

# TechNews

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## Students seek answers at President, Provost Forum

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The President and Provost Forum is an event hosted by Student Government Association (SGA) every semester at Illinois Institute of Technology that provides students the opportunity to ask questions they have regarding university policy to the top two university administrators, President John Anderson and Provost Alan Cramb, who was recently chosen to succeed Anderson as the next university president later this year.

This semester's President and Provost Forum was hosted over the lunch hour on Friday, March 6, in the Hermann Hall Ballroom. Free sandwiches, fruit, chips, and desserts were offered to those in attendance as they arrived.

The event got started with opening remarks from SGA President Akinade Aderele. He thanked those in attendance and explained the purpose of the event. He then passed command of the stage over to Gabriel Connors, an SGA Senator who served as the moderator for the event. Connors explained the format of the event and dove right into providing questions to the president and provost.

This semester's President and Provost Forum saw considerably more questions than those hosted in recent semesters; over 40 questions were submitted via an online form that was made available for students to submit their questions prior to the event.

The first question came from the online form and asked the reasons for President Anderson leaving the position of President of the university and what plans Provost Cramb has for the position. "I have been in the job for almost eight years, which is quite a long time for the president of a university,"

said Anderson. He also added that a variety of personal and professional circumstances contributed to the decision. "I feel comfortable about stepping down at this particular point. I feel like we've done great things over the past eight years. I think the university will do very well in this transition." Provost Cramb added the following: "If I look forward to what's really important to the university, growth of the undergraduate body is probably the most important thing we can do for the stability and strength of the university. We have to have a current undergraduate body that enjoys their experience while they're here. The student experience in the classroom, I think, is excellent, however the student experience out of the classroom needs to be improved significantly. I'll be focusing out the out-of-the classroom experience." Cramb also mentioned that administration plans to improve student retention and graduation rates as well as placement in careers or graduate school after graduation.

The next question also came from the online form regarding decisions from administration regarding policies related to cancelling class and preparing campus after snow or other severe weather. "As long as it's not snowing inside the classroom, we're going to have classes," began Anderson. "I thought our staff has done a great job this year of cleaning the sidewalks." He added that students miss out on value of their tuition by having a day of class cancelled. Provost Cramb added that if he can't make it to campus from his residence in Lincoln Park, it would be a time to consider cancelling classes.

Another question from the online form asked for elaboration regarding the updates and changes to the IIT Public Safety escort policy, which was modified in mid-February to end on-demand safety escorts to

off-campus locations and replaced them with regular escorts by a security van at scheduled intervals to limited off-campus locations. President Anderson says that the update to the policy makes the service more predictable and reflects the concerns that students have brought up over previous years. The floor was opened up to additional questions, one of which asked about the options for students who do not live in designated areas where Public Safety will be dropping off students. President Anderson says that the policy is still new and open to feedback from students. "If changes have to be made, they'll be made, but it will not be feasible to stop at every location where a student lives," said Anderson.

The floor was opened up to additional questions from students. A student representative from TEDxIIT asked about scheduling a meeting with the president of the university, to which President Anderson suggested calling his office and simply asking to schedule a meeting with him. An additional question asked about the keys to fundraising for university events. Provost Cramb suggests students speak with the deans of their colleges, ask for Student Activity Fund money, and solicit donations from alumni.

An additional question from the floor came from Maria Garcia, a representative from Commuter Student Association. Garcia asked for some additional information regarding the requirements for classes to be cancelled due to weather conditions. Provost Cramb answered that class would be cancelled if there was a legitimate concern for safety of students or if state or local authorities asked people to not travel. "Decisions are not based on thinking of individuals. They're based on thinking of the university as a whole. People have to make a decision themselves. If they feel it's not safe

for them to do something, they shouldn't do it." Provost Cramb adds that, if students can't make it to class because of weather and they travel a far distance, our faculty are asked to take that into account and make sure students are able to make up anything they missed.

Another question from the audience came from a student regarding the food services at IIT. The student asked what administrators plan to do regarding quality of food on campus. "The administration takes any issue raised by people about quality of any of our services very seriously," said Cramb. He says that a full analysis by a variety of people is initiated when issues are brought up. "Sodexo is a large corporation that is under a lot of requirements by the city and the state for quality control. They are not allowed by the city or state to get out of quality control, and they are inspected not only by us but also the city and the state to make sure they are meeting the quality requirements to serve food to anyone," added Cramb. Katherine Stetz, IIT's Dean of Students, also added that weekly meetings take place between Sodexo and her office to address student concerns.

Several of the questions submitted through the online form asked for transparency regarding tuition increases and where the revenue from tuition goes. President Anderson says that only about 40% of tuition money goes to paying faculty; other money goes toward facility improvements and other operational costs. Anderson added that tuition goes up every year because things get more expensive every year. He also added that students will not be made able to see a breakdown of salaries of individuals or other costs like they are able to at public universities. A few additional questions regarding tuition increases were asked, and related answers were provided, saying that

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Photo by Kevin Zheng