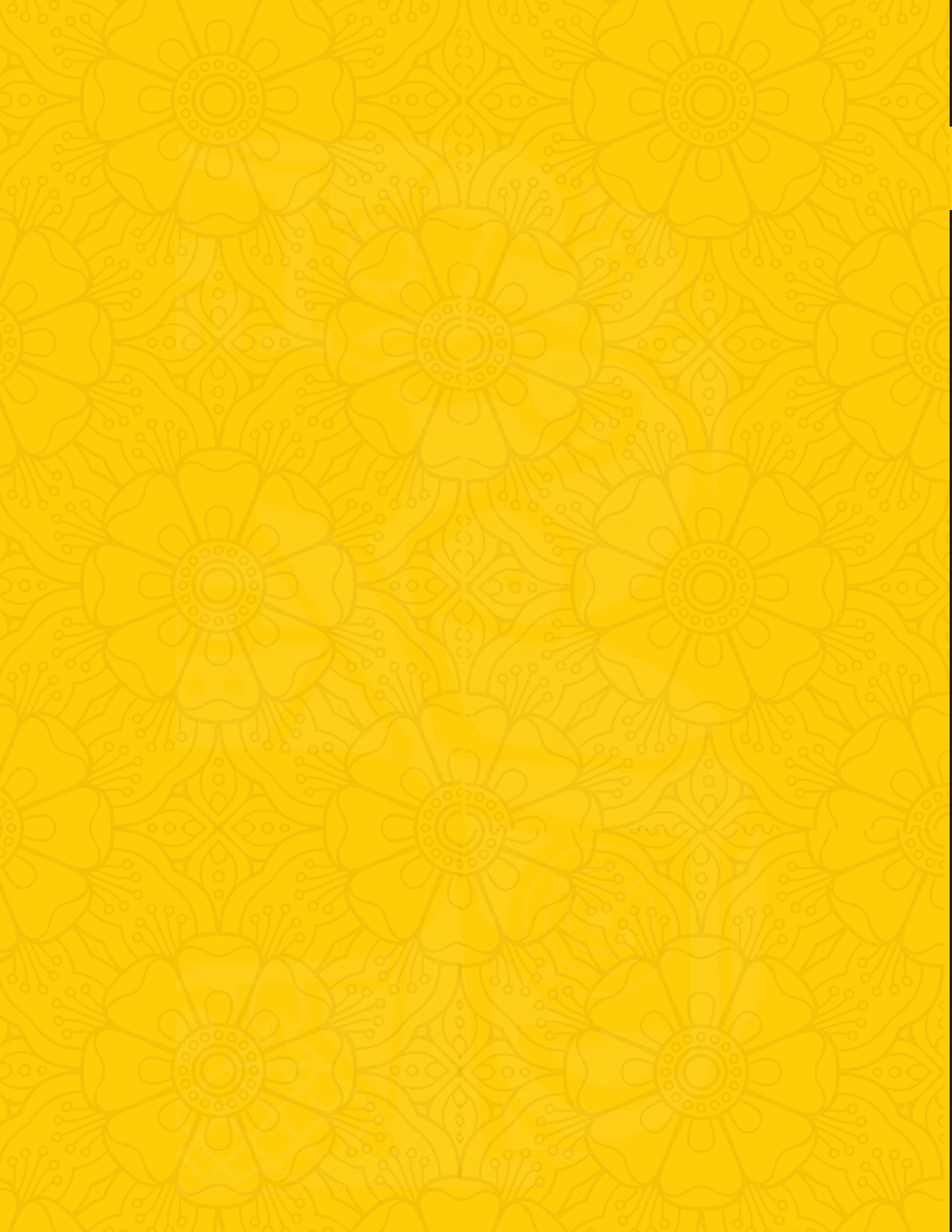




# The India Center Annual Report



2024-2025



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# About The India Center



## Vision

Enhance The India Center at UCF's impact as the nation's preeminent location for the study of India's role in the world today.



## Mission

The UCF India Center incubates ideas, research, and education on contemporary India—building academic bridges, enhancing cross-cultural understanding, and connecting communities across India and the United States. It promotes scholarship, interdisciplinary research, educational programs, partnerships, and outreach to the Indian American community in Florida and nationwide, while encouraging engagement with broader U.S. society through the dissemination of knowledge and cultural exchange.



## Goals

- Strengthen The India Center's programming through regular organization of the Annual India Lecture Series, the Distinguished Lecture Series, and the Annual India Forum.
- Build partnerships with institutions in India for joint research and training, including facilitating an India-specific Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU) program in STEM disciplines at UCF, exchanging PhD students, and exploring avenues for visiting faculty.
- Launch a practitioner-in-residence program for distinguished Indian decision-makers in government, scientific organizations, non-profits, and academia at the UCF India Center.
- Launch and expand the India Studies certificate program along with building The India Center internship program to train the next generation of India scholars at UCF and in the United States.
- Expand The India Center's networks with academia, think tanks, and the policy community through an India Center non-residential fellows' program.
- Collaborate with UCF Advancement and Partnerships to raise resources that support The India Center's goals, enhance student and faculty research and activities focused on India, and create new incentives and opportunities for UCF students and faculty to study contemporary India.
- Build partnerships with the Indian community in Central Florida and beyond and increase public awareness and interest about India, India-U.S. relations, and the UCF India Center.



**MICHAEL D. JOHNSON, Ph.D.**  
Provost\* and Executive Vice President  
for Academic Affairs

## A Vision Forward

### Remarks from the Provost\*

**W**e at UCF see an obligation to promote greater understanding and awareness about India, a nation with a deep history, great importance on the world stage today, and a future as an international leader. The world's largest democracy, and now the largest nation by population, India has tremendous – and rapidly growing – influence on the global stage. Despite India's significance and potential, the country gets far less attention than it should in American higher education.

Visionary members of the Central Florida community, led by Anil Deshpande and Sharad Mehta, saw an opportunity for UCF to help fill this gap, and indeed become a leading place in the U.S. for the study of the India of today and tomorrow. Their dedication brought the UCF India Center to life, with a shared vision to advance our university and our community.



India's cultural heritage is a critical part of the educational offerings at many American universities, including UCF – an examination of a history of great depth, including some of the world's earliest civilizations and a rich tapestry of cultural and religious traditions. This is part of The India Center's charge.

But the defining vision for The India Center is to broaden the understanding

\* Provost Johnson recently retired and we are looking forward to our future work with Provost Buckwalter.

and awareness of contemporary India, understanding India in the world today, and promoting ties between U.S. and Indian institutions, business, government, and other organizations through partnerships, scholarship and research, education and outreach. All of this is essential for us to fulfill our obligation to prepare our students for success in a global marketplace.

We are blessed to have a university community that has many Indian American faculty, staff and students. Hundreds of students from India choose UCF for their education each year. And we are immersed in a vibrant regional network of Indian Americans who have chosen Central Florida as their home. All of this makes it clear that UCF should build a strong focus on India, and why, with this community, it can become a true center of excellence.

This year was a milestone: the investiture of Dr. Yogesh Joshi as the inaugural Indian Community Endowed Chair and Director of The India Center. Dr. Joshi and team immediately launched into the impressive programs documented in these pages.

I am tremendously excited about The India Center's future and truly grateful to our many supporters. Together we look forward to a future of remarkable impact.





**JOSHUA COLWELL, Ph.D.**

Interim Dean,  
College of Sciences &  
Pegasus Professor of Physics

## Dean's Message

**T**he College of Sciences and the University of Central Florida have strong ties to India through our faculty, staff, and students, and The India Center provides a focal point and organization to strengthen those connections. Through the momentum of the Center's work, we are forging opportunities for deeper collaboration, including student exchanges and research partnerships.

India's growing leadership on the world stage intersects with areas of study at the College of Sciences, from movies to materials science to space exploration and much more. As a major metropolitan research university, UCF is positioned to expand partnerships for The India Center to other universities and industries.

The activities in this report illustrate the broad and varied opportunities for UCF to build greater engagement with the local Indian community and beyond to India. As you read about The India Center's work, I hope you will feel inspired by the great strides to date.

