

## **Institutional Distinctiveness**

### **Cachar College, Silchar-01, Assam**

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Cachar College was set up in 1960 with a defined socio-economic objective. It was the time when the victims of the unfortunate partition from across East Pakistan were yet to come to terms with the loss of leaving home and hearth. These families in a huge number had been evicted from their own land and they found it difficult to financially settle in the first generation. Cachar College was conceptualized as a destination of higher education for the students from these refugee families.

Right from the beginning, therefore, the builders of this institution resolved that Cachar College would never run after elitist identity. The College management down the years has always strived to reach out to the most deprived sections of the society in imparting higher education. High-end clientele has never been a goal post for the College. Catering to the demand for higher education from the socially and economically disadvantaged strata of the society located over a large and diverse geographical jurisdiction has been always high on agenda for the College.

A quick look at the Table 1 reveals the increasing proportions of social disadvantaged students based on castes in the total enrolment of the College. The data pertaining to five-year period, during 2015-2020, show how enrolment of students belonging to Scheduled Caste and Other Backward Class have looked up by leaps and bound. The corresponding numbers have far overtaken the officially earmarked 'reserved sets' signaling thereby how Cachar College has imbibed the much coveted 'access' and 'equity' in its admission policy. Similar trend is not perceptible in case of the Scheduled Tribe category because of paucity of demand for the same. The percentage of ST population in the feeder areas is just a shade over one percent.

**Table 1: Enrolment across Social (Caste) Dimension**

Year	Reserved Seats			Actual Admission		
	SC	ST	OBC	SC	ST	OBC
2015-16	37.8	81	81	38	67	81
2016-17	54.6	117	117	55	93	117
2017-18	66.5	142.5	142.5	67	57	143
2018-19	66.5	142.5	142.5	170	64	265
2019-20	66.5	142.5	142.5	168	59	222

Table2 corroborates the fact that Cachar College, in spite of its extremely urban location, has successfully met the higher education needs of population of the Barak Valley and also that of the adjoining areas of the neighbouring Manipur, Mizoram and Tripura. Data for the year 2019-20 show that the average distance of the home locations of the students from the College is as long as nearly 22 KMs.

**Table 2: Mean Distance of Students' Home Location from Cachar College**

**2019-20**

<b>Academic Programmes</b>	<b>Distance from Home in KM</b>
B Com General	11.27
B Com Hons	7.69
B Sc General	36.13
B Sc Hons	42.48
B A General	13.37
B A Hons	20.76
<b>College Average</b>	<b>21.95</b>

Equity and access are the two parameters which all governments in the independent India cutting across political hues have incorporated in the education policies. Cachar College has put them both as priority and thrust area which along the sixty-year-long journey of the institution have become its distinctiveness and identity. The College has only tried to perform to stick to its basics-higher education for the downtrodden.