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Campus inclusiveness, college affordability, more take center stage at President, Provost Forum

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COPY EDITOR

Once per semester, Illinois Tech's Student Government Association (SGA) hosts an open event in which students of the university are invited to bring issues of personal importance forward to the institution's president and provost in a public space, seeking answers. Moderated by the sitting SGA president, the semiannual President and Provost Forum involves staff and faculty members far beyond the top floors of IIT Tower, with dozens of individuals in attendance from offices across the university. The first such assembly of this academic year came on Wednesday, November 9, hosted in the Hermann Hall Ballroom during the 12:45 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. lunch hour shared by most Illinois Tech students. Though the official time frame for the event was brief, a broad array of topics was discussed by President Alan Cramb and Provost Frances Bronet in the time provided.

Beginning the President and Provost Forum, SGA president Hamze Leo Sukkar introduced three basic "ground rules," modifying the previously less structured nature

of the gathering. He would alternate between taking in-person questions and reading from those submitted online, rather than covering all online questions first before moving on to those who wished to speak in person. Each topic would be allowed only ten minutes of total discussion (regardless of the number of students wishing to ask about it), presumably an adjustment made to avoid domination by any single topic, something that occurred with printing credit policies in the Fall 2015 semester and with undocumented student grievances in the Spring 2016 semester. Additionally, any student asking a question would only be allowed one follow-up, and any online submission would only be able to spawn one additional discussion from a student in attendance. While that final rule was not strictly adhered to during some topics which generated a natural back-and-forth discussion, the first two were upheld faithfully throughout the Forum.

The first question of the afternoon, from an online submitter, asked what Illinois Tech was doing as a whole to promote the involvement and empowerment of women in STEM. Dr. Mike Gosz, the university's Vice President for Enrollment, was brought up

to the front of the room to discuss the issue, speaking about Illinois Tech's array of summer programs aimed at high school students as a method for recruiting more young women into popular majors offered here. Gosz specifically highlighted a coding camp for young women devised by the Department of Computer Science to encourage interaction with a discipline in which women are currently extremely underrepresented, even in comparison to other typically male-dominated fields. He pointed out that the university hit 33 percent female enrollment from its class of first-year students for the Fall 2016 semester, and explained that a target of 40 percent was set for the near future. Expanding on those topics, Bronet stated that part of the university's push for female recruitment (and general outreach) included a focus on the fact that many of its programs had potential for broad social impact, connected to issues beyond the pure technical knowledge of the degree. She also brought up that multiple department chairs, two academic deans, and the university's own provost (herself) were women, and that Illinois Tech had the capacity to stand as a leader among engineering-focused schools in that regard.

The first in-person question came from a student who began by remarking on the vitriol surrounding domestic politics in the past year (the U.S. presidential election had taken place the day before the President and Provost Forum). Connecting Illinois Tech to an ongoing debate between supporters of unmoderated free speech and campaigners against discriminatory expression, the student asked how the university planned to create an environment that was at once open to people of varying personal identities and discourse which may sometimes question the legitimacy of those identities. Cramb's response focused on the principle of respect, imploring all Illinois Tech students to keep in mind the frame of reference that each person had for their own views when discussing subject matter which they disagreed upon. Bronet said that beyond encouraging students to behave in a mutually respectful fashion, the university itself hoped to inform its own policy decisions on related issues with student input, allowing those enrolled at the institution to shape its approach to accommodating different identities and viewpoints.

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Protesters clog downtown streets in opposition to Trump's election win



Photos edited for obscenity

Photos by Andrew Adams