I'm grateful to Dr. Joshi, the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs, Leila Chacko, and The India Center team for their impactful work summarized in these pages. I'm also deeply appreciative of our founding chairs, donors, and other stakeholders for continued support and dedication to growing this important center for UCF and for our Central Florida community.

As UCF builds a University for the Future, we are proud to host and support The India Center in the College of Sciences to strengthen our research and collaboration with India.



**YOGESH JOSHI, Ph.D.**

Indian Community Endowed Assistant  
Professor and Director,  
The India Center

## Director's Message

**W**e are delighted to present this annual report—my first as the inaugural Indian Community Endowed Chair and Director of the UCF India Center. This report not only highlights our achievements but also celebrates the vision and determination of those who laid the foundation for The India Center. Provost Michael Johnson, who has been the intellectual fountainhead and institutional memory of The India Center, continues to guide and support our mission. We are deeply grateful for his thoughtful message in this report. We also extend our thanks to Dean Josh Colwell for his message, and we look forward to working under his leadership at the College of Sciences. The establishment and growth of The India Center would not have been possible without the dreams, efforts, and support of UCF leadership, faculty, and students, as well as the Indian American community in Central Florida, who have worked tirelessly over the years to create this unique institution.

The 2024–2025 academic year was a landmark period for the UCF India Center, as we reached several significant milestones and strengthened our position as a hub for scholarship, dialogue, and engagement on India-related issues. Through our Annual India Lecture Series, we brought together leading voices from academia and policy to discuss issues of pressing relevance to both India and the United States. These lectures provided an avenue for students to engage with thought leaders, sparked intellectual curiosity across the campus, and built bridges between UCF, the Indian American community, and global networks of expertise. Topics ranged from India's ambitious technological pursuits and the application of artificial intelligence in medicine to evolving migration patterns and their policy implications.

One of the highlights of the year was our inaugural Distinguished Lecture, delivered by Dr. Vivek Lall, Chief Executive of General Atomics Global Corporation. Dr. Lall's expertise and global stature added immense value to our discussions. During his visit, he met with the deans of the College of Sciences and the College of Engineering and Computer Science, engaged with faculty, and participated in a dinner hosted in his honor by members of the Indian American community. The Distinguished Lecture Series is designed to feature scholars and practitioners whose work has significantly advanced the India–U.S. strategic partnership. By fostering these exchanges, The India Center aims to promote meaningful dialogue at the intersection of academia, policy, and practice, and to nurture deeper bilateral engagement through thought leadership and institutional collaboration.

We also organized our second Annual India Forum, *Capturing Change in India: Economic Transformations, Technological Transitions, and Evolving Global Footprint*, a daylong conference showcasing cutting-edge research from leading universities and think tanks across North America. The Forum generated a series of policy papers that will be published both on our website and in print. This initiative not only strengthens the Center's intellectual contributions but also positions UCF as an important voice in shaping policy dialogues on India. Our goal is to make the India Forum one of the nation's most compelling platforms for conversations about India's rise and global role, with active participation from scholars and policymakers in India and beyond.

Another significant milestone was the approval of our new India Studies Certificate program at UCF. This multidisciplinary program offers students a comprehensive understanding of India's politics, history, society, and international relations. Complementing this academic program, we revamped our internship offers to better align with the certificate, ensuring that students gain both academic knowledge and practical experience. Together, the certificate and internships will nurture the next generation of India-focused scholars, policymakers, and thought leaders at UCF.

As an incubator of ideas, research, and education on India, the Center serves a wide range of stakeholders. In the past year, we hosted 20 expert speakers, organized 17 academic and cultural events, participated in over 20 community engagements, and reached more than 1,000 in-person attendees and 12,000 online participants. Through collaborations with colleges, schools, and departments across UCF, as well as close engagement with the Indian American community, The India Center has significantly expanded its visibility and impact.

Our growing international recognition is equally gratifying. India's Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation sponsored a UCF student to take part in the student challenge at the prestigious Raisina Dialogue, India's premier global conference. We also hosted India's cybersecurity working group as part of the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program, and I had the privilege of consulting directly with the U.S. State Department on India-related policy initiatives. Additionally, I was invited to

deliver a lecture to the 64th National Defense College (NDC) course in New Delhi, which included senior military officials and civil servants from India and several other countries. These developments underscore the India Center's role as a trusted partner in fostering high-level India-U.S. dialogue.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to our vision of establishing the UCF India Center as the nation's leading institution for ideas, research, and education on contemporary India. In the coming academic year, we will welcome two scientists from India as part of our new Scientist-in-Residence Program, funded by a grant from the Glenn W. Bailey Foundation—our first academic grant of this kind. We also plan to expand our non-resident fellows program, which will bring together leading academics and policymakers from both the U.S. and India. Additionally, we are collaborating with the UCF Foundation to establish a distinguished Board of Advisors to guide, mentor, and support the Center's strategic direction.

None of these achievements would have been possible without the unwavering support of UCF leadership, the enthusiasm of our students and faculty, the dedication of the Indian American community in Central Florida, and the commitment of our staff. Leila Chacko, together with our student office assistants and interns, works tirelessly to advance the mission of the India Center. We are deeply thankful to all who have contributed to our journey, and we look forward to building on this foundation to achieve an even greater impact in the years ahead.

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We have both an enormous responsibility and a unique opportunity to engage with the aspirations of students at UCF and India, creating a bridge that can address challenges and unlock shared potential...Together, we can empower and make real change in lives of many Americans and Indians...I envision The India Center as an incubator of ideas, education, research and enterprise for our students, faculty and the Indian-American community...Let us collaborate, learn, and innovate together, investing in and creating a brighter tomorrow for ordinary Americans, ordinary Indians and the extraordinary India-US strategic relationship.

Remarks shared by Dr. Yogesh Joshi during his investiture ceremony.

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# UCF Invests Inaugural Indian Community Endowed Chair and Director

In November 2024, The India Center at the University of Central Florida reached a defining milestone with the investiture of Yogesh Joshi, Ph.D. as its inaugural Indian Community Endowed Chair and Director. This endowed position, made possible through the generous support of the Founding Chairs Chitra and Anil Deshpande, Sarita and Sharad Mehta, and Aparna and Raj Toleti and major supporters Drs. Neena and Ramesh Chopra and Anil Valbh, marked a significant endorsement of the Center's mission to expand India-related scholarship, deepen cultural exchange, and enhance U.S.-India engagement.

The formal Investiture Ceremony was led by UCF Provost Michael D. Johnson and College of Sciences Dean and former Vice Provost for Strategic Initiatives Maggy Tomova. The event brought together university leaders, faculty, students, donors, and community members to celebrate the next phase of The India Center's growth. A classical Carnatic performance by Knights Khayal added cultural richness to the evening, underscoring the Center's commitment to showcasing India's diverse traditions.



Dr. Joshi brings to the role a wealth of scholarly expertise in India's international security and the Indo-Pacific region. His research examines how rising powers develop sophisticated weapon systems and deploy them on the modern battlefield. He previously led the Foreign Policy and National Security Program at the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore (NUS), and was a MacArthur and Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at Stanford University. His appointment signals an ambitious future for The India Center—one that includes expanding interdisciplinary research and programming in areas such as technology, business, health, and global affairs, while continuing to build connections between Central Florida, India, and the broader Indian diaspora.



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UCF is enriched by a significant number of Indian American faculty, staff, and students, with Indian students representing the largest group of international graduate students at UCF. An endowed professorship is a tremendous investment in The India Center's future, and we greatly appreciate our Founding Chairs and all the donors who made this possible.

– Provost Michael D. Johnson

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# Launch of The India Center's Annual India Lecture Series

Launched in January 2025, The India Center Annual India Lecture Series has quickly established itself as a cornerstone initiative in promoting global engagement and interdisciplinary learning. Designed as a premier platform for intellectual exchange, the series offers the university and wider Central Florida community a unique opportunity to explore contemporary developments in India and assess their broader international implications.

