

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Greetings! Welcome to this web chat. I am excited to be here and am ready to respond to questions.

**Shibin Mathew:** What are the safety issues that Indian students must be aware of both while working in the labs and in the campus life outside?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Safety on campus remains a significant priority for US universities. Usually students get orientation on security aspects of the campus and what they can do in case of emergencies such as tornadoes or storms, as well in case of crimes on campus.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** In terms of work on campus and in labs, university safety offices ensure equipment, conditions and employee/student behavior is safe.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** On the whole, it is up to the student to pay attention to where they live, what they do, and on the whole use common sense in their daily lives.

**savitha:** What is the selection process? Should students approach individual universities, get through GRE? What is the process?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** The selection process for undergraduate students is different from that for MS, PhD students. In the former, mostly SAT, high school performance and ability to complete the course work play a deciding role in selection.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** However, for graduate students, GRE, TOEFL, undergraduate scores/performance and demonstrable ability to do independent work (research) can play a greater role.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** This is especially true for PhD programs where the student is expected to be independently working under the guidance of an advisor.

**Shibin Mathew:** What are the difficulties generally faced by PhD students in the top engineering schools?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Doctoral students are expected to carry a much higher burden of work than most MS and undergraduate students. Thus, the ability to think independently, communicate effectively orally and in writing, to be able to do lab/teaching work, to write proposals...all have to be handled. This is really as much a learning process as a process to prepare the student for professional life whether in teaching or research or industry.

**RK:** When do the universities generally let you know whether they have accepted you or not for the fall semester for an MS program?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Admissions notifications typically start showing up early in spring semester.

**Jayashree:** 2)As far as I have seen, American universities offer M.S. in Computer Science under the three kinds of schools: 1) the School of Natural sciences 2) School of Engineering 3) School of Computing Sciences. Are the M.S. degrees offered under all these three types of schools considered equal while

searching for jobs or for other future opportunities? Keeping in mind that I am an Engineering student, can you tell me studying under which of these schools is a better option for me?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** The way Computer Science is approached differs from institution to institution, however the overall content of courses/general expectations of what people ought to know may not be that different. More important than the "school" under which the program falls is the aspect of what specific specializations they offer at the program and what you want. If a university has professors who specialize in cloud computing and you are interested in mathematical models/algorithms, then it is not a good match. It is better if you look through various programs and find a suitable match to your needs/interests.

**sheetal goel:** hey i am sheetal,i have done my under grads in construction technology and management and now interested in a MS in the same field..i wanted to no how is the curriculum there and what is the job opportunity for my field as even u r from the same background??

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** The curriculum in construction technology is a combination of a bit of architecture, a bit of engineering, construction techniques, surveying and project management. You have to know a bit of all of these things to become a competent construction engineer. Job opportunities...that is hard to answer as it varies with the economy, construction demand and such.

**Jayashree:** 1)Good afternoon, sir. My name is V.P.Jayashree. I am doing my final year B.E. Computer Science and Engineering at Anna University, Chennai. I am a prospective student to pursue a MS in computer science and applied to few universities.

**Jayashree:** 3)I heard that most of the on-campus housing is occupied by the American students. Is it true? Can you please educate me if many girl students from India stay on-campus in US Universities or they stay in apartments outside the University?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Jayashree: I have already responded to part 1. For the 2nd part: on campus housing is available for ALL students: international as well as local students. Sometimes adult students prefer off-campus housing as it offers more freedom (for cooking, socializing) and also is less expensive. On campus housing is often very convenient, has the comfort of walking to college/class but sometimes you may not find the meal options to be to your taste. Also living in a dorm with 300 students is different from living with 2 friends in a 3 bedroom apartment. Girl/boy...it does not matter; everybody who is a student can stay on campus if facility and space are available.

**savitha:** Hi, what are the career prospects in terms of aeronautical engineering? One has heard that the US is the best bet for aeronautical engineering studies....

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Again, it would be difficult for me to respond to the specifics of career prospects for this or other fields as these change with time and I am not knowledgeable. However, in terms of facilities, faculty capability and research...I would agree that the US institutions are top flight for the field.

