

# Rural engineering colleges strike it rich in rank list

Vasudha Venugopal

**CHENNAI:** In the recently-announced list of rank holders of Anna University, many rural colleges have made their mark. While the top ten colleges of the city still have the highest number of university rank holders, many engineering colleges in other districts and rural areas boast of at least 20 university rank holders each. At least 12 colleges from such areas have made it to the list of institutions with a high number of university rank holders this year. This year, the university rank list has separate ranking for area-wise colleges.

## Attracting placements

K. Bommannaraja, professor, PSNA College of Engineering and Technology in Dindigul, said the institution began emphasising on academics to attract more placements. "With many more

students from Tamil medium schools, colleges in rural areas have to put in more efforts to get them to score well. Recently, we started giving industry training to first-year students. This worked well as the students seem to score more after they have understood the concepts," he added. The college has managed to get over 150 university ranks this year, one of the highest in the State.

E.V. Kumaran of Arunai Engineering College in Thiruvannamalai, which, for the first time, has managed to get around 30 university ranks, said the institution provides four-hour compulsory coaching in the evening for students who are lagging in academics. "Providing dinner and transport facilities also ensures that the students do not miss these classes," he said. There are 557 engineering colleges across the State affiliated to Anna University.

- Many colleges focus on academics to attract companies

- Anna University's shift from using marks to CGPA while determining ranking also contributed

Over the last few years, city-based engineering colleges and a few institutions on the outskirts have dominated the university rank holders' list.

Saiprakash Leo Muthu, CEO, Sairam Group of Institutions that has consistently produce a high number of rank holders said the fact that Anna University did the ranking based on the CGPA and not on marks, as it used to do earlier, has helped many students bag university ranks. "For rural colleges, getting university ranks is the best way to attract companies

who want to associate themselves with colleges with a good record," he added.

A professor from Paavai Engineering College in Namakkal said the number of rank holders is often a factor when students and parents make choices during admission. "Parents want their children to join colleges that focus on studies," he said.

## Scholarships, fee waivers

Many of these rural colleges offer scholarships to their university rankers and sometimes, waive fees for the next semester. "Colleges in rural areas anyway lose out on good students from their own areas who choose city colleges. When their entire fee is waived, it is motivation to study well for the next semester," said an official from Nandha Engineering College in Erode, which has a good number of rankers this year.

Nandhini P.H., a ranker from a college in Karur that has managed to get as many as 50 ranks, said that studies are given the foremost importance in her college. "Our teachers are rewarded if they produce gold medallists. Because of this, students are given severe impositions if they fail in internals. Even during preparation leave, many of us are asked to come to college to practise questions from university question papers," she said.

K. Balachandran, an industry analyst, however pointed out that while it was true that companies were attracted to colleges with good academic records, they also looked at other skills. "Students in city colleges are at an advantage as they are reasonably good at communicating in English. Also, they have internship and training in companies that students from rural areas lack."