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TechNews

Student newspaper of Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

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Photos by Jamshid Tokhirov

International Students Feature: France

Alexandra Detweiler
TECHNEWS WRITER

When international students are interviewed for this section of TechNews, food is almost always the first thing to come up. This week, Marie Thomas, a first year graduate student studying materials science, and Laure Delisle, a first year graduate student studying data science, were asked about the differences between their home in France and their life at Illinois Tech. Predictably, the diet was the first thing discussed. Thomas stated right off the bat that the food was much sweeter than she was used to. Things like brownies, cakes, and cookies used a lot more sugar here than in France. Delisle agreed with her. "It's super sweet here!" she commented. "I baked a cake the French way and gave it to some American people and they did not like it." Common desserts in France, according to Delisle and Thomas, include yogurt and fruit. Even the drinks are sweeter here: in families like Delisle's and Thomas', soda is a rare thing. Instead, water or sparkling water is served with meals. Delisle elaborated by saying, "We don't do soda a lot.

When you're partying, you buy soda, but we don't buy soda on a daily basis." An additional difference, according to Delisle, is the lack of bread. She is used to buying a fresh baguette every day so that bread can be served at every meal. Appetizers, too, are missing from American meals. "We always start the meal with [an appetizer]," Delisle explained, "and then move on to the main meal." Appetizers in France can be as simple as some carrots, but are essential the meal routine.

Both Thomas and Delisle attended university in France, and therefore commented quite a bit on the differences between the two. Firstly, the two differ drastically in price. According to Thomas, university in France is only about 300 Euros, or about 340 US Dollars, per year. The workload is also different between the two countries. When Thomas attended university in France, she had next to no homework at all. "In my school, there were no assignments," she explained. "just an exam, and that's all." According to Delisle, a student in France is expected to study by themselves, using things such as quizzes and exams as reference material. "You

get practice because you do exercises in class, they're just not graded," Delisle continued. On another note, Thomas and Delisle say that the atmosphere is different in classrooms in each country. It is considered rude for students in France to wear things like hats and pajamas in class. "You cannot enter the school if you're wearing flip flops," Delisle explained. Thomas also expressed her confusion, saying, "Here, people are wearing caps and hats in class. In France, it's rude to wear something inside." In addition, students in France are not supposed to eat or drink in class, even water. Therefore, Delisle and Thomas were confused at the number of water bottles they saw in Illinois Tech classrooms. "I'm just glad I can bring coffee into class," Delisle admitted, "because I need coffee." Conversely, while this may paint French classrooms as a formal environment, the two French students commented on the fact that they were used to students chatting in class - even while the teacher is speaking. In the US, the students are a lot more silent, perhaps because of a stronger relationship between students and teachers. "In France," Thomas clarified, "teachers don't care about the

students. They speak, you write, and that's all." Delisle agreed with Thomas, mentioning that "teachers are friendly here. ... It's interactive here, you can ask questions."

As would be expected, the general way in which people act is also different. According to Thomas, "people are less friendly in France." In Delisle's words, French people are "less enthusiastic about everything. It's exhausting, because I'm trying to be on the same level [as Americans]. We don't make that much comment, we are more reserved. People here think we are rude, because we are not as expressive as they are. People want to know a lot about you, they want to know your 'fun fact.'" Delisle also mentioned that while she didn't consider herself a shy person at all, in America she feels like the shyest person in the room.

Next week, look for an international student feature on your peers from Central Asia!

TechNews

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Response to university administration's justification for new addition to protest policy

Wes Ludwig

ILLINOIS TECH STUDENT

Having had the opportunity to read the information from Dean Stetz in Soren's piece last week, I'd like to once again offer my comments. The addition in question: II.A.9.d in the handbook section outlining the student code of conduct was added as part of a larger effort to update the language of the handbook motivated by the need to maintain compliance with Title IX regulations for gender and sex discrimination. The manner in which these edits were carried out illustrates my concern for the role of the student in decision making at IIT. These changes were made in a meeting that didn't solicit student representation, let alone input, and were confirmed and added to the handbook autonomously. I understand the often prohibitive effort that attempting to get an uninterested party's input takes, discussion of policy especially is often mind-numbing. However, these changes do affect the liberties of the student body and as such I think that they could have at least been pointed out in a meaningful way, rather than left to the students to find and collectively imagine the worst in a vortex of Facebook angst. But hindsight is irrelevant. How will we now move forward having seen the displeasure, concern, and fear that this caused for students?

