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Pass/Fail implementation, new degrees, more presented at latest UGSC meeting

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The work of the Undergraduate Studies Committee (UGSC), a body composed largely of faculty members representing each undergraduate academic department at Illinois Tech, is an important step in the process of creating or modifying degree programs, changing institutional academic policies, and setting general education requirements for undergraduate students at the university. While its decisions must be approved by the University Faculty Council (UFC), the UGSC toils independently to formulate important items that come before the UFC.

During its third meeting of the year on October 11, the UGSC considered a number of new and revised degree programs. While most of these programs were presented to the committee as information items (meaning that they would not require a vote), thorough discussion was still had about each in order to address all relevant information for representatives to take back to their departments.

The first new degree programs reviewed were the most unconventional, the result of a new affiliation agreement with Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine. That agreement offers guaranteed admission to LECOM for a limited number of Illinois Tech students who meet certain academic requirements, pursuing graduate degrees in

LECOM's medical, dental, and pharmacy programs. Each track is formulated for eight total years of college education (four at Illinois Tech and four at LECOM), with the exception of a special version of the pharmacy program which permits three years at Illinois Tech instead with some credits back-transferring from LECOM to fill out credit requirements here. A back-transfer agreement is not entirely uncharted territory for the university, since a similar policy already exists for an affiliated program with the Illinois College of Optometry (which takes up the former VanderCook campus to the east of Illinois Tech). An affiliate pharmacy program also exists already in partnership with Midwestern University, but that program does not bestow an Illinois Tech degree upon its students. The new LECOM-affiliated programs have already spawned relevant policies within the biology and chemistry departments at this university, and the track is expected to be available for students soon.

Next up on the day's agenda, the members of the UGSC turned their lens inward toward programs that exist entirely within the confines of Illinois Tech. A revised version of the Bachelor of Science (B.S.) in Molecular Biochemistry and Biophysics was presented with changes to some electives, changes which had been prompted by criticism from members of the UFC when the degree was initially presented there the previous week. The newest version of the degree was

explicitly approved by the chairs of the biology, chemistry, and physics departments before being presented, hoping to avoid any further confusion or debate over its contents.

Finally, two new co-terminal degrees were presented for consideration before a vote scheduled for the next UGSC meeting, both of which result in an Master of Science (M.S.) in Biology for the health professions. The programs, stemming from B.S. tracks in biology or biochemistry, are intended for individuals who do not have the grade progress for admittance into medical school or another relevant professional school, providing an alternative by which they can build qualifications by completing a master's degree that will theoretically allow them admittance later on.

After discussing various degree programs, focus shifted to Aubrey Hall, a staff member from the Registrar's office who was present to answer questions and take input about the technical implementation of the university's new pass/fail policy, which was formulated last year in concert with SGA and has been written about thoroughly in previous UGSC coverage. The policy allows students to take a certain number of free and technical electives under pass/fail grading rather than the traditional letter scale, and will come into effect next semester. Under the currently planned system, students would register for a course, then submit a petition through DegreeWorks to request approval

for the pass/fail option, at which point the office of Undergraduate Academic Affairs (UGAA) would review and approve or deny the student's petition, changing their grade mode to pass/fail if approved. Hall fielded a number of questions about the visibility of each student's grading style to faculty during the semester, and reiterated an email he had sent to department chairs recently requesting a list of all courses in each department which will be able to be taken as pass/fail by students of the university. Some technical details still need to be ironed out, but the implementation of the policy largely aligns with its formulated goals even in its current state.

Just before the meeting's end, a representative of Lewis College spoke briefly about an upcoming faculty-led study abroad program in Scotland and Northern Ireland, which will take place over next summer and will cover certain core humanities and social sciences credits. The program is intended to be welcoming to all of Illinois Tech's majors, not just Lewis College students, and will be billed similarly to regular summer courses (excepting travel costs). Information about it can be found by contacting Elizabeth Hall (ehall9@iit.edu) in the Study Abroad office.

UGSC meets once every two weeks in Wishnick Hall. Full minutes of each meeting, as well as information about votes and membership, are available at iit.edu/~ugsc.

Illinois Tech Robotics breaks record at 12th annual Pumpkin Launch



Photos by Alexandra Detweiler (top left, right) Jamshid Tokhirov (bottom left)