

TechNews

Student newspaper of Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

OPINION 2
CAMPUS 2-3
A&E 4-5
SLIPSTICK 6-7

New campus protest policy causes anger among student activists despite reassurances

Soren Spicknall
COPY EDITOR

"[Students] have recently lost any right to publicly express dissatisfaction with this school."

That sentence, written by student Sanjin Ibrahimovic near the top of a wide-ranging 1990-word post to the Illinois Tech Student Community (ITSC) Facebook group, was the first public sign of simmering discontent over a small new section of the university's Student Code of Conduct which had been the subject of private outcry among campus activists during the preceding week. Ibrahimovic's extended September 15th screed and the comments it attracted touched on a variety of notable campus issues, but they most meaningfully represented the first large-scale discussion of the changes to the Student Handbook which were made prior to this academic year. That discussion and the private ones before it, largely based upon the premise that such changes were made in reaction to protests last semester, set a distrustful and angry tone for student reception to the revised

policy.

On March 3rd of this year, Undocumented Students and Allies (USA), a student organization focused on forwarding access to support and scholarships for Illinois Tech students who reside permanently in the United States but lack citizenship, assembled in the McCormick Tribune Campus Center for their annual "Coming Out of the Shadows" event, sharing stories of barriers to their education and livelihood, both personal and institutional. The group was ejected from the MTCC due to the presence of external news media (who lacked filming permits), but carried on outside on a chilly spring day and eventually marched across campus with a megaphone and an array of banners bearing slogans accusing Illinois Tech of undermining efforts to increase resources for undocumented students. A subset of the group met with university president Alan Cramb at the tail end of that protest to present a list of "demands", and the organization made itself very visible at the Spring 2016 President and Provost Forum the following week to seek public answers to each item on the list.

The Illinois Institute of Technology has typically seen little use of classic campus protest tactics, which are altogether common at many universities, and the actions of USA during the spring semester made them a lightning rod of sorts for conversations about how student input on sensitive topics can be communicated most effectively to administrators. At the time of the demonstrations, the language present in the Code of Conduct covering visible dissent stated that "intentional obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings or other IIT activities and other authorized activities on IIT premises" could be punishable under the Office of Student Affairs' Conduct Discipline procedure. No students involved in either of USA's protest events that semester were disciplined under that policy, but members of the group (and many other students) are concerned that a recent change to the Code of Conduct is intended to provide a basis for reprimand. The new language of the policy, now situated in Section 9 of the code, provides the following definitions for punishable activities:

Inappropriate, disorderly, or disruptive conduct that is unbecoming of an Illinois Tech student. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Yelling, cursing, or causing a disturbance;
- Participating in an on-campus or off-campus demonstration or activity that disrupts the normal operations of Illinois Tech and/or infringes on the rights and opportunities of the members of the Illinois Tech community;
- Intentional obstruction or disruption of teaching, research, administration, disciplinary proceedings or other Illinois Tech activities and other authorized activities on Illinois Tech premises; and
- Leading or inciting others to disrupt scheduled and/or normal activities in the classroom or in any campus building or areas.

Continued on Page 3

International Students Feature: The Caribbean

Alexandra Detweiler
TECHNEWS WRITER

As the weather gets steadily colder over the next few months, keep in mind that while the transition may be depressing for you, the change of season is a lot harder for those who come from warmer climates. International students from the Caribbean attending Illinois Tech are in for an especially hard time. Cady Rodney, an international student from the Caribbean island of Antigua, is used to an average year-round temperature of around 80 degrees Fahrenheit. According to her, "The weather is the biggest thing because the temperature is like 80 and that's it. It doesn't go up or down, it's just that." Sydney Robertson and Arlene Hayes, two students who come from the island of Grenada, agreed with Rodney. Robertson mentioned that her definition of 'hot' weather differed from her peers' by a wide margin. "Most people say 'it's a nice day out, it's hot!' But I'm cold all of the time! Where I come from, it is basically summer all year 'round." According to Robertson, the coldest it ever gets in Grenada is about 68 degrees Fahrenheit. Because of this, the snowy winters at Illinois Tech are something of a scary campfire story. Hayes shed some light on this, saying, "We don't have four seasons, we only have two: wet season and dry season. There is no snow, ever. If it snowed people would probably think it was the apocalypse or something." Rodney experienced her first Illinois winter two years ago and has adjusted somewhat to the cold weather. She had mixed feelings about the snow, however, saying, "It was so beautiful to see, you know, from inside, but when you get into it it's like, 'I want to go home!'" On an optimistic note, Rodney made sure to mention that with the winter also came opportunities that she was not used to, such as ice skating and other winter sports.

