

# Is Middle East The New Study Abroad Destination?



Rise of Indian Colleges in the UAE



Careers: St. Edward's and Austin are Perfect Pair



The Silent Disconnect: Post-COVID Loneliness in the Younger Generation



The Missing Link in India's Counseling Revolution



7 Facts You May Not Know About Northeastern University Until You Attend



Engineering at a Liberal Arts Institution: Why? Why not!



How Students at We-Learn Are Combining Subjects, Hobbies, and Creativity to Build Projects That Stand Out



The Vanishing Value of a College Degree





# Editor's Note



For decades, the Indian student's study-abroad dream has followed a familiar map — the US, UK, Canada, Australia. But look closely at today's trends, and a new region is quietly redrawing that map: the Middle East. Dubai, Doha, and Abu Dhabi are emerging not just as travel hubs or business capitals, but as academic destinations. Their universities are modern, globally connected, and increasingly home to branch campuses of some of the world's most respected institutions. Add to that their affordability, proximity to India, and cultural comfort — and you have a destination that feels both global and familiar.

For many Indian families, this balance matters. The Middle East offers high-quality degrees without the heavy cost of living overseas or the anxiety of long-distance separation. It's education that fits modern realities — ambitious, accessible, and strategically located at the crossroads of East and West. Of course, questions (and challenges) remain — about post-study work rights, global recognition, and long-term opportunities. But the direction is clear: the Middle East is no longer just a transit point; it's a destination in itself.

As our cover story explores, the question is no longer if — but when — the Middle East becomes the next big chapter in India's study-abroad story.

**Neeraj Mandhana**  
Founder & Editor-in-Chief  
Aiiyo

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# IS MIDDLE EAST THE NEW STUDY ABROAD DESTINATION?

## The Rise of Dubai, Doha, and Riyadh as Academic Hotspots

By  
Neeraj Mandhana  
Founder  
Aiyyo



Neeraj Mandhana

### Indians in the Middle East: A Long History

The Indian community has been woven into the fabric of the Middle East for centuries. Trade routes between the Arabian Peninsula and India date back to ancient times, when spices, textiles, and pearls moved freely across the Arabian Sea. Over the 20th century, large numbers of Indians migrated to the Gulf as oil economies boomed, contributing to construction, healthcare, education, and commerce. Today, nearly 9 million Indians live in the region, forming the largest expatriate population. Their presence is not only demographic but also cultural—festivals, food, and businesses reflect a deep-rooted Indian influence that continues to shape Middle Eastern society.

### The Rise of Dubai's Golden Visas

A major policy shift in recent years has been the introduction of the "Golden Visa" in Dubai and other emirates. These long-term residency permits are designed to attract investors, entrepreneurs, professionals, and even top-performing students. For Indians, this has opened doors to stability and opportunity in the UAE like never before. Instead of temporary work visas tied to employers, families can now plan for the long term—owning property, enrolling children in schools and universities, and setting up businesses. The Golden Visa has effectively positioned Dubai as a magnet for global talent, making it not only a financial hub but also an academic and cultural center.

### The Economy: Thinking Beyond Oil & Gas

The Middle East economy is diversifying rapidly beyond oil. Vision 2030 in Saudi Arabia, investments in green energy, and the rise of logistics, aviation, and technology sectors are creating new demand for skilled professionals. Indians, with their strong presence in engineering, IT, medicine, and finance, are finding pathways into these emerging industries. The region is also experiencing a boom in start-ups, supported by government incubators and venture capital. For young graduates and mid-career professionals alike, the Middle East now offers career trajectories that once required moving to the West.

### Global Universities Enter the Region

A notable trend is the arrival of international universities establishing campuses across the Middle East. Institutions from the U.S., U.K., Australia, and France have opened branches in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and beyond. These campuses give students access to globally recognized degrees while staying closer to home, often at lower cost. For Indian families, this presents a practical alternative: world-class higher education without the challenges of long-distance relocation. As more universities join this wave, the Middle East is positioning itself as an emerging education hub that complements its growing economic influence.

### Leading Western Universities In The Region

The German University of Technology in Oman (GUtech), established in 2007 in Halban near Muscat, is affiliated with Germany's RWTH Aachen University. It delivers programs in engineering, geosciences, architecture, business, and computer science, all taught in English with German as a second language. Its annual intake is a few hundred students, forming a total student body of about 2,000.



**The American University of Sharjah (AUS)**, founded in 1997, is located in Sharjah, UAE, and modeled on the American liberal arts system. Known for its strong business, architecture, and engineering programs, it attracts students from across the Gulf. It enrolls over 5,000 students annually, making it one of the largest private universities in the region.

**The American University in Dubai (AUD)**, opened in 1995, is based in Dubai Media City. It offers accredited U.S.-style education with popular majors in business administration, communication, and engineering. With a total student population of about 1,800, its class sizes are relatively small and personal.

**New York University Abu Dhabi (NYUAD)** was launched in 2010 on Saadiyat Island as a flagship branch of NYU's global network. It is highly selective, admitting only about 500 students per year from a pool of tens of thousands of applicants. Students benefit from a liberal arts core, advanced research, and opportunities for global mobility within NYU's network.

**Northwestern University in Qatar**, established in 2008 in Doha's Education City, focuses on journalism, media, and communication, drawing from Northwestern's strength in these fields. It offers a small, close-knit learning environment with access to the wider Education City ecosystem. Class sizes are intimate, typically in the dozens rather than hundreds.

**Texas A&M University at Qatar**, set up in 2003 in Education City, Doha, brings Texas A&M's world-renowned engineering programs to the Gulf. It specializes in chemical, petroleum, electrical, and mechanical engineering. Its annual enrollment is a few hundred students, keeping the focus on rigorous technical training.

**Murdoch University Dubai**, located in Dubai International Academic City, is an Australian branch campus that opened in the mid-2000s. It offers degrees in business, IT, media, psychology, and cybersecurity, mirroring Murdoch's Perth programs. It has a modest but growing international student population.

**The University of Wollongong in Dubai (UOWD)**, established in 1993, is one of the UAE's earliest international branch campuses. Located in Knowledge Park, Dubai, it provides Australian degrees in business, IT, engineering, and media. Thousands of alumni have graduated, and its incoming classes remain among the largest in Dubai's private sector.

**The University of New Haven in Riyadh** is a recent extension of the U.S. institution into Saudi Arabia. It offers American-style education with programs in business and STEM aligned to Vision 2030 workforce needs. Still in its early stages, it has a modest intake as it grows its reputation.

**The American University of the Middle East (AUM)**, founded in 2006 in Egaila, Kuwait, is one of the country's largest private universities. It offers engineering, business, and design programs tailored to the Kuwaiti and Gulf job markets. AUM enrolls thousands of students, with each incoming batch numbering in the high hundreds.