I will allay discussion of the specific problems of interpretation that the policy raises for now in order to propose a series of ideas on how the school could more effectively represent the interests of the student body in these types of institutional decisions. But first, a comment on a statement that was attributed to Dean Stetz in last week's article (referring to students concerned with the intentions of the new policy, and its possible effects on student rights) "when there's a group of people who don't trust, I don't know to respond in a way that will build that trust." I don't think that the relationship between a student and

administrator should be one of trust. I cannot trust an administrator to hold my interests above their own, because if the choice were between the interests of the students and the interests of investors, it's safe to assume that administrators will choose to keep their salaries over losing their jobs. We shouldn't be asked to just believe in our hearts that administrators won't choose to use vague policy to silence groups and individuals. We shouldn't be asked to imagine a totally different set of rules than those that are laid out because of how we're told something will be handled in practice. Ours should be a relationship of mutual respect, and that respect should be apparent in the way that our input is sought out and manifested as well as in written policies on how the university can treat its students. I should not have to take an administrator's word that something seemingly indiscriminate in its application will be applied with great concern and sensitivity. I won't, I don't believe they're capable of doing so. With that being said, my suggestions follow:

A collection of areas of concern should be determined by SGA and the Office of Student Affairs (OSA): areas which pertain to interests of the student body, as such they will require a student representative to be present or to be consulted before ratifying any institutional change in those areas. These representative positions could be distributed within SGA or PSAC as seen fit, and could fall to the appointment of SGA administrators (these appointments should not be under the control of professional administration).

A permanent position (or multiple to represent undergraduate as well as graduate students) should be made on the Board of Trustees for a student representative, likely a high ranking officer from SGA. This position will hold equal voting weight with the other board members and can be used to introduce issues for action.

I would now like to turn my attention to the issues of the policy itself. It may be a lawyer's advice to keep wording as vague

and encompassing as possible so as to allow for the most maneuverability in any case of application; that's what I would do if I wanted to create a system where I can win regardless of actual circumstance. That principle has been faithfully applied to this policy, focused on the word disruption, which is at no point further defined in order to give a frame of reference for enforcement. In fact, Dean Stetz's defense of the policy is only her good word that the kind members of administration will only deign to enforce this nebulous policy when it suits them. My apologies, that is "when an action was unsafe". Why then is it that the word unsafe, or danger, or violence never appear in the language of the policy? When the only way that a policy makes sense is to not enforce it, what good is the policy (other than as a convenient back door for the university to separate itself from undesirables)? The only sign of good faith that the OSA could offer now is a collaborative rewrite with representatives of student government.

To the student who commented anonymously about vocal protest possibly devaluing his education in Spicknall's article last week:

You should thank protesters for the free service they provide in educating you on what I imagine is a much needed outside perspective. If we can't be bothered to even literally hear the complaints of our own colleagues and contemporaries, we deserve no place as decision makers and actors of change in society. Our education is (unfortunately in our world) a privilege, and we have an obligation to use our privilege to help others.

I do hope that other students, faculty, and administrators will offer their own opinions against (or with) mine, so that we may have a discussion on these important considerations of the relationship between our academic, administrative, and political realities. I will continue to offer my opinions on these matters and I hope others will join me.

CAMPUS

Kappa Phi Delta holds fundraiser for breast cancer awareness

Andrew Adams

TECHNEWS WRITER

Anyone walking through MTCC last week would have seen tables of old clothes, assorted used knick knacks, and other odds and ends, all hanging under a sign that read "Kappa Klearance." This strange assortment of items were being sold by Kappa Phi Delta, as part of their annual campaign to raise support for breast cancer research and awareness: Paint IIT Pink. All the proceeds from Kappa Klearance went to Lurie Children's Hospital.

According to Kyra Keigher and Madina Tahmas, two women who helped run the sale, this is the second time that Kappa Phi Delta has held a garage-sale style event. "We

were giving away a lot of old clothes anyway, so we figured we should put them to good use," said Tahmas. According to Keigher and Tahmas, the sale went well, which can be explained both by people supporting the cause and by people simply needing a good deal on a sweater - which was apparently the top seller.

