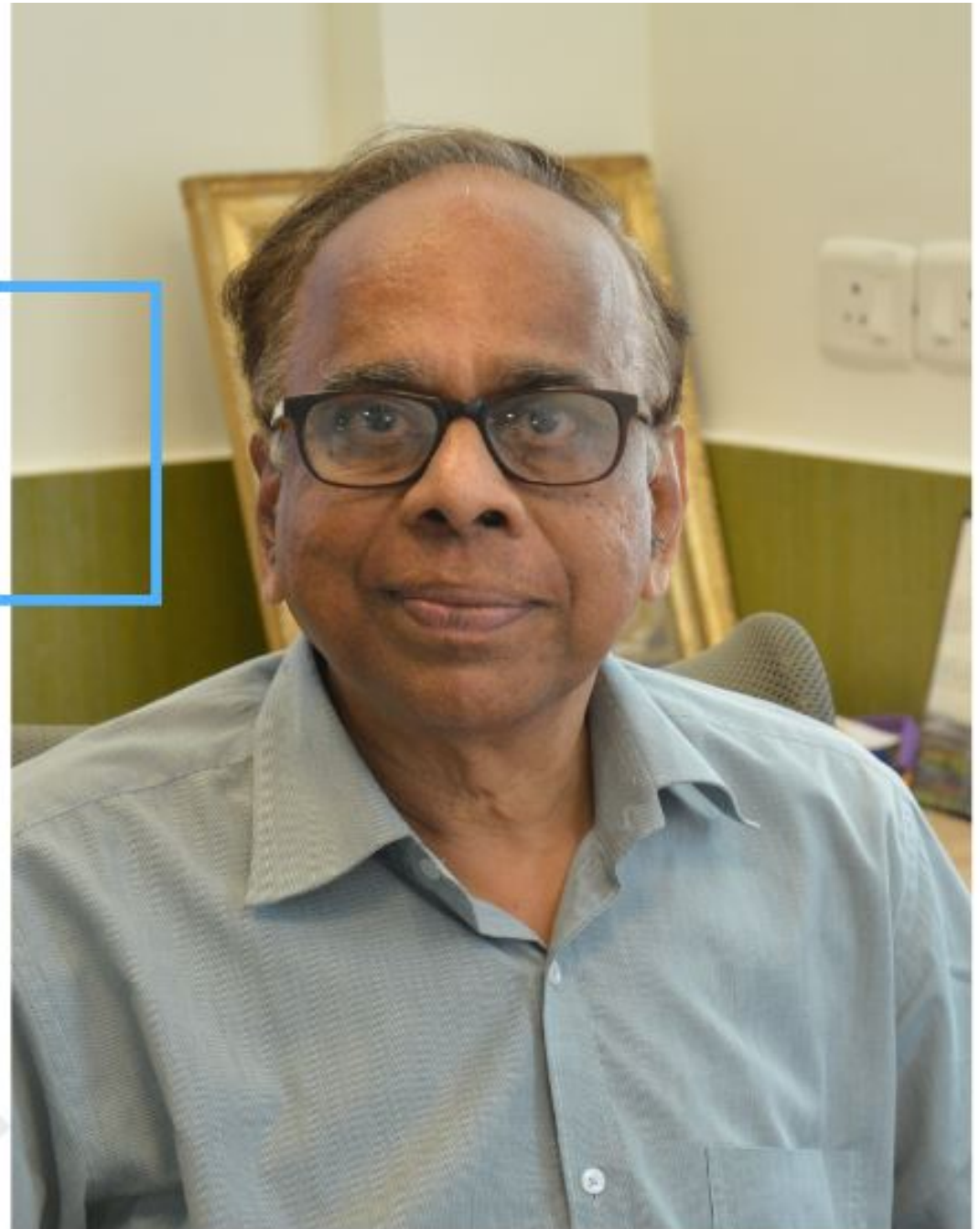DR. P. K.
VISWANATHAN

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Ascending Towards the Peak of Excellence in Big Data and AI Education

Great Lakes Institute of Management for AIMLA was established in 2004 by Padmashree awardee, Dr. Bala V Balachandran, Professor Emeritus at Kellogg School of Management. Great Lakes Institute of Management is among India's leading Business Schools with campuses in Chennai & Delhi-NCR. The institute's motto "Global Mindset, Indian Roots" is in line with its mission to be a Center of Excellence in fostering managerial leadership and entrepreneurship in the development of human capital through quality research, teaching, residential learning, and professional management services.