**Middlesex University Dubai**, established in 2005, is the first overseas campus of Middlesex University London. Located in Dubai Knowledge Park, it offers a wide range of UK-accredited programs, especially in business, law, media, and computing. The campus hosts over 4,000 students, one of the largest in Dubai.

**The University of Birmingham Dubai** opened in 2018 in Dubai International Academic City as a branch of the UK's Russell Group institution. It offers programs in business, computer science, education, and international relations. Though relatively new, its cohorts are steadily growing, with annual intakes in the hundreds.

**Heriot-Watt University Dubai**, established in 2005, is part of the historic Scottish university known for engineering, business, and design. Located in Dubai Knowledge Park, it offers undergraduate and postgraduate UK degrees. Enrollment is a few thousand, with balanced intakes across engineering, business, and computing.

**De Montfort University Dubai (DMU Dubai)** is a branch of the UK's DMU, which opened in Dubai in 2021. It provides UK degrees in business, computing, art, and design, all taught in English. As a newer entrant, its student body is still growing, with intakes smaller than long-established peers.



# RISE OF INDIAN COLLEGES IN THE UAE

## How India and the Gulf Are Co-Creating a New Model for Global Learning

By  
Aiiyyo Editorial Team

Over the past two decades, the Middle East has become a hub for international higher education, attracting universities from Europe, North America, and Asia. Among these, Indian institutions have carved out a strong and rapidly growing presence. The expansion reflects both the global ambitions of India's top universities and the increasing demand for quality education in the Gulf region, particularly from the large Indian diaspora. Today, names like SP Jain, BITS Pilani, Manipal, IIT Delhi, IIM Ahmedabad, Symbiosis, and Amity have made Dubai and other Middle Eastern cities their second home.

### A Regional Shift Toward Education Hubs

The Gulf's economic diversification strategies—especially in the United Arab Emirates (UAE)—have placed education at the center of long-term development plans. Dubai International Academic City, for instance, now houses more than 25 international universities, with Indian campuses among its leading contributors. For Indian families living in the region, these institutions offer familiar curricula, cultural continuity, and affordability compared to sending children abroad to the US, UK, or Australia. At the same time, Gulf nationals and international students are also turning to Indian universities for their strong reputation in fields such as business, engineering, and technology.

### SP Jain School of Global Management, Dubai

SP Jain was one of the earliest Indian players to bet big on Dubai. With a global model that includes campuses in Singapore, Sydney, and Mumbai, its Dubai campus offers business and management programs designed with a global outlook. Known for innovative teaching methods like multi-city undergraduate programs, SP Jain helps students build networks and gain international exposure while remaining rooted in Indian academic rigor. Its graduates are highly visible in finance, consulting, and tech industries across the Middle East.

### BITS Pilani, Dubai Campus

Birla Institute of Technology and Science (BITS Pilani) is one of India's most respected private universities, particularly in engineering. The Dubai campus, established in 2000, was the institute's first international branch. It caters largely to engineering, sciences, and technology students, offering degree programs that mirror those of the Pilani home campus. The Dubai outpost has become a trusted name for families seeking high-quality STEM education without having to relocate to India, and its alumni network is strong in the UAE's energy, infrastructure, and tech sectors.

### Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Dubai

Manipal is another pioneering Indian brand in the Gulf. With a large, modern campus in Dubai International Academic City, Manipal offers undergraduate and postgraduate programs across disciplines including engineering, media, business, and life sciences. Its emphasis on practical, industry-oriented learning resonates well with the UAE's emphasis on employability and innovation. Manipal Dubai also draws a diverse mix of students from outside the Indian community, signaling its broader international appeal.



### **IIT Delhi in Abu Dhabi**

The arrival of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) in the Middle East marks a watershed moment. IIT Delhi, one of India's premier technology institutions, recently launched its campus in Abu Dhabi. This is the first IIT presence outside India, developed in partnership with Abu Dhabi's Department of Education and Knowledge. With programs in artificial intelligence, computer science, and sustainability, the campus symbolizes India's academic export of top-tier STEM talent. It also cements the UAE's ambition to become a global technology hub while giving students in the region direct access to the IIT brand.

### **IIM Ahmedabad in Dubai**

Not far behind, the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs) have also entered the Gulf. IIM Ahmedabad, India's top business school, has set up an executive education center in Dubai. Unlike full-time undergraduate programs, this initiative focuses on leadership training, management development, and short-term executive programs tailored to regional business needs. Its presence reflects the demand from Gulf corporations for high-caliber managerial training aligned with global best practices, delivered with Indian insight into emerging markets.

### **Symbiosis Dubai**

Symbiosis International University, best known for its strong reputation in business and liberal arts in India, has expanded to Dubai. The campus offers management, IT, and international relations programs, attracting not only Indian expatriates but also a growing international student community. Symbiosis's reputation for fostering cross-cultural exchange fits seamlessly with Dubai's cosmopolitan fabric, making it a promising newcomer to the region.

### **Amity University Dubai**

Amity University, one of India's largest private education groups, has built a full-fledged campus in Dubai offering a wide range of programs from engineering to fashion design. Its strong industry partnerships and emphasis on entrepreneurship make it a major draw for students seeking hands-on training and placement opportunities in the UAE's dynamic economy. With world-class facilities and a brand known across Asia, Amity has quickly become a top choice among private Indian universities in the Middle East.

### **Looking Ahead**

The rise of Indian colleges in the Middle East highlights a new chapter in transnational education. For Indian universities, it's a way to globalize their brand and meet diaspora demand. For the Gulf states, it helps position cities like Dubai and Abu Dhabi as magnets for knowledge, talent, and innovation. Together, they are creating a cross-border academic ecosystem that blends Indian excellence with Middle Eastern ambition—an alliance that will likely expand in the years to come.



# 7 FACTS YOU MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY UNTIL YOU ATTEND

## Hidden Stories, Unique Traditions, and Campus Quirks You Won't Learn Online

By  
Ravisha Maheshwari  
Senior Editor  
Aiyyo



**Ravisha  
Maheshwari**

Northeastern University (NU), located in Boston's Fenway-Kenmore district, is a leading R1 research institution known for its experiential learning and strong industry integration. Its 73-acre urban campus blends into the city, offering access to cultural landmarks, restaurants, and public transit. NU offers 291 undergraduate majors and 230 combined majors across seven colleges, including Engineering, Computer Science, Business, Health Sciences, and Arts, emphasizing interdisciplinary study and innovation. The hallmark Co-op Program provides up to 18 months of paid professional experience with top organizations like Tesla and Deloitte, contributing to a 97% post-graduation employment or graduate school rate. NU's NUpath curriculum and John Martinson Honors Program develop critical thinking, ethical reasoning, and leadership, while global programs in London, Toronto, and Oakland ensure early international exposure. Campus life includes over 250 clubs, active sports culture, and unique traditions such as Husky Hunt and the Beanpot Tournament.

