

Empty benches force SFI to request AICTE:

Cut eligibility to 35% to fill seats'

With only 33,781 students registering for admission to nearly 72,388 engineering seats in colleges in the State, 46.6% seats are likely to stay vacant; educationists question if reducing eligibility is right move

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Anticipating more empty benches in classrooms and more financial imbalance in colleges offering professional courses, members of Association of Self-Finance Colleges in Gujarat have reached out to All-India Council of Technical Education, seeking relaxation in eligibility criterion.

Currently, there is cap of 45% marks for students from general category and 40% for reserved category students to participate in the admission process for professional courses. The college managements have asked AICTE to reduce it to pass percentage, which is 35 per cent.

Members of the association that has close to 400 colleges under its umbrella has demanded that AICTE should allow students with passing marks to participate in the online admission process. The Pharmacy Council of India has allowed students with passing marks to take admission in degree pharmacy courses from 2019 academic year.

Grim situation

A depressing situation for engineering courses came to fore on Tuesday when, at the end of registration, only 33,781 students registered to partici-



NILKANTH DAVE

Current cap is 45% for general category and 40% for reserved category

pate in the online admission process for nearly 72,388 seats in colleges in State. Even if every student registered was given admission, it would still leave 46.6% seats vacant.

Janak Khandwala, managing trustee of Silver Oak College and office-bearer in Gujarat SFI association, confirmed they have reached out to the government. "The last three years has been depressing. Every year, several seats remain vacant. We have more than 15

lakh seats of professional courses across the country. Every year, about 50% (about 8 lakh) seats remain vacant. Reducing the criteria from minimum 45% to 35% will make more students eligible and number of vacant seats can be reduced."

Talking to Mirror, Khandwala said, "Take example of Chartered Accountant exam. Anyone can take up the course but examination is so strict that only quality students pass. AICTE should

allow students with passing percentage to get admission but university system and examination system apart from syllabus should be made so strict that only quality students pass."

Will it benefit students?

Rupesh Vasani, director of SAL College of Technology, said that if AICTE approves the proposal, it may solve issue of vacant seats in colleges temporarily. "There is no statistical data and analysis on whether the proposal will benefit large section of students. This is because students are allowed to consider marks of practical and subjects like computer in case they fall short of eligibility criterion. Ninety per cent of students are covered under this. So, it is not sure if the decision will benefit anyone except for colleges to fill in seats," he said.

He also said that letting students with pass percentage take professional courses may also affect quality of engineers and other professionals churned out of the colleges.

Vice-Chancellor of Parul University and former member secretary of ACPC, MN Patel said that the decision to have no lower cap should be re-considered for pharmacy course. "If a student with 35% is allowed to take admission in engineering, the government will have to dilute the syllabus in a way that suits them. In doing so, we will end up lowering quality of academics and outcome in terms of stu-



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Anil Sahasrabudhe, AICTE chairman

dents," he said. He said, it is advisable to have a bottom-line or eligibility percentage for any course—be it professional or otherwise.

AICTE chairman, Anil Sahasrabudhe told *Mirror* they will consider the letter. "We consider all requests that are submitted. Our committee will analyse its pros and cons before taking any decision. We take decisions in advance and the request cannot be considered for 2019 academic year. The eligibility criteria/ marks will be same as announced by us for 2019," he added.