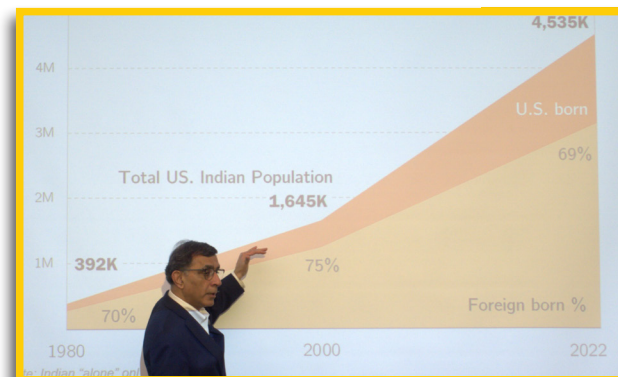
The series features a thoughtfully curated lineup of distinguished scholars, policymakers, thought leaders, and industry experts. These speakers bring

a wealth of knowledge and diverse perspectives to critical conversations about India's trajectory in areas such as governance, foreign policy, economic innovation, environmental sustainability, public health, and technological advancement. Each lecture is followed by engaging Q&A sessions and discussion forums, encouraging audience participation and fostering collaborative learning across disciplines.



By convening voices from around the world, the Annual India Lecture Series reinforces The India Center's mission of deepening understanding of India's growing role on the global stage. The lectures serve as an educational bridge, connecting students, faculty, and members of the public to nuanced insights and lived experiences that shape contemporary India. This initiative not only enriches academic discourse but also strengthens cultural awareness and prepares students to be informed global citizens. The lecture series engenders significant networking opportunities for UCF students and faculty as well as introduces UCF's rich academic and research credentials to the world.

Through the success and momentum of this year's series, The India Center continues to advance its commitment to inclusive dialogue, impactful scholarship, and meaningful engagement between India and the international community.



## India's Pursuit of Innovation

### Insights from Dhruva Jaishankar



In January 2025, The India Center welcomed Dhruva Jaishankar, Executive Director of ORF America, as the featured speaker for its inaugural Annual India Lecture. His presentation, “India’s Quest for Technology,” offered sharp insights into India’s strategic ambitions and innovation landscape. The event, moderated by India Center Director Yogesh Joshi, Ph.D., spotlighted the Center’s commitment to elevating conversations on India’s global engagement and fostering thought leadership around emerging policy and technological challenges.

“

The University of Central Florida (UCF) has done what a lot more U.S. universities should do: made a serious investment in the study and understanding of contemporary India through the creation of The India Center. The Center has benefited from generous support from the local Indian-American community, is successfully leveraging the research strengths of the university, and benefits from the dynamism and vision of its Director. This has enabled rigorous academic research, policy-relevant convening, international exchanges, and a greater public profile that benefits UCF students and the local community, and I was fortunate to experience the enthusiasm of the student body and active public outreach firsthand.

-Dhruva Jaishankar

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Mr. Jaishankar explored India's emergence as a global tech player, highlighting advancements in cybersecurity, AI, space exploration, and telecommunications. His analysis connected India's innovation trajectory to broader geopolitical and economic trends, offering insights into how technology is shaping India's international influence and domestic priorities.

Drawing from his recent book, *Vishwashastra*, Jaishankar positioned India's technological ambition as part of a larger strategic vision. The lecture sparked discussion on the intersection of policy, innovation, and leadership in a rapidly changing global landscape.

The event was attended by students, faculty, and community members, demonstrating widespread interest and The India Center's expanding reach.



# Confronting Dementia with AI

## Innovation for Global Impact

On February 19, 2025, The India Center at UCF hosted a timely lecture titled “AI and the Global Dementia Crisis: Opportunities for Innovation and Impact,” featuring Vijaya Kolachalama, Ph.D. from Boston University’s Chobanian and Avedisian School of Medicine.

Bringing together students, faculty, healthcare professionals, and community members, the event explored how artificial intelligence can help address the rising global burden of dementia—particularly in India, where limited access to neurological care presents urgent challenges.

Kolachalama shared his lab’s work on multimodal AI systems designed to improve early diagnosis and decision-making through the integration of neuroimaging, biomarkers, and electronic health records. He emphasized AI’s potential to support—rather than replace—clinical expertise, especially in under-resourced settings.

The lecture sparked rich discussion on the ethics of AI in healthcare, medical education, and cross-sector collaboration. Kolachalama also introduced “PodG,” an educational AI platform, inspiring interest in its application at UCF.

Moderated by Dinender Singla, Ph.D., with UCF’s College of Medicine, the event exemplified The India Center’s mission to foster interdisciplinary dialogue and global engagement in technology and medicine.



Vijaya Kolachalama, Ph.D.



Dinender Singla, Ph.D.



# Understanding India–U.S. Migration and Its Impact

In March, The India Center at UCF hosted a seminar featuring Devesh Kapur, Ph.D. a leading expert on migration and diaspora studies, titled “Indian Migration to the United States and Development in India.”

Drawing from his acclaimed work *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy*, Dr. Kapur explored the post-1965 migration of Indians to the U.S.—one of the most selective and impactful migration waves in modern history. His presentation examined how Indian immigrants have become among the most educated and highest-earning groups in the United States, while raising critical questions about the effects of migration on both India and the U.S.

Topics included the role of U.S. immigration policy, the rise of Indian professionals in the technology sector, changing diaspora dynamics and, new trends in unauthorized migration.

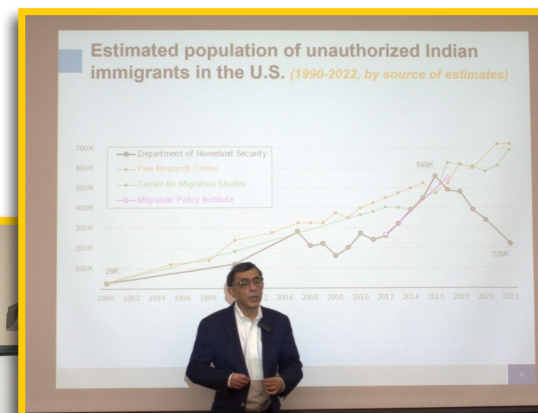
The seminar sparked discussion on international education, labor policy, and India’s demographic transition. This event reflected The India Center’s commitment to interdisciplinary dialogue and its role as a bridge between academic inquiry and global policy conversations.



Devesh Kapur, Ph.D.



Ajai Singh, Ph.D.



# U.S.-India Technology Futures

## Insights from the Inaugural Distinguished Lecture



Vivek Lall, Ph.D.

In the spring semester, The India Center launched its Distinguished Lecture series. Vivek Lall, Ph.D., Chief Executive of General Atomics Global Corporation delivered The India Center's inaugural Distinguished Lecture. The event marked a major milestone in the Center's mission to convene influential voices on strategic global issues—with a focus on science, technology, and innovation.

The day began with Dr. Lall participating in a series of meetings with UCF faculty and students, including the Deans of College of Sciences and the College of Engineering and Computer Science, facilitating insightful dialogue around research, innovation, and industry-academic partnerships. These sessions created opportunities for cross-disciplinary exchange and potential avenues for future collaboration.

Prior to the public lecture, guests from the university and community participated in a meet and greet with Dr. Lall, offering opportunities for personal dialogue and networking. This intimate pre-event gathering fostered meaningful engagement and highlighted the importance of building strong academic and industry relationships.



Jayanta Kapat, Ph.D.



Dr. Lall's lecture, "U.S.–India Technology Opportunities," drew on his leadership roles at NASA, Boeing, Lockheed Martin, and the United Nations. He outlined promising areas of bilateral cooperation, including national defense, nuclear energy, space exploration, and joint innovation. He emphasized the significance of shared democratic values, growing economies, and the expanding tech startup ecosystem in driving strategic collaboration.

Moderated by Jayanta Kapat, Ph.D., Pegasus Professor and Director of CATER, the lecture included an audience Q&A and welcomed a wide-range of student groups, faculty, and community members. This inaugural event laid the groundwork for future Distinguished Lectures, positioning UCF as a hub for U.S.–India partnership and innovation.

Following his visit to UCF, Dr. Lall offered enthusiastic praise for the university's leadership, engagement, and strategic vision:

“

Thank you for an excellent experience. It was extremely well done and deeply appreciated all the interactions. The outstanding Deans, Faculty/Staff, and students of UCF have a clear focus for being at the cutting edge of STEM. The community outreach and networking beyond UCF will be key to the success of the Center.