### 1. Northeastern's Roots Lie in the Boston Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)

Northeastern University traces its origins to the Boston Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), where it was founded in 1898 as the Evening Institute for Young Men to provide working-class individuals with practical, career-oriented education. Initially offering law courses, the program expanded under the YMCA's guidance to include engineering, business, and liberal arts, leading to its establishment as Northeastern College in 1916 and later Northeastern University in 1922. Though it formally separated from the YMCA, Northeastern retained its commitment to accessible, experiential education, which is reflected in its renowned co-op program. The Huntington YMCA, once a key student resource, still stands near campus, symbolizing the university's deep-rooted connection to its founding mission. Today, Northeastern has grown into a global research institution, and the spirit of co-op and the practical education of Northeastern's DNA comes from the YMCA.

### 2. A Campus Split by the MBTA Green Line

Northeastern University's Boston campus is uniquely bisected by the MBTA Green Line E branch, making it one of the few college campuses in the U.S. with an active tram running through its center. The street-level tracks along Huntington Avenue require students to regularly cross over them to get between academic buildings, dorms, and facilities, creating an urban, city-integrated feel. The Northeastern stop on the Green Line provides easy public transit access to downtown Boston, co-op jobs, and neighboring universities. While it may seem unusual at first, students quickly adapt, and the presence of the train enhances the campus's vibrant metropolitan atmosphere.

### 3. Home to One of the Best College Gyms in the Country

The Marino Recreation Center at Northeastern University is a state-of-the-art fitness facility that offers students free access to top-tier exercise equipment, group fitness classes, and recreational activities. One of its standout features is a full rock climbing wall, providing an exciting challenge for both beginners and experienced climbers. The gym is known for its spacious, modern design and variety of workout options. Whether students are looking to lift weights, take a yoga class, or scale the climbing wall, the Marino Center ensures they have access to premium fitness amenities at no extra cost.

#### **4. Snow Days Are (Almost) Nonexistent**

Boston winters are notoriously harsh, with heavy snowfall, freezing temperatures, and frequent blizzards. Despite these extreme conditions, Northeastern University is known for rarely canceling classes, no matter how intense the weather gets. The running joke among students is that "Hell will freeze over before Northeastern does," emphasizing the university's resilience and commitment to keeping operations running. Even during major snowstorms, students can expect classes to continue as scheduled, with campus pathways quickly cleared.

#### **5. Husky the Dog Has a Secret Name**

While Northeastern's mascot, Paws the Husky, is a familiar sight at games and events, the true husky statue on campus holds a special legacy. Known as King Husky, this statue honors Northeastern's very first live mascot. A long-standing tradition among students is to rub King Husky's nose before an exam for good luck, believing it brings academic success. Over the years, the statue's nose has become noticeably shinier from the countless students following this ritual.

#### **6. The Library Has a Nap Room**

Northeastern's Snell Library goes beyond just books and study spaces—it offers Nap Pods for students needing a quick recharge between classes or study sessions. These pods provide a quiet, comfortable space designed for short naps, making them especially useful for students pulling all-nighters. Snell Library's nap pods are a unique perk of campus life, whether recovering from an intense study session or just catching a power nap.

#### **7. Tunnels Underneath Campus**

Northeastern is rumored to have a network of underground tunnels beneath its Boston campus, supposedly used by staff and faculty to navigate during harsh winter conditions. While not open to students, these tunnels have sparked curiosity and speculation over the years. Some believe they connect key buildings, offering a hidden passageway beneath the busy city streets. Though their exact purpose remains unknown mainly, they add an element of mystery to Northeastern's urban campus.





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# # Industry Leader SPOTLIGHT



## Dhruva Bhat

Co-Founder & Director  
Lumiere Education

In this section, Aiiyo brings you insights from counseling trailblazers who have made a significant impact with their work. Through candid interviews, we explore their journeys, passions, and personal philosophies. This month, we sit down with Dhruva Bhat, Co-Founder & Director of Lumiere Education, to uncover what drives his success, how he balances the demands of work and life, and the mantra that keeps him moving forward.

### What was your college degree?

Economics

### Your Favorite Book

The God of Small Things by Arundhati Roy

### Your Comfort Food

Massaman curry

### A School/College you really enjoyed visiting

Amherst College

### What's on top of your bucket list?

Visiting Egypt and traveling down the Nile

### One thing you would most like to change about the world

The mismatch between talent, and opportunity. I've been in some of the most prestigious educational institutions in the world, and it's sad that those types of opportunities are not available to the millions of talented people around the world.

### If you could give one piece of advice to your high school self, what would it be?

Your mental health is important. If you need to see a therapist, go do it.

### What inspired you to do what you do?

Having access to amazing extracurricular opportunities, and through that incredible mentors, changed my life. I think everyone deserves those.

### A secret to balancing work & life

Find the communities that matter to you, and invest your time and energy to do things with them. Also, take yourself less seriously.

### Your Life Mantra

Work hard, set ambitious goals, and have fun along the way.



# CAREERS: ST. EDWARD'S AND AUSTIN ARE PERFECT PAIR

## Inside the Partnership Between a Liberal Arts Campus and a Global Tech City

By  
David Bernay  
Director of International Admission and Advancement  
St. Edward's University



David Bernay

St. Edward's University is in the heart of Austin, Texas, a thriving tech and arts city that in the past decade has seen incredible economic and population growth. Austin isn't just home to over 10,000 technology companies, like Dell, AMD, Samsung, Oracle, Meta, Google, Apple, and Tesla; it's also a hot spot for several other leading industries. We're seeing a lot of growth in renewable energy, healthcare and life sciences, and a super active creative and entertainment scene (after all, Austin is the Live Music Capital of the World!). This mix of big companies, a strong startup culture, and a great quality of life makes Austin a fantastic place for ambitious young professionals.

As a smaller, private liberal arts university, St. Edward's is perfectly placed within this environment, helping our students build the skills that Austin employers are looking for. This means our students are landing great internships and full-time jobs right after graduation.

We really believe in hands-on learning at St. Edward's. That's why we've put together strong programs and partnerships to connect our students directly with Austin's professional world. Here are some of the main ways St. Edward's helps students get ready for their careers:

### Career Treks

Imagine getting to go behind the scenes at top companies, seeing how they really work, and meeting people who are already in the industry. That's what our "Career Treks" are all about. Brittany Stansel, our Senior Director of Career and Professional Development, puts it well: "Career Treks started as a way to get students off campus and into real workplaces, giving them an inside look at different companies while building important connections with professionals. By going into these places, students not only grow their networks but also start to see themselves working in these organizations. We've seen these visits lead to internships and lasting relationships." In just one semester recently, our students visited places like Circuit of the Americas, Google, SXSW, and AT&T Stadium to learn about working there and how they could make that their own future, either as interns or full-time employees.