Paint IIT Pink will continue across the next week. The campaign, according to a post on the Facebook page for the event, is "focused on honoring breast cancer survivors and fighters, and also raising money for breast cancer research." The week will continue with more fundraising opportunities, including sales of raffle tickets, baked goods, and support pins. T-shirts to support the campaign will be sold until October 10. All proceeds from these

sales go to the Lynn Sage Foundation. The week will also feature online posts showing stories of those who have had breast cancer. For those seeking more information about that, email womensappreciation@kappaphidelta.com.

The campaign will culminate at the Illinois Tech Women's Volleyball game, called Dig Pink, on October 11. There, prizes will be raffled off and there will be a display of luminaria to honor the fighters and supporters of breast cancer. The event's page intimates that there will be more festivities and honors at the half-time of the game. Nearly 100 people were marked "interested" or "going" on the Facebook page for this event, making this an event worth watching out for.



Photo by Andrew Adams

Lewis College hosts Kevin Elliott to speak on the importance of values in science

Reno Waswil
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

Science is held by a good many people, to be an objective—or at least one of the most objective—practices in which we can engage. It is for this reason that often it is seen as advantageous or even necessary to remove personal, social, and commercial values from the process.

Kevin Elliott, an associate professor at Lyman Briggs College at Michigan State University and author whose book, “A Tapestry of Value: Inevitability and Social Goals,” being released January 2017, argues against this notion. He presented his arguments to the Illinois Tech populous in a talk hosted by Lewis College of Humanities in the Rettaliata Engineering Center (Crawford) Auditorium entitled “Values in Science: How to Throw Out the Bathwater and Keep the Baby,” on Friday, September 23, at which ample refreshments were provided, drawing in students and faculty alike.

Elliott began the presentation proposing two projects for the talk: defending “science values” and arguing that values should not be excluded from the process of doing science. Values, he defines, are desirable qualities or states either of a personal or societal nature, such as positive health, environmental protection, etc. The problem, as well as much of the criticism, comes when these values start to influence scientific reasoning.

He lists some popular examples for how valuation has been of detriment to science: citing studies showing that over half of research fail reproductions and instances of design bias, publication bias, falsification of data, and misleading rhetoric. He also spoke to the all too well known cases of corporate biasing of science, such as has been committed by certain pharmaceutical and pesticide companies about the effectiveness and harm of their products as well as by the tobacco industry about the dangers of the substance.

However, Elliott claims that values, in addition to being unavoidable in some sense, have a huge relevance to scientific work given the role of science in society. By the nature of values, they often result in research being done to fit social priorities. It may be said that scientists have something of an obligation on what questions to focus their attention. What is studied possibly has a huge social impact, and choosing what to study (maximizing the yield of a crop,) how to study it (how long to run the experiment, scales,) and how to interpret the available data (whether it is better in any given situation to overestimate or underestimate effects) are all questions that require evaluation.

Thus, Elliott proposed, instead, for a focus on three criteria for the evaluation of science that will, ideally, help with the negative effects of valuation within it: transparency, reproducibility, and critical review. He then proceeded comment on each one.

For transparency, he concluded that the attempts at it has had mixed success. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) enacted in 2007 that all pharmaceutical companies were required to register all of their trials after reporting results. The effectiveness of this suffered due to spotty compliance, exceptions from this act, limited requirements within the act itself, and that it was not retroactive. Attempts have been, according to Elliott, even less effective in chemical safety as well as other sectors where it is necessary.

As for reproducibility, there is an interesting dynamic where industry laboratories actually have more reproducible data than independent/academic ones due to more access to funding. However, Elliott said that there are problems even with this, arguing that “results can be reproducible without addressing the questions being asked.” Inadequate endpoints, doses, and lack of population variability in experiments severely limit the real world applications of many of this research. As an example, he cited that although a few academic tests, particularly one published in *Andrology*, have shown endocrine disruptive effects associated with Bisphenol-A (BPA), very little is being done because the vast majority of journal accepted results are the ones being done by industry that do not show these effects. These are signs of a systematic problem with the way experimental results are being verified and accepted.