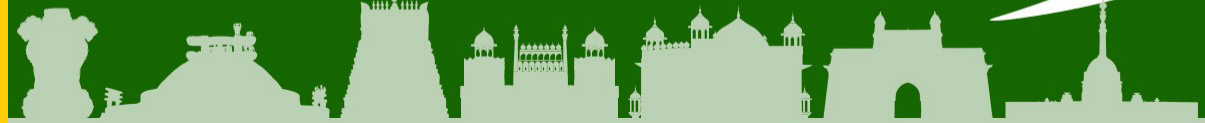
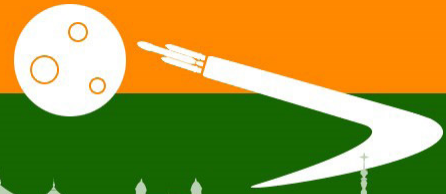
-Vivek Lall

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# INDIA STUDIES

## CERTIFICATE PROGRAM



In a landmark achievement this year, The India Center celebrated the official approval of its India Studies Certificate Program, slated to begin in Fall 2025. This academic milestone underscores the Center's ongoing commitment to broadening global learning opportunities and enhancing India-focused scholarship at UCF.

Created for undergraduate students across disciplines, the India Studies Certificate Program offers an intellectually enriching curriculum that weaves together courses in history, political science, religion, literature, and international relations. With a strong interdisciplinary foundation, the program invites students to explore India's dynamic political landscape, vibrant cultural traditions, religious diversity, and expanding global influence.

Students enrolled in the program will gain analytical tools and cultural fluency that are increasingly vital in careers related to international affairs, diplomacy, education, global development, and intercultural communication. By fostering deeper understanding of India's domestic and international dimensions, the certificate prepares graduates to navigate multicultural environments and contribute meaningfully to a globally connected workforce.

The program also reflects UCF's broader dedication to global engagement and international collaboration. By embedding India-centered studies within the undergraduate experience, The India Center continues to serve as a catalyst for cross-cultural dialogue and academic excellence.

### **Total Credits Required: 12 credit hours**

- **Core Courses (3 credits):** Students must complete at least one course from a selection focused on Indian politics, foreign policy, or history. Additional core courses may count toward electives.
- **Restricted Electives (9 credits):** Students choose three courses from a diverse list covering South Asian history, literature, religion, humanities, and international politics.
- This flexible, interdisciplinary structure allows students to tailor their studies to personal interests while developing knowledge applicable to global careers.

# 2025 Annual India Forum

## Capturing Change in India

On April 3, 2025, The India Center at UCF hosted its highly anticipated Annual India Forum titled “Capturing Change in India: Technological Transitions, Economic Transformations, and an Evolving Global Footprint.” The conference was co-sponsored by the College of Graduate Studies; the College of Sciences; the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs; the Center for Global Economic and Environmental Opportunity; the Office of Research. This event brought together an impressive assembly of scholars, policy experts, practitioners, and students to examine India’s sweeping changes over the past thirty years. With a spotlight on innovation, growth, and international engagement, the conference offered an enriching platform for interdisciplinary dialogue on how India is shaping—and being shaped by—the contemporary global landscape.

The program featured a series of focused panel discussions that delved into India’s advances in technology, energy, and defense, unpacking their implications for domestic policy and regional strategy. These conversations addressed key issues such as digital inclusion, clean energy innovation, and strategic defense partnerships, providing participants with a nuanced understanding of India’s multidimensional development.

In addition to fostering robust intellectual exchange, the Forum laid the foundation for an upcoming edited volume of policy papers that will showcase the insights presented at the event. This publication aims to contribute to the academic discourse on India’s evolving role and inform future scholarship on the country’s transformation.

By facilitating rigorous analysis and collaborative reflection, the event reaffirmed The India Center’s mission to promote deeper awareness of India’s global footprint and its significance in international affairs.



## PANEL 1

### India's Technological Transitions



**Kelsey Larsen**

Assistant Professor  
& Associate Director,  
Intelligence Community  
Center for Academic  
Excellence PANEL



**Akanksha Golchha**

Fellow with the Chair  
on India and Emerging Asia  
Economics at CSIS



**Shahana Sheikh**

Postdoctoral Research  
Fellow at the Center for  
the Advanced Study of  
India at the University of  
Pennsylvania



**Trisha Ray**

Associate Director  
and Resident Fellow at  
the Atlantic Council's  
GeoTech Center

## PANEL 2

### India's Economic Transformations



**Buveneshwaran  
Venugopal**

Assistant Professor of  
Finance, College of Business



**Chaithanya Renduchintala**

Assistant Professor at the  
Rosen College of Hospitality  
Management



**Neelima Jain**

Director of the States  
Initiative at UC Berkeley's  
Indian Energy and Climate  
Center and Adjunct fellow  
at the Center for Strategic  
and International Studies



**Shantanu Khanna**

Assistant Professor of Public  
Policy and Economics at  
Northeastern University,  
Invited Researcher at J-PAL,  
a Research Affiliate at the  
Institute of Labor Economics,  
and a Research Fellow at the  
Global Labor Organization

## PANEL 3

### India's Evolving Global Footprint



**Thomas Dolan**  
Associate Professor &  
Director, Intelligence  
Community Center for  
Academic Excellence



**Sameer Lalwani**  
Senior expert on South Asia  
at the U.S. Institute of Peace  
and non-resident senior  
fellow with the Center for  
Strategic and Budgetary  
Assessments



**Zachary Constantino**  
Practitioner Fellow at  
the University of British  
Columbia's School of Public  
Policy and Global Affairs



**Aditi Malhotra**  
Fellow at the Canadian Global  
Affairs Institute and the  
Centre for International and  
Defence Policy



## Annual India Forum Keynote Address: Ajay Kumar, Ph.D., Former Defense Secretary of India.



Ajay Kumar, Ph.D.

As part of its 2025 Annual India Forum, The India Center at UCF was honored to host a keynote address by Ajay Kumar, Ph.D., former Defense Secretary of India and principal architect of the country's landmark defense innovation initiative, iDEX (Innovation for Defense Excellence). In a thought-provoking lecture titled "From Assembly to Innovation: India's Defense Industry Transformation Through iDEX," Dr. Kumar offered an incisive analysis of the dramatic evolution underway in India's defense sector.

Drawing from his experience at the helm of India's defense establishment, Dr. Kumar detailed the country's shift from a legacy license-based production system toward a fast-paced, innovation-centric ecosystem. He highlighted the emergence of defense-tech startups and the rise of deep-tech entrepreneurs as drivers of change, showcasing how policy reforms and strategic vision have played a catalytic role in advancing indigenous capabilities. His talk illustrated how iDEX has enabled the development of cutting-edge, scalable, and cost-effective technologies—including unmanned aerial systems, advanced surveillance platforms, and quantum communication tools—delivering impact across sectors and security domains.

The keynote address resonated deeply with attendees and established a strong foundation for the broader themes of the conference: India's technological transitions, economic transformations, and growing influence in global affairs. Dr. Kumar's insights not only illuminated the strategic potential of innovation within national defense but also reaffirmed The India Center's role as a leading forum for policy dialogue, interdisciplinary scholarship, and international collaboration.



Yogesh Joshi, Ph.D.



# Student Engagement and Impact

**A**t The India Center, empowering students is central to our mission—and this year, that commitment came to life through meaningful engagement with diverse student organizations. We collaborated with the Indian Graduate Student Association, Indian Student Association, Gujarati Student Association, Punjabi Student Association, Knights Khayal, Knights Nakshatra, and International Medical Outreach, cultivating a strong network of cultural ambassadors and academic changemakers across campus.

From co-hosting vibrant cultural celebrations to supporting academic initiatives and professional development, The India Center offered a range of resources designed to elevate student voices. Through our India trip sponsorship, students from International Medical Outreach were able to explore global healthcare challenges firsthand while contributing meaningfully to communities abroad. These experiences not only expanded students' global perspectives but also deepened their understanding of India's societal dynamics and healthcare landscape.

Additionally, the Center served as a connector—linking students with faculty, visiting scholars, and community leaders—while offering mentorship and collaborative opportunities that bridged disciplines and backgrounds. As we continue to grow, student engagement remains a driving force behind our work, ensuring that future generations are equipped to lead with empathy, insight, and global awareness.