### Advanced Experiential Learning

We're deeply committed to our students' success. St. Edward's makes sure that 100% of our students get access to Advanced Experiential Learning opportunities right here in Austin and beyond-- hands-on experiences, including internships, research projects, and impactful service and leadership activities.

### Employer Partnerships

St. Edward's has also worked hard to build strong relationships with top local employers in the Austin area. With over 40 official partnerships, our students can connect with and work for companies like Whole Foods (grocery), Deloitte Consulting, Moody Center (sports/concert arena), Ascension Texas (hospitals/healthcare), The City of Austin, Texas Parks and Wildlife and many more.

The combination of St. Edward's University's focus on hands-on learning and Austin's exciting job market gives our students a huge advantage. These experiences – from exploring companies on Career Treks to real internships and meeting industry leaders – give students not just classroom knowledge, but also the practical skills, professional networks, and confidence they need to do well. Our graduates are consistently getting jobs in competitive fields, often turning their Austin internships into full-time roles. This unique blend ensures that St. Edward's students aren't just learning about their chosen fields, they're making a real impact in a city that values new ideas and talent.



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- > **Early Decision II:** January 5
- > **Regular Decision:** January 5
- > **Spring Admission (first-year or transfer):** November 15
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\*These are the priority deadlines; however, applications will continue to be accepted on a space-available basis.

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- > Academic performance and standardized test scores (if applicable)\*
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- > Audition or portfolio (for select programs)

\*SAT/ACT scores are not required for students applying for Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 admission.

For more information, visit [syracuse.edu/admissions/apply](https://syracuse.edu/admissions/apply).



# ENGINEERING AT A LIBERAL ARTS INSTITUTION: WHY? WHY NOT!

## The benefits of studying engineering in a liberal arts school

By

Jade Saybolt

Associate Director of Admissions

Lafayette College



**Jade Saybolt**

In the United States, liberal arts schools are a popular choice for undergraduate students. Jade Saybolt, associate director of admissions, interviewed the Dean of Engineering at Lafayette College, Jenn Stroud Rossmann, to understand why students select and enroll at liberal arts schools, particularly to study engineering.

**Jade: Hi Jenn! Thanks for chatting with me about engineering at a liberal arts institution. Before we get started, let's clarify what "liberal arts" means.**

**Contrary to the name, a liberal arts school is not politically liberal or focused only on the arts. With core principles in interdisciplinary learning, students explore across the curriculum, not just in their own area of study. They conduct research, study abroad, and pursue a variety of interests, while also developing as critical thinkers, creative problem-solvers, and responsible citizens of the world. At Lafayette, we foster intellectual inquiry, artistic exploration, scholarship, and personal growth in a vibrant, diverse, and inclusive community.**

**Now that we have a better understanding of a liberal arts pedagogy, Jenn, why should students pursue engineering at a liberal arts school?**

**Jenn:** Great question, Jade! Engineering has a history and a social responsibility that we take seriously. We value the humanities and social sciences and how they help our students appreciate the social context in which they'll address individual and societal problems and develop the ethical framework to decide whether and how to use their engineering skills. Engineering is for people, so developing humanistic inquiry and understanding social systems helps us become better engineers.

Studying the liberal arts makes students better engineers—fostering empathy for design stakeholders, communication skills, and creativity—and it also makes them better humans! We prepare students for interdisciplinary collaborations and for full participation as engaged citizens of the world.

Engineering is one of the multiple "ways of knowing" that all students (regardless of major) can develop at Lafayette, so methods of design, systems thinking, and engineering judgment are accessible to all our students.

**Jade: I completely agree, Jenn! I know readers are probably wondering, how is the student experience the same or different compared to a technical school?**



**Jenn:** Engineering students can be more than just engineers at a liberal arts school. That means getting involved with activities like music ensembles, theater, our school newspaper, and a range of clubs from Engineers without Borders or our Electric Vehicle Club, to our college's organic farm. About a quarter of our engineering students are on D1 athletic teams! And many engineers double major in another subject, or choose classes outside engineering that let them follow their curiosity wherever it leads them.

At Lafayette, the student:faculty ratio is much smaller than at a large university, so our classes and labs are small, and taught only by faculty—no graduate students or teaching assistants (TAs). We know students learn better in smaller classes, with the kind of dedicated attention our faculty can offer.

Because there aren't any graduate students, our college is centered on the undergraduates— who are first in line for research opportunities or to use equipment, like our 3D printers.

About half our engineering students study abroad. They may do this for a semester—in Madrid, Bonn, or Stockholm—or take a 3-week interim course during winter or summer break, whatever works best for their own interests; many students do both!

**Jade: I saw you have Integrative Engineering? What is that, and how is it different from a traditional engineering major?**

**Jenn:** Integrative engineering is the newest of our 5 Bachelor of Science (BS) majors—it began in 2019! It's built on the idea of systems thinking: understanding the elements of complex systems, and the connections between systems that might be electrical, chemical, or physical in nature. This framework bridges all the disciplines of engineering, and prepares students to work in interdisciplinary fields like bioengineering and robotics. The curriculum is flexible, and the program has just received ABET accreditation in 2025 (just like our 4 other BS programs)!

**Jade: Lafayette also offers a major in Engineering Studies, what is that?**

**Jenn:** Our Engineering Studies program braids together the "social" and the "technical" aspects of engineering, and is especially interdisciplinary. Students learn engineering fundamentals and take courses that make explicit connections to policy, sociology, history, and economics. When this Bachelor of Arts program was proposed in 1970, the rationale was: "Society needs more liberally-educated persons with technical backgrounds" to address "pressing public-sector problems" in food and housing, environmental sustainability, education, energy, and infrastructure. That's still true today.

**Jade: This has been a great conversation about engineering at a liberal arts school! To wrap things up, what is one piece of advice you would give to aspiring engineering students?**

**Jenn:** Stay curious. Always ask why and how!

# LEGENDS OF ADMISSIONS



**Qulthum Ahmed**

Associate Director, India &  
South Asia

**IE University**

Qulthum Ahmed brings warmth, intellect, and an unmistakable curiosity to her role as Associate Director for India & South Asia at IE University. An engineer turned admissions expert, she blends her analytical eye with a genuine passion for people, whether she's answering rapid-fire questions from students or reflecting on what "home" truly means. Having been awed by the beauty of Mussoorie and inspired by her own experience as an IE alumna, she approaches every conversation with empathy and insight. For Qulthum, admissions isn't about numbers, it's about stories, potential, and helping students find their fit in a university that's bold, global, and visionary. Confident, spontaneous, and endlessly engaging, she embodies the very spirit of IE: forward-thinking, human, and full of heart.