Known for its flagship program – One-year Post Graduate Program in Management (PGPM), Great Lakes is led by an exceptional faculty, steered by an outstanding advisory council and buoyed by international collaborations. Great Lakes has emerged as a top-ranked Business School within a short span of time. Great Lakes also offers the regular two-year Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM), weekend, and executive programs, all accredited by AMBA in addition to the SAQs. The institute also offers, for working professionals, various online and blended learning programs through its online platform – Great Learning.

A Novel Teaching Pedagogy

In the growing VUCA world, the necessity to inculcate value-driven business acumen to create future-ready leaders is the need of the hour. While most B schools focus on building managers of tomorrow, only a few like Great Lakes have the vision to create business leaders equipped with disruptive trends and technologies that are required for the changing industry needs.

At Great Lakes, the journey of Analytics started in 2013-14 with a program in Business Analytics & Business Intelligence (BABI) – a corporate program for executives spanning over 11-12 months with structured curriculum comprising of core analytical subjects such as statistical methods for decision making, advanced statistical models, predictive analytics, data mining, and optimization. This included domain specific specialization such as Marketing analytics, Financial Risk analytics, Web & Social Media analytics. After completion of all these courses, the participant partakes in a Capstone project that showcases the individual's ability to understand and implement his/her Analytics skills.

Now, learning from this experience and a vision to be the trendsetter in disruptive analytics, Great Lakes Chennai has introduced AIMLA – Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning & Analytics (an acronym coined by Founder & Dean - Dr. Bala). This course has been initiated as a pioneering effect by Dr. Bala as a major in the one-year PGPM curriculum that serves as a launching pad for other advanced courses. It covers the basic concepts of analytics landscape, clustering, logistic regression & association rules, neural nets, and such at a foundation level.

Leadership Expanding Horizons of Knowledge

Dr. P. K. Viswanathan is the Program Director for the Business Analytics & Business Analytics and AIMLA programs at Great Lakes Institute of Management. He is also the professor of Analytics at Great Lakes.

His journey started in the year 2004, right from the inception of Great Lakes, when it was operated from a private premise in the heart of Chennai with its first batch consisting of 60 students. He was then the founder-faculty in terms of teaching the course. Although he was working in another great institute. Right from day one he has been associated with Dr. Bala and Great Lakes, and till date, a span of 14 years, he has been able to share his knowledge with all students on statistical methods as well as predictive analytics and other related courses. Dr. Viswanathan has literally seen the journey from a small city premises to magnificent green campus, located in the outskirts of Chennai.

According to Dr. Viswanathan, "To continue excellence is not a destination, whereas it is a continuous improvement. Hence, the institute works together in delivering flexible, agile, and value-added processes through its advanced curriculum." As he has mentioned earlier, be it the corporate BABI program or the latest AIMLA, Great Lakes is progressing one step ahead to keep up with upcoming trends.

Giving Edge to Education

India being versatile for its higher education landscape, and home to some of the reputed world-class institutions such as IIM- A, IIM – B, IIT, to name a few have been offering best

practices with quality research and comprehensive curriculum for the students. And now with many e-Learning platforms scoring high in the market and contributing to the evolution of analytics talent in the country, Great Lakes takes into account some of the best practices by both former and later and implement into its curriculum. However, the institute sticks to its motto and mission to balance the theoretical and practical approach.

Quality Learning with Practical Exposure

Students enrolling for the PGPM at Great Lakes are required to have a minimum of two-year work experience, and a majority of the participants, although from diverse sectors, have an IT education or relevant work experience. Today, corporates want to leverage disruptive technologies, and hence the candidates they hire are required to be readily equipped and step in line with the job's demands from day one. Based on this requirement, along with knowledge in current technology and business trend, and to make the program more interesting, the institute gives a number of case examples to illustrate how analytics plays a role in decision making in the corporate world and what are the theoretical underpinnings that a student shouldn't miss. Great Lakes has made conscious efforts to ensure that business flavor and theoretical rigor are mixed to the right proportions. It also conducts analytics problem-solving puzzles and quizzes from a corporate perspective, train students to naturally develop the skill of analytical thinking and host competitions both within and outside Great Lakes for a grander exposure with real-time simulation.

Developing Course Architecture in Relevance to the Industry

The program at Great Lakes is structured to aid students support their companies with AIMLA driven businesses practices by bringing relevant insights using advanced methods to implement strategies. Great Lakes' participants, after course completion, move to a lateral position in their organizations. They become capable of rethinking and help expand the business by applying the techniques learnt in classrooms.

