Be it dashing out of the back door to bunk classes or stepping in to fill the shoes of a goal keeper, Sijo, who incubates startups, was ever ready for anything in his graduation days at College of Engineering, T’puram.

Sijo Kuruvilla George needs no introduction if you have happened to visit Startup Village in Kochi. The 30-year-old CEO of the technology business incubator says he might have picked up the nuances of business (marketing and strategy) at Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, (2008-'09), but it was his time at College of Engineering, Thiruvananthapuram, where he studied mechanical engineering (2001-'05) that stand out for amazing moments that he can pick from his college life. Excerpts from an email interview:

What did college teach you? My college taught me the need to figure out ways to get work done and I learnt how to manage relationships as well.

What was your proudest moment in college? I was elated when we won the inter-collegiate basketball tournament during my final year. It was really special because in the four years of engineering, this was the only time we managed to clinch the trophy. Winning the college union elections twice, getting elected as Convenor of our college festival. This irked a particular professor whose classes I had missed the most. He ended up being a bit harsh on me overall and made me toil hard to make up to him for all those missed sessions.

Was bunking classes part of your college routine? Absolutely. I would rate it as one of the most exciting aspects of my engineering days. The reason I would enthusiastically go to college was that I could bunk as many classes as possible.

Did you have any rifts with your professors? Why? Fortunately, not many, barring a few minor ones. I was fairly diplomatic and maintained quite a good relationship with my professors and key officials of the college management. In my second year, I ended up missing quite a few classes due to my duties as the General
union elections twice, getting elected as General Secretary of the college union and getting to represent the university basketball team in my final year also count among some of my proudest moments.

Have you had any embarrassing moments in college?
Quite a few in fact! One such instance that I still recall happened during my second year. I had marked my attendance and was looking to get out of the class through the back door. I moved myself to the last seat in the back bench and took off towards the door when the teacher was not looking. But I had actually darted in the wrong direction and ended up banging in to the door.

Another embarrassing moment was the inter-batch football tournament. I was asked to stand in as goal keeper for one of the matches, in place of the regular guy. My friends convinced me that I would do just fine, as I was tall and I played basketball well (I have never played football in my life). All in all, it was
good fun in newspapers. This saw us going to a variety of events; some really good ones and some amazingly hilarious experiences like the Alliance Francaise show music, which recited only popular theatre (drama) numbers; that was quite an amusing experience since it could have even been Latin for us! Some friends of mine used to crash weddings regularly but I wasn’t party to that kind of adventure.

What extracurricular activities were you involved in?
There were several, most notable ones being the college union activities, basketball and cricket. I was active on all these fronts until I graduated. I also spent time participating and organising various events that happened in the college and outside of it.

— shilpa vasudevan@newindianexpress.com

Once we had a hilarious experience at an Alliance Francaise music show, which recited only popular numbers from theatre productions; that was quite amusing as it could well have been Latin for us! — Sijo Kuruvilla George, CEO, Startup Village