## 1. An Unforgettable Travel Memory.

I traveled to Mussoorie for one of my work trips, and I was in complete awe of the natural beauty our own country holds. Having lived abroad myself, it was a breath of fresh air—both literally and figuratively—to experience such immense beauty so close to home. 10/10 would recommend!

## 2. Most unexpected question a student has ever asked you.

Early on in this role, a student asked me a question that wasn't exactly unexpected, but definitely personal: "What was your own experience like as a student at IE, and would you prefer living in Spain or back home?" It made me pause and reflect—not just on my academic journey, but also on what "home" really means to me.

## 3. If you weren't in admissions, what job would you secretly love to have?

Before joining IE, I was exploring internships as a Data Analyst. I'm actually an engineer by background, and I've always had a deep love for numbers and patterns. It's a field I still find fascinating!

## 4. What's a totally random skill you've picked up because of your job?

I've always been a people person, but this role has taken my talk time to a whole new level! Whether it's presenting, hosting sessions, or answering rapid-fire questions from students and parents, I've definitely honed my ability to speak confidently and spontaneously in any setting.

## 5. What's one thing you wish students knew about admissions, that they often don't?

That we're rooting for you! Admissions isn't about finding reasons to reject a student — it's about finding reasons to say yes. We want to see your authentic self, beyond just numbers and grades. Your story, your experiences, and your potential matter more than you think.

## 6. If your college were a person, how would you describe their personality in three words?

IE is that friend who's always ahead of the curve, speaks three languages, and somehow manages to turn every challenge into an opportunity!

## 7. What's the most oddly specific club or organization on campus?

Probably the IE Board Games & Tabletop Society — where you'll find students intensely debating strategy over Catan or chess, while networking with future consultants and entrepreneurs. Where else can a Dungeons & Dragons campaign turn into a case study in team leadership?



# THE SILENT DISCONNECT: POST-COVID LONELINESS IN THE YOUNGER GENERATION

## How a Generation Forgot What Connection Feels Like

By  
Soumya Ramaswamy  
Parenting & Teen Coach & Founder  
Shaping Futures



Soumya  
Ramaswamy

The COVID-19 pandemic changed the way young people connect with others. Even though life looks “normal” again, many teens and young adults are still struggling with a deep sense of loneliness. This unseen emotional impact is called the Silent Disconnect.

### What Is the Silent Disconnect?

The Silent Disconnect is the hidden emotional pain many young people (ages 13–25) feel after years of isolation, online learning, and reduced social contact. It’s not just being alone, it’s the feeling of being misunderstood, not belonging, and not knowing how to fit back in, even when they are surrounded by people.

As adults, we returned to a world we already understood. We had our identity, our friendships, and some social stability. But for young people, those were the years they were supposed to discover who they are, who their real friends are, how to communicate, how to feel confident in social spaces. Instead, they were forced to stay home during the most important stage of social growth.

They are still trying to make sense of a world that changed while they were learning how to live in it.

### Why the Disconnect Happened

- **Weakening of Social Skills** – Missing real-life conversations and interactions made it harder for teens to read body language, handle group situations, and form strong friendships. Many now feel awkward or anxious in social settings.
- **Digital Overload** – Online life became the only option during lockdowns. While it kept people connected, it also created “fake closeness”, constant scrolling, comparisons, and shallow communication that left them feeling even more alone.
- **Loss of Hope in Society** – Many young people no longer feel confident about their future or the world around them. This can lead to negative thinking, low motivation, and withdrawing from others.
- **Shame Around Loneliness** – They believe they should be happy, social, and busy, so they hide their struggles. This silence makes the loneliness worse.

Loneliness in this age group is not small, it raises risks of worry, sadness, physical health issues, and difficulty building relationships.

### How Parents Can Help Their Child Reconnect

Parents are the strongest support system for helping young people rebuild their emotional and social world. Here’s what helps:

#### 1. Make Loneliness Okay to Talk About

Normalize the struggle: “It makes sense to feel this way, you missed out on real experiences.” Let them express emotions without jumping in to fix them immediately.

## **2. Encourage Real-World Interactions**

Show them what healthy social life looks like, invite friends, engage in community. Suggest low-pressure meetups: one or two friends, hobbies, sports, volunteering.

## **3. Balance Screen and Real Life**

Create family rules for phone-free time. Discuss how social media isn't real life, what they see is filtered and often fake.

## **4. Help Them Build Purpose Again**

Support activities where they contribute, not just participate, volunteering, group projects, creative clubs. Empower them to take small steps that rebuild confidence.

## **A New Kind of Connection**

The goal is not to go back to how life was before. It is to help young people build Stronger, Healthier ways of belonging.

They learned to be alone during a crisis. Now, with patience, empathy, and presence, let's try to show them how to feel connected again not by pushing but by walking with them.



# HOW STUDENTS AT WE-LEARN ARE COMBINING SUBJECTS, HOBBIES, AND CREATIVITY TO BUILD PROJECTS THAT STAND OUT

## Beyond the Classroom: How Passion Projects Shape Your Future

By  
Neha Pandit  
Founder  
We-Learn



Neha Pandit

At We-Learn, robots aren't just machines — they're imagination in motion. Every whirring motor and tiny wheel is a playground for ideas, a chance to experiment, and a reminder that creativity can be built, tested, and even a little messy.

Robotics here isn't about coding perfection or following instructions to the letter. It's about curiosity: What if this could move on its own? Could it respond? Could it surprise me? And then rolling up your sleeves to make it happen. The process is playful, hands-on, and full of those magical moments when an idea sparks into reality, sometimes in ways even the students didn't expect.

### From Wobbly Wheels to Wow Moments

Vansh walked into the studio with wide eyes and zero experience, staring at a tangle of wires that looked more like spaghetti than science. His first challenge was a line-follower robot, designed to trace a track on its own. At first, it zigzagged wildly, spinning off course like a tiny robot with a mind of its own. But every "oops" moment became a clue. With a few adjustments, the bot glided smoothly along the track. Watching it move, Vansh laughed, "It's like I taught it to think!" That first success wasn't just about a robot moving — it was about discovering that experimenting, failing, and trying again is part of the fun.

Ishani wanted more than a line follower. She dreamed of a robot that would respond to her phone. Her first attempts ended in chaos: the car spun, bumped, and refused to obey. But with persistence and creativity, she figured out the design, and the first time her car obeyed her command to move forward, she couldn't stop grinning. "It's like magic, but I made it!" she said. And in that moment, she realized that robotics isn't just about building machines, it's about building confidence and problem-solving skills.

One of our students Risha, designed and built a Sun Finder robot that moves around until it locates sunlight. She carefully programmed and adjusted its sensors so it could detect light and navigate efficiently. Watching her robot roam the studio, searching for the brightest spot, Risha learned how experimentation and fine-tuning can bring an idea to life. For her, the project was not just about building a machine; it was about the joy of seeing her creation work on its own.

