

# Individual Contributor of the Month : Dr. Sushma Kulkarni

Article by Sheetal Sohoni

***“What you do, has far greater impact than what you say.”***

***-Stephen Covey***

Dr. Sushma Kulkarni believes in action, and has been one of the active members of an ever growing IUCEE ecosystem. She is the Director of Rajarambapu Institute of Technology (RIT), Maharashtra, India. Sushma joined RIT in October 1987 as a faculty, and has been part of the organization ever since. She rose through the ranks through her commitment, vision, and leadership qualities.

Sushma did her undergraduate in engineering from Visvesvarya National Institute of Technology (VNIT) Nagpur. She worked in industry for few years before joining RIT in late eighties. RIT supported Sushma in pursuing higher studies, and she completed her masters and PhD while working at RIT.

John. F. Kennedy former president of the United States of America once said: “Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other.” For a professional woman, leading and learning is not restricted to her professional job, but is extended way beyond and above that. Just as in her professional life, Sushma excelled in her personal life too! Like any other working woman, Sushma also faced challenges, but she is fortunate to have a very supportive and understanding family. Her family has played an active part in her journey of learning and leading. Sushma is married to her undergraduate classmate, and they have two kids: a daughter and a son. She inculcated qualities of independent thinking, integrity, and self-confidence in her kids, who are doing exceptionally well in their respective careers. Both of Sushma’s kids are RIT alums.

Sushma extended the philosophy of learning and leading by example at her work too. She is open to new ideas & change, and believes in creating independent thinkers. Her team at RIT is a great example of people who have carried forward the idea of improving engineering education ecosystem in India. They started adopting and developing teaching philosophies and active learning in their classrooms. Because of her flexibility and openness to adopt new ideas, Sushma became the obvious choice of Dr. Ratnalikar (founder of Journal of Engineering Education, India) to head the journal in 2007, and thus Rajarambapu Institute of Technology started publishing the journal from their campus. In 2013, the journal became the joint responsibility of Rajaram Bapu Institute of Technology (RIT) and the Indo-Universal Collaboration for Engineering Education (IUCEE). When asked about Sushma’s role in the journal, Dr. Ratnalikar vociferously praised Sushma’s contribution in carrying forward the mission and goals of the journal.

The idea of adapting, adopting, and rediscovering educational philosophies first acquainted Dr. Kulkarni and RIT to IUCEE in 2007. Since then she has been an indispensable part of the IUCEE team. Here too, people find her easy to work with. According to Dr. Sohum Sohoni, co-editor in chief of JEET, *“Sushma is one of the most reliable and dependable people to work with. She is ready to tackle difficult conversations, and is focused on end results, rather than being bogged down by ego. This was most evident to me when I was new to the JEET team, and we had a meeting on how to raise JEET’s international visibility, where I asked several tough questions that a lesser person would have taken personally. Sushma was calm and focused in her responses, and this a great example for the rest of her team participating in the meeting”.*

My personal experience is similar as well. While interviewing Sushma for the article, I realized she is the least pretentious person, and is easy to talk to. She has a lot of achievements to gloat about: winner of Global Engineering Dean’s Council Award, member of council recognized as 100 Most Influential Directors of Indian Education by the World Congress in 2016, and part of various prestigious educational councils.

But Sushma is least influenced by her achievements. She has a confident aura around her, which makes you comfortable, and pushes you to do your best. Her contribution to the Engineering Education Ecosystem in India is vital. The IUCEE team extends their gratitude and best wishes to Dr. Sushma Kulkarni!

