

IIT-Gandhinagar girl on US space quest

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Indore: As children, we have all gazed in awe at the starlit sky. But for Aditi Dighe, the attraction didn't stop there. The Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar (IIT-Gn) student whose favourite subjects are space studies and astronomy has been selected to participate in the Caltech Space Challenge to be held in the USA later this year.

Caltech Space Challenge is a programme that plans to design an ambitious mission to an asteroid by 2025 as envisaged by US president Barack Obama. The programme is being organised in collaboration with NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. Dighe, a third-year student of electrical engineering at IIT-Gn, is among the 30 students from around the world selected for the workshop.

"I am among the four students from India who will attend the five-day workshop at Caltech in September. In the workshop, we will be expected to design a manned mission to a near-Earth object (NEO)," said Dighe.

However, getting the coveted spot among the top students was not a cakewalk for Dighe. "My college had carried out a selection process in which various students were

interviewed. I think my knowledge from various astronomy and cosmology lectures in college and interactions with various scientists helped me get through," she added.

As per Girish Singhal, assistant research professor at IIT-Gn, Dighe was found to have extensive knowledge on space.

"She could talk and answer almost all our questions with respect to space, astronomy and cosmology. Hence she was the ideal candidate for this programme," said Singhal.

IIT-Gn director SK Jain also revealed that three students of the institute were currently interning with Caltech and that he was expecting more to do so next year.

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