### Creativity in Motion

At We-Learn, robotics and AI are about more than just putting parts together. Students imagine, sketch, test, and rethink until their creations come alive. Every misaligned wheel, every blinking sensor, and every unexpected spin becomes a chance to experiment. Sometimes mistakes lead to the coolest ideas. The moments when a robot behaves in a way no one predicted often spark the most laughter, collaboration, and innovation.

As students grow bolder, they start asking bigger questions. What if the robot could sense obstacles and change course? What if it could react to its environment? That's where AI enters the conversation, not as lines of code, but as creative problem-solving in motion. Meha, for instance, experimented with sensors to make her robot slow down when it "bumped" into an object. Watching it respond, she exclaimed, "It's like it knows!" AI here isn't abstract or intimidating, it's imagination given a way to act in the real world.

### Insights from the Experts

As students explore robotics and AI, it helps to see how their work connects to the wider world. A recent seminar with Dr. Vincent Wilczynski, a Yale professor, highlighted how hands-on experience shapes learning. "Students are encouraged to learn by doing, building projects, exploring courses, and adapting to the latest technology," the professor explained. "Even in robotics and AI, portfolios are essential. Students present their projects and the work they've done with robots,

and these portfolios act as an introduction — whether to a university or a future workplace. It's a way to showcase creativity, problem-solving, and technical understanding all at once."

For students at We-Learn, this approach has immediate benefits. Every line-follower bot, phone-controlled car, or sensor-driven prototype becomes a piece of their portfolio. These projects are tangible evidence of initiative, experimentation, and creativity, and they help students stand out in competitive university applications or early career opportunities.

### Building More Than Robots

In the end, robotics and AI at We-Learn aren't just about machines. They're about the mindset of invention. Students leave not only with robots they can hold, drive, and show off, but with the ability to approach challenges differently, adapt when things go wrong, and push their ideas further than they thought possible. Every bot, every quirky misstep, every "aha" moment in the studio is proof that curiosity, creativity, and hands-on exploration can turn ideas into reality.

At We-Learn, building the future isn't about waiting for technology. It's about picking up the tools at hand, thinking boldly, and creating it yourself — with a smile, a laugh, and maybe a little controlled chaos along the way.

A NEWSLETTER FOR

# INDIA'S COUNSELING COMMUNITY

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# THE PERSONALITY ESSAYS: LETTING CHARACTER SHINE THROUGH WORDS

By  
Bhupender Bhardwaj  
NM Squad

College applications are dominated by numbers like GPAs, test scores, and class ranks, but an intangible entity like personality cannot be precisely measured. That is why universities ask simple questions: "Describe yourself in three words," "Who has influenced you the most," or "What brings you joy?" These prompts may seem playful, but they are diagnostic tools to reveal voice, humor, insight, and self-awareness, qualities no metric can capture.

## 1. The Power of Showing, Not Telling

Personality essays ask you to show who you are. When the University of Pennsylvania asks you to write a thank-you note to someone you have never properly acknowledged, the goal is reflection. Who shaped your journey, and how do you recognize their influence? Writing this note allows you to articulate gratitude and awareness in a way that feels genuine.

I often encourage students to look beyond obvious mentors. A kid reflected on the barista who always remembered her complicated coffee order, noting how that small consistency reminded her of the importance of attention to detail. These subtle interactions can tell a rich story of character.

## 2. Revealing Perspective Through Experience

Columbia University's prompt asks about a lived experience that shaped your ability to contribute to a multidimensional community. This is your chance to demonstrate empathy, curiosity, and collaboration.

Some students discover lessons in unexpected places. One girl described spending summer mornings helping her neighbor train rescued parrots, learning to understand behavior through patience rather than commands. Experiences like this demonstrate curiosity, adaptability, and a willingness to learn from unconventional settings.

## 3. Micro-Moments of Joy and Personality

If you peruse the prompts for Cornell University, you chance upon one that asks, "What brings you joy?" The experience of joy, most would have noticed, often emerges in surprising ways. It can appear in small, overlooked moments, like the smell of rain on a quiet morning or the rhythm of footsteps on an empty street. Sometimes it comes from unexpected accomplishments, like solving a tricky puzzle or fixing a broken gadget. It is found in the simple act of noticing beauty, whether in nature, art, or the little quirks of daily life. Paying attention to these moments and transforming them into written words helps your personality shine through in ways that grades or test scores never can.

I advise students to choose vivid, personal examples. The more specific and unusual the moment, the more their personality shines through.

#### **4. Crafting Voice and Authenticity**

Personality essays succeed through precision and voice. A one-line answer can convey humor, humility, and depth at the same time. For instance:

1: "Collector of misprinted postcards. Amateur cloud cartographer. Midnight pancake engineer."

2: "Talking to my cactus about deadlines while the rain erases yesterday's chalk doodles."

Admissions officers imagine your energy, thought process, and what a conversation with you might feel like. I tell my students to experiment with tone. Be playful, reflective, or witty, but always stay true to yourself. Over-polished answers feel distant.

#### **5. Bringing Your Story to Life**

Personality essays are the heart of your application. They show who you are when the world stops measuring. I remind students that these prompts present an opportunity for a conversation. Each answer is a chance to share curiosity, creativity, and joy in being fully yourself. Writing with honesty and voice lets admissions officers sense your presence beyond the page.

In the end, these essays capture your quirks, your humor, your unexpected experiences, and your reflective thoughts. They invite readers to meet the real you, see the world through your eyes, and imagine what it would feel like to share a space with someone who notices, appreciates, and creates memories in life in their own unique way.





# THE MISSING LINK IN INDIA'S COUNSELING REVOLUTION

## Why the Future of Career Guidance Depends on Teachers, Not Timelines

By  
Gen Next Education

Across India's schools, the counseling movement is visibly thriving. Over the last decade, schools have introduced dedicated counseling departments, organized career fairs and workshops, and encouraged conversations about global opportunities. Students are curious, parents are ambitious, and counselors are more professionalized than ever before. On the surface, it seems like the system has evolved.

And yet, behind this progress lies an uncomfortable truth: the model remains incomplete. Despite new infrastructure, most students still plan their futures inside an outdated framework. Their career decisions continue to reflect societal expectations, not personal potential, and are guided by parental familiarity rather than market reality.

### The Legacy of Limiting Advice

Every counselor in India has heard the familiar scripts: "You like math? You should become an engineer," or "You love to draw? That's a nice hobby, but focus on something practical." These phrases, rooted in good intentions, have become symbols of a system that rewards caution more than curiosity.

Students today no longer lack access; they lack context. They are surrounded by opportunity but disconnected from how their interests translate into real-world work. When parents and schools continue to define success through narrow professions like doctor, engineer, lawyer, or accountant, they inadvertently shrink the imagination of the next generation.

