’We are focused on attracting only the best talent’

Noida-based Shiv Nadar University (SNU), which began operations last August, recently joined hands with Babson College to offer programmes focused on entrepreneurship and to establish a centre for entrepreneurship. While some peers suggest the university is facing teething troubles in terms of attracting students, NIKHIL SINHA, founding vice-chancellor, SNU, tells Disha Kanwark that the institute is not in the volume game and is focused on attracting talent. Excerpts:

How is the Shiv Nadar University doing since it opened last August?

We have made good progress. We started last August with five batches of engineering students in five specialised programmes. Since then, in addition to teaching the students, we have been building the facility to launch additional programmes this year. Apart from these five specialisations, we also have undergraduate programmes in physics and chemistry. Mathematics, too, will be expanded. We have got a School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and School of Natural Sciences, besides the School of Engineering. The other major changes this year will be the addition of the postgraduate and PhD programmes in disciplines such as physics, chemistry, computer sciences, electrical engineering, and mechanical engineering. We are gearing up for the changes.

Is attracting quality students a challenge, given there are other good institutions in SNU’s vicinity?

We will look at Class XII Board exam results. We conduct our own admission tests, and after that the interview round follows. This is how we will select students. We have a rigorous programme based on merit. Only merit-based admissions happen at SNU. A scholarship and financial aid programme will be announced for 2012-13. We have the best scholarship schemes for the undergraduate and graduate programmes in the country. In fact, our PhD programme will be the highest funded such programme in the country. Our PhD students will be earning Rs.10,000 to Rs.40,000 a month after paying all costs of education. Industry players say the university has not been able to manage good admissions for its programmes.

SNU was launched in August 2011. It has been uniquely positioned as a research-led, interdisciplinary university designed to create a global centre of learning and education in India, and to benchmark to international standards.