

BY PUSHKALA VENKATARAMAN ('95 MMS) AND ASHISH GARG ('97 INSTRU)

## BITSIAN FACULTY @ B-SCHOOLS

*While most BITSians are aware of what business school's like from a student perspective, fewer among us know what it's like from a faculty perspective. We spoke with Kartik Hosanagar, Assistant Professor of Operations and Information Management at the Wharton School of Business to learn about his career path and experience as faculty at one of the world's premier business schools.*

### MEET BITS Alumnus

Kartik Hosanagar (94-98), Assistant Professor of Operations and Information Management at Wharton Business School; A keen math enthusiast, an ambitious and dedicated researcher, a thinker who looks for ways to better community experiences in various fields, and a person who still finds time for fun and the outdoors.

A dabbler in many senses, Kartik or HK as he is known to many, spent time at BITS with the Photography Club (DoPy), Mime team, Dance club, EDC, and with writing. An ardent Math lover, HK enjoyed courses like Engineering Graphics, Data Structures, Linear Algebra, Complex Variables and Management Information Systems though he does say that his attendance record was not one to write home about! His best times in BITS include the good times during Oasis & Apogee where he worked with various departments. He also performed during OASIS'97 with the Mime team. Most importantly he met his wife Prasanna at BITS.

After BITS, HK started off with wanting to do a tech focused MBA. As he sent enquiries to Professors, a couple of them suggested that he think of doing a PhD. They shared some of their papers and he found Management research fascinating. Soon, he changed



his mind and decided to do a PhD. Since he had a background in technology (Electronics and then Information Systems at BITS), he wanted to look at business issues in the tech sector. It was a good way to wed his engineering background with his management interests. While his advisor steered him towards Operations, his own interests veered him towards strategic issues. Today his research looks at Operations and strategic issues surrounding IT-intensive products and firms.

HK went on to obtain an M Phil and a PhD from Carnegie Mellon University. Having been exposed quite a bit to the west via the Indian media, his transition to the US was relatively smooth. There was very little that shocked or surprised him.

Life as an academic appealed to HK aplenty when the "What Next?" question popped up after the PhD. This was because of the ability to choose what to work on and to let go of work that seemed relatively unexciting, the flexibility in day to day schedule, the ability to pick consulting projects based on time and interests, executive education, travel, etc. Though he wasn't totally excited by teaching early on, he has been

### Kartik Hosanagar ('94 Comp Sc)

Assistant Professor of Operations and Information Management at the Wharton School of Business



#### Education

- BE Computer Science – BITS Pilani (1994 – 1998)
- MPhil & PhD. Carnegie Mellon University

#### While @ BITS

- DOPY, Mime team, Dance club, EDC, writer. Also loved Math courses!

#### Areas of research

- Content delivery; web caching; pricing, software agent design.

finding it increasingly satisfying more recently.

He believes that a strong research tradition sets Wharton apart. World class professors impart state-of-the-art knowledge to their students which include a deep understanding of business issues that is possible through research. Wharton has also excelled in reaching out to international

stakeholders, and to business executives (including the MBA alumni) through executive education programs, faculty consulting, etc which in turn enriches their programs.

HK's research thus far has focused on Operations and Strategic issues in the e-commerce and telecom domains. Specifically, some of these domains include Information Retrieval (search engines, comparison shopping sites like Froogle), wireless computing (3G cellular, WiFi, WiMAX, wireless security), retail e-commerce, and content delivery (Peer-to-Peer networks, Content Delivery Networks). While the research certainly requires an understanding of the technologies, HK's focus has been on issues such as service design, pricing, customer segmentation, new product rollouts, etc. For example, how is the pricing of IT-based products different from pricing of traditional goods and how do you identify customer segments that are most likely to be interested in a new product.

“Methodological rigor – mainly quantitative and analytical skills” is what HK says is a highly desirable trait for a student applying to the PhD program at Wharton. He goes on to add that since BITS trains students well in quantitative and analytical areas, students who have excelled in that environment (particularly in Quant courses) will likely do well in the PhD program. In



Huntsman Hall, The Wharton School.  
Photo credit: [www.wharton.upenn.edu/](http://www.wharton.upenn.edu/)

addition, Wharton looks for demonstrated interest in research and in application areas in the business realm. This he feels is not a natural strength of a BITSian application because of our limited exposure to undergraduate research and to domains such as Economics and other social sciences.

His impressions on BITSians versus American students: “It's hard to generalize, but there is the following broad trend” he says. “BITSians are trained better technically and quantitatively. However, they are less likely to take risks or think out-of-the-box (at least early on in their careers). BITSians are also less likely to have a broad set of perspectives informed by social sciences, medicine, etc”.

Kartik feels that a big challenge for BITS is being able to attract

the best students. He also strongly believes that urgent attention needs to be given towards improving health care facilities. Another area where he feels BITS needs to improve is to do more to participate with the local community in Pilani. He feels that it is unfortunate that the local community has not derived significant benefits from having such a fine institution and talented students in Pilani. He also agrees that BITSian alumni association can do a lot towards making BITS an institute of high standards.

“Alumni engagement is an extremely important ingredient of university success”. Apart from monetary contributions, HK explains that other forms of alumni engagement can include participating in student mentoring through formal and informal channels like Practice School, convincing decision makers within one's organization to share resources of value in teaching and research with BITSian professors and ultimately by being good ambassadors of the institution.

His enjoys reading the New York Times, Business 2.0 and select columnists of the Times of India and Photography is his favorite pastime. Being a bit of a purist, he still uses a fully manual Nikon FM2N camera that operates without batteries in the era of digital cameras.

