

Best Practices #1 at BNCA

The Portfolio System

Any Educational Institute engages in a number of other activities besides teaching and learning. In a college of Architecture such activities dominate considering the very nature of architectural education which tends to be more experiential, interdisciplinary. At BNCA, we have encouraged and fostered a rich offering of short as well as long term activities. To encourage different activities to occur and to ensure their sustenance, we at BNCA have constituted a framework that we call as the 'Portfolio' system. Objectives and Underlying principals To encourage different activities in the institute that goes beyond the curricular requirements To provide freedom to faculty for not only choosing which activity they wish to participate in, but also to ideate and establish new activities at the Institute. To facilitate aligning of faculty's research interests, social interests with the Institutional goals. Context BNCA was established in 1994 as a women's only institute of Architecture. This is what makes us a distinctive institute. As principal of a young college our founder principal established a shared vision of an institute that was constantly seeking opportunities and exploring territory that would enrich the student experience within the institute. In a few years we found that the number of activities was exponentially increasing. We needed a system to ensure that the activities could be continued and retained for a sustained amount of time. The system had to be flexible enough so that it did not become a top down, imposed structure. The system had to be open-ended onto which groups of students and faculty could join for a limited time or for a specific purpose. It would also have to be a system that did not have a sense of hierarchy but rather that of team-working.

The Practice At BNCA, we call this system as the 'portfolio' system. A portfolio is variously defined as 'a job or a responsibility that a person has' in an organization and also as 'an organized portable showcase of ones talents and achievements. We embrace both these meanings when we talk about the portfolio system. On one side it is a responsibility that a teacher or a member of the institute has and on the other hand it is also an instrument that the person voluntarily chooses or creates in order to further his or her research and social interests. At BNCA the portfolios range from publications to celebration of events and days at the institute. Over time the number of portfolios has increased with activities such as those under United Nations Academic Impact Hub getting added. As the portfolio system is voluntary it inevitably means that some will be more motivated than others to conceptualize or opt for portfolios. Some faculty have also been over enthusiastic and taken on more activities than they could manage. These portfolios require varying degrees of infrastructural and institutional support and being aware of this and providing for it in the annual budget is a challenging task. Evidence of success Some of the more successful portfolios that have enriched our institute are as follows United Nations Academic Impact Hub BNCA is a member of UNAI since 2012 and a UNAI hub since 2014. BNCA UNIAI hub has completed a number of projects. More information on these projects can be read on our website – <https://www.bnca.ac.in/bnca-cells/united-nations-academic-impact-programme/unaiprogrammes-at-bnca/> Publication Cell BNCA Publication Cell has been active since 2009. We have continued this publication journey with several other books, now totalling nine in number. More about our publication cell can be read on our website - [https://www.bnca.ac.in/bnca-cells/publication-cell/Problems encountered and Resources required](https://www.bnca.ac.in/bnca-cells/publication-cell/Problems%20encountered%20and%20Resources%20required) A couple of problems have been observed recently which we are trying to address. Need for mentoring among junior faculty – As new faculty join the institute, they need to be mentored to equip them to use the portfolio system to their own and institutional benefit.