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Career Services make job search easier

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With the advent of the hiring period, the résumé season is definitely in. In this fierce coagulation of employers and students, there are many key elements that help define this relationship even better. One such factor in our very own school is Career Services, and the newly-positioned Career Development Coach. One can see Career Services staff pushing the social media boundaries and reaching out to students on Facebook and Twitter. With photos of fellow students receiving career guidance and complementary books becoming the norm this spring, David Wilson Work is the man to go if you want to review your professional documents before venturing into employer land. In this exclusive interview excerpt, we capture his thought process and how his organization is pushing the boundaries on the career front.

First of all, a little background on Work and the arsenal he brings to the table. He is currently a résumé coach and is on the panel of the Job Search Counselors at Career Services. His core competency is English writing and reviewing resumes. He marks them up and corrects errors and provides plenty of suggestions. He basically red-lines the documents and drafts that students bring. He was once a peer tutor at the Harold Washington College and now has refined this to a more efficient and refined capacity as a full-time counselor. One can reach out to him and book an appointment by logging on the Jobs4hawks portal and booking a time slot for a resume review session under the calendar tab.

He is available on campus at various places ranging from Crown Hall and Galvin Library to MSV. His rough timings are around 3 p.m. to 8 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays. You can also send him an email at wwork@iit.edu. One can only wonder if a more befitting email address can be found in correlation with what he does. He says that a big part of the process is awareness. He jokingly states that social media and now traditional media—starting with this article—are used in that process. He added, “We want you to know that we have counselors available. You could see me with an appointment or e-mail or meet the counselors at Hermann Hall.”

Upon asking how the review sessions are being received by the student community, he said that he is booked solid for two weeks now and that is a successful experiment so far. The next question shot at him was about the primary goal of Career Services as a whole. He had this to say: “Our main goal is to offer extension services that are going to increase accessibility of career services to our students across the board and alumni. We want students to be aware of what they have available in terms of career services and also informational resources such as Galvin Library.” Research librarians are often not utilized by the students and one can prove to be of great help with industry and business position search. The primary message from Career Services is that academic skills are applicable to job searching. It is a new experience for Mr. Work as well in terms of writing and coaching.

There are few graduates who do come back to get help with their resumes and career guidance. Upon being asked to illustrate the importance of Gerald Doyle, the Vice Provost, Work says, “It’s all about delivering better value for the degree, and another big piece is branching career service into campus culture through different disciplines and departments. That’s really a key thing Gerry is pushing.” The study bubble is a concept that Work stirred up in the interview. It’s merely a term for old concepts. These days, the course loads are so heavy and rigorous that students often don’t have the opportunity to look ahead of what they are doing academically and think of their careers professionally. “We want to foster that awareness across the board,” Work adds.

As the interview touched on various topics, another familiar one sprung up across the table, passion. According to Work, although there are a variety of reasons to be educated and earn a degree, namely cultural and societal reasons, the number one reason people want a degree is to get a job and increase their earning power. He went on to say, “You want an IIT degree to have a competitive value in the educational marketplace, and on the career services frontier you want to do a good job educating the students about the options they have available while they are still in enrolled so that they are enrolled and ready to go ideally as soon as they graduate.”

The next question was about a key member of this movement, Gerald Doyle, who has been pushing this on social media. Work considers Doyle a broad and forward thinker whose methods and thinking are very much up to recent times. The people in his office are very active and well coordinated according to him. “Everything we do is centered around serving the students better,” he said. Where Doyle comes in is coming up with new ideas and new programs for getting things done.