## Student Voices

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IGSA deeply values its collaboration with The India Center at UCF. Throughout the year, the Center organized various cultural and academic events that helped students feel connected to the Indian community in Florida. The Center also shared valuable PhD, internship, and job opportunities that supported our members' academic and professional growth. We truly appreciate this partnership and look forward to continuing our collaboration to create even more enriching opportunities for students in the future.

**Ravinder Sharma,**  
*Indian Graduate Student President*

Working with The India Center this year has been such a meaningful experience for ISA. Their events, like the U.S.-India Technology lecture and the Forever Welcome workshop, create thoughtful spaces for learning, dialogue, and connection, and we've truly enjoyed being a part of them. We're also incredibly grateful for their support at our events. The India Center has been an amazing partner in helping us celebrate and strengthen our shared culture on campus.

**Meghana Mukkoti,**  
*Indian Student Association, Vice President*

We established our connection with The India Center in 2023, where IMO conducted its first medical service trip to India. During both the 2023 and subsequent 2024 program, we have been gracious to be supported. Over this next year we plan to further our cooperation through collaborating in multiple events and projects, including co-hosting guest speakers on topics of Indian traditional medicinal practices and biomedicine. I am truly excited about our future as partners.

**Jeffrey Pamblanco,**  
*International Medical Outreach Vice President*

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# Quad Fellowship Informational Seminar

In a strategic effort to strengthen international academic ties and promote STEM-focused collaboration, The India Center, in partnership with the Institute of International Education (IIE), hosted an informative webinar on the prestigious Quad Fellowship. Tailored for current and prospective graduate students from India and the United States, this virtual seminar served as a

gateway to global opportunity, emphasizing the fellowship's role in fostering scientific and technological innovation among the Quad nations—India, the United States, Japan, and Australia.

Associate Dean of the College of Engineering and Computer Science (CECS), Dr. Manoj Chopra, opened the event by warmly welcoming attendees and providing an overview of UCF and its robust engineering and computer science programs. His remarks set the tone for the session by highlighting UCF's strong

commitment to international engagement, academic excellence, and research-driven innovation.

The session offered participants valuable insights into:

- The goals and mission of the Quad Fellowship
- Eligibility criteria and the application process
- Opportunities for cross-national STEM collaboration
- Career development benefits and long-term impact on global leadership

This initiative demonstrates The India Center's unwavering dedication to creating global academic pathways and cultivating strategic partnerships that enhance UCF's presence in the international education community. It also reinforces the university's role as a dynamic hub for cross-cultural exchange, innovation, and the advancement of knowledge across borders.

**QUAD FELLOWSHIP**  
BY IIE

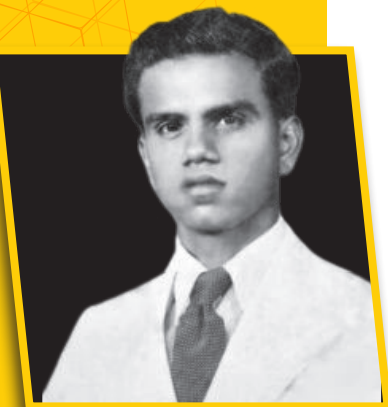


**The India Center at UCF presents  
Quad Fellowship Info Session**

## Student Scholarship Award

The Professor T. G. Srinivasan India Center Scholarship is available to undergraduate UCF students in the College of Engineering and Computer Science or the College of Sciences who plans to do experiential learning in India to enhance their undergraduate degree. Kannan Srinivasan '96 (M.S.), and his family celebrated T.G. Srinivasan's 100th birthday by creating the scholarship for students with an interest in India to honor his contributions to higher education. T.G. Srinivasan, who was involved with the Indian independence movement during college in the 1940s, began his career as an engineer in India. He was a respected engineer and, later, a professor.

Jeffrey Pamblanco has been named the inaugural recipient of the Professor T. G. Srinivasan India Center Scholarship, an honor that recognizes his academic dedication and meaningful engagement with global health initiatives. A pre-med student pursuing a double major in Anthropology and Biology, Jeffrey brings a unique interdisciplinary perspective to his studies, combining cultural insight with scientific inquiry. His commitment to service and cross-cultural exchange is exemplified through his involvement with the Registered Student Organization International Medical Outreach (IMO), with which he has already traveled to India twice. During these visits, he gained hands-on experience working in a hospital setting, deepening his understanding of healthcare systems and patient care in different cultural contexts. Looking ahead, Jeffrey will take on a leadership role as he prepares to co-lead IMO's upcoming trip to India this December, continuing his journey of learning and service abroad.



Professor T. G. Srinivasan



Jeffrey Pamblanco

“

I am incredibly grateful to be awarded the T.G Srinivasan scholarship. I hope to uphold this honor by leading International Medical Outreach's third medical service trip to India and work to build a medical exchange program between UCF and our colleagues at Dr. Hedgewar Rugnalya.

– Jeffrey Pamblanco, scholarship recipient

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# Cultivating Future Leaders

## The India Center Internship Program

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**T**he India Center continues to invest in the next generation of globally engaged scholars and professionals through its robust and interdisciplinary student internship program. Offered during the summer, fall, and spring semesters, the program provides students with immersive opportunities to contribute to India-focused research, programming, and outreach while gaining valuable academic and professional experience. These internships are open to undergraduate students across disciplines and are designed to cultivate both subject-matter expertise and transferable skills.

Interns work across three specialized tracks—research, media, and technical support—each tailored to align with students’ academic interests and long-term career goals. Research interns, primarily from the School of Politics, Security, and International Affairs, explore topics such as India’s foreign policy, Indo-Pacific strategy, regional security dynamics, and India’s evolving role in global governance. Media interns gain hands-on experience in event documentation, multimedia content creation, and community engagement, while technical support interns—often from computer science and related fields—manage digital platforms, embed media, troubleshoot IT issues, and contribute to web development and analytics.

Beyond skill-building, the internships fosters mentorship, cross-cultural awareness, and collaborative learning. Interns participate in workshops and seminars on Indian politics, culture, and international relations; assist with high-profile events featuring distinguished speakers and scholars; and engage directly with visiting dignitaries and community leaders. The program also encourages cultural immersion through participation in festivals, collaborative projects with Indian organizations, and opportunities to learn Indian languages.

Interns play a vital role in advancing the Center’s mission to broaden awareness of contemporary India and strengthen U.S.-India partnerships. Their contributions help deepen public understanding of India’s strategic importance and cultural richness, while also preparing students for careers in international relations, media, technology, and global policy.



### **Liliana Hogan, Spring 2025 Intern**

*International Relations (Senior)*

“I’m grateful for the opportunity to intern with The India Center. The mentorship I received and the chance to contribute to its mission deepened my understanding of India’s global role and enriched my skills. As a student of comparative politics and international affairs, I especially valued the Center’s interdisciplinary approach and truly enjoyed working with the team.”

### **Nirmala Puppala, Summer 2025 Media Intern**

*Information Technology (Senior)*

“As an international student from India, working with The India Center was both meaningful and fulfilling. It gave me the opportunity to contribute to a mission that reflects my roots while applying my technical skills to support impactful projects.”



### **Shivram Sundar, Summer 2025 Research Intern**

*Computer Science and Political Science (Junior)*

“As a first-generation Indian American, interning at The India Center was both a personal and professional journey. It not only strengthened my connection to my heritage but also deepened my understanding of India’s role in global innovation.”

### **Ryan Granger, Summer 2025 Research Intern**

*Political Science (Junior)*

“At the beginning of this internship, I wasn’t sure if I would like it. But at this moment, after getting personally invested in this research, I can say that this was a very beneficial experience for myself and for my future.”



