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**Spokespeople quoted:** Kaushik Bellani, CEO, Saviance Technologies

Dr. M. L. Singla, FMS Professor & Advisory Board Member, Saviance Technologies

TIMES CITY

# When old order returns to buoy GenNext

## Alumni Touch: Networking By Ex-Students Brings Companies For Campus Placement

Shreya Roy Chowdhury | TNN

New Delhi: Keep your college senior in good humour, never mind he made you duck-walk down the corridor. He may play a vital role in your career. Alumni activity has burgeoned over the last few years and it's not just about stirring nostalgia. Former students help current ones get a start in their professions, offer career advice and internships.

The Hindu Old Students' Association is itself fairly old, but started taking active interest in college activities two-three years ago. Their efforts have paid off.

"The number of companies visiting the campus has risen since we started working with the placement cell," says secretary Ravi Burman. "This

year, we're expecting it to increase by 20-25%." The association has 1,800 life members. "Now, others are waking up too," he says.

IT consultancy, Saviance Technologies, launched Viburnix a-year-and-a-half ago. It provides customized sites—like social networking ones with forums, albums, blogs, shop, chat—for alumni associations. "At least 40% of the top 100 business schools have alumni engagement activities. Half of them have in-house pages," says Kaushik Bellani, CEO, Saviance. "The placements and events sections are most popular on our sites. Alumni groups are a great source for lateral hiring," says Bellani.

Burman agrees. "If a Hindu alumnus comes to me, he'll



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at least get an interview," he says. A summer training programme for final year students is in the works for placement in companies owned or served by alumni. "They'll gain experience, get a feel of the corporate world," he adds.

The Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University,

uses Viburnix. FMS's alumni association was registered in 1998, but started networking vigorously last year. M L Singla, who runs it, learnt how much alumni matter during recession, when placements became a challenge for even top B-schools. "We don't explicitly tap our alumni," says Sin-

gla. "But when intake dropped to 10%, companies weren't hiring, the network got activated." FMS's 2011 annual dinner had 1,100 attendees; there were 750 in 2010. The trick, Singla discloses, is "to remind them 30 times a year they belong to us".

The tug of the apron strings can prompt other kinds of assistance. "We got water-coolers installed in hostels last year and organized a health-camp in March. We are raising funds for renovation of the auditorium and air-conditioning the labs. We support nearly every society, debate and seminar," says Burman.

Singla launched the Global Alumni Mentoring Programme (GAMA) this year. Final-year students are put in touch with FMS alumni for "career mentoring" a few

weeks before final placements. "It helped us prepare for interviews and write resumes," says Avni Ahuja, one of the students who benefited from it. Those into FMCG sales got a "reality check" about staying in small towns. Ashray S wanted to start in FMCG Marketing and had consulting as long-term plan. His mentor advised him to start with consulting.

IITs have a similar programme in iitConnect. Their "Centre for Innoventures" encourages entrepreneurship efforts. "Placement opportunities are circulated via e-newsletter and top-level alumni are put in touch with the placement department," says Shashi Munjal, former president of the alumni association, which has about 35,000 members.