

TechNews

Student newspaper of the Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

OPINION 2
 CAMPUS 3
 A&E 6
 SLIPSTICK 7
 SPORTS 7

Career Fair: Stunning or Bumming?

Khaleela Zaman
 DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Walking into the Career Fair on Tuesday, September 9, it was amazing to see some empty tables even though such a large number of students filled Hermann Hall. With 149 total companies participating, 45 percent of which were accepting international students, it seemed like students had a plethora of work opportunities. So many professionally dressed students were present that 25 were on the waitlist. Shirlean Williams, from the Career Management Center (CMC), was the head of organizing this career fair, and even she was impressed with the students' dress. The events hosted by the CMC leading up to the career fair, she says, definitely helped the students perform better at the event. Williams was able to secure several new companies for this fair, including Target, Structural Group, and Marathon Petroleum, among others. She was also extremely excited to know that there were over 4,000 jobs available at the career fair.

However, from the students' perspectives, this career fair did not offer as many opportunities as were advertised. While speaking with Jong Massaquoi, he mentioned that as he walked to each company he was interested in, not many of them had representatives at their tables. This concerned him; did he come late? But he came at 1:00 p.m. and it ended at four in the afternoon. Sankesh Jain, a second

year Masters of Electrical Engineering student, says that the CMC's pre-career fair events were very helpful when he attended them last year. However, he was unimpressed with the job-selection for international students present at this career fair. There are many challenges for international students, with the visas, and their sponsors. The process for businesses to be able to accept internationals requires a lot of work for the companies. Unfortunately for Jain, that meant that he was only able to visit two companies who would even consider hiring an international student in his field of study. Another international student of electrical engineering, Ming Chen, found interest in more companies than Jain. With a minor in artificial intelligence and the experience of learning Java in one of his classes at IIT, Chen was able to talk with more companies, even with the challenges that come with being international and wanting to work in the United States. He mentioned that most of the companies present were interested in IT and computer science majors, offering many jobs related to software. As a fourth year undergraduate, Chen did a lot of research on the companies he was interested in, which helped him during the fair, and he plans to follow up with the companies this time.

Taking the student concerns back to the top of the chain, Shirlean Williams very willingly offered to clear the air. In regards to the international challenges, she says that

many people are attracted to the large corporations with well-known names. However, she stresses that the smaller consulting firms also present at the fair are usually much more willing to go through the process of sponsoring visas. Most people do not know that these firms have contracts with the big brand-name corporations, and Williams shares that oftentimes people working for the consulting firms are eventually able to find an "in" (and a job) with these corporations.