As a response to these issues, Elliott

proposed the necessary practice of critical review in quality controlling research, with an emphasis on the word critical. This can be best done with oversight from boards of qualified individuals making sure that the research and results that are approved are up to snuff and are, more importantly, relevant to the questions that they are proposing.

Strengthening critical review relies on strengthening the involvement of regulatory agencies, advisory boards and panels, and funding boards and governments. These organizations can—and should—focus more on informatively deciding what studies are good studies, and making sure that the criteria for being so do not discount academic and independent researchers or studies that are actually relevant in comparison to ones that may seem more reproducible at face value.

Elliott concluded by reaffirming that he firmly believes that science should try to exclude values, but needs to be scrutinizing them with effective critical review. There are numerous limitations, he admits, as nearly two-thirds of scientific funding comes from industry, which makes legitimate review much more difficult to impose. However, he sees this as the best method to ensure science can thrive given its heavy role in society.

ITT's abrupt closure may permanently put decades-long confusion to rest

Steven Milan Moreno
TECHNEWS WRITER

For years, the acronym for Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) has been confused with that of another, more well-known institution. Many have seen the commercials on TV: “ITT Technical Institute, education for the future.” For over twenty years since the for-profit college started airing commercials, the two institutions have been easily mistaken for one another. Many students here at IIT may know from first-hand experience that this confusion is widespread among the general population. This is never more obvious than when students are asked by loved ones or friends which college they are attending. The student must reluctantly either use the full name of the university or use the acronym but then specify that it is different from the one on television. Even Google, known for its

accurate searches, has trouble discerning the two schools as links to IIT can be found when searching ITT and vice versa.

With this ever growing problem of confusion and misidentification, the school has begun the transition from IIT to Illinois Tech, which has steadily caught on amongst students and faculty alike. The transition to this new shorthand term for the university still has a long way to go, as numerous signs, advertisements, and logos seen across the campus still bear the IIT acronym. The confusion between ITT Technical Institute and IIT may soon come to an end, however, as recent developments suggest that one player is out of the running for good.

Last month, ITT Technical Institute shut down all of its nationwide campuses and their online computer servers without so much as a warning. This has left many of their enrolled students questioning their

future as their college has left them up a creek without a paddle. The collapse was not without warning signs, however, as the school in recent years had been plagued with numerous complaints from students, declining enrollment numbers, and investigations by the court system for suspected fraud on the part of the school's executive board. Many of these problems created a negative reputation for the school in recent years, something IIT Office of Admissions wanted no ties or connection to whatsoever. With the end of the for-profit school and their barrage of commercials on television, the confusion may soon pass with time as ITT Technical Institute fades away from mainstream knowledge.

The use of IIT may still prove to be a problem internationally however, as the acronym is shared by another institution in the country of India: The Indian Institute of Technology. While it is usually unheard of in

the United States, the same cannot be said for the one billion people living in India. With over 60,000 students and 23 campuses across this large and populous country, the school is a behemoth when compared to our relatively small university, with a student population of less than 8,000. In addition to the IIT in India, the acronym is used by several other smaller universities and colleges around the world such as the Institute of Investigative Technology in Madrid, Spain and the Islamic Institute of Toronto in Canada. Even here in the United States, the acronym is also used by the Indiana Institute of Technology. All of these schools lack the mainstream knowledge of existence, and therefore are nowhere as near a problem for Illinois Tech as ITT Technical Institute has been for the past two decades.

RHA hosts night of dancing, casino games at annual boat cruise



Photos by Jamshid Tokhirov

biITcoin and the Blockchain Education Network team up with WIIT at the Chicago Bitcoin Airdrop

Reno Waswil
DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

The Blockchain Education Network (BEN) is a grassroots network that promotes and empowers students and schools around the world in educational initiatives in their campuses and communities. On Saturday, September 24, BEN partnered with Illinois Tech student organizations biITcoin and WIIT by way of Dev Bharel, the president of the former, to put on the “Chicago Bitcoin Airdrop.” The event was meant to complement similar airdrops done all around the country, such as at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and the University of Florida, but on a slightly larger scale.

The course of the event spanned about eleven to twelve hours in total, and included a “street teams”—made up of Bharel along with students Patrick Bartman, Siddarth Ramesh, and Dominik Wiegel (who, as per the

name “Airdrop,” brought with him a remote control drone)—and a “studio team”—made up of students and WIIT personnel Jordan Mynes and Reno Fera-Ducatt.