# UCF at the Raisina–IE Global Student Challenge

The India Center was honored to receive an invitation to nominate a School of Politics, Security and International Affairs (SPSIA) graduate student to participate in the 2025 edition of the Raisina-IE Global Student Challenge. Hosted by the IE School of Politics, Economics & Global Affairs in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), New Delhi, this prestigious international program is designed to engage future leaders in critical discussions around global governance and to develop their capacity to drive transformative change. The Challenge runs in conjunction with the Raisina Dialogue—India’s premier forum on geopolitics and geoeconomics—bringing together students from over 60 top Schools of Government and Global Affairs across eight regions worldwide. UCF’s nominated graduate student, Dhanya Nair, joined an inter-regional team, working under the guidance of an Academic Advisor to tackle case studies focused on “Building Bridges: Mitigating the North-South Divide,” with emphasis on multilateralism and the digital divide. The team collaborated virtually for several weeks, culminating in an immersive experience in New Delhi, where they presented their solutions during Day 2 of the Raisina Dialogue. This opportunity underscores UCF SPSIA’s ongoing commitment to global engagement, experiential learning, and cultivating leadership among its graduate students.

“

Attending the Raisina conference was a transformative experience that gave me valuable insight into international affairs and policy making at the international level. The opportunity to address Heads of State, academics, other dignitaries and interact with and ask questions about public policy or current events was unparalleled.

-Dhanya Nair,  
SPSIA Graduate Student

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## Faculty Engagement & Collaboration Across Campus

UCF faculty have played a vital role in advancing The India Center’s mission this year, forging rich connections between scholarship, community, and international dialogue. Faculty members moderated public talks with distinguished speakers, contributing critical insights that bridged campus learning with global perspectives. Their involvement in the Center’s Annual India Forum highlighted the depth of India-related research and fostered interdisciplinary collaboration across the university.

Notably, The India Center proudly supported the campus book launch of *Kashmir’s Necropolis*, authored by faculty member Dr. Amrita Ghosh. The event spotlighted literary and cultural studies within the broader India-U.S. discourse and offered an engaging platform for faculty, students, and community members to exchange ideas.

Faculty also took part in community roundtables and a dedicated faculty affiliate lunch, which brought together UCF scholars and leaders from the Indian American community. These gatherings sparked valuable conversations around shared goals in education, research, and public outreach.

In addition to faculty-led programming, The India Center co-sponsored events with departments and units across campus—amplifying its impact and showcasing its commitment to cross-campus collaboration. Whether through guest lectures, cultural forums, or collaborative initiatives, faculty engagement continues to be a cornerstone of the Center’s work, enriching its programs and strengthening its ties across the university and beyond.



“

India Center is the one hub in UCF for learning and sharing anything about India. The India Center community is as warm and welcoming as India itself.

-Eshwar Venugopal,  
Assistant Professor of Finance in the College of Business at UCF

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It's been an honor to have led The India Center for several years. The Center has offered an outstanding program that has enriched the UCF campus and the Central Florida community through speakers, community events, and student-focused programs. The India Center has provided opportunities to UCF faculty and students as it broadens our understanding of contemporary India

-Kerstin Hamann,  
Pegasus Professor and Senior Associate Dean, College of Sciences

“

The India Center at UCF provides more than just a South Asian cultural experience—it serves as a platform for innovative conversations, featuring both technical and social insights from renowned speakers of the Indian diaspora.

-Sudipta Seal,  
Pegasus Professor and Chair, Department of Materials Science and Engineering.



## Interdisciplinary Engagement Campus Dialogues on Indian Literature

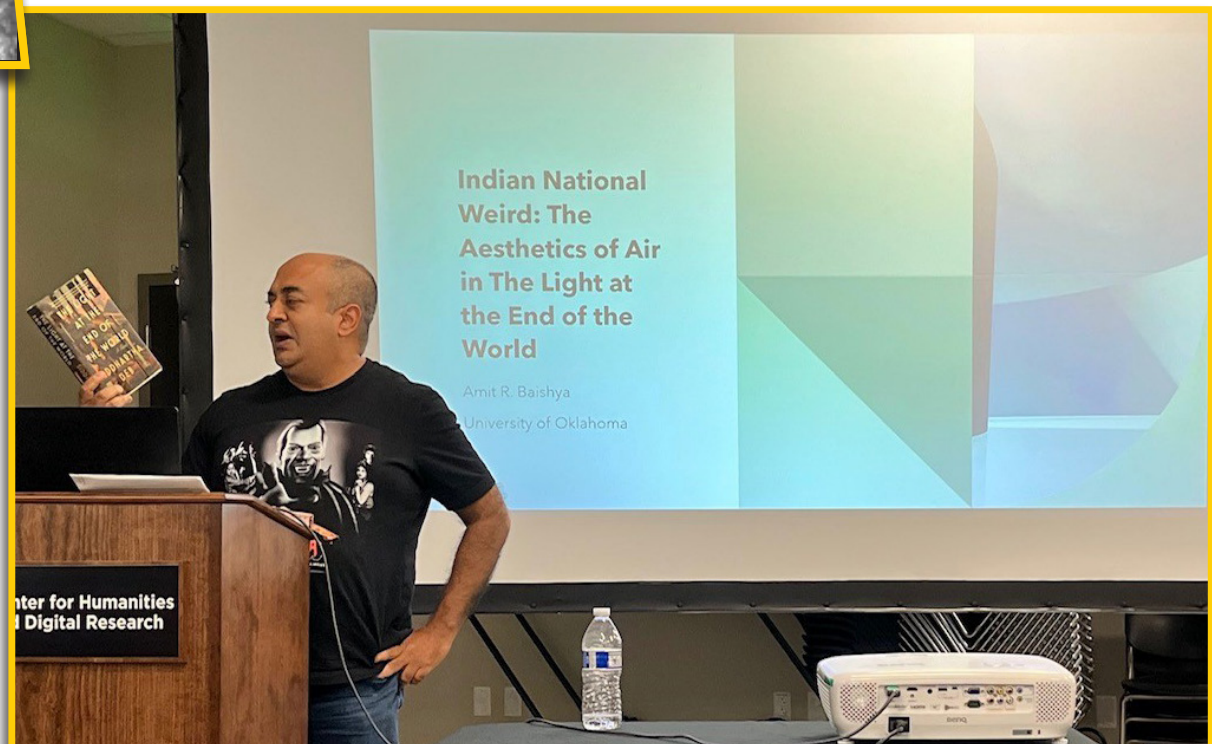


Amit Baishya, Ph.D.

As part of its Fall 2024 programming, The India Center, along with Center for Humanities and Digital Research, and the English Department at UCF co-hosted Amit Baishya, Ph.D., Associate Professor of English at the University of Oklahoma, for a lecture exploring the “aesthetics of the weird” in contemporary South Asian literature. Baishya examined how speculative and genre-defying narratives engage with the socio-political and environmental complexities of the region. Drawing on works like Siddhartha Deb’s *The Light at the End of the World*, he illuminated the ways in which South Asian writers are reimagining literary forms to confront the dislocations of the Anthropocene. The event offered an interdisciplinary lens on genre theory, environmental humanities, and literary innovation—further advancing The India Center’s mission to foster global and critical discourse in South Asian studies.



Amrita Ghosh, Ph.D.



## Faculty Scholarship Spotlight

In November 2024, The India Center at UCF proudly hosted a book talk featuring *Kashmir's Necropolis: New Literature and Visual Texts* by Amrita Ghosh, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of South Asian Literatures and faculty affiliate of the Center. This impactful program highlighted Dr. Ghosh's research on literary and visual representations of violence, trauma, and resistance in Kashmir—a region shaped by decades of militarization, contested identity, and geopolitical tension.

Through a compelling analysis of emerging cultural texts, Dr. Ghosh explored how narrative forms, from literature to digital media, convey stories of survival and agency in the face of systemic erasure. The conversation offered attendees—students, faculty, and community members alike—a deeper understanding of Kashmir's complex historical and contemporary realities, while underscoring the nuanced interplay between art, memory, and political power.

The event not only elevated awareness of a significant and sensitive topic within South Asian studies but also served as a model for the Center's broader commitment to supporting faculty scholarship and fostering informed dialogue. By convening diverse audiences around cutting-edge research, The India Center continues to fulfill its mission of connecting academic inquiry to lived experience and encouraging reflection on global human rights and societal transformation.



Amrita Ghosh, Ph.D.



# Strengthening Academic Exchange

## The India Center and the English Department Symposium

The UCF English Department's Annual Symposium, co-sponsored by The India Center at UCF, served as a platform for interdisciplinary dialogue focused on migration, film, and literature in the Indian context. The spring 2025 symposium featured three dynamic panel discussions that brought together scholars, students, and community members to examine the cultural narratives shaping contemporary India and its diaspora.

