Nuffield College in the University of Oxford Announces Collaboration with FLAME University, India

On September 20, 2016, Sir Andrew Dilnot, the Warden of Nuffield College, and Professor Raymond Duch, the Director of the Nuffield College, University of Oxford, Centre for Experimental Social Sciences, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with FLAME University in Pune, India to create a collaborative Centre for Experimental Social Sciences at FLAME. The new Centre has been established for five years in the first instance. The signatories from FLAME were Dr. Devi Singh, Vice-Chancellor of FLAME University; Krutarth Shah, Governing Body Member of FLAME University; Tejas Patani, Board of Management Member of FLAME University; Sharon Barnhardt, who will be the Director of CESS India; and Pavan Mamidi who will be Director of International Research Collaborations at CESS India. CESS India will be formally known as CESS Nuffield-FLAME University.

Speaking about the new initiative, Professor Duch said that “CESS Nuffield is extremely excited about the collaboration with FLAME University in India. FLAME University are acknowledged as pioneers of liberal education in India, and their focus on inter-disciplinary education makes them the right fit for us. This collaboration offers Nuffield CESS a unique opportunity for Oxford scholars to cooperate with the vibrant and rapidly growing community of social scientists in India.”

Dr. Barnhardt said, "The expansion of CESS Nuffield to India made possible by FLAME University will create a research centre which is almost unique in India. Its core will be experimental social sciences - a method-based unifier, rather than being focused on a theme or issue. This will give us a platform to work across economics, sociology, political science and social psychology in addition to their applications in law, management and public policy. This is an investment in social science research, which demonstrates FLAME University’s commitment to supporting an important element of liberal education.”

Dr. Mamidi, himself an alumnus of Nuffield College, added “The new centre will have ‘lab-in-the-field’ capabilities to combine the control of laboratory
experiments with the diversity of the field. This particular feature will be attractive to many experimentalists and we are looking forward to deeply enriching international research collaborations based out of Pune.”

The MoU provides for intensive collaboration between CESS Nuffield and FLAME University on the training of young experimental social scientists in India. The Centre for Experimental Social Sciences at Nuffield College has developed a superb reputation for providing accessible but cutting edge training in experimental methods for students with very diverse interests including students from academia and the public and private sectors. Professor Duch said “We are very pleased that Nuffield CESS will host, annually, a large contingent of students from FLAME University at our training facilities here in Nuffield College. These students will get the opportunity to attend research training programs at Nuffield CESS, while staff from our Centre will also conduct training sessions at the new CESS Nuffield-FLAME University facilities on the FLAME campus.”

The new Centre will invest in the development of experimental facilities and in the hiring and training of new research staff in India. CESS Nuffield-FLAME University will have state-of-the-art facilities for conducting experiments in the FLAME experimental lab, in the field at sites throughout India, and online using a subject pool recruited from amongst the entire Indian population. Professor Duch pointed out that “this Nuffield-FLAME collaboration would transform how social scientists conduct experimental research in India – scholars from around the world would have easy access to what is certainly the most diverse and populous subject pool that exists today. Our vision is to open up the Indian continent to experimentalists wherever they may be located but also to provide a very rich resource to Indian scholars.”

This collaboration represents an important milestone in the CESS initiative that Nuffield College envisioned when it created the Centre. The College’s Governing Body expected that CESS would facilitate experimental social science research throughout the world. Last year, Nuffield CESS established a very successful collaboration in Santiago, Chile with the University of Santiago, providing the Centre with an important presence in Latin America. The collaboration with FLAME University dramatically advances the ability of CESS researchers to design and implement experiments with a truly global reach since there are now major lab, field and online capabilities in Europe, Latin America and Asia.

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