

O.P. Jindal Global University Establishes the Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling - Studies relating to Mental Health Need to be Prioritised in India

The O.P. Jindal Global University (JGU) on Tuesday, 29 September established a new school: Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling (JSPC) on the eve of the 11th Anniversary of the University. This is the 10th School launched by JGU in response to the growing need to understand human psychology, mental health and encourage teaching and research in these fields. The Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling will contribute to the creation of a dynamic and resourceful centre to train young students to contribute in the field of psychology.

The Guests of Honour for the Inauguration of the 10th School of JGU were Professor (Dr.) Ian Paul Overall, Executive Dean of the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuroscience, King's College London and Dr. Nimesh G. Desai, Director, Institute of Human Behaviour and Allied Sciences, Government of Delhi.

Speaking on the occasion, Professor (Dr.) C. Raj Kumar, Founding Vice Chancellor, O.P. Jindal Global University observed "The Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling (JSPC) is being launched by JGU on the basis of five guiding principles, which includes, the interdisciplinary dimension of the study of psychology within the larger context of humanities and social sciences. The second principle behind the setting up of the school is to inculcate a sense of research in the broader field of psychology. The third principle stems from the need to develop disciplines surrounding psychology with a view to improving the discourse around mental health in particular. The fourth aspect is to deliver on a long felt need to have a world class school of

psychology within India with a view to fulfilling the aspirations of a large number of young people in the country. Keeping in mind the fifth guiding principle, JSPC wishes to be an institution, which provides foundational knowledge, and expertise, and skills for developing the next generation of mental health professionals. The interdisciplinary nature of psychology is something we will explore via this course and this school."

The need to create a School dedicated to Psychology and Counselling was also felt due to the prevalence of a deep stigma attached to mental health issues in India. With one in five Indians being afflicted by some kind of mental health issue, it is important to ensure that such issues are addressed at the earliest, said Professor (Dr.) Sanjeev P. Sahni, Principal Director of the Jindal Institute of Behavioural Sciences (JIBS). "The Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling will work towards making a huge impact on the teaching and research in the broader field of psychology and behavioural sciences. Studies by WHO have revealed that 14-15 percent of the Indian population suffers from some form of mental disorder. We are starting this school because India has only 4,000 professional mental health experts. Our aim is to establish world class laboratories for diagnostic assessment systems. The world class faculty can bring a pool of diverse information and knowledge in the mental health arena. We want to be more pragmatic, and we wish to provide students a hands-on experience and give them a global."

JSPC will be composed of a diverse and expert group of professors, each with their independent psychology research programme and will

establish an experimental laboratory with various psychological equipment to facilitate faculty research and for the use of student training. International student exchange programmes will help students to live in and study psychology at an international university. In the classroom, the faculty will utilise experiential and goal-based teaching to facilitate understanding. Outside the class, each student will be mentored by a specific faculty member, with a potential opportunity to directly assist in their research. In the coming years, a Masters and a PhD course will also be introduced. JSPC also aims to start and publish an online journal, run by the faculty and students to document the latest findings and accolades for the school, faculty and students.

Speaking about the vision of the new school, Professor (Dr.) Derick Lindquist, the founding Vice Dean of JSPC said, “From the very first semester, students will be exposed to psychological theory, experimentation and practice, through a range of innovative and creative courses. Students will be taught valuable and critical creative thinking. They will be trained in experimental design, execution and analysis, and will learn assessment and treatment procedures for counselling and other types of mental healthcare. In their final year, students will design and write a thesis; one that displays expertise in a specific subject area, combined with empirical results that can move the field of psychology forward. Students will also do internships in a variety of settings such as hospitals, NGOs and other organizations.”

The inaugural address was given by Professor (Dr.) Ian Paul Overall, Executive Dean, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology and Neuro Science, King's College, London, on the topic “Important contribution of psychology to understand mental health problems. Professor Overall said “Psychology as a discipline is based on an ethos of pluralism and diversity. These are the exact principles that JGU identifies itself with, too, and hence this symbiotic relation will help in the enrichment of the discipline considerably.”

Dr. Nimesh G Desai, Director of the Institute of Human Behaviour & Allied Sciences delivered the keynote address and said, “The WHO had predicted that depression would become the top ranked problem among all public health problems. Given this fact, and the fact that COVID-19 has wreaked havoc with the mental health of people across the world, the setting up of this school becomes significantly more relevant and necessary.

The session was concluded by Professor Dabiru Sridhar Patnaik, Registrar, JGU, who said “With a growing awareness mental health and illness, it becomes important for us to create spaces and train people in this important and necessary field. This is where the Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling is important. There is a need to understand the field of psychology and counselling in a broader scope and context, especially since psychology is required in multiple fields and hence, becomes an interdisciplinary branch of study.”