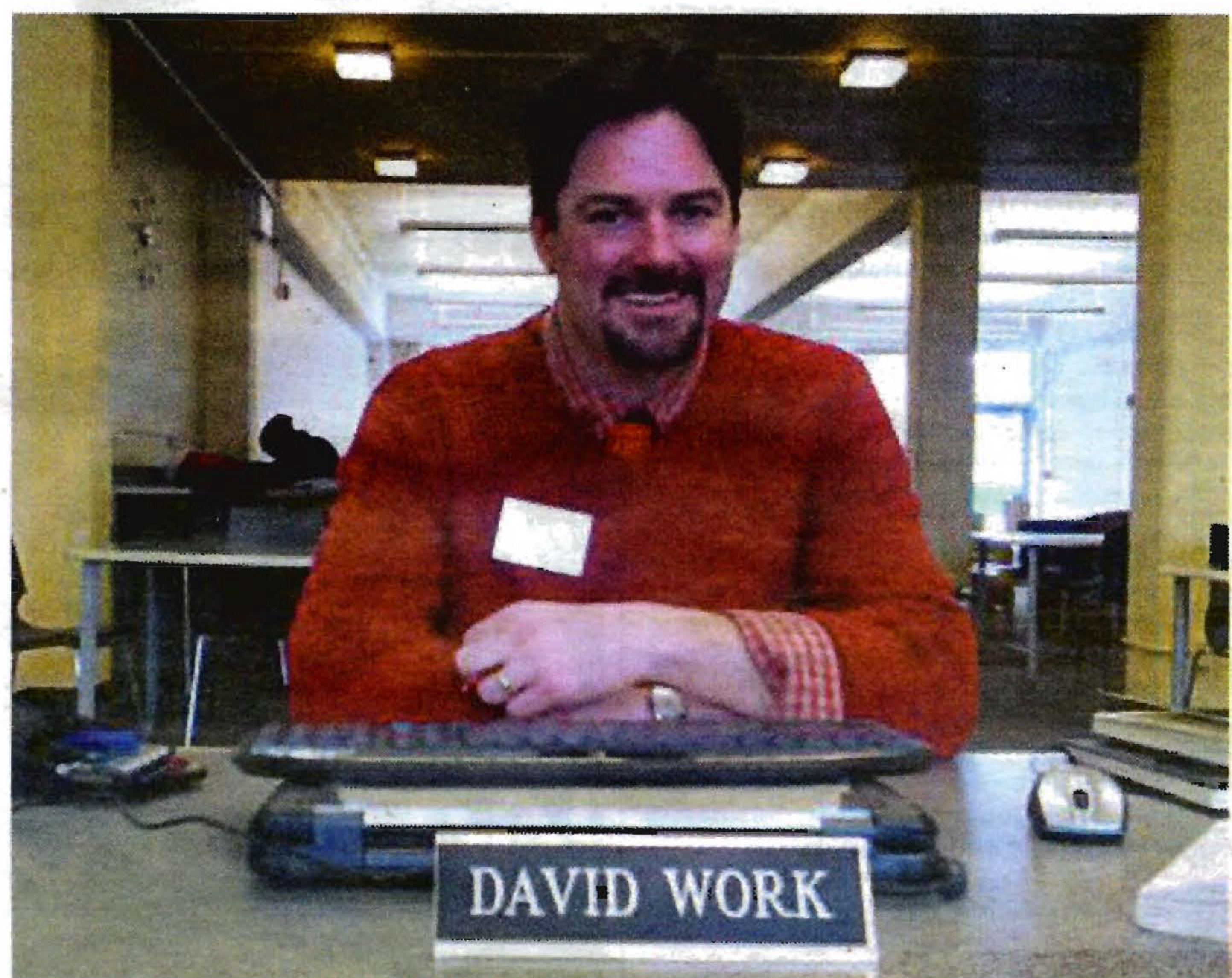
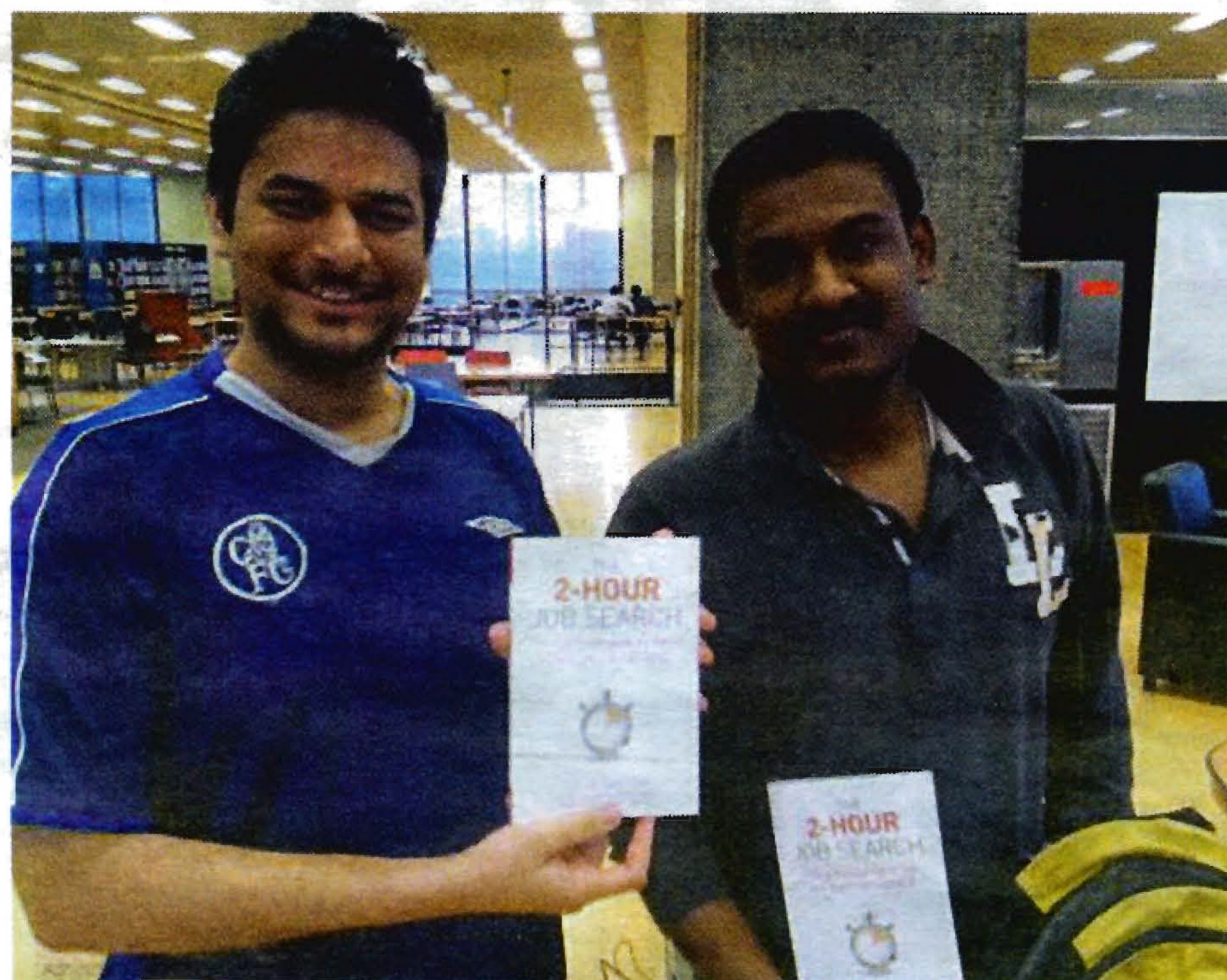
He pushes the ethos and assembles a team based on the notion that we put students first. “Students first! Students first! Students first! That’s essentially the mantra we work with. Although it sounds like the official motto for all IIT staff, in the Office of Student Access, Success, and Diversity Initiatives (SASDI) and Career Services live it,” he added. Secondly, the Career Services extension is in line with the success section of SASDI. Ensuring that students succeed when they graduate is key in the same way that SASDI has taken various initiatives. They key goal of this organization was previously to get more students into IIT, and currently their goal is ensure that the students of IIT leave successfully into the job market. “We already have a really robust input pipeline and now we want an equally good output pipeline,” is what Work had to say when asked about the workings of the organization.