**sheetal goel:** wat is the scope for construction management in the us??as i have an udergrad in the same

**sheetal goel:** so isn't it a good idea to get a masters in construction

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Construction management used to have a lot of demand when the economy was booming a few years ago. They could not find engineers fast enough to meet the

demand. Then the slowdown occurred and people were laid off...I cannot tell you what the prospects are now, but they will surely change with time.

swethasekar: what basic qualities should an engineering graduate need?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** An engineering graduate is expected to (i) know their technical stuff that they studied for undergrad, (ii) be familiar with the supporting knowledge/information (e.g. computers, mathematics), and (iii) have the essential analytical capabilities that are necessary to perform the engineering function.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** But they are also expected to be hard working, honest, have communication skills and ability to work in teams and alone.

**Brindha:** I would like to know as to how i should choose universities to enhance opportunities for financial aid. What are the basic criteria?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** I would suggest you choose the universities based on (i) what the university offers and how it matches what you want, (ii) your ability to afford the education. Financial aid is challenging to get unless you are thinking of assistantships. If you are found to be competent and the professors believe they can invest in you and you will perform to their expectations, they might consider you for assistantship funding. However please know that there are quite a few applicants and few funding opportunities.

sheetal goel: how difficult is it to work with Americans when we get placed?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Working with people is always interesting...whether it is in India or the US or other parts of the world. The most significant difference I found was that the work ethic in the US is very strong---they are at work they work VERY hard. And when they go home, they're home! You will find the same diversity of individuals in the US as in India. But the thing that I love about working with Americans is that they value hard work, intelligence, talent and your ability to perform. They do not care what gender, race, color, height, national origin you are as long as you can perform!

savitha: why should a student study engineering in the US, be it graduate studies or PG studies? What Universities would you like to suggest?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Having studied in India and the US, and having taught in Indian and US universities, I will say that there is a significant difference in the mindset when it comes to graduate studies, especially in engineering. One finds professors in the US who are steeped in research and they love teaching...they work in the academe and with industry, doing fundamental and applied research. The libraries are generally well endowed, as are laboratories. So a student who wants to study or do research has a lot of resources handy. The specific university that a person may find suitable is entirely up to their individual needs/wants and a person needs to do some research to satisfy that the college they are selecting is indeed offering whatever they are looking for.

**Hema:** I am a software engineer having 3.5 work experience and planning to do MIS . Could you please advise me whether to go in for Management Information systems or a general MBA . What are the job prospects for both courses.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** A general MBA program covers a large umbrella of knowledge and the graduate of the program is essentially a GENERALIST. An MIS person is a specialist primarily in the IT field. What would you like to be? I wanted to be an engineering specialist so I did MS/PhD in

engineering, but later I also desperately needed management skills in my previous organization and so I did a general MBA.

**Jayashree:** 5) After I have been offered admission by a university in USA, what are the next steps to be followed to confirm the admission from my side?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** You can send them an email acknowledging receipt of admission offer. If you are planning to join them subject to issuance of a visa, you may want to indicate as much to them. Then, follow the instructions on the consulate's website and begin to think of applying for a visa, while also thinking about what you need to do and when in order to arrive in the US and join the university.

**savitha:** In terms of branches, which branch of engineering has the best schooling in the US?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** You may want to review the information at <http://www.america.gov/universities.html>

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Because the number of schools/options is too large to list specifically here.

**savitha:** Hi, I am Savitha Karthik, journalist with the Deccan Herald. I have a couple of questions... When it comes to engineering education in America, which branch of the subject do you think is best pursued in the US? As in, is it IT, mechanical, chemical, and so on?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Again, the answer depends on the level of education (MS or PhD), research or general education, specific areas of expertise and the like. There are centers of excellence all over the world, but the US has a significant number of very good institutions offering excellent programs for graduate and undergraduate students.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** In terms of general questions, if you would like, Ms. Savitha, you can contact the consulate's press office at (+44) 2857-4000

**Humera:** After completion of MS from London, a job or ph.d in US..What will be a wise choice ??????/ Ph.d is a researching field...will job experience be an additional point to do ph.d after MS?????????

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** What would YOU want to do...that should be the driver to the answer. For me doing a Ph.D. was FUN and my professor encouraged me to do it and I am glad I did because it gave me instant credibility among my peers in the US and still does wherever in the world I go. Many of my friends did not care for doctoral degree and the rigors it imposes on you...they chose to do MS and they are happy with what they did. Others I know in the US did a BS and started working. Again, different strokes for different folks! What would YOU like to do?

