TechNews

Student newspaper of Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

TechNews: past, present and future

(Photo by Rebecca Waterloo)

By Karl Rybaltowski
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

With a quick glance outside, the name may be deceiving, but the spring semester is here. And while it may seem cliché at this point, this semester is going to be a time of transition. Students are graduating, organizations are picking new leadership teams, and IIT staff are implementing changes. TechNews is no different, and we are looking forward in determining how to best improve the newspaper. That said, this is a perfect time to reflect upon what we've already done, and assess how well we have served you and the IIT community in our efforts.

You've probably had your fair share of it: the surveys, feedback forms, and evaluations for IPROs, professors, student organizations and even the overall IIT experience. Behind each and every one of those pieces of paper or online forms is a group of people that, in their own way, is attempting to improve the university experience for everyone.

There's one other important thing to keep in mind when averting your gaze from survey-takers or deleting e-mails asking for feedback: this stuff works. It's for you. Fall may have been for collecting feedback, but spring is the time of change. It's time to walk the walk, now that we've got your talk. University departments

are coming up with action plans for improving service to students, while organizations are hard at work affecting change themselves. TechNews is part of this process, too, though much of it has been under the hood, so it's worth going over in a bit more detail.

Content
We're constantly working on getting quality content to IIT students. Our staff made the decision to more aggressively pursue events coverage pre-emptively, rather than exclusively reviewing what has already happened. To provide more guidance to writers, we developed an editorial calendar. We made a greater effort to communicate effectively between our talented staff and writers. We've also introduced features such as the Person You Should Know series, work on IIT's community involvement, dedicated space for SGA news, and made Sex-Tech an actual advice column. We introduced How To Chicago (a city events calendar) and playlists from readers, writers and staff. In short - we've been busy.

Presentation
It's been about a year since the new layout was unveiled, and reaction has been overwhelmingly positive. In the past semester, we also made the greatest effort to date of eliminating errors, and owning up to them when they did slip through.

Web Presence

We moved our website off-site in order to get online ad revenue, in the process deciding to rebuild it from the ground up. Not only did we want to make it look nicer, we wanted to make the entire experience - whether just reading articles or submitting them - more intuitive and interactive for the user. As with any entirely new venture, there have been some snags in the updating process, and we're currently working on getting those fixed.

Organization
Between tightening up internal communication (providing all staff with a Google Apps account specifically made for us), revising the production cycle and workflow, and completely overhauling our advertisement process, we've been busy in terms of our organization. The result is, we'd like to think, a much more responsive staff. But there's plenty more to go - the payroll system can still be frustrating, and we're always looking for ways to run things more smoothly.

The Fun Stuff
We've hosted contests in the newspaper and introduced The First Day of the Rest of My Life, a comic that hopefully better resonates with (and entertains) students. We started a Photo of the Week competition (which you're welcome to submit to). We've worked on maintaining visibility on campus. This semester we'll additionally be co-hosting a Bog event

and trying even more new things.

Now that you've got it all in front of you, TechNews wants to hear from you. Below is a link to a feedback survey - help us out, be honest, and watch as the paper gets even better just because you voiced your opinion. And if the satisfaction of doing your part is not enough, there are prizes: T-shirts, buttons and more!

Thanks for supporting TechNews - we do it all for you.

TechNews
wants YOU!
(to tell us what you think)

http://tinyurl.com/tn-survey
Take the survey. Win prizes. Feel good.

Robotics kicks off at IIT

By Ryan Kamphuis
STAFF WRITER

Over 500 high school students were on campus the morning of Saturday, January 8 as IIT played host to the 2011 Chicago FIRST Robotics Competition Kickoff.

The FIRST Robotics Competition is a robotics league where teams of high school students work together to design and construct a fully-functional robot in six weeks. These robots compete against each other by playing a game that changes every year. The game is announced simultaneously to all teams through a live satellite broadcast that is viewed at Kickoff events worldwide. The Chicago-area kickoff was attended by teams from Indiana, Iowa, and all across Illinois.

At the kickoff, teams gathered in the Hermann Hall auditorium to watch the live unveiling of the 2011 FRC game. When the broadcast was over, the teams broke apart and took part in brainstorming sessions and educational

workshops that were held in the HUB and Wishnick Hall. During all of this, teams were able to pick up kits of robot parts that all teams receive as part of the competition.

This year's Chicago FRC Kickoff was organized and run by members of the Illinois Tech Robotics student organization. Members of the group began planning the event in late November, and worked up until the night before to ensure that everything was ready for the event. This included everything from lining up speakers, ordering catering, building a full scale mock-up of the game field the robots will be playing on, and preparing the HUB to handle the hordes of people that would be attending Kickoff.

The Illinois Tech Robotics organization was founded as an outreach group to allow IIT students to support FIRST in the Chicago area. It does this by organizing and hosting events

like the Chicago FIRST Robotics Competition Kickoff and the Illinois State FIRST Tech Challenge Championship. It also does this by connecting IIT students with robotics teams throughout Chicagoland to assist them in building their robots. As it gained members, Illinois Tech Robotics also began building its own robots and taking on new projects, such as organizing a brand new college-level robotics competition that will take place in St. Louis this April.

After the kickoff event teams will spend six weeks building their robots, and then join again in late March to compete against each other in an attempt to win a trip to the national competition. The regional competition takes place at UIC because of lack of space at IIT, but Illinois Tech Robotics still plays a major role in organizing the regional and helping things run smoothly during the competition.