

# Making the Most of MIT—A Chat with Meghana Dharmapuri

*Meghana Dharmapuri was the Editor-in-Chief of the MIT Post for the academic year 2017-18. A student of Computer Science and Engineering, she graduated in 2019. She left a lasting impression on her peers and faculty alike. Currently a Solution Advisor at Deloitte India (Offices of the US). The MIT Post had the opportunity to sit down and interview Meghana about her experiences in MIT, the MIT Post and her professional life.*

## **How was your MIT experience? What stood out to you the most?**

Okay, I did a lot of things. I was one of those “active kids around the block” at that time. I come from an army background. So, there’s a lot of sports and all of that involved. So, when I came here, I saw this whole avenue of things to do. I was part of the music club, debate club, and MIT Post. Eventually, I was on the Editorial board also, and a lot of other things. I was part of the tennis team and swimming team. So, I used to be in all of these things because it was something apart from the academics itself. I also made sure that I took out time to study. The evenings were just for ensuring I’m in all these student activities and technical projects. One of the reasons why it was really nice for me was that the seniors were very authentic. It made a lot of impact the way they were with you, the way they encouraged you to always do whatever felt better. I was also part of the dramatics club AAINA. It was a unique experience compared to all my other peers in different colleges. Apart from your academics, you get that time to explore different avenues and see what else you are good at. So that is something I enjoyed.

## **Were you part of any projects?**

I was actually with Manohar Pai Sir. There was a technical project called RC Air. We worked on air cleansing machines.

**How different is your MIT experience from your professional life?**

Very different. Here, you used to get that time to balance things out. At work you don't because there's just so much to do. For the sake of comfort, there are sports there. I'm part of the football club over there and the basketball club. But still, it's not the same, because here, you have that whole peer group aspect. Everybody is your age and going through the same things, the same journey. The end goal is the same, at least for those four years. That helps you through that whole process, no matter where you are in life at that point in time. In an office, it becomes very different because you're dealing with many different people. For me, I'm not even dealing with my colleagues. I'm only dealing with people on the Swiss or US sides who I have never even seen in my life. That's the thing. It makes a huge difference when you're here and learning things hands-on, online it's a little different.

It's the time aspect, the amount of time that you have to do things, and the rat race- it is still a little easier because everybody's going through the same thing.

**You seem to have participated in many different activities, so to most students, would you recommend joining many clubs or focusing on one?**

See, I would say first you should explore. You see, if you've not tried something, you don't know if you're good at it or if you enjoy it. You don't know the kind of seniors you meet, the kind of people you meet. Otherwise, you're restricted to a very small circle. So, make sure you go out there, do things, and meet as many people as possible because the exposure is very vast. The kind of people you meet, their experiences, what you learn from them, you never know, you might make some

friends for life through that. So, after that year, see what you like, and then start narrowing it down. That's what I did. So, in the first year, lots of clubs. The second year, few. And then the third year, I just stuck to a couple of clubs like IECSE and MIT Post.

**What do you think of our curriculum and course structure now that you are in the industry? Has it helped you in your professional life?**

Actually, it is. To a great extent, it is. Everybody is taking a course they are interested in. I have gone more into the consulting side of things in the software field, but for me, it was more of the technical mindset that I could develop through the course and curriculum. The kind of questions I should ask, the kind of technology, while it's not the same tools and technologies you're using, it makes me adapt faster to those. But for others who are more interested in the software field. It's a very up-to-date course, in fact, for that matter. I think I've heard that your courses are getting updated even still. That's wonderful because most of my time, they did network; I think the networking one, then SVPN that they were doing then, are things they applied in their jobs. So definitely the course has been immensely helpful for everybody relevant.

**We have heard you like to travel and said you're from a military background. Did you move around a lot as a child?**

Yes, I did. I studied in seven different states. I studied in nine different schools, so I was always moving. I've studied in the school for just ten months, and I've also studied for two years. But to date, the longest place of residence has been Manipal for me. So that's something really interesting when somebody asks, what is home? I wonder if it is the longest place for residence. Because then it's Manipal. It's the feeling that this is my hometown for me.

## **What was your experience like in MIT Post?**

There's a reason I stuck around all four years in this one club. Firstly, my love of writing. I used to like writing the kind of articles that I did. But apart from that, it was the whole culture. It is not entirely just students. It's got some part of the administration. You've got that sort of mix of things going on that you are running around and talking to professors about things, getting those permissions. That's got a real kick to itself, right? Then the kind of people I interacted with; my seniors-their objectives were very clear. I had certain visions for the Post, which pushed me to do a few more things there. Like we had a new column that I created called In Transit, which was our travel column. So that is something that I really enjoyed working on with everybody because every vacation needs to be going somewhere new.

We had the yearly magazine, the Standard, which had a different set of articles going into it. There was a lot of variation in the way we worked. So, it was really fun.

## **Where did you do your internships, and did you find them on campus?**

My internship was at Deloitte. Other internships are small ones. I did that development here, so that was it. Apart from that, it was only Deloitte. A lot of us from campus were there. So, they hired a lot of people. It was a lot of fun to learn things during our internship because we didn't have to execute many things. It was just shadowing different projects and different kinds of things on which people were working. We had something called an innovation project. So that is something my team and I did. You were supposed to use different kinds of technology to see what kind of things that you can do. It was a competition at the end of the day, and we won. Hence internship was a good period. We returned to college every time for the midterms, and the final terms were also fun. We just coordinated together.

## What additional learnings outside the classroom that you value most?

As I said, go out there as you don't know what field you find interesting. I've seen people who completed their engineering, but one of these clubs stuck, and they made a career out of those things and are very successful doing that right now. Or even the projects they did, so many people did mechanical or computer science projects, and they have their own start-ups now, so it's all about how you leverage your interest and first go out there and put yourself out there to see what is there. If you test what is there and see what you can do with it, then make the most of it. Make sure you experience Manipal to the maximum because, trust me, nobody has experienced what we have. To date, I know so many seniors who were in that "Manipal bubble" because of the experience they had. Most people get out of college and are done with it, but everybody carries Manipal with them for a long time in their lives, so make sure you make full use of that.