get inside your blood.

I am proud to be a part of ISA at UHCL. I request everyone to keep working for ISA so that new students get the feeling of comfort when they come here.

- Ankit Agarwal, President, ISA Executive Council, 2004-2005

Independence Day



India got her independence on August 15th, 1947.

ISA Celebrations:

ISA celebrates Indian Independence Day every year. This year we celebrated our first outdoors event on Independence Day. ISA members collected at Clear Lake Park to barbeque and play games enjoying the outdoors.

Welcome Week/ August

The Student Life Office organizes a welcome week for all the returning students of UHCL. This

event targets all the students who are coming back to school after summer break. The week long festivities require a lot of organizing, and they require several volunteers to help them through the event. ISA council and members contribute to making this event by organizing and volunteering their time and ideas to the office.

Student Life Fair



UHCL's Student Life Office organizes a Student Life Fair to inform the students about student organizations on campus. ISA participates in the fair and sets up our own booth. This is the day that new students get a chance to know about and join organizations of their choice.

Navratri



Significance:

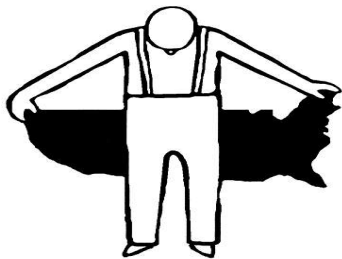
Navratri is an Indian festival celebrated to mark the victory of good over evil. The occasion marks the triumph of Lord Rama over Ravana. The people are asked to burn the evil

within themselves by burning effigies.

ISA Celebrations:

According to the traditional Navratri celebrations, ISA too celebrates with dancing and music. The Atrium II is decorated and at the start of the evening, a pooja is performed. This is followed by garba and dandiya dances, to the beat of traditional Navratri music. Snacks and drinks are provided for the event participants, for a nominal payment. Dandiya sticks are sold at the dance floor.

Clothes Drive



ISA organizes a clothes drive every year. A week long event run in the Bayou and Delta buildings, we keep boxes throughout the building and invite people to donate their clothes to us. These clothes are in turn sorted and donated to the needy. Students from all over campus participate in the clothes drive by donating their used clothes to us. This year the clothes are being donated to St. Christopher church in Houston. The ISA Clothes Drive is one of the charity events performed by ISA.

Bake Sale



ISA started a new tradition this year by introducing a bake sale for fund raising. This bake sale ran for two days in the Bayou. The food consisted of delicious Indian snacks like spring rolls, samosas and home made cake. The proceeds were donated to the Florida hurricane victims. ISA donated \$200 to Red Cross.

World Unity Day (Participation)



The Student Life Office organizes an event where each country is represented by a booth. The booth for India is set up and manned by the ISA. This booth displays Indian artifacts and other informational posters. We also had games, mehendi and prizes.

The ISA activities like "New Students Welcome Party" gave me a chance to interact with my fellow mates and build new bridges of friendship and love. In a nutshell I feel that ISA is the best organization, which guides and leads us to our destiny in UHCL.

- Kishore Kumar Alla,
Current Student, Fall 2004

Diwali



Significance:

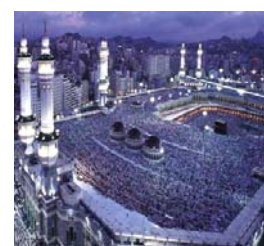
Diwali is celebrated in honor of Goddess Laxmi, the Goddess of Prosperity and Wealth. The meaning of the word Deepawali is a cluster of lamps.

ISA Celebrations:

Diwali is ISA's biggest event of the year. ISA celebrates Diwali on a grand scale, befitting the most widely celebrated festival in India. The patio is decorated with Indian decorations, costumes, informative posters. The entire place is lit up with different kinds of lighting like kandils, hanging lights, multi-colored bulbs, candles and lanterns.

This is the event where we honor the people, who support us throughout the year, by donating to our association, our invaluable members and the people who make a difference to our organization. A professional D.J. is hired for the night, and the guests proceed to dance the night away. A complete scrumptious Indian dinner is provided to all the guests.

Eid



Significance:

The day of Eid is celebrated by the Muslim religion to express their gratitude to Allah for helping them fulfill their spiritual obligations.

ISA Celebrations:

ISA celebrates Eid by having a lunch at the Bayou Building. A feast is provided to celebrate this occasion. All members are invited to participate in the meal.

In early August, we came to the Alumni-UHCL, asking for some used furniture to be donated to new students. We did get good response from the Alumni and nice coordination from folks from Indian Student Association. Many thanks for your kindness and efforts to help newly-arrived students.

We hope that these kinds of activities will continue in the future as they are so critical for new students to get a good start here.

- Bui Tan Thai, Vietnamese student, Fall 2004

Goodwill Activities



Natural calamities and other disasters are a part of this world we live in. The Gujarat earthquake (2000), September 11th disaster (2001), Astronauts calamity (2003), and the Florida hurricane (2004) are a few of the disasters

that occurred in the years since ISA has come to being. Each time, we have risen to the occasion, and did whatever we can to help those affected.

The ISA raised funds for the Gujarat earthquake victims and donated money to the City of Houston Mayor's fund raising.

After the September 11th disaster, the ISA raised funds and collected wishes for the affected. These funds and wishes were then sent across to the firefighters and families of the affected.

The Columbia space shuttle calamity was met with a booth set up by ISA in order to inform the students about the occurrence. The booth, which was up for three days, displayed information about all seven astronauts, and updated news about the space shuttle. ISA also lit a candle at the SGA meeting, and honored the astronauts.

The Florida hurricane prompted ISA to raise funds via a bake sale. Indian snacks were sold to the students in order to raise money and sent to the Florida Hurricane victims.