The issue isn't that students are directionless; it's that they are not being shown the diverse pathways their passions can lead to. Math can evolve into cryptography, behavioral economics, or AI ethics. Art can power user experience design, animation, or data visualization. Yet, the system still pushes students into predetermined funnels rather than encouraging them to deepen their curiosity and connect learning with purpose.

### When Counseling Comes Too Late

In most schools, counseling begins only in Grades 11 or 12, when students are already racing against college deadlines. At that point, the counselor's role is largely administrative, organizing applications, university visits, and timelines, leaving little time for deeper reflection. Instead of being architects of exploration, counselors are reduced to project managers.

Complicating matters further is the performative nature of today's counseling ecosystem. University representatives, in their effort to attract applicants, often focus more on networking with counselors than on student outcomes. Perks, invitations, and visibility become currency. Counselors, caught in this structure, sometimes find themselves acting as gatekeepers rather than guides, not out of choice, but out of systemic design.

This isn't a criticism of counselors themselves, but of the constraints that shape their work. Many are deeply committed but operate within frameworks that prize processes over purpose and influence over insight. The result is a form of progress that looks complete on paper but remains hollow in impact.

## The Gap Training Can't Fill

To “fix” this gap, many organizations have introduced certifications and short-term training programs for counselors. While these initiatives aim to build capacity, they often fall short of creating transformation. They teach how to manage a process, not how to inspire a paradigm shift. The ecosystem ends up producing process experts rather than futures thinkers, professionals skilled at form-filling but unequipped to connect students’ evolving interests with emerging industries. What the education system needs now are not more trained managers, but visionaries who can guide young people through a rapidly changing world, where careers are hybrid, interdisciplinary, and often invented in real time.

## The Untapped Force: Teachers as Career Influencers

The most underutilized resource in this equation is hiding in plain sight: teachers. They are the ones who see students every day, who notice the first spark of curiosity and the quiet moments of self-doubt. They are witnesses to how interests form, fade, and re-emerge. Yet, they are rarely included in career guidance frameworks.

Teachers already influence career thinking, even if informally. A history teacher who connects world events to modern diplomacy, or a physics teacher who explains how research powers space entrepreneurship, is already doing the work of a career influencer. The problem is that these efforts are incidental, not institutionalized.

Empowering teachers doesn't mean burdening them with counseling responsibilities. It means giving them the language, tools, and flexibility to connect their subjects to the real world. Imagine a classroom where students explore how literature informs brand storytelling, or where a biology discussion links to public health and environmental careers. These moments bridge academic content with possibility.

## Building a Culture, Not a Department

To embed this vision, schools need a cultural shift rather than a procedural one. Several strategies can accelerate this transition:

- **Reframe the Teacher's Role:** Recognize teachers as career influencers who can integrate relevance into learning, not as part-time counselors.
- **Integrate Career Literacy into Curriculum:** Provide teachers with frameworks to highlight industry intersections within their subjects.
- **Offer Micro-Training Modules:** Short, subject-based workshops can show teachers how to spark exploration without disrupting academic flow.
- **Foster Collaboration:** Create ecosystems where teachers and counselors share observations and coordinate student development strategies.
- **Celebrate Guidance Champions:** Schools should acknowledge and reward teachers who mentor, motivate, and connect learning to life.

## A Broader Definition of Guidance

The goal is not to replace the counselor, but to expand the circle of influence. Students need multiple touchpoints and mentors who understand both their curiosity and capability. By integrating teachers into the ecosystem, schools ensure that career thinking starts early, occurs naturally, and grows through meaningful connections in the classroom.

If India's education system truly aims to prepare students for the future of work, it cannot wait until the final years of school to start these conversations. Guidance must evolve from being a service to being a culture, a living, breathing part of everyday learning. The missing piece lies not in more departments or certifications, but in recognizing that the people who see students most often, their teachers, are also the ones best equipped to help them imagine what's next.



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# SCHOOL COUNSELLOR OF THE MONTH



**Shraddha Kumar**  
Counselor  
Utpal Shanghvi Global School

From students asking for the “easiest Ivy” to daydreams of mind-reading superpowers, Shraddha Kumar approaches university guidance with humor, heart, and a calm sense of perspective. As Counselor at Utpal Shanghvi Global School, she’s known for turning curiosity and chaos into clarity, often reminding students to focus on what’s within their control and let go of the rest. Whether reflecting on “Lessons from my cat Milo” or smiling when a student quotes her months later, Shraddha finds joy in the quiet impact of her words. Thoughtful, witty, and deeply grounded, she brings warmth and wisdom to every conversation, proving that the best guidance often begins with a good laugh and a listening ear.

**1. What’s the weirdest/funniest thing you ever heard a student or parent say?**

He’s not really into studying — what’s the easiest Ivy to get into?

**2. If you had to write a college essay about yourself, what would your topic be?**

“Lessons from my cat Milo”

**3. What’s the most oddly satisfying part of your job that no one ever thinks about?**

When students quote me back to me. Like months later when a student says, “remember when you told me \_\_\_?” — and it’s something I said offhand that somehow stuck with them.

**4. What would your “Guidance Counselor Superpower” be if you were in a comic book?**

The ability to read minds to figure out what they really want!

**5. Which fictional character do you think would make a surprisingly great guidance counselor?**

Dr. Strange, because he would probably see like a million possible futures and knows exactly which one you will pick.

**6. What’s your go-to motivational phrase that even you roll your eyes at sometimes—but it works?**

We can only focus on and work with what is in our control- the rest doesn’t matter.

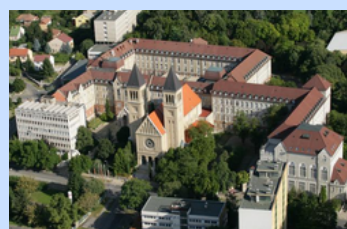


# AIYYO'S RANKING OF THE MONTH

## Top 7 Hidden Jewel Global Colleges

### University of Pécs, Hungary

Founded in 1367 in the historic city of Pécs, it is Hungary's oldest university and one of Central Europe's most international campuses. It offers English-taught undergraduate programs in Business Administration, Computer Science, Nursing, Psychology, Mechanical Engineering, and English & American Studies. The university enrolls about 22,000 students overall, including roughly 5,000 international undergraduates from over 100 countries.



### Queen Mary University of London (Malta Campus)

Located in Żabbar, Malta, this campus delivers British undergraduate degrees identical to those in London. Its English-taught programs include Medicine (MBBS), Business Management, and International Relations, following the same curriculum and standards as QMUL's main UK campus. Annual intake is approximately 150 undergraduates, with students representing more than 40 nationalities, including a growing number from India.

