

Name	Vignesh M	Nilakottai BoysTown	Sponsor	
Institution	SBM College of Engineering & Technology			
Location	Dindigul	Accommodation Hostel		
Course	Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering	4 years		
Start	01 August 2012	End 31 July 2016	Year	4



Our Apprentices continue to study their syllabus of theoretical and practical subjects into their fourth year, living in campus hostels, local digs or for some travelling daily from there or a relative's home. Their Apprentice Officer continues to maintain regular contact, monitoring progress, welfare and attendance and liaising with faculty members. In sixth semester most courses set projects for students to undertake in small groups. For our Apprentices, project expenses are covered by additional sponsorship payments. Lastly come final exams and campus interviews, leading to work experience and substantive employment. Formal sponsorship ends with this course, although some elect to continue their studies while working, by correspondence or part time courses and, generally gaining exemption from the first year. This subsequent study will be self or family funded.

Vignesh continues to thrive on his course and edge his overall semester results ever upwards, from a struggle with tough subjects and referrals in first year, to the comfort zone to date:

S1 6.8, S2 6.0, S3 7.3, S4 7.8,
S5 7.9, S6 8.2, S7 8.2

His subjects in the 8th and final semester are:

Advanced Internal Combustion Engines
Engineering Economics
Cost Analysis

All three are theory only, the first is his favourite and none is tough. His Project has yet to be assigned but it will be in the field of Hydraulics and he'll work with two others for three hours daily, two days each week for eight weeks. Class size is 50 and all work is English medium but with no problems for Vignesh.

Because he attended a government higher secondary school he was given a free lap top which he has used to advantage on this course. From earlier course work and hearing model spoken English, he's now well into Computer Aided Design (Auto CAD) and an engineering design software – "Solid Works". His Tutor rates him a very good student and agrees he should rank high in his final exams, possibly even at State level.

He still lives in the campus hostel devoting 2 ½ hours daily to private study, while playing table-tennis on the college team gives a welcome break from study. Asked to reflect on the past years and his current attainment, he concludes he wouldn't want to change anything - "I'm very happy with my achievement".

This college doesn't hold campus interviews but Vignesh is confident he'll achieve a good placement, hopefully working in design, initially for work experience training for six months, earning Rs10,000 monthly

and rising to Rs15,000 when employed substantively. After that he's keen to work abroad, perhaps joining his uncle in Dubai. Like many youngsters in India today, he's free to go where ever work opportunities take him – even many girls are no longer tied to working near home. Families are happy with this and certainly Vignesh's is, doubtless in expectation of regular remittances.

His family situation remains unchanged. Mother remains in good health and his elder brother is still working. Vignesh had early dreams of travelling and helping his family, he can certainly do that now with his fully qualified position.

All our apprentices are always deeply conscious of the role of their Sponsors in supporting their education and training and they cherish any contact. Vignesh sends Aunty his grateful thanks for supporting his education and training over 12 years, taking him from child to the family head and "breadwinner".

For many, dropping out of school or even completing school but with no formal earning capacity, can be the start of a life of menial work and deprivation. Thanks to Aunty, Vignesh is able to change his life and can look forward to a secure future for himself and his family. Without Aunty, none of this could have happened and she can be very proud of her budding mechanical engineer. Perhaps she would like to help another child to succeed – it can become very addictive!

Interviewed and Written by: Terry Quadling, Volunteer February 2016