<The ISA> arranged for a welcome party for all the Indians and encouraged me to perform a dance at the same. They made sure that I was involved in all the activities.

It was really fun working with the ISA committee, its more than a committee; it's like a family on campus.

- Ankur, new student, Fall 2004

ISA- THE INSIDE VIEW

ISA Council Team Structure



The ISA executive council is a team of eight members who work together to coordinate the events. The eight members each have a post in the council, which are: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, SGA (Student Government Association) Representative, Public Relations Officer, Marketing Officer, Special Events Coordinator and Webmaster. Any ISA member can contest for these posts.

Organizing and pulling off so many events on such a large scale is hard work. Being a voluntary organization run completely by the students, all the work is done by the students themselves. The council receives all the advice and help possible from their advisor, Sameer Pande, other officials and offices in UHCL.

The council has to manage everything right from the conceptualization, planning and making the event happen. Since the council is comprised of students, they have to find the time and energy to manage the ISA work in between their classes, studies and on-campus jobs.

In spite of the demands on their time, a new batch of students steps up every year to

contest the elections and serve the ISA. The force that drives them is the need to help other Indians and make a difference.

I have some good impression about ISA. Its members helped us by transferring us some furniture, especially Ankit and his council. Yeah, I think they are helpful and gentle.

- *Thin Nguyen, Current Student*

Working for ISA:

- *By Alphy Daizen, ISA Executive Council, 2003-2004, ISA Legend*

Hmmm! Where shall I begin? My initiation to ISA was quite early; in fact it was my first day at the university when Aparna asks me if I would like to attend a SGA workshop. (My mind goes okaaaay, do I really have to.) Anyway there I was attending a SGA workshop with a placard saying representative of ISA. (Talk about being put to work early.) But I never forgot that first workshop, because if it were not for that first workshop I wouldn't have known about the nuts and bolts of being an officer for an organization. And I wouldn't have known much about the SGA, or gone on to be the Vice President of the SGA Executive council.

As Dr Staples would say "there is always been a dearth of leaders in society". What most people don't realize is that all of us have leadership skills hidden in us. Only thing it needs is a bit of nurturing. Is there something you always wanted to improve - like your communications

skills, organization skills, public speaking skills, inter-personal skills? Well now is the time to improve those skills, yes right now while you are at the university. This is the place where you can try out all those things, a place where you can make mistakes...learn...overcome fears. These are the very skills that will help you get that job and later on that promotion.

So guys and gals a word of advice get involved on campus - be an officer, be a committee rep, attend SGA meetings, volunteer, attend leadership workshops.

Be a leader. Campus life is not just about getting an education; it's about all round development of an individual, and guess what that's you.

Working of ISA Council:

Working for the ISA not only includes helping others, achieving targets and accomplishing these very difficult tasks. A side effect of this work is that helps these students to build their personalities.

Organizing an event takes a lot of work in planning and executing the event. Each aspect of the event, like food, decorations, cultural aspects, invitations, pre-event marketing, event coverage, post-event follow-up, updating the website, etc. has to be taken care of. This includes coordinating several tasks with several different people, and delegating the best job to the most appropriate person. The students learn how to undertake and manage these responsibilities, they learn how to work with different

people in order to accomplish tasks, and they have to do all this while managing their studies and campus jobs. Thus the organization work helps the council build their managerial, time management and communication skills.

The ISA Experience:

- *By Amit Kumar Singh ISA Executive Council, 2003-2004, ISA Legend*

Working for ISA is great fun and full of great experiences; it has made me an organized person as a whole and taught me the strength of the team work. I feel working for such a big and a strong family shows you how to respect others view and communicate your ideas. Also it provides a perfect environment to work with people from different background and learn things out of the textbook. Apart from the learning and other serious stuff it is great fun too, the late night brainstorming sessions and seeing our plans coming to life is a pleasure which can be substituted to none. And after all the planning, action and reactions the biggest thing I think I have achieved is not the applause nor the criticisms but what I have become, a more confident and more determined person. I have seen myself growing over every event, every meeting and every party. And according to me that is my biggest achievement; an achievement which can never be taken away from me and will keep on growing. The credit goes to ISA for bringing out the best in me.

Three cheers to ISA

Having traveled the path from being a founding member to Advisor of the Indian Students Association the word that epitomizes my feelings is one of pride. Every time I think that we have had a year of activities that would be difficult to surpass, I am proved wrong. Each semester brings new blood, new ideas and in terms of achievement sky is the limit for ISA.

I hope that I can keep pace with the ever-expanding organization.

-- Sameer Pande Ph.D., Coordinator of IISS, ISA Advisor

Event	Date	Location
Holi	March	Soccer Field, Delta Building
Cricket Tournament	Summer	Delta Building Parking Lot
Independence Day	August	Outdoors Event
New Students Welcome Party, Fall	August	Atrium II, Bayou Building
Navratri	September	Atrium II, Bayou Building
Diwali	November	Atrium II, Bayou Building
New Student Welcome Party, Spring	January	Atrium II, Bayou Building
Eid-Ul-Adha	February	Patio, Bayou Building
Community Events: Clothes Drive, Bake Sales, Others	Fall & Spring	Bayou and Delta Buildings

For making this newsletter happen...

THANKS!

An idea, a thought to spread the word about ISA. Converting the thought to this reality was possible because of the support provided in the following forms: SGA for funding our venture, the contributors for taking time out to write to us, Achyuth, Kashif and Amit Singh for providing the content writer inspiration, Sameer and Murali Krishna for finalizing the draft, Satheesh ILU for the images and Raja Sekhar for using all his time and creativity in making the beautiful cover page, providing aesthetics and pleasing everyone involved!

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Ankit Agarwal, President

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