The street team’s goals were to spread educational information about Bitcoin, the popular cryptocurrency, and blockchain, the public ledger over which Bitcoin transactions take place. Furthermore, they would guide participants through the process of setting up their first Bitcoin wallets on site, if applicable. They did not limit their span to Illinois Tech, but traveled around the city, spending time at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Student Center East, the Depaul Lincoln Park Campus Student Center, and the University of Chicago Reynolds Club.

As this happened, the studio team remained broadcasting live for over ten straight hours via WIIT 88.9 FM terrestrial and online radio streaming from the A. Sidney Katz studio. This offered an outlet to the event for those that could not take part in-person,

including keeping listeners up-to-date with how it was going, and providing a platform for discussion and education for listeners by way of in-depth interviews and trivia with people calling into the station.

The street team started their exploits on the McCormick Tribune Campus Center (MTCC) Bridge at about 10 a.m., and the radio team began soon afterwards. Spending two to three hours at each destination, the street team encouraged passing patrons to take part in an educational discussion, which included explaining to them how they could set up a Bitcoin wallet on their phone. If they elected to work through the process right there with them, participants were even given about \$6 worth of free Bitcoin to their new wallet care of the BCN, hence calling the event an airdrop.

On the radio end, between songs from a playlist curated by Mynes, he and Fera-Ducatt had very interesting conversations over the studio phone with notable members in the Blockchain community and relatively

uninitiated persons, alike. Their callers included Dean Masley—executive director of the BCN—as well as Dawn Newton—manager at wallet naming service “Nextki”—and many more. In addition to this, they heard from relatively bitcoin-uninitiated listeners who called in for a chance to win about \$25 worth of bitcoin by answering trivia question related to the topic. They would also occasionally get on-site check-ins from the street team by way of either phone calls or via the mobile broadcasting device they brought with them.

After over ten hours of conducting the event, both teams congregated at Illinois Tech’s RET Center Auditorium at 8:30 p.m. for food, a recap presentation, and a “Bitcoin 101” event put on by biITcoin and presented by Bharel. This was the last chance people had to set up their wallets and get before finally closing what came together to be a successful though tiring event.



Photos courtesy of Reno Waswil

President Student Advisory Council meets to discuss ideas, plans for Fall 2016

Annie Zorn
ASSISTANT EDITOR

This past Thursday afternoon marked the first President Student Advisory Council Meeting (PSAC) for the 2016-2017 school year. The PSAC is a committee of representatives from different aspects of student life such as Athletics and Greek Life that gather with the President and Provost monthly to address their concerns and ideas about improving campus and the relationship between students and administration. 12 PSAC members along with President Cramb and Provost Bronet talked about 3 issues: Student Issue and Ticketing System, Transparency in policy changes, and involvement with developing areas of Chicago.

The first topic in the meeting was brought up by Gabriel Conners. He discussed

creating a new ticketing platform for student input on issues that would work in a similar way to maintenance or OTS tickets. The main objective would be to have a channel for students who have concerns but don’t know how to go about solving them. The following discussion was primarily about logistics and how the system could realistically be implemented either through a tab on MyIIT or its own website. The President and Provost liked the idea but stressed the importance of making benchmarks, having the system be transparent, and filtering out individual issue in favor of larger, more general matters. President Cramb mentioned contacting the Staff Advisory Chair, Jacqueline Anderson, about collaborating on the idea.

The next topic was brought up was a desire to have more transparency from the administration when it comes to making policy changes. There were some issues such

as feeling as though the updated alcohol policy was treating students unfairly or that the new student handbook was barring students from their right to protest. After clarification by the President and Provost the board decided that the main problem that needs to be addressed in all of this is the issue of communication. Provost Bronet mentioned that sometimes the administration may not be aware of what can cause an issue and that communication, possibly through the PSAC, SGA, or another student group can make sure that students voices are being heard. President Cramb said that he is very interested in feedback from students when it comes to policymaking.

The last topic to be brought up was about how Illinois Tech can be more involved with the surrounding community. President Cramb mentioned the current efforts of the university to connect with the community and gave contacts so that the board could work on

finding a way for students to get more involved with these community outreach programs. Conners brought up the idea of having a “community corner” to inform students and community members about what is going on with each other and have a way for the neighbors to be more involved. Provost Bronet showed her support for the idea of having a community corner, talking about how it aligned with her idea of “make the invisible visible”.