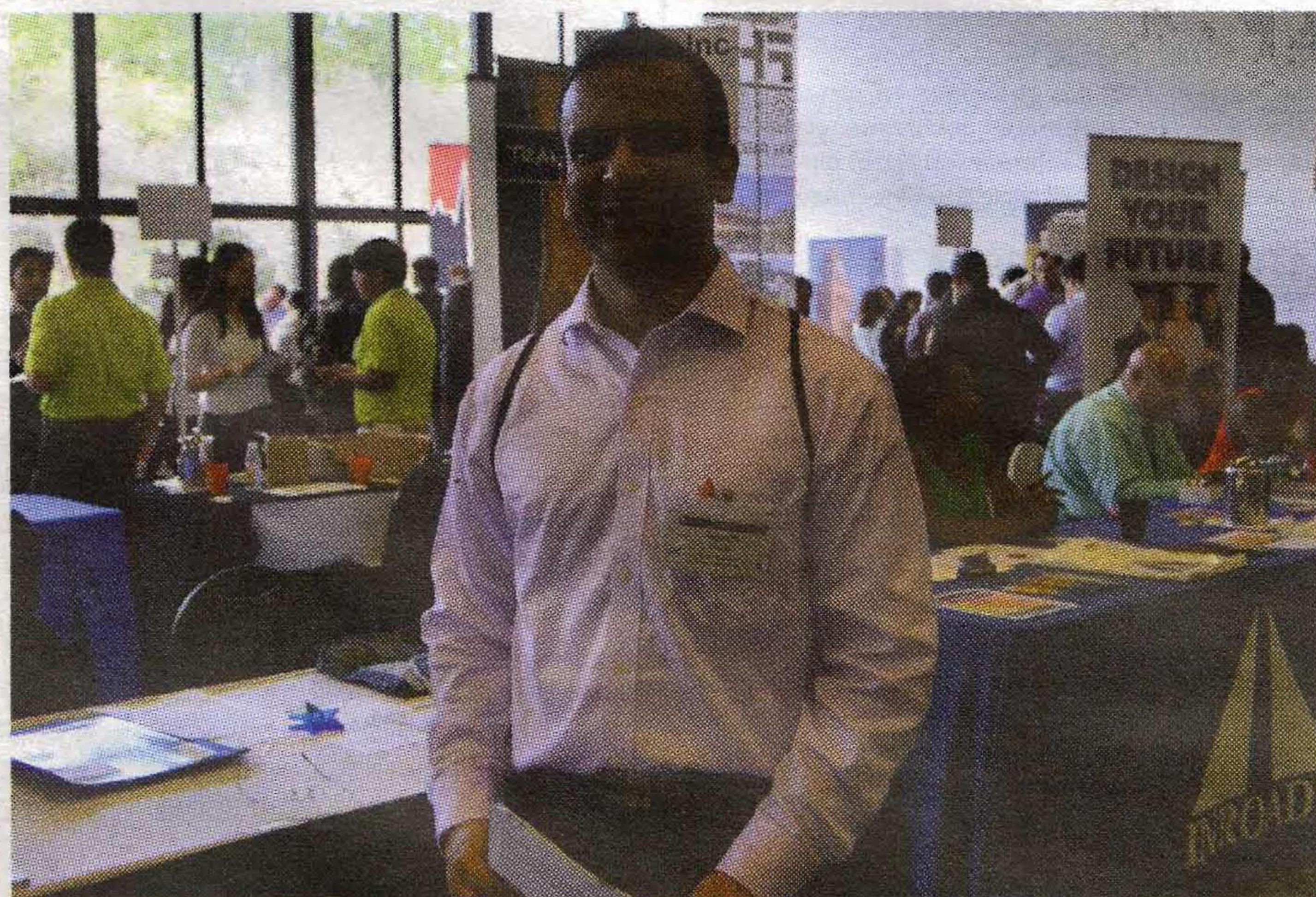
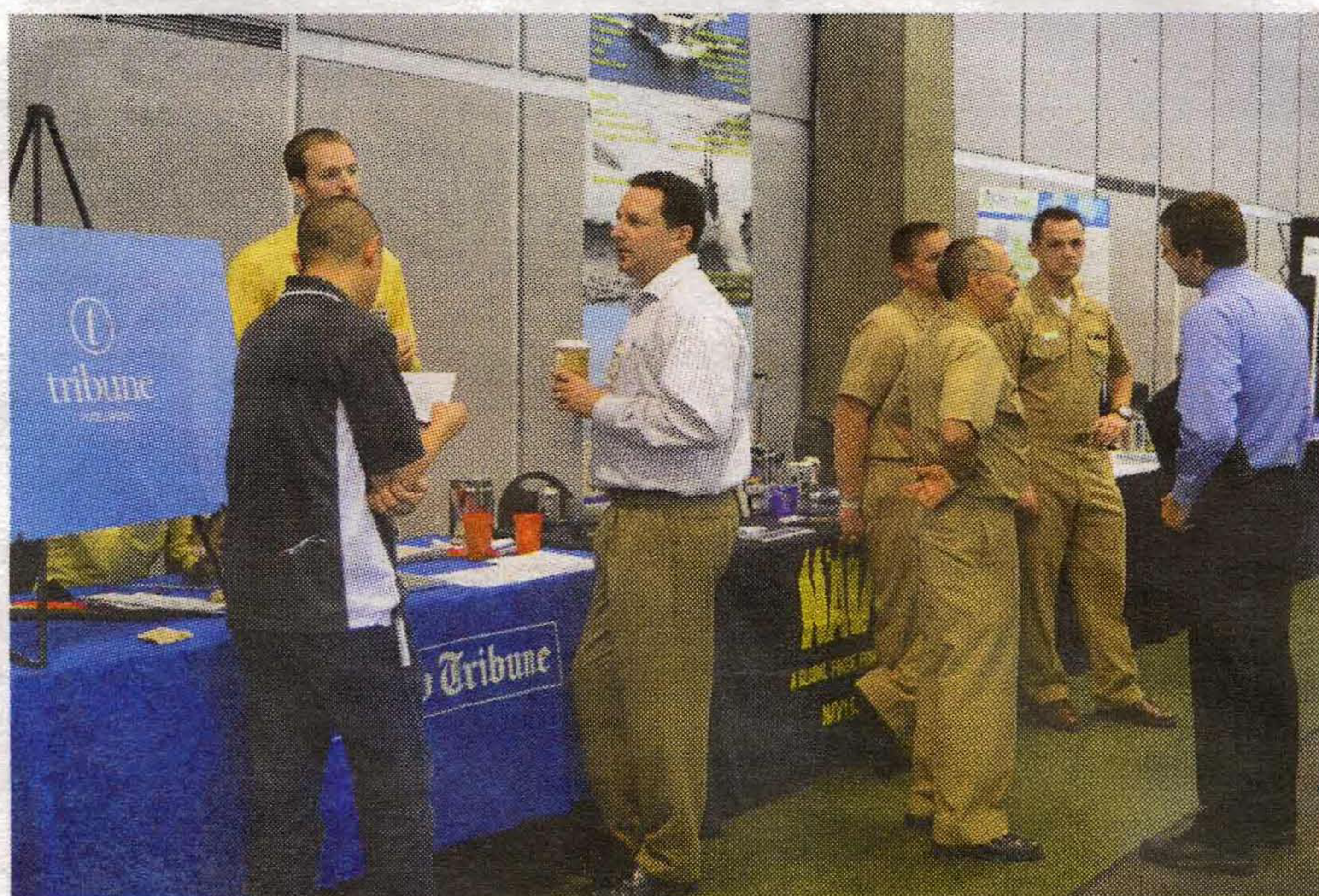
In addition to people basically forming mobs around the big names, including Motorola and Goldman Sachs, many students abandoned the lesser-known companies, leaving those representatives looking quite bored behind their tables. Shirlean Williams conveys that so many students are attracted to this "branding," including both domestic and international students. She says that most people do not know that some of the companies at the career fair actually work together or are competitors. Both eClinical and Epic are competitors, with their employees doing the same jobs, yet the line for Epic is always much longer than the line (if there even is one) for eClinical, Williams observes. That is why she has always stressed the importance for students to conduct research on the companies attending the career fair.

Shirlean Williams expressed her deep passion for helping students secure working positions to enhance their careers. She

is always working to get more companies to come to IIT's career fairs, and she even helps organize smaller events where students can come to see just one company at times sprinkled throughout the year. For example, Google has agreed to conduct an information session separate from the career fair, which will be held on Thursday, September 18 at 12:45 p.m. in the MTCC Ballroom. If a specific company is not at IIT, either at the career fairs or at smaller events, then Williams says they should be available online through Jobs4Hawks.

When asked to give advice to IIT students regarding the career fair, Williams extremely passionately says that she just needs students to come out for the events, prepared and with plenty of research done.

She said, "I'm going to keep pushing [to get more career opportunities], I just need students to help me. We are on their side." Williams adds that she keeps trying to get larger corporations to represent themselves at IIT. However, many big-name companies, including Amazon, have come and very few, if any, students have met with them. "If students do not come, it hurts us," she said. Shirlean Williams and the CMC are devoted to helping students with their careers and are always working to expand the career fair opportunities for students in all majors; they just need students to take advantage!



Photos by Khaleela Zaman