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HawkTalk, Toastmasters collaboration develops student leadership traits

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The past two weeks have made November an eventful month for HawkTalk, IIT's student organization that specializes in fostering public speaking and communication skills. During this time, HawkTalk hosted a workshop series in collaboration with Toastmasters International, the global organization that inspired the inception of HawkTalk in the Spring of 2014.

The first Toastmasters workshop was held on Thursday, November 13, focusing on the characteristics of an effective leader. Rachel Muhammad, coming to IIT from a Blue Cross Blue Shield Toastmasters club, led the workshop. Upbeat and engaging, Muhammad

interacted with the nearly 30-member audience in a way that made becoming an effective leader seem more achievable. The attendees came up with a list of personality traits of an effective leader and participated in an active discussion analyzing each characteristic. Vision, grit, effective communication, and resilience were a few of the discussed traits. In addition, they learned that effective leaders also need certain mental capabilities, including, but not limited to open-mindedness and quick, knowledgeable thinking.

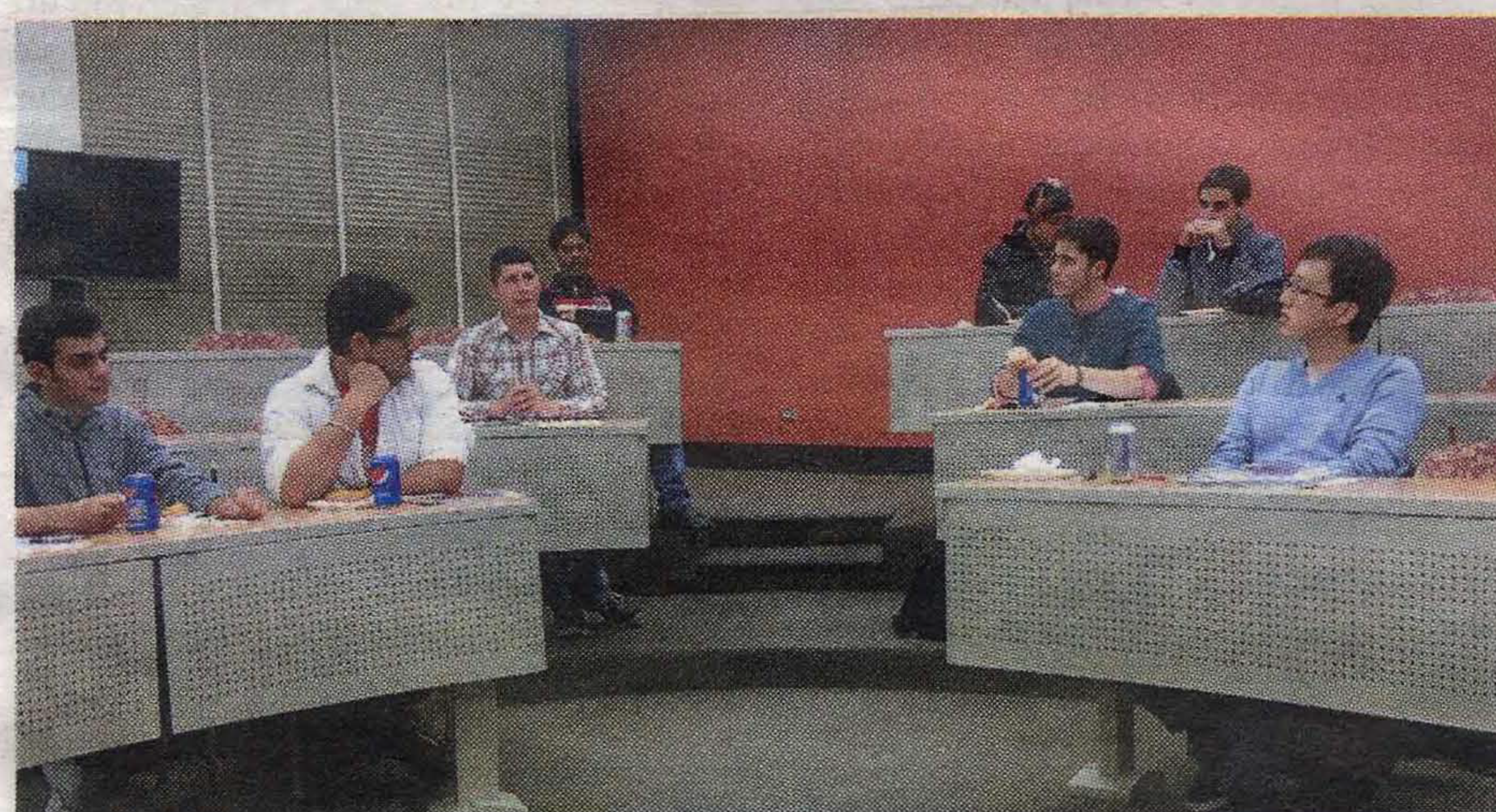
Lynorque Robinson, another Blue Cross Blue Shield Toastmaster facilitated the second workshop on the craft of communicating on Thursday, November 20. Titled "Speechcraft: The Success Communication Series," this workshop was extremely interac-

tive, bringing every participant up to the floor to speak. Every student was able to evaluate themselves on their current comfort levels as speakers, gaining insight into their abilities and learning ways to improve on those that were lacking. Several students were selected to participate in a "Table Topics" session, where each was given a topic on the spot and expected to speak impromptu for one to two minutes. Participants were able to directly address their fears of being in front of an audience and for some international students, face the language barrier.

On both occasions, attendees were provided workbooks and other materials to aid in their journey toward becoming more effective leaders and communicators. Another exciting aspect of the workshop series was

that each participant was presented an official Toastmasters International certificate of completion following each workshop. The series filled not only their brains, but also their stomachs. On each of the two occasions, delicious food from Chinese Kitchen was served, making for a delightfully wholesome experience.

For those who have not attended HawkTalk's workshops this semester, or have attended and are looking for more, stay on the lookout for further Toastmasters collaborations in the upcoming spring semester. To stay updated, join HawkTalk on HawkLink and like the "HawkTalk IIT" page on Facebook. Do not hesitate to forward any questions, concerns, or suggestions to the organization at hawktalk@iit.edu.



Photos by Anoopa Sundararajan