The program comes with case studies, live projects, and group discussions from the current landscape, market competencies and skills that blend them to take managerial decisions with analytical thinking. These activities are monitored constantly on the basis of student's performance and, whenever there is a need, they are directed with appropriate guidance.

An Overview to Valuable Recognition

The institute has been awarded with following appreciations:
- 8th among Business Schools in India for the year 2019 by National Institutional Ranking Framework, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India

> *Be Distinct or Extinct: Aspire to Inspire with cutting- edge knowledge in Business Analytics and brace yourself for the best experience of your life.*
>
> *- Dr. Bala V Balachandran*

- Ranked 5 among Top 10 B Schools for EMBA programme in India by Education World 2019
- Featured among Top 10 Analytics & Data Science Institutes in the World - 2018 by Analytics Insight Magazine
- 3rd in One-year MBA programs in India for the year 2018 and 2017 by Outlook India
- 7th in Private B Schools in India by Business Today for the year 2018
- 4th in One-year Programs by Business World for the year 2017
- 14th among Top Private B Schools in India by Business World for the year 2018
- 9th in Top B Schools in India by Business India for the year 2017
- 1st by Analytics India Magazine among Top 10 Analytics B Schools in India for the year 2016

Challenging Endeavors for Great Lakes

When talking about challenges Dr. Viswanathan feels, Firstly, the requirements to be met for the type of organizations that employed Great Lakes' AIMLA was a big challenge. The team met this challenge successfully by preparing the students in terms of capabilities to meet the job requirements well in advance with the help of the institute's Corporate Career Services (Placements) Team.

The second challenge was to determine what was the differentiator between Engineering Graduates who were doing AIMLA and the course conducted by Great Lakes?

Engineering Graduates were extremely capable in the software part that included writing Python Codes for AIMLA. The institute prepared its students by blending academic rigor with business relevance and imparted problem-solving skills that are required for Strategic analytics decisions in organizations. Thus, the differentiator was good proficiency in R and Python coding oriented toward solutions to business problems.

Another Challenge was "How to deliver AIMLA that involves high conceptual rigor and technical skills to management graduates with business application orientation?" The team at Great Lakes struck a right balance between theory and practice and selected excellent visiting faculty for delivering special modules in AIMLA with the internal full-time faculty team alongside.

Designing New Frontier for Great Future

Dr. Viswanathan believes AIMLA is the new frontier in business analytics that promises a great future in terms of attractive career opportunities for budding young students of management from leading business schools. He mentions Andrew Ng, the world luminary in this field who predicts "AI will transform every industry just like electricity transformed them 100 years back."

A survey conducted by global data storage player Seagate points to the following:

I. In India, 90% of respondents have implemented AI in one or more areas of their business, much higher than 74% reported in Asia-Pacific Markets.
II. The opportunities to reap AI are tremendous.
III. Strategy is a challenge to cope with pressure on innovation and technology.

Analytics job opportunities are constantly evolving in India over the years. There is a steady rise in the overall demand for analytics professionals with new jobs being advertised each day. A research Study by ANALYTICS INDIA SALARY STUDY 2019 (Analytics India Magazine & AnalytixLabs) reveals the following interesting findings:

- The median salary for an analytics professional in India for the year ending 2018-19 remained at INR 12.6 Lakh per annum cutting across experience levels and skill sets.
- Data Analytics professionals are currently benefitting from the big data wave and are earning 26% higher salary than a typical software engineer in India.
- Analytics salaries continue to exceed other software engineering roles in India with earnings that outperform Java counterparts by almost 50%.
- Big Data and Data Analytics professionals who work on unstructured data continue to earn more than normal analytics professionals.

Expanding Boundaries with Advanced Initiatives

The institute is expanding its reach by creating two brand new avenues for Global MBA programs:

Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, in collaboration with Stuart School of Business, IIT Chicago, USA has launched an International MBA program in Business Analytics. It is a comprehensive 12-month program that covers the latest analytics tools and techniques along with their business applications. The topics would be covered in a practical and hands-on manner with real-world case studies to enable participants to succeed in business roles using data analytics.

Great Lakes Institute of Management, Chennai, India, in collaboration with Babson College, MA, USA, has launched Global MBA in Family Enterprises Management. The graduate program will provide a cutting-edge, relevant curriculum to transform some of the sharpest and the most enterprising minds engaged in family enterprises to become future business leaders. It is pivoted around 11-months of education plus 4 months of effective coaching and mentoring of participants to develop a family business plan, transforming a business idea to startup venture and a personal plan to succeed in the family business. Participants spend one week every month in the classroom environment with the faculty.

Analytics Insight