The meeting ended with the president concluding that the topics discussed were important and open-ended enough that the PSAC could spend the rest of the semester on them. President Cramb and Provost Bronet suggested that they divide into subcommittees to efficiently get the work done. The next meeting will be sometime next month and the PSAC will meet before then to discuss next steps.

Student Government Association calls for student volunteers to join committees

Ethan Castro
SGA SENATOR

It is an unfortunate conclusion that the Illinois Tech Student Government Association (SGA) lacks sufficient transparency or clear communication in its projects and functions. There is definitely some merit to this claim. SGA lacks a formally recognized forum for inputting feedback, and regular SGA meetings are at a somewhat inconvenient time (Wednesday nights at 9:15 p.m.) This conception is one issue that SGA hopes to address in the upcoming semester, as expressed by Executive Vice President Sonia Kamdar. One of her primary directives for SGA this year is to “increase SGA’s impact and transparency by dedicating a committee to work on events and advertising and by utilizing several means of communication with the student body.” Thus, a new project from the SGA Communication Committee will be to regularly feature updates on committee projects in every issue of TechNews. First, we should get to know each committee of SGA and the scope of their projects. Each senator is to pick from one of these four SGA committees and from there, decide on an individual project to work on and document. In addition

to representing their individual colleges, SGA senators take on campus-wide projects from one of the four Committees: Academic Affairs, Student Life, Communications, and Events.

Led by Vice President of Academic Affairs, Akash Raina, the Academic Affairs Committee of SGA “essentially deals with any matter that affects the academic experience on campus,” as stated by Raina himself. For example, “the committee recently proposed that quizzes and exams may not be held during career fair hours, which should be in effect very soon [...] Some of the projects our senators are working on are increasing printing funds for architecture students and expanding flexibility when it comes to checking out books from the library.” Although it can be a thankless and sometimes heavily bureaucratic commitment, the Academic Affairs Committee of SGA is an invaluable asset in addressing students’ key experience as members of Illinois Tech, their formal education.

Qianran He is the Vice President of the Student Life Committee, which in her eyes “solves most of the real life problems around us.” Student Life is focused on improving the day-to-day living conditions around campus, from developing the HAWKi app to changing the school shuttle pick up locations, or just adding a whiteboard in MSV. Basically any

problems or ideas Illinois Tech students have in their daily life could be set as one of our projects to work on.” One current project He’s senators hope to tackle is the revival of a student discount card, offering discounts to Illinois Tech students among local restaurants and shops. Between Academic Affairs and Student Life, SGA hopes to facilitate avenues for change across every level of this university.

The Communications Committee of SGA is responsible for the direct image of SGA among the surrounding community both on and off this university’s campus. This distinction is an important one to make, as it is a goal of Vice President of Communications Jelani Cauty. Cauty sees it as an obligation of Communications to expand the role and availability of SGA “not only within the scope of Illinois Tech, but within Chicago as well.” Specific projects to carry out this initiative include collaborations with student organizations through an ongoing SGA senator liaison project and local community volunteer opportunities. Cauty himself is currently in an open dialogue with the local Boys and Girls Club of Chicago to create new volunteer opportunities to link together the entire campus. Similarly, the very writing of this article is another such effort by Communications to more directly engage

the student body, which is the overall goal of Communications.

Finally, the newly created Events Committee of SGA hopes to establish regular events, both casual and professional, meant to push SGA as a visible, available, and approachable organization. This Committee is still looking for a Chair to lead it, but SGA President Hamze Leo Sukkar is confident that this committee, alongside the ongoing projects of the aforementioned committees, will help to break the illusion of SGA as a secretive and inaccessible organization.

However, these committees do not work alone. Elected senators are held to an expectation of working in a chosen committee and documenting their project progress, but these projects always welcome volunteers. As President Sukkar himself says, “[volunteers’] role is vital, and we need volunteers who could be interested in joining the Events Committee, among others. The committee can function at its best with larger numbers and we are still looking for passionate volunteers/members to help us ‘navigate the uncharted seas’ with a new established committee.” Moving forward and as a senator myself, I hope and will work to ensure that SGA grows in its visibility and project impact. The creation of articles such as this is simply one step in that process.

