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Faculty, staff, students prepare for Homecoming 2016

Olumurewa Oguntade
TECHNEWS WRITER

Annually at Illinois Tech, there are two main departments that work together to program events for the week-long Homecoming celebration. The first is the Office of Campus life, which focuses mostly on weekday events for students, many of which are co-planned by Union Board. This year includes a movie screening, a Hawks Coffeehouse event, a Scavenger Hunt, Laser Tag, and the Homecoming Carnival on Saturday. The other department, the Office of Institutional Advancement and Alumni Relations, is in charge of the actual Homecoming events for alumni that take place over the weekend such as the Young Alumni Reception, the 50th Reunion Breakfast with President Alan W. Cramb, the Golden Society Reunion, the All-Alumni Party and Spirit Day celebration, and the 25th Reunion Gathering.

In addition to these separate events,

in the celebration of Homecoming at Illinois Tech, there are a few events that unite both students and alumni, ranging from general admission events to exclusive events, which require preregistration.

The most noteworthy, considering its status as a recent addition and its accessibility to the most students, is the 'Open Houses and Tours' event, scheduled to take place from 3:30 to 4:45 p.m. on Saturday. Alumni will be shown around the various schools on campus, their respective facilities, and will be briefed on the college's history at the Galvin Library Archives. This provides them the opportunity to learn about the latest happenings in the colleges, their curriculum and facility developments, and may provide them the chance to view student work. For students, it will be an opportunity to network with professionals in their respective fields, and since this year's homecoming includes the celebration of the 1st Reunion of the Class of 2015—another recent addition to the program—there is the possibility that these professionals will be old

friends and classmates.

Also providing room for alumni and student interaction, though on smaller scales, are the events hosted by alumni affinity groups. These include the Leadership Academy Gathering, the Camras Scholars Reception, the School of Applied Technology Fall Barbecue, the Reunion and Greek Life Barbecue and the African American Alumni Association (4As) Gathering. While the first three are restricted to current members and their alumni only, the others are not.

In addition to formal events, various social and sporting activities are open to attendance by all students and alumni. Among these are the open hours at the Bog, the Women's Volleyball Game on Friday, the Men's Soccer game and the Women's Volleyball Tri-Matches on Saturday. Even the traditionally student-targeted Homecoming Carnival will feature alumni presence at the Spirit Day prize wheel from 46pm. The Second Annual Spirit Day celebration also features a 'Show your Spirit' Photo Contest where students

and alumni get to view and vote on submitted photos; the contest began yesterday and runs daily through to Saturday, September 17.

Though Homecoming is generally meant to celebrate the return of alumni, students have a higher possibility of participation this year due to the coinciding class of 2015 reunion. The class of 2015 reunion means that there is a greater chance of being invited as a guest to accompany an alumni friend to some exclusive events. Kellie Fields, Director of Alumni Relations, encourages students to engage with alumni to any degree they can. She says: "The number one thing I'd encourage students to do is to stop and talk to alumni, because they love that. They like to know what the students are doing and how things have changed since their time here"

For detailed information about homecoming events, visit the Alumni page on the Illinois Tech website.

Carving right through campus, the 31st street bus is back

Soren Spicknall
COPY EDITOR

Prior to 1997, residents of some of Chicago's most culturally distinct neighborhoods were connected by the 31st Street bus, a route that started way out west in Little Village, made its way through Bridgeport and the southern edge of Chinatown, and eventually terminated here in Bronzeville. As some of those neighborhoods fell out of fashion during the golden years of America's love affair with suburbia, economic decline set in, and ridership had dropped so low that the Chicago Transit Board (the legislative body of the Chicago Transit Authority) voted to close the struggling route.

Since the very moment of the closure announcement, activists from across 31st Street corridor neighborhoods have been attempting to lobby the city to restore

the #31 bus route. For more than ten years, their calls went without response, but after gathering some data which showed potential for increased ridership, the CTA piloted a program in 2012 to extend the 35th Street bus up to 31st street for a portion of its route, with the stated intention of using it as a template for further re-establishment of bus infrastructure along 31st. At the time, that pilot program was a point of frustration for most activists, since it only covered a small portion of the old #31 route and did little to connect the vast majority of those who could ride the old route.

Though the 2012 pilot program largely disappointed those pushing for the re-establishment of the 31st street route rather than placating them, it had the unplanned effect of vastly increasing their numbers and organization. Teaming up with a similar effort to bring back an axed portion of the #11 Lincoln Avenue route on the north side,

a coalition of neighborhood organizations stretching from as far south as Jackson Park and as far west as Little Village rallied around the concept of a much larger pilot route for the #31 bus, and starting last week, those cries were officially answered. Following a November 2015 decision by the Chicago Transit Board, a route was constructed stretching from the westernmost edge of Bridgeport over to King Drive here in Bronzeville, connecting two communities historically isolated from each other once more with expanded public transit infrastructure.

Though the pilot program (which is scheduled to run for 6 months to assess the feasibility of making the route permanent once again) is a huge step forward for the CTA31 / CTA11 Crosstown Bus Coalition, it includes a number of route compromises that have drawn criticism, leading some activists to claim the route is "set up to fail". Specifically, the route

doesn't run past 7PM, buses make a detour to 35th along Wentworth Avenue and State Street (meant to pick up customers connecting from the red and green line stations there), and the 31 terminates before reaching 31st Street Beach, a destination for many Bridgeport and Bronzeville residents. Proponents of the current route argue that ridership would be much lower without the L station connections, and that the cool season trial period of the bus route means that a terminus at the beach would only end up costing the CTA more money and make its overall return on investment look worse on paper.

Only time will tell whether the route will succeed, but for now, if you find yourself headed over to Bridgeport, consider hopping on a westbound #31 bus to see if it's worth your while. You can find more information about the route at transitchicago.com/31pilot.



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Photos courtesy of The Bridgeport Alliance