Student reaction to university handbook edit

Wes Ludwig
ILLINOIS TECH STUDENT

It's rare that something as mundane as an amendment to a handbook is such an illustrative reflection of our time; though I suppose the true history of power is written in policy. The recent addition of Section II, subsection A, part 9, clause d to the IIT student handbook, along with II.A.9.c. opens students who participate in or organize disruptive demonstrations to disciplinary actions from IIT including suspension and expulsion. To most, this would seem an unremarkable piece of administrivia. It is. But one must ask, why even go to the trouble of writing it?

Was II.A.9.c. not sufficient to stem the tides of misbehaving students? It will shock no one when I say that IIT does not have a radically mischievous student body. I'm more often impressed by the peacefulness and annoyingly good manners of our students. We sit quietly, take notes, do our homework, and certainly don't complain in ways that might disquiet those who field our complaints; and only then if we can come to the table with at least three solutions to the problem we're having. It isn't clear to me that there is a behavior problem at IIT. The diligence and calm focus required for our chosen pursuits seem to make the IIT campus a place more for contemplation than action; so why then do we need a policy to prevent students from organizing?

The only recent events springing to mind that may have motivated this response would be the two demonstrations of the Undocumented Students and Allies organization, wherein they voiced their grievances in a public campus space and marched to IIT tower to advocate for our undocumented colleagues. I could never imagine that the administration would enact this kind of policy in reaction to a few students in a school recognized organization advocating for otherwise voiceless members of our community; to target specific members of an already vulnerable group would be downright cowardly and underhanded. For that matter wouldn't any popular movement of the IIT student body be legitimized for the sheer fact that it could motivate us to the point of union and action? It must be something else.

This issue of TechNews will post Op.Ed.'s alongside the school's line on the policy, so I am not afforded the luxury of having read IIT's official explanation of their intent in order to craft a response. However, as IIT is currently not in the grips of occupying protesters, we can only assume that this policy is preventative in nature, seeking to fortify the position of the school against foreseen conflict with students.

I personally believe in the importance of civil disobedience and strife in social discourse, and feel that protecting disruptive demonstration reserves a platform for issues that may otherwise go unheard. But before reaching conclusions, we must clarify what exactly we think the role of the student body is in shaping the actions of the university. I find myself quite comfortable having professional managers handle the everyday logistics and operations; that is certainly out of the purview of students. We're quite busy enough with the current course-load, thank you. Similarly so with matters of academics; I can't very well devise program structures and lesson plans for things I yet know little about, so I'll leave it to our excellent professors.

What then of the university is left to the students? Ourselves, as it were; this is the philosophy that defines the role of student government at IIT. The only authority that SGA has is over the regulation of student organizations, which is quite important, but does not come close to influencing the actions of our Institute. While it is true that SGA members occasionally advise members of administration, SGA itself (and no student, or student group for that matter) has any decision-making power, shared or autonomous. The administration is fastidious in surveying and soliciting feedback; however, we as students have no way of ensuring that important issues are addressed, or changes made.

In certain cases (the attempted removal of student rights for example) it becomes necessary for the student body to bend administration to their will. Disruption and bad press are among the most effective means to both spread awareness of a problem, and force institutional action. This policy serves to further limit student agency, at a point where I didn't think there was much left to limit. By intimidating potential actors with the promise of disciplinary action for simply wanting change, this policy seeks to kill student organization far in advance, strangling even the dim hope that someday there will be a popular movement at IIT to change something. That's how this little piece of administrivia makes me feel: hopeless.

This comes in the midst of an election that has abandoned all pretense of being related to policy, effectively reducing citizens' roles in government to that of consumers and perpetuators (don't forget to like and subscribe) of spectacle and scandal. The message of either campaign is clear: you will take what we give you; because you wouldn't want the other one to win, would you? IIT's administration, much like the US government, feels no need to include its substituents as participants; in fact, our silence makes their jobs easier. If we don't make noise, they don't have to come check on baby. That kind of relationship allows for s**t to pile up.

In the university we cannot afford to be only passive consumers, if only because then no change will ever be made to benefit the students. The free market notion of voting with your dollars doesn't work here; none of us will up and leave our university to start fresh somewhere else because we didn't like something about it. We simply don't have that kind of financial security. We're a generation that shoulders astronomical debt before we can legally drink. And while this situation is not of IIT's making, it doesn't seem that they have any qualms about reaping the benefits of this trend. When something like this comes along, it makes me question: are we not already so thoroughly owned? IIT already has most of us for the next ten years of our incomes; do they also need to own our scholastic agency and hopes for shaping the future of this institute?

This kind of policy makes me question my value to IIT. Am I no more than the debt that I can take on, the numbers that I can put up in donations after I graduate? Is our voice as students so worthless to administration that this kind of silencing can be codified, and are we so beaten down as a generation that we will stand idly by while it happens? I'm a hopeless man, so it is apparent to me that the answer is yes. But I would so love to be proven wrong by the unified actions of the students.

CAMPUS

Career Services hosts Fall 2016 career fair

Abhinaya Iyer
TECHNEWS WRITER

Kids dream about becoming different people in life: starting from a princess or a prince when they are five, to a scientist or president when they are ten, an artist or author when they are fifteen, to finally selecting a major in college. A student's major in college helps them decide a career and what they wish to be in their professional life. But to be able to get there, students have to go through a path filled with learning, interviews, and multiple jobs; whether it's an internship or part-time job, they all take students one step closer to success. However, finding a job isn't easy in today's world of high-caliber competition.

Illinois Tech makes the job-finding task easier by setting up a career fair every semester for the students, whether they are graduating students looking for a job or ongoing students looking for summer internships. The career fair for the Fall semester of 2016 was hosted on September 21 in Herman Hall and Crown Hall, the latter space being specifically catered to architecture students. The career fair began at noon and went on until 4 in the afternoon.

Many students spent all morning preparing speeches and dressing professionally, be it in suits or in skirts. All levels of students, ranging from freshman to graduate students, attended the career fair with hopes of a promising career. At Crown Hall a few prominent firms, like Wright Heerema Architects (who were one of the

Photo courtesy of Career Services

crowd favorites) were there, along with the American Institute of Architects (who have a student chapter here at Illinois Tech). RGLA Solutions was another firm that seemed to captivate the crowd with its commercial work in the field of designing stores and outlets, looking for greener ways to design efficient buildings. "IIT has some bright students and we are more than happy to be here," quoted one of the interviewers, while speaking with a fourth-year student.

Meanwhile at Herman Hall, Illinois Tech's future engineers, computer scientists, and more were working their charm on the present companies, trying to secure an internships or jobs. Grainger and Exelon, which were set up in the building's auditorium, seemed to attract a huge crowd and were very popular among ITM students. U.S. Cellular, which was set up in the Expo, was also very popular among international students in the fields of programming and telecommunications. GrubHub was another employer that was popular among Java coders and Computer Engineering students. Hanley, Flight & Zimmerman, whose motto is "a seasoned intellectual property firm with innovative value," seemed quite content with the students' answers to questions about skill sets relevant to their technical work. A few graduate schools were present at the career fair, giving students a moment to ponder further education and its positive sides. There were also the U.S. Marines, Army and Air Force programs present, talking to students about lucrative programs and career opportunities open to them.

On the whole, the career fair was deemed a success by most participants, opening new professional horizons to many students for their lives ahead.