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Reviews:

Bon Iver opens up a new world on long-awaited third album "22, A Million"

Soren Spicknall

WIIT STATION MANAGER

In the time that Bon Iver has lain dormant, it's clear that Justin Vernon has been paying close attention to the masters of modern songcraft. It seems strange to say such a thing about somebody who is often considered a modern master in his own right, but the sentiment rings true: his new album, under the moniker which birthed his fame, bears stylistic flourishes similar to many contemporary artists of note, ranging from Dan Deacon to alt-J to Jamie xx. Combined with the cathartic, folk-rooted songwriting style Bon Iver has embodied from its debut back in 2007, this year's "22, A Million" is a statement of continued musical progress for the project's central figure, and a landmark moment for the music of 2016.

When Vernon announced Bon Iver's hiatus in 2011, the group was still primarily associated publicly with bedroom-scale folk and forested landscapes. 2007's *For Emma, Forever Ago* was well documented for its wilderness cabin writing and recording process, and a Midwestern sense of loneliness pervaded much of the project's early works. Behind the intimate overall atmosphere of Bon Iver's music, though, was a full tapestry of layers that was expanded upon the recording of *Bon Iver* in 2011, an album that counted collaborators as accomplished as experimental saxophonist Colin Stetson among its ten accompanying musicians. In concert, the band was a force that left crowds in awe, executing the full orchestrated scale of its compositions in beautifully-rendered live form. The earworm "Skinny Love", which initially launched Vernon's career, quickly became akin to Radiohead's "Creep", an awkward sideshow shoved in the middle of a much more musically accomplished overall picture.

At the time that Bon Iver was becoming more present in the world, Vernon was experimenting with his love of the 1980s in projects like the 22-person R&B collective Gayngs and his own song "Best/Rest", and was collaborating with artists as distinct from his own pigeonholed style as Kanye West. He went after high-concept arena rock with Volcano Choir (drawn from the musicians of post-rock group Collections of Colonies of Bees). He produced a covers album from long-running gospel group The Blind Boys of Alabama. Since Bon Iver's hiatus, he's kept himself busy with guest appearances (St. Vincent, Colin Stetson, and more) and with creating a nation-



Image courtesy of Bon Iver

al-level annual music festival from scratch in his hometown of Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

As if to reflect how utterly different Vernon's interests can be from the woody image bestowed upon him by his own label's marketing materials back in 2007, every visual aspect of the new album "22, A Million" reflects the polar opposite of the painted nature scenes and soft tones of the past. Its cover is dominated by black, white, orange, and green, adorned with cryptic symbols and pseudo-technological diagrams. The album's initial lyric videos serve very little practical purpose, flitting in and out of glitch-art scenes adorned with words splayed at random across the screen. Each song is named unpredictably, words and numbers twisted with replacement characters that can only be found in the high numbers of alt-keyboard shortcuts. After five years of rest for the name Bon Iver, this new album's contents reflect the changed aesthetic: after experimenting occasionally with a vocoder and synthesizers on previous albums, Vernon has put all his cards on the table with the most am-

bitious collection of songs his career has seen so far. And with so much time and so much anticipation between albums, he gambles the project's legacy on this release. And unreservedly, "22, A Million" succeeds.

The album is brought to life fairly quietly by the song "22 (OVER S_{∞∞∞}N)", a wise sequencing choice for ongoing listeners to the group. The first single from the album, the piece is underpinned by a fairly classic Bon Iver melody that would be at home on the group's last LP, but is upended by the inclusion of modified vocal samples and choppy audio artifacts that might convince a few CD buyers that their players aren't working properly. The real revelation is to come, though, as the following composition introduces the full scale of Bon Iver's transformation into a truly modern project. Titled "10 d E A T h b R E a s T □", the song is more percussive than anything else in the band's discography, and is underpinned by a distorted bassline reminiscent of Sigur Rós's "Brennisteinn", a piece that was as surprising for fans of that group as this one is

for Vernon's. It's followed up by the intensely minimal "715 - CREEKS", which consists entirely of Vernon's voice fed through a vocoder, with harmony count and dynamic contrast relied on exclusively to move the melody along. Though that stark songwriting choice reveals some weaknesses in Vernon's lyrics, it stands impressively as a musical risk for an artist who can certainly afford not to take them.

