SGA Senate Election hasty, unfair
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its candidates. The whole point of student government is to be inclusive, but this relying on social media is anything but. The date of this election needs to be pushed back so there is time for election information to be spread through more traditional means. In the past, SGA has used more traditional means to spread election information, but gave students no time to consult them. They took the time to prepare a candidate info packet and publish candidate bios in TechNews, but then held their election at a time that allowed people just a few hours to consult these resources after they were made available. Pushing back the election guarantees that students who receive their information through more traditional means have the time to actually learn about the election and make an informed decision before they need to vote.

While I can understand wanting to get these elections started as soon as possible in order to capitalize on many students' excitement for being back at school, rushing these elections in order to do so will only hurt SGA and the student body as a whole in the long run. Rushing an election does not give the student body time to ensure that they are electing candidates who will be effective. Spreading information about the election and its candidates almost exclusively through social media and excluding a large majority of students from the process ensures that we will be electing candidates that only represent their own views or the views of a small number of students.

Electing ineffective Senators that represent few students views only results in an SGA that gets little done other than marginalizing the student body. Poor representation will lead to more students assuming that SGA never gets anything done. Rushed elections will lead to students becoming cynical, thinking SGA couldn't do anything even if they wanted to. Excluding students will make them think their opinions don't matter. All of this leads to a less powerful SGA. With how many changes are happening at IIT, this is the worst possible outcome for students. Now, more than ever, the students of IIT need a student government that represents them well and is strong. Let's make that happen. Let's ensure that the students of IIT have the time to get to know their candidates and elect the best ones to the Senate. Let's ensure that candidates are not elected on name-recognition alone. Let's show everyone that our student government represents all of us. Let's show that the student body of IIT will not be ignored when it comes to our changing university. Let's have a proper, fair, inclusive Senate election.

SGA is *our* student government, so let's call on them to allow us to do all this by pushing back the Senate election date.

Here's the beef: campus meals offer little value

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Every semester, someone complains loudly about how disproportionate the cost and value of the Meal Plans are. Until a proper, transparent response is heard, it's fair to continue asking. Where is the value?

Let's review the math. IIT requires most residential students to have a meal plan. For the 2014-2015 school year, the cheapest of those required by the university is the "Create Your Own" plan for $4,848. As part of Create Your Own, you receive 175 meals per semester. For the entire academic year, whether you count 180 school days or 10 months, the Create Your Own provides you with one full meal per day. For $4,800, a person could spend $13 on food per day and still save money. It would seem that a student should be eating more than once per day and not be spending more than $13 per meal.

The Create Your Own meals can also be converted to Bonus Points (which can only be spent at campus dining locations) at a rate of seven points for one meal. If you convert all 350 meals you would end up with $2,450 in Bonus Points. There are several problems with this.

First, it makes the value of each meal $7, but they cost you $13. Furthermore, the $4,848 you spent has decreased in value to $2,450 (A loss of $2,398—49.5%.) Perhaps this is remedied by the affordability of campus dining options. If a full "all you care to eat" meal at The Commons is valued at $7, surely you should be able to buy yourself a single sandwich and drink for less than that at Center Court.

Turns out this isn't the case. Center Court, one of the most popular places to eat amongst Bonus Point holders, offers a good variety of more portable foods ranging from burritos, to burgers, and sandwiches. Trying to buy a full meal is problematic. A 12 inch-sub, cup of soup, and a 20 ounce drink will run $9.32 (with a 75 cent discount and no tax). So the meal for which you paid $13.85 for unlimited food, and then traded for $7 in Bonus Points, won't buy you a limited meal that costs $9.32.

Considering Center Court is run by the same people and offers many of the same options as The Commons, these things should add up, shouldn't they? Instead, you lose $6.85 and then have to make up the difference of $2.32.

Something isn't right here. This is just the math of the situation. Let's ignore for a second that the university can require you to buy a meal plan and then they set the price you have to pay for that required meal plan. Where is the value? Is it in the convenience? I can't say that I would mind taking the train to The Loop to somehow feed myself for $16.17. Maybe it's a way of guaranteeing that people always have something to eat? But why can't you opt out if you know how to feed yourself? Why not expect adults to take care of themselves? There is a huge missing value in what you pay and what you receive on campus. This needs to be explained.

And a quick note to The Commons— if I'm going to pay roughly $5,000 to feed a single mouth for eight months, I'm going to help myself to as many chicken nuggets as I please.

An appeal to cheating, dishonesty

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What is college good for? Why do you need teachers to tell you what is already out there in some capacity, whether in a textbook or in a journal or online at some reputable educational source? So why get a formal post-secondary education at all if you can become a learned, self-actualized person without the privilege of someone forcing you to learn something you want to learn to eventually be able to support yourself?

Well, for one, it legitimatizes it. It seems the essential part of that education is the diploma saying you followed all the rules and had the determination to carry it to its conclusion. How can one get around this pesky situation? There is the black market where any degree to any college can be bought with no work necessary, and as long as you have some understanding of what you are doing–you know the terminology and so on—you will pick up most of what you need for the experience anyway, where there are real consequences for your actions. Still, fraud of that scale seems a little too dicey; there's too much risk of being caught.

So then there comes the insolent nuisance that is cheating, which college administrations seem to hold to see as vile as buying a bogus diploma on the black market, and when the reports come out that it is happening on their very own campus, they make it a priority to scare everyone into place. Here is the problem though: the only real reason to prosecute student for cheating, the only real reason to make a system so based on exam grades, is to teach these aspiring youths about how to become determined and try to get them to work as hard as they can for something that is majorly pointless.

So I return to the question at hand; why college? Well to answer that, just look around yourself, reader! You are surrounded by people that are as ambitious as you: you can form friendships, form connections, hold discussions, implicitly rather than explicitly learn from, with them, you can start projects that interest you, and start working for yourself with the creative fuel that is—for all practical purposes—topical busywork in the background. Also, there is the availability of the professors, who have the most relevant experience to your own goals that you can consult. Are there ever exams on the advice, influence, and inspiration of your professors?

All corporate and government agencies have their own demands, and as long as you have the basics and are vaguely familiar with the contents you are working with you will be fine. It may even make much more sense for efficiency and to the benefit of the greater economy to just to have apprenticeships rather than spending time going through a middle man to what most people want in a career, which is a steady, decent paying job, and isn't even necessarily relevant to most of their other classes.

All in all, college is basically a false atmosphere that makes it feel like situations are more important than they are and creates a strange community where a person may feel, or strive to feel like they are more important than reality suggests. What is incredibly clear is how schoolwork has very little to do with this, especially when you are taking about a problem with cheating. Cheating has always existed and will always exist. Yes, there should probably be some sort of regulation with the taking of examinations if we really are going to keep up that necessity in order to test whether these brats are gaming the system or not; I am not advocating total anarchy.

The student must figure out themselves how much they think holding the material to memory may help them in their own goals. Forcing some sort of ethical or moral aptitude to do the best you can and failing is better than knowing you have had an unfair advantage in the hope that it will help them in the future is a contradiction that is pointless and misdirected. The harder you push against cheating, as heinous that crime seems to be, you will only get diminishing returns on those bureaucratic investments.