

Explore STEM+ at IIT

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Although many of us were having good fun during the spring break, the educational outreach program at IIT kept many of us busy during the entire week. More than 50 students and faculty from IIT volunteered for organizing the program. The program had hands-on workshops conducted about the various STEM fields - science, technology, engineering, and mathematics, as well as business, architecture, and psychology. The different workshops engaging multiple disciplines were Building Blocks for Team Communication, Experience ArchITecture, Mechanics of Roller Coasters and Robot Obstacle Course. The workshops were proposed and developed by IIT undergraduate students, with the support of IIT faculty and staff.

Even the organizers of program "Explore STEM+ at IIT" were quite surprised when the registration reached its full capacity within a week the online form was made available since it was organized for the first time. Around 300 students participated in the workshops from various high schools around Chicago area, including Chicago Public Schools (Community Youth Development Institute, Gage Park High School, Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy, Perspectives/IIT Math & Science Academy, Simeon Career Academy, Thomas Kelly High School, and Uplift Community High School), as well as De La Salle and De La Salle-Lourdes Hall Campus, Mooseheart Child City & School, and the West Side Leadership Academy of Gary, Indiana. The number of students attending from

the various schools varied from 1 to 44.

The results of these workshops were positive, which is evident from the feedback of students. Brianna R., a student at Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy, said, "My experiences on the STEM+ activities were very positive. I appreciated the different fields that we were able to interact in through fun projects. This experience really opened my eyes to new career choices and interests. Both the architecture and roller coaster activities were very engaging and encouraged communication skills which are important. I would recommend this trip to my fellow classmates in the future so they can receive the fun, interactive, and innovative way of learning that I did." Brittany S., a student at Gwendolyn Brooks College Preparatory Academy: "Today was a very educational and exciting field trip. I had a wonderful experience with architecture and engineering. It broadened my horizon in these fields. I did not think that engineering could be as fun or as interesting as it was for me today. When we got a chance to make our own roller coaster it gave me a new idea about engineering. Before this field trip I did not know what engineering was, let alone have any interest in it, but after I attended this wonderful field trip, it made me rethink my future and my interests in what I want to be when I grow up. Thank you for allowing me to participate in this wonderful experience and I will be looking forward to many other field trips pertaining to this one."

Marya Spont, community liaison and outreach coordinator for Undergraduate Admission, who was the main coordinator of the event, said "the results of the surveys that high school students and teachers filled out were overwhelmingly positive,

with the most common suggestions for improvements from both groups being 'make it a full-day event' and 'let us go to every workshop.' While we at IIT were glad to hear that our campus visitors had a good time overall, we were especially moved by the fact that 98.5% of attending students "strongly agreed" or "agreed" that they left the event knowing more about STEM fields than when they came (more than 70% suggested that they didn't know about STEM fields before coming), and more than 80% said that they were more likely to consider a STEM career after attending these workshops. Being able to make a change — a real, measurable, and possibly life-altering change — in a young person's life is something that we are all very proud of and which we hope to continue to make possible in the future."

Clockwise from bottom: Experience ArchITecture; a robot obstacle course; and the organizers of STEM+ (Photos courtesy of Sumana Sundaramurthy)



SGA unveils UCal

By **Karl Rybaltowski**
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