### University of Nicosia, Cyprus

Established in 1980 in Nicosia, it is the largest English-language university in Southern Europe. Undergraduate programs taught entirely in English include Medicine (MD 6-year), Computer Science, International Business, Architecture, and Digital Currency. The university hosts around 14,000 students, of whom about 30 percent are international, with notable representation from India and Africa.



### King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST), Saudi Arabia

Founded in 2009 in Thuwal, KAUST is a research-intensive institution offering all instruction in English. While it primarily serves graduate students, it has launched selective undergraduate research and dual-degree initiatives in science and engineering that prepare students for advanced study. The university community represents more than 120 nationalities, including strong participation from India in its STEM pipeline programs.

### Duke Kunshan University (China)

Established in 2013 in Kunshan as a partnership between Duke University and Wuhan University, DKU offers a fully English-medium liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. Majors include Data Science, Global Health, Environmental Science and Policy, Political Economy, and Media Arts. It enrolls about 1,700 undergraduates, with roughly one-third international students drawn from over 60 countries, including India.



### Hawai'i Pacific University (HPU), United States

Founded in 1965 in Honolulu, HPU combines American liberal arts with professional education in a multicultural island setting. Its undergraduate programs in Business, Nursing, Marine Biology, International Studies, and Communication are taught entirely in English. The university enrolls about 6,000 students, with international students—many from India—comprising 12–15 percent of the undergraduate population.

### Iceland School of Energy at Reykjavík University (Iceland)

Based in Reykjavík and founded in 2007 as part of Reykjavík University, it is globally recognized for sustainability and clean-energy studies. Undergraduate instruction in English is limited but includes specialized pathways in Sustainable Energy and Electrical Power Engineering under the university's BSc programs. Reykjavík University enrolls about 3,500 students, with more than 20 percent international participation concentrated in its energy and engineering departments.





# THE VANISHING VALUE OF A COLLEGE DEGREE

## How Structural Shifts, AI Disruption, and Risk-Averse Hiring Are Eroding Entry-Level Opportunities in a Booming Economy

By  
Shrinidhi Rao  
Chief of Staff  
The Burning Glass Institute



**Shrinidhi Rao**

For decades, a bachelor's degree served as a reliable passport to professional employment. But for today's young graduates, that promise is faltering. Despite record corporate earnings and a resilient labor market, those just entering the workforce with college degrees are facing higher unemployment, shrinking opportunities, and an unsettling mismatch between their qualifications and the jobs they can secure.

Recent data from the Burning Glass Institute reveals a paradox at the heart of the American economy: even as industries like finance, tech, and professional services thrive, young college graduates are seeing a sharp uptick in unemployment and underemployment. In fact, more than half of the Class of 2023 found themselves in roles that didn't require a degree at all, a stark reversal of long-standing norms.

### 1. The AI-Powered Expertise Upheaval

Generative AI is dismantling the very foundation of early-career roles. Entry-level tasks, drafting documents, summarizing reports, handling simple data analysis, are precisely the kinds of activities at which AI now excels. The result? A "Flipped Pyramid" where companies need fewer junior staff to handle the groundwork and instead seek mid-career professionals who can steer strategy, manage projects, and make judgment calls that AI can't replicate. In roles such as marketing, finance, and project management, traditional graduate gateways, which demand talent with less than three years' experience, are plummeting. In their place, postings increasingly call for candidates with six or more years under their belt.

### 2. Post-Pandemic Lean Hiring Models

COVID-19 taught companies to do more with less. During the upheaval of 2021–2022, many firms streamlined operations, investing in automation and process efficiencies. As a result, when demand returned, they discovered they didn't need to scale up headcount at the same rate as revenue. Today, businesses are reluctant to invest in training junior hires who may take months to become productive. Instead, they're prioritizing experienced workers who can contribute immediately. This risk aversion is proving especially costly for new grads, who now find themselves excluded from hiring pipelines that once welcomed them in droves.

### 3. The Graduate Glut

More Americans are earning bachelor's degrees than ever before. While this trend reflects positive educational aspirations, it has also flooded the market. By 2034, the U.S. is projected to have 7–11 million more college-educated adults of working age than it did a decade ago. But the growth of suitable professional roles hasn't kept pace. This oversupply intensifies competition for limited jobs, fuels credential inflation, and depresses wages. Even engineering, a field considered immune to such trends, sees over 25% of graduates underemployed today.

EXPERIENCE  
REQUIRED



#### **4. AI as a Force Multiplier**

Rather than being a standalone disruptor, AI amplifies all the above forces. It enables leaner hiring models, makes companies more selective, and exacerbates the experience gap. By automating junior-level work, AI removes the very training grounds that allow young professionals to gain experience. It's not just replacing jobs, it's erasing career ladders.

#### **A Generation Left Behind**

The data tells a sobering story. Between 2018–19 and mid-2025, unemployment among 20–24-year-olds with a bachelor's degree rose from 5.2% to 6.2%. This puts them above nearly every other educational group, including those with only a high school diploma. The employment advantage that once came with a degree is now narrower than at any point in the last 30 years. Layoff data reinforces this trend. Degree-holders aged 22–27 are being let go at nearly double the pre-pandemic rate, particularly in AI-exposed sectors like tech, business operations, and finance—the very fields that once promised upward mobility.

#### **What Lies Ahead?**

If these trends continue unchecked, the result could be a structural underemployment crisis. Young graduates may become a “stranded” generation: overqualified, underutilized, and increasingly skeptical of the value of higher education. Worse still, the country risks squandering its greatest asset, its educated workforce, at a time when global competition demands innovation and adaptability.

Yet there's room for hope. Structural disruptions have historically birthed new models of work and enterprise. But change won't come passively. It will require bold rethinking from employers, educators, and policymakers alike, rethinking entry-level design, investing in new training models, and rebuilding pathways to experience in an AI-augmented world. The question is no longer whether college degrees have value, but whether our economy still knows how to use them.



# Thank You, From Team Aiiyo

Thank you for taking the time to read Aiiyo. We're proud to bring you fresh, thoughtful perspectives—and it's your curiosity and engagement that fuel our work. At the heart of our mission is a desire to elevate the level of conversation around career choice and college admissions, helping readers navigate these decisions with greater clarity and confidence.

If you have any questions, feedback, or would like to contribute to a future issue, we'd love to hear from you—just drop us a line at [contact@aiiyo.in](mailto:contact@aiiyo.in). Until next time, stay sharp and stay inspired.

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**Jesus Lall**  
Advisory Board



**Megan Mankerian**  
Advisory Board

## Operations Team



**Neeraj Mandhana**  
Founder &  
Editor-in-Chief



**Ravisha Maheshwari**  
Senior Editor



**Bhupender Bharadwaj**  
Junior Editor



**DK**  
Admin & Logistics



**Ritik Jha**  
Accounts