While "22, A Million" is largely notable for potentially being Bon Iver's "Kid A" moment, redefining what the group stands for musically, under all the electronics are many of the same familiar faces who created the sound that Bon Iver was known for prior to 2016. In fact, many of the album's tracks have fully-orchestrated horn and string sections behind them that could be isolated to create an album very similar to Bon Iver, Bon Iver, most notably mid-album pair "29 #Strafford APTS" and "666 1". Vernon's old banjo even makes an appearance every once in awhile, connecting all the way back to "Skinny Love" in a context that would probably be entirely foreign even to the songwriter himself nine years ago. However, when Vernon samples from a new palette of sounds, he does so with full conviction, most thoroughly evidenced during "21 M□□N WATER", which morphs from ambient to experimentalism and serves as a long intro of sorts for the chill-inducing crescendo of "8 (circle)". The latter song blends R&B sensibilities, late-1980s soft rock instrumentation (Bruce Hornsby is a heavy influence of Vernon's), and a bevy of other elements for a concert-ready masterpiece that retains impressive artistic merit for a song that practically begs to be shouted aloud by 40,000 people at Vernon's own Eau Claire festival.

In a rare feat, Bon Iver has managed to reinvent itself completely naturally, without betraying a single major element of what drew people in to begin with. What's more, that reinvention stands on its own as one of the most technically complex albums with broad significance this year, or perhaps even this decade. The works on "22, A Million" are impeccably composed, a testament to the potential of popular music to produce genuinely inspired and meaningfully executed works. Furthermore, the album somehow remains cohesive despite a practical arsenal of new musical tricks, and makes a strong case for the continuation of the Bon Iver project for years to come. 9.9/10

Hawks Coffeehouse features "The Voice" contestant, Nelly's Echo

Reno Waswil

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER

As the reader may know, Union Board's fortnightly Wednesday event, Hawks Coffeehouse, invites musical artists and poets to perform at the MTCC Welcome Center from 7-8 p.m., offering drinks and pastries for the patrons. Last Wednesday, September 28, saw a rainy return to the classic Hawks Coffeehouse style that had been experimented with somewhat on the previous few nights. This particular week featured artist Nelson Emokpae of Nelly's Echo, a touring musician who can attribute his current notoriety to being a contestant on season 3 of National Broadcasting Company (NBC)'s hit show "The Voice."

Emokpae's performance was expert. Though most of his set featured the popular covers attendees may have come to expect from events like these (such as Jason Mraz's "I'm Yours" and Leonard Cohen's "Hallelujah"), much of his set had him doing unintuitive mash-ups of these sorts of songs that might not be expected to work together. He also would often, sometimes in the middle of songs, implant observations of the audience and otherwise cheeky and spontaneous alternative lyrics into songs for the sake of humor. Such examples of this were his polite references to what audience members were doing and looked like, his traffic upset upon arriving in the city, and where he was off to on his tour after Illinois Tech.

His performance, along with Alien

Sound and Lighting's, compared to past weeks: a more stripped-down and classic sound setup made this Hawks Coffeehouse its usual positive and relaxing experience. It was only made better by the catering for this week, which featured both chocolate and raspberry walnut biscotti. This was also the first of this series of events this semester to feature apple cider along with the usual coffee provisions by Sodexo, a seasonal mainstay for the recent autumn equinox on Thursday, September 22.

A great upset to the event, and perhaps to many of the other events that were planned for that Wednesday night, seemed to have been the extensive storming and rainfall that day. At the beginning, the usually packed Welcome Center venue was nearly vacant, a feature on which Emokpae couldn't help but

humorously comment. Furthermore, upon arriving at the university, Emokpae, wishing not to get his clothes and guitar wet, elected to camp out in his car until the rain let up enough for him to make a swift break for the MTCC entrance.

By the closing however, there was a sizable crowd of over 30 people to see the very last few minutes of the show, and Emokpae graciously went over his allotted time ever so slightly to give them something for their time.

The intrigued reader is advised to come to the next Hawks Coffeehouse featuring musical artist "Lakin," 7 p.m. October 14th in the MTCC Welcome Center; coffee and apple cider will, once again, be making a welcome appearance.

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