Expert panels delved into the intersections of storytelling and identity, emphasizing India's global influence in cinema and literary expression. Topics ranged from the representation of migration in Indian film to the evolving themes in South Asian literature. The event also showcased original student research, encouraging academic inquiry and critical engagement with global cultural trends.

By highlighting the rich tapestry of India's contributions to global storytelling, the symposium reinforced UCF's commitment to fostering cross-cultural academic exploration. The collaboration with The India Center underscored the university's dedication to supporting international perspectives within the humanities.



## Public and Community Engagement

Throughout the year, The India Center continued to foster connections between the university and the wider Central Florida community through a robust slate of public programming and outreach initiatives. By creating welcoming, inclusive spaces for dialogue and cultural exchange, the Center deepened engagement and expanded its network of supporters across disciplines and generations.

One of the year's hallmark events was India's Republic Day celebration with remarks by Consul General of India, Atlanta, Shri Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan. The program featured cultural performances, student presentations, and remarks by faculty and community leaders, all recognizing India's democratic journey and its place in global conversations. The gathering drew a wide audience, transforming the campus into a hub of celebration and reflection.

The Center also hosted several public talks and virtual lectures designed to bring academic insights beyond the classroom. Scholars and experts addressed topics ranging from India's evolving foreign policy to contemporary social movements, providing valuable context for today's headlines while inviting community-wide participation. These events reinforced the Center's role as a resource for lifelong learning and global awareness.

In a unique and personal gesture of hospitality, members of the local Indian diaspora hosted private roundtables and dinners for visiting dignitaries and speakers. These community gatherings offered guests an authentic experience of Indian culinary traditions and warm exchanges that sparked lasting connections.

Through these initiatives, The India Center affirmed its commitment to meaningful public engagement, advancing cultural understanding and building bridges between campus, community, and the global stage.



## India's Republic Day at UCF

On January 26, 2025, The India Center at UCF hosted a vibrant Republic Day celebration that brought together students, faculty, and members of the Central Florida Indian community to honor India's transition to a republic and the adoption of its Constitution.

The event featured traditional Indian music and dance performances, including a special musical presentation by Pandit Nandkishor Muley, affiliate faculty member of The India Center. Attendees were welcomed by Dr. Yogesh Joshi, Indian Community Endowed Assistant Professor and Director of The India Center, who reflected on the significance of the day: "We are coming together for an important moment in our history that continues to guide our collective future."

A highlight of the celebration was the presence of Shri Ramesh Babu Lakshmanan, Consul General of India in Atlanta, who addressed the audience and recognized the contributions of local Indian organizations. Certificates of appreciation were presented to over a dozen community groups, including the Indian Graduate Student Association, the Gujarati Society of Central Florida, and the Sikh Society of Central Florida.

Dean of the College of Sciences, Dr. Maggy Tomova, also spoke at the event, emphasizing the diversity and vibrancy of UCF's student body and its strong ties to the Indian American community. A commemorative letter from Orange County Mayor Jerry Demings was read aloud by Ravinder Sharma, a Ph.D. student in Physics and President of the Indian Graduate Student Association, who also introduced the Consul General.

The celebration was a powerful reminder of the shared values of democracy, unity, and cultural pride—and a testament to The India Center's role in fostering meaningful connections across communities.



## Strengthening Public Dialogue The India Center's Community Outreach

**T**hroughout the year, The India Center deepened its commitment to public engagement and civic dialogue by actively participating in a range of high-impact forums and governmental initiatives. By strengthening ties with local government and community organizations, the Center contributed meaningfully to discussions on cultural representation, policy, and international awareness. Highlights included its involvement in the Orange

County Mayor's stakeholder meeting and its participation in a talk at the Hindu Society of Central Florida, the Indian American Chamber of Commerce Women's History Month panel, and Congressman Maxwell Frost's AAPI Roundtable. These platforms enabled the Center to elevate nuanced conversations around India's place in global discourse—while also forging valuable relationships with policymakers, scholars, and civic leaders.



Complementing these efforts, The India Center maintained a robust presence in prominent community celebrations and outreach initiatives, demonstrating its ongoing role as a bridge between academia and the broader Central Florida community. The Center proudly participated in events such as the Orange County Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month celebration, which brought together diverse communities for cultural exchange and dialogue. Additionally, the Center attended high-profile galas hosted by key organizations, including the Central Florida Association of Physicians from the Indian Subcontinent, the Indian American Chamber of Commerce, and the Indian American Business Association and Chamber.

These gatherings offered rich opportunities to connect with influential community leaders, amplify the Center's mission, and foster enduring partnerships across sectors. Together, these engagements reflect The India Center's dynamic approach to public-facing programming—one that blends academic insights, cultural celebration, and civic collaboration.



## Global Engagements with India

In alignment with its mission to promote cross-cultural dialogue and collaboration, The India Center was invited to participate in the University of Central Florida's hosting of the Confederation of Indian Private Universities (CIPU) delegation, an event led by the university's Provost. The Center contributed to this high-level exchange by delivering a lunchtime talk, offering perspective on Indo-U.S. educational ties and opportunities for future engagement. The dialogue opened pathways for shared academic inquiry and showcased UCF's commitment to fostering global connections through thoughtful partnership.



The India Center continued its outreach by engaging directly with strategic institutions in India and the United States. In a notable address at the National Defense College in New Delhi, the Director offered timely insights on the nuclear and conventional military balance in the Indo-Pacific. The Director of The India Center was also invited by the U.S. State Department for a consultation roundtable on India-

Russia defense relationship. These engagements are an acknowledgement of The India Center's growing role in building India-focused and policy relevant expertise. Furthermore, The India Center hosted participants from the U.S. State Department's International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) on campus, facilitating robust discussions on foreign policy and civil society, and reinforcing the Center's position as a hub for international dialogue and exchange.



Together, these initiatives reflect The India Center's expanding influence in global academic and policy circles, and its dedication to building bridges between institutions, cultures, and communities.

# International Partnerships

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**T**he India Center fosters interdisciplinary partnerships between institutions in India and the United States, and beyond, including universities, private enterprises, and organizations. These collaborations are designed to explore and address critical issues of shared interest—spanning fields such as technological innovation, political systems, strategic security, healthcare, and related domains. The Center’s outreach efforts are both global and local in scope, engaging stakeholders across India, the United States, the Central Florida region, and within the UCF academic community. Current initiatives and partnerships include:

- » Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani, Rajasthan
- » Vellore Institute of Technology, Tamil Nadu
- » Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Karnataka
- » Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati, Assam
- » Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences and Technology, Jammu
- » Rajagiri College of Social Sciences, Kerala
- » National Institute of Technology, Calicut, Kerala
- » PSG College of Technology, Tamil Nadu, a joint Master’s degree in Data Analytics
- » Tata Power, Summer Internship Program
- » Karlstad University, Sweden

Internally, regular collaboration continues with UCF Global, supporting a globally engaged academic community. Through these initiatives, The India Center is not only enhancing educational outcomes but also strengthening cultural understanding and bilateral engagement between India and the U.S., positioning UCF as a hub for global cooperation and innovation.

# Virtual Public Lectures

## Engaging Global Dialogue from Campus to Screens

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In the 2024–2025 academic year, The India Center at UCF leveraged the virtual format to broaden audience reach and foster timely discussions on pressing global issues through a dynamic series of public webinars. These events reflected the university’s dedication to accessible, globally relevant scholarship and showcased The India Center’s leadership in convening thought-provoking dialogue across disciplines.

The fall series began in September 2024 with “Navigating the Crossroads: Ethics and AI in India,” featuring Jibu Elias, creator of INDIAai, in conversation with Dr. Karthik Nachiappan. The session examined the ethical dimensions of India’s rapidly evolving tech landscape, highlighting concerns around data privacy, inclusivity, and governance.

In October, the Center hosted “U.S. Elections and the Future of the Indo-U.S. Strategic Partnership,” with renowned foreign policy expert Dr. C. Raja Mohan. Moderated by Dr. Aubrey Jewett, the webinar explored the impact of political transitions in India and the United States on bilateral relations, with special attention to diplomacy, diaspora influence, and strategic continuity.

