

Star College Scheme: A Game Changer

Modern College was selected for Star College Scheme of the Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Government of India, in 2011. This resulted in an unprecedented growth in laboratory infrastructure developments, with procurement of large number of small equipment besides some high-end equipment, the laboratories were restructured and renovated and were fixed with lab-safety measures. All ten science departments were supported under this prestigious scheme, probably the only college in the country to have support for so many departments. This has helped the college in introducing student-centric, research –based teaching pedagogies and one of the distinctive features was the introduction of research projects at undergraduate levels, right from the first year and to continue them till their final years of UG degree programs. Starting with only 150 student undertaking research projects in 2012-13 the number reached beyond 500 students in 2019-20. This was a unique experiment, which got wide appreciation at DBT and was specifically highlighted on the DBT’s web portal (<http://dbtindia.gov.in/schemes-programmes/building-capacities/teaching/star-college-scheme-strengthening-ug-science>, Fig. 1)

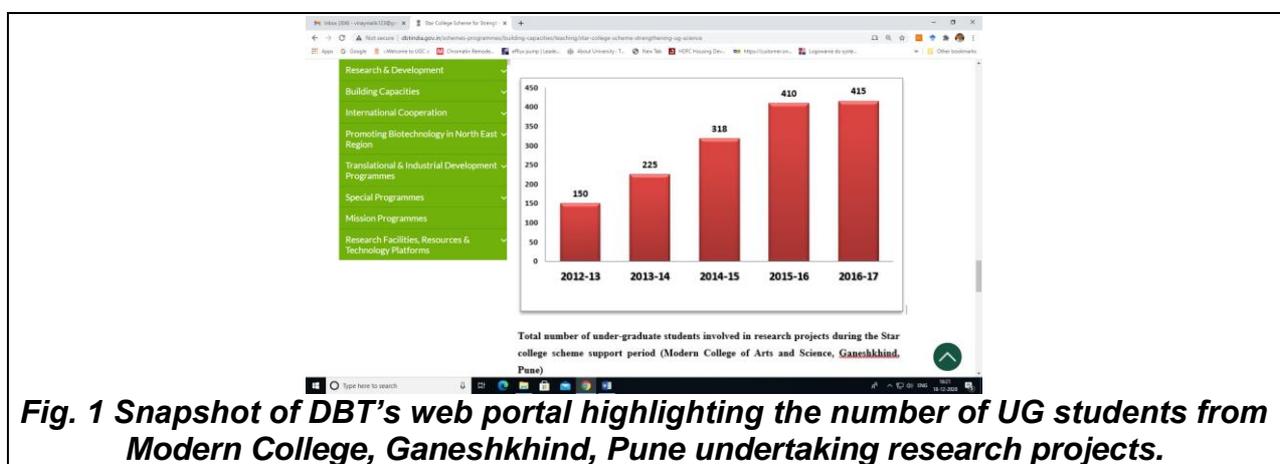


Fig. 1 Snapshot of DBT’s web portal highlighting the number of UG students from Modern College, Ganeshkhind, Pune undertaking research projects.

Overall, more than 1500 under-graduate and 700 post-graduate students have undertaken independent research projects so far in the last 5 years. Many of the projects by under-graduate students were continued in their post-graduation in the same college (maintaining the pool of advanced-learner students). The outcomes of many of these projects are published in peer-reviewed, indexed journals. Consequently, the college was awarded coveted ‘Star Status’ in 2017-18 with a sanction of Rs. 2.82 Crores. In a further recognition of our outstanding work through this college, the coordinator of the scheme at Modern College, Ganeshkhind, Pune was nominated as Member, DBT’s Expert Committee for Screening New Star College Proposals

submitted to DBT. The Principal and the Coordinator were invited by the DBT to give a lead presentation at the annual review meeting for newly inducted colleges under this scheme, at the Pondicherry University in 2019-20. They were also invited by the DBT at the India International Science Festival, Lucknow, 2018-19. The college took a lead afterwards and started mentoring other colleges in Maharashtra and outside for this scheme, including Shri Shivaji College, Barshi, Solapur (awarded Star Status in 2020), C.T. Bora College, Shirur, Pune (received Star College Scheme in 2019), and Nirmala College for Women, Coimbatore (awarded Star Status), beside others. In addition to this, the highly motivated students are now engaging several school students in and around Pune and mentoring them for inculcating scientific temper amongst them and to explore the science.