**Nordwart:** What would you say will be the "fields of the future" ie. the subject areas that students should concentrate on to make sure there will be enough jobs in the future?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** My personal knowledge of this is very limited. However, virtually every area of knowledge has a leading/cutting edge and YOUR interest should drive it. If you are interested in mathematics and computation, perhaps you can do MS/Ph.D. in math. Or if you are interested in robotics, maybe that is what you should pursue. If you do not know what you want to do, maybe you could consider going into the industry first, reading up on the field of interest and then pursuing your goals.

**Koks:** Considering the current financial crisis in the US. Do you think we still have the opportunity to find a job in the US after finishing our PhDs? (Electrical and computer engineering branch)

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** The financial situation in the US certainly has some bearing on the hiring of new graduates. However, companies are always on the lookout for top talent who will give them an edge, a team member who will contribute things of significant value to the company and make them stand out. This is especially true for Ph.D.s who work in specialized areas involving IT, electronics/computer science, and other applied engineering areas.

**savitha:** Savitha again, Mr Srivatsa, what is the percentage of Indian students studying engineering in American universities?

**savitha:** And what draws them there?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** I can tell you that over 100k students from India are studying in the US. In the largest 25 universities, about 18% of the total student body is international students. More statistics on international students in the US can be found at <http://opendoors.iienetwork.org/?p=150808>

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** The draw for students is (i) quality of education, (ii) quality of facilities, faculty, resources and simply nature of the academic/research programs at the universities in the US. The prospect of finding a job after graduate school is also a significant element of the draw.

**Jayashree:** 6)How can I get to know the students from Chennai going to the University where I am going and establish contact with them, before going to USA?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** I would suggest you look up the people at USIEF in Chennai <http://www.usief.org.in/index.aspx> and in Bangalore at the Yashna Trust <http://www.yashnatrust.org/>

**Sai Priya:** Can a student change his/her Major after getting an admit from the University???

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** You can change the major when you are in the US. Changing majors while you are still in India might be possible (I do not know how the process works as it would vary from university to university) but it is possible that if you went from one major to a related major, you might be able to carry some course credits from one program to the other.

**RK:** Is it important that to study only in a top university in the US or even a mediocre one with a good faculty will be equally good?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** What is considered a top/mediocre university by one rating system is not necessarily what is thought of by the other rating systems. The US has a LOT of good universities and an overall ranking does not do justice in capturing the diversity and depth of faculty, resources and general capabilities available at the university. I would most certainly encourage you to explore not just "TOP" universities but also those not ranked so. Ultimately, it is not just the university rank that counts...it is what you get out of the educational process and what you do with it that counts even more.

**savitha:** How does one make the most of the course? In terms of internships? Practical training?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** I've found that for ME, the programs that I found most suitable were the ones where the professors poured their knowledge and experience into the students and brought

theory, practice and everything together for us. Internships, laboratory exercises, field trips, library resources, all contribute to the totality of the experience. In my MBA program the professors themselves used to say: you 40 students have more experience than I do, so I will learn from you and you learn from me...we will have a fair exchange. It was FANTASTIC.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Are there any more questions that you'd like to ask? If yes, please send them now.

**sheetal goel:** thank you for answering all our questions sir

**Koks:** I want to ask about the PhD life in USA. It is somewhat stereotyped as painful and that professors always push students hard. is it true?

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Ph.D. programs, irrespective of where in the world you are, are unique and different because you have to work VERY closely with the advisor who is guiding your work. He/she is the expert (normally) though through their guidance, you will become the expert in the field by the time you are done with your Ph.D. Yes, there are stereotypes and some elements of that have been experienced by many...but the bottom line is that a Ph.D. program produces a doctoral degree holder whose quality must fully satisfy the university and the committee that is graduating/approving the person's degree. It is a big deal and the professors treat it as such.

**Presenter (Ravi-US Consulate):** Thank you for participating in this web chat. I appreciate your questions and your time. The transcript from this session will be available at the Bangalore VPP and the US Consulate Chennai websites.