The success shouldn’t necessarily mean a Fordist economy, but making students options more accessible and clear. For students graduating this May, Work had some sound advice, and this advice was two-fold. His first piece of advice is to book an appointment with Career Services and come see the counselors in a one-on-one session. “Either myself or one of the conventional CMC counselors would be happy to help out,” he exclaimed excitedly. His second piece of advice lies around the book “The Two Hour Job Search.” This book is being handed out to students graduating this May and is a ton of useful information and tips. The book is full of sound advice for job-seekers because clears out conventional clutter and targets. Not only is it full of pointers, but it is so comprehensive and detailed that you need nothing else. It provides you with a protocol to work with and it comes with specific instructions, so you can’t go wrong, and you don’t

have to rely on someone or something else to complement the reading. The book primarily aims at teaching how to get an interview using the internet.

Students are better off reading the book before applying for jobs online and sending résumés into the void. It also teaches you to foster connections with people. Networking is a key skill the book imparts and that is something most people overlook in a social and professional realm. It’s more of a buzzword and cliché these days, so it’s ignored, but it’s actually critical. “It’s actually neologism for what humans have done since the stone age, exchange greetings, socialize, share strengths and competencies and overcome difficulties together,” says Work. The challenge for an IIT student at times is that sometimes we forget the human part of the equation. One must never forget that we learn and do so much in our jobs and internships for the purpose of helping other people, to make this world a better place, and in order to do that we need to meet other people. We need to talk to them and befriend them.

Part of the college experience is refinement of that process, learning how to alter your modes of dress, speech, and action in order to achieve this goal. David goes on to say, “Learning the art of diplomacy is required, and I think diplomacy is getting people to do what you want them to because they want to do it. Which is so much easier if they like you and have their interests aligned with yours.” The final part of the conversation lingered around the next step from here for Career Services. As per Mr. Work and his colleagues’ vision, the next step is to identify best practices and scaling them up, so that the whole student body can be served. This would offer a richer experience to every student at IIT. The markup practice, which has been active for a long time now, currently does quick reviews for a large number of students, but the goal in the near future would be to do a more tailored service on a larger scale. We have a student body of around 6000 people, and roughly a third are taking advantage of Career Services as a feature.



Photos courtesy of David Work