

Dean Himes responds to Humanities Department changes

Shreya Jha
LAYOUT EDITOR

In response to a previous TechNews article on the recent changes in the Humanities department, TechNews engaged in a conversation with the Dean of the Department of Humanities, Dean Christine Himes.

Himes is the former Director of the Center for Policy Research at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, serves on the Board of Scientific Counselors for the National Center for Health Statistics, and is a Fellow of the Gerontological Society of America. She has also been an assistant professor of sociology at Syracuse University, and became a part of the IIT team in April 2014.

In the discussion, Dean Himes responded to the mentioned situations regarding the decrease in the number of courses and a decrease in variety.

“Humanities provides students with the ability to think of complex ideas. Studies in the topics of humanities helps enrich lives in terms of work and personal growth. Colleges don’t just prepare you for a job; they help you grow as a person. Humanities emphasizes critical thinking and values, and instills an appreciation for art and creativity in all forms,” said Dean Himes.

Dean Himes says that the current and future academic years will observe a reduction in the course options. Many of the courses in Humanities are taught by adjunct faculty; adjunct faculty refers to the professors who are hired for a temporary period to come and teach about 2 courses a year. The Dean said that the Department of Humanities will focus on the permanent professors instead of the adjunct ones. “Some classes are really small in the

sense that they have less than ten students. The department cannot afford to have such small classes. It looks at all the courses offered, and removes the ones with less than ten students. This would mean that about 2-3 courses would be cut off each semester because of low enrollment”, said Dean Himes.

A number of students reportedly face issues while registering for courses—these issues pertain to which courses satisfy their Humanities requirements. There are a number of courses under topics related to philosophy, history, communications, social sciences, and more, which satisfy course requirements for humanities. The department is trying to find a way to make registration for such subjects easier while working with the Office of the Registrar. “For instance, all courses which satisfy course requirements for humanities could be listed under one group, or the courses satisfying the humanities requirements could be listed on the our website,” said Dean Himes.

While deciding on the type, time and subjects of courses, the department looks at the list of mandatory courses required for the students majoring in topics which falls under the Department of Humanities. “They are our top priority, and then we look at what other courses are available within the expertise of our faculty. The humanities department does have a certain understanding of the pattern of popular courses. Over time, the courses with more registered students were kept, while new courses replace the less popular ones. Our objective is to maintain a balance between classes which satisfy student interests and the mandatory courses required for academic purposes within the humanities department,” said Dean Himes. Certain courses are introduced so that the students can continue their prog-

ress through a subject. For example, the department offered Spanish 1, 2 and 3 in the past semesters and is offering Spanish 4 to maintain continuity of courses.

The Illinois Tech MediaRoom is an online platform with news articles about IIT. Illinois Institute of Technology has been defined as a “technology focused university” in the Illinois Tech MediaRoom. Digital Humanities has become a new topic of discussion and seems to be in favor of the general consensus in a “technology-focused university.” “It is a fairly complicated term. Even within the study of humanities, people do not agree on its exact definition. On one hand, it refers to the study of subjects related to humanities and social science using technology. For example, special programs are used to study the word patterns in the plays of Shakespeare. When people say ‘Big Data,’ they are actually implying the study of Social Sciences with the aid of technology. On the other hand, it refers to the impact of technology on our world related to communication, relationships, etc. We do not plan to introduce courses relating to digital humanities based on the first definition. Our focus has been more towards the second definition, the impact of technology on the traditional subjects of the humanities,” said Dean Himes.

In the Illinois Tech MediaRoom, Himes has been quoted to say, “While much effort has been put into training leaders in the development of new technology, I believe it is equally important to train leaders who understand the role technology plays in our everyday lives and in shaping society more broadly. In that regard, Lewis College at Illinois Tech is poised to play an important role in educating students who will be the creative innovators of the future.”

“At this point, I am working on the projects which are already in motion and trying to understand the process as a whole. We are trying to focus on the introduction of Digital Humanities,” said Dean Himes.

Dean Himes says that she understands that there are scheduling issues related to the times of the courses. She says, “I definitely have to learn more about such scheduling issues.”

Himes says that if she could make one change in the department, she would wish it would be easier for students to take more classes in the humanities and social sciences rather than just focus on their own major or core topics.

Dean Himes had been an assistant professor of Sociology at Syracuse University. “In teaching, I try to make the subjects interesting, relating them to the students. I ask them a lot of questions. Sometimes the classes tend to deviate from the original lesson plan, but that’s okay. I don’t feel the compulsion to stick to a lesson plan and my classes are about sharing ideas and being involved.”

“My experience at IIT has been exciting. There certainly is a lot to learn when you come to a new institution. There are new people, a new culture. You have to find out where the challenges are. I have been impressed with the administration and the faculty with their willingness to think about new ideas,” said Dean Himes.

The conversation with Dean Himes was indeed candid and informative; it was a reminder that a two-way flow of information at Illinois Tech is indeed possible.

Thank a Giver (TAG) Day

Zaira Ortiz
TECHNEWS WRITER

IIT is one of the most generous schools in the nation when it comes to providing students with Financial Aid packages that meet their needs, and helping students finish school without worrying too much about finances. IIT, a private institution, is so committed to making sure students can afford their tuition, that by the end of their college careers, IIT graduates have paid less for a private education than students attending state schools. How is this possible?

It is possible because IIT has some of the most generous givers in the world who

care about the success of IIT students throughout their education and even after, givers who want to change the world by investing in us. Student Engagement and Philanthropy Day is a day where students show appreciation for the individual donors who have contributed to the financial relief many IIT students feel.

This is a day where Illinois Tech will join more than 100 educational institutions worldwide to participate in the third annual Student Engagement and Philanthropy Day organized by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE). The goal of the program, which will take place at institutions in the United States, England, South Africa and Australia, is to educate students about the importance of philanthropy and grow en-

gagement opportunities on campuses.

Students, you can participate by joining the Office of Institutional Advancement in thanking the extraordinary donors and alumni for their contributions to Illinois Tech and your education. There will be free food, giveaways, and more planned for Thank A Giver (TAG) Day 2015. Go to one, two, or all of the events ranging from a Thank-a-thon to a student trivia night and dance party! The Thank-a-thon will take place from noon to 2 p.m. where you can sign banners at the MTCC Bridge, Galvin Library, or Hermann Hall. While you’re at it, sign some cards to really show IIT donors some love. The student party will be at 7:30 p.m. at The Bog. Participate in philanthropy trivia games and then dance the

night away.

Students, do you know where the money for your scholarships comes from? Or the dollars that pay for some of the resources you use every day? Take a moment out of your day on Thursday, February 26, to learn how philanthropy impacts your daily life. Finally, students you can thank a giver by signing banners, cards, taking photos in our Thank-a-Giver (TAG) Day photo booth, or saying a quick thanks on camera. There will be free food, giveaways, and more planned for TAG Day 2015.

Read more about the event at alumni.iit.edu/tag, and don’t forget to “tag” your TAG Day photos with [#illinoistechtag](https://twitter.com/illinoistechtag).

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