Closing the series in May 2025, the roundtable “Operation Sindoor: Implications and Lessons for a Rising India” brought together Lt. Gen. Deependra Singh Hooda, Dr. Happymon Jacob, and journalist Suhasini Haider to discuss India’s changing security posture in the aftermath of the India–Pakistan crisis.

Together, these virtual events underscored The India Center’s commitment to providing thought leadership on India’s evolving global role and strategic priorities.



Overall Annual YouTube Views:

**12,216**

# Exploring AI and Ethics in India

## Key Insights from “Navigating the Crossroads”

The India Center at UCF launched its fall 2024 programming with a timely virtual event, “Navigating the Crossroads of Ethics and AI in India.” The discussion featured Jibu Elias, creator of INDIAai and Mozilla’s Responsible Computing Challenge Lead for India, and was moderated by Karthik Nachiappan, Ph.D. of the Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore. Together, they explored India’s rapidly evolving AI landscape, examining key ethical considerations such as data privacy, inclusivity, and governance. The session highlighted the challenges of responsible AI development in the context of India’s growing tech ecosystem and emphasized the importance of policy support and ethical foresight in shaping the country’s AI future. This event reflected The India Center’s commitment to engaging with contemporary issues at the intersection of technology, society, and public policy.



Jibu Elias



Karthik Nachiappan, Ph.D.



# Partnerships in Transition

## Indo-U.S. Strategy Before the 2024 Election



C. Raja Mohan, Ph.D.

In October 2024, prior to the U.S. presidential election, The India Center at UCF hosted an insightful discussion titled “U.S. Elections and the Future of the Indo-U.S. Strategic Partnership,” spotlighting the evolving political landscapes in both countries. With India transitioning to a coalition government and the U.S. presidential race in full swing, the event provided a valuable forum to explore how these developments might influence bilateral relations.

Featuring leading Indian foreign policy expert C. Raja Mohan, Ph.D. and moderated by UCF’s Aubrey Jewett, Ph.D. the conversation examined the resilience of the U.S.-India partnership, areas of convergence and tension, and the increasing importance of diaspora engagement. Dr. Mohan offered a nuanced analysis of foreign policy challenges and opportunities amid shifting global dynamics, underscoring the need for strategic foresight and collaborative momentum. The event exemplified The India Center’s commitment to fostering critical dialogue on global affairs with academic and policy relevance.



Aubrey Jewett, Ph.D.



# Virtual Roundtable

## Navigating the New Geopolitical Reality

In May 2025, The India Center hosted a timely virtual roundtable discussion examining the evolving geopolitical landscape in South Asia following the recent India–Pakistan crisis. The event brought together distinguished experts—Lieutenant General Deependra Singh Hooda, Happymon Jacob, Ph.D. and journalist Suhasini Haider—to explore how India’s response to cross-border terrorism signals a shift in its strategic posture.

Titled “India’s Rise and the Use of Force: Navigating the New Geopolitical Reality,” the conversation addressed India’s growing willingness to use military force under the shadow of nuclear deterrence, and the implications for its diplomacy, defense policy, and global partnerships. Panelists debated whether regional instability hinders or enhances India’s ascent, and how India’s zero-tolerance stance on terrorism shapes expectations for its leadership.

The roundtable offered nuanced insights into India’s evolving role as a global power, highlighting the importance of strategic clarity, international cooperation, and crisis management. This event reinforced The India Center’s commitment to fostering informed dialogue on pressing international issues and India’s place within them.



Happymon Jacob, Ph.D.



Suhasini Haider



Lieutenant General  
Deependra Singh Hooda  
(Retd.)



# India 2047

## A Strategic Dialogue on Economic Aspiration and Reform

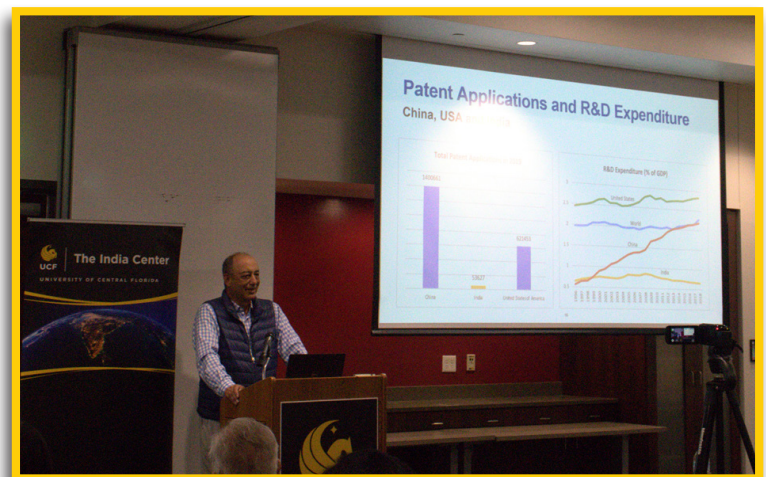


Ajay Chhibber, Ph.D.



Buvaneshwaran Venugopal, Ph.D.

On October 22, 2024, The India Center at UCF hosted “Making India an Advanced Economy by 2047: What Will It Take?” an engaging event examining India’s long-term economic vision. The lecture featured Ajay Chhibber, Ph.D., Distinguished Visiting Scholar at George Washington University and Non-Resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, and was moderated by Buvaneshwaran Venugopal, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Finance at UCF. Drawing on insights from his book *Unshackling India*, Chhibber outlined the economic, political, and institutional reforms needed to transform India into a \$21 trillion economy by its 100th year of independence. He emphasized the importance of state reform, investment in education and innovation, manufacturing-led job growth, and a renewed U.S.-India economic partnership. The event attracted a broad audience and sparked an engaging dialogue on growth, inequality, and global competitiveness, exemplifying The India Center’s role in advancing thoughtful discourse on India’s development in a rapidly changing world.



# Community Roundtables and Dinners

**T**hroughout the year, The India Center at the University of Central Florida hosted a remarkable series of community dinners that served as vital touchpoints for engagement, dialogue, and partnership between the university and Central Florida's dynamic Indian American community. These curated gatherings were intentionally intimate, designed not only to honor distinguished thought leaders—including Ajay Chhibber, Ph.D., Vijaya Kolachalama, Ph.D., Dhruva Jaishankar, Devesh Kapur, Ph.D., and Vivek Lall, Ph.D.—but also to cultivate meaningful conversations that transcended disciplines and generations.

Each dinner provided a unique forum for cultural exchange, academic insight, and professional networking, aligning with The India Center's ongoing mission to build bridges across borders and enrich understanding of India's global role. The presence of UCF leadership and faculty alongside community members underscored the importance of collaborative scholarship and community-rooted impact.



The success and spirit of these evenings were anchored in the extraordinary generosity and hospitality of our hosts, whose commitment to fostering thoughtful dialogue and genuine connection made each gathering truly memorable. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to:

- » **Chitra and Anil Deshpande**
- » **Braham Aggarwal and Suresh Gupta**
- » **Aparna and Raj Toleti**
- » **Sarita and Sharad Mehta**

These individuals opened their homes and hearts in service of strengthening the relationships that shape The India Center's work. Their contributions reflect the power of community in advancing the Center's vision and underscore the vital role that personal generosity plays in enriching institutional life.

Each gathering welcomed UCF leadership, faculty, and members of the local community, embodying the Center's mission to foster engagement, elevate U.S.-India relations, and celebrate the contributions of the Indian diaspora. The warm conversations and spirited exchanges that defined these dinners continue to inspire our work and reflect the power of collaboration in advancing The India Center's vision.



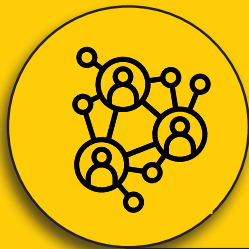
# ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



Guest Speakers  
Hosted

**20**

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Community  
Engagements

**20**

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Academic &  
Cultural Events

**17**

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Total In-Person Event  
Attendance

**1,136**

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Total YouTube views

**12,216**

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**Yogesh Joshi**

Indian Community Endowed  
Assistant Professor  
and Director, The India Center



**Leila Chacko**

Director of Public Affairs



**Arjun Sherugar**

Student Office Assistant



Give to The India Center

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