From an academic perspective, there are myriad differences between schools in the U.S. and schools in the Caribbean. Robertson is a third year transfer student studying biochemistry who previously attended a community college in Grenada. According to Robertson, "the workload is different" back in Grenada, where homework is given in a more

spaced out interval. In the U.S., Robertson says, "every class [there is either] a test or homework due." But while this point of view might lead an outsider to think that school in the U.S. is more difficult, Rodney believes the opposite to be true. Rodney is a fourth year biology major and completed her associate's degree back in Antigua. In Rodney's opinion, academic life in the Caribbean is more taxing than in the U.S.

did not mean that classes at Illinois Tech were not hard. Rodney continued, "IIT is hard, too. I've had a lot of sleepless nights."

Predictably, differences in diet were also a big point of conversation. Robertson, Hayes, and Rodney all fiercely missed food back in the Caribbean. In Robertson's words, "back home we cook with a lot more spices; less cheese and oil. So I basically just feel like

lots of Indians, and there's a bit of French in the Grenadian background. You can see a lot of that influence in our food." It's no surprise, then, that these three international students are tired of the food they find in America.

Holidays and events here at Illinois Tech are also different. For example, every August in the Caribbean there is a large street festival called Carnival. While Robertson made sure to clarify that it is "not [a] parade in the American sense," it seemed to be something similar. According to Hayes, there are "lots of people, colors, performances, concerts, and music." One particular thing that is commonly featured in this event is a musical instrument originating from Trinidad and Tobago, the steelpan. This event is emulated around the world in different cities, even in Chicago. However, Robertson stated, "I went to a Windy City Carnival, but it was a sad excuse for Carnival." Other than Carnival, there is a lot more emphasis on Christian holidays in the Caribbean due to the high percentage of Christians in the population. According to Hayes, the Caribbean is "highly religious. Probably half of the country is Catholic and half is Protestant." This is obviously a stark contrast from the strong religious diversity here at Illinois Tech. Due to this, there is a lot more participation in holidays like Easter back in the Caribbean. Rodney described this by saying, "We wouldn't get a 'spring break,' but we get a long Easter vacation. When it's Easter, everyone goes to the beach." In contrast, Robertson mentioned that there was one major event that happened here on campus that she had never heard of before. She said, "This homecoming thing? I have no idea. We don't do that at home." So the next time homecoming rolls around, consider inviting a few international friends who may not be familiar with the event.

The days are getting shorter, and this past Wednesday, September 21, was the first day of autumn. If the winter temperatures become depressing, remember Rodney's optimistic perspective: with the snow comes numerous other opportunities. Just remember to remind your peers from warmer climates like the Caribbean to dress appropriately!



Photo by Andrew Adams

She claims that this is "because we're small, they're really trying to 'up the standards' so that we can be recognized by other countries." According to Rodney, teachers are harder on students in her home country because they want to produce smart, high-quality students that will stand out internationally. In her own words, "Here, we are given more instruction. Back home you were basically fighting for yourself. Nobody's spoon-feeding you. You have to take initiative and get the work done." In addition, Rodney mentioned that curves didn't exist in schools back in Antigua, another fact that made tests and exams more challenging. Rodney clarified, "If you got a fifty percent, you got a fifty percent, and that was it." She made sure to be clear, however, that she

"I'm getting fat." While Illinois Tech does make an effort to offer to native Caribbean cuisine every once and awhile, Rodney commented that it was nothing like the real thing back home. According to Rodney, "Sometimes they do try and do Caribbean food, and it doesn't really work all that well. I was surprised, one time I saw them do a Jerk Chicken soup ... I didn't even want to try it. They try, but honestly the food doesn't compare to what it is back home." This might be due to the fact that in the Caribbean, native food has a complex background and is influenced by a multitude of different cultures. Hayes explained, "The food is like a blend of lots of different cultures. Because of the whole slave trade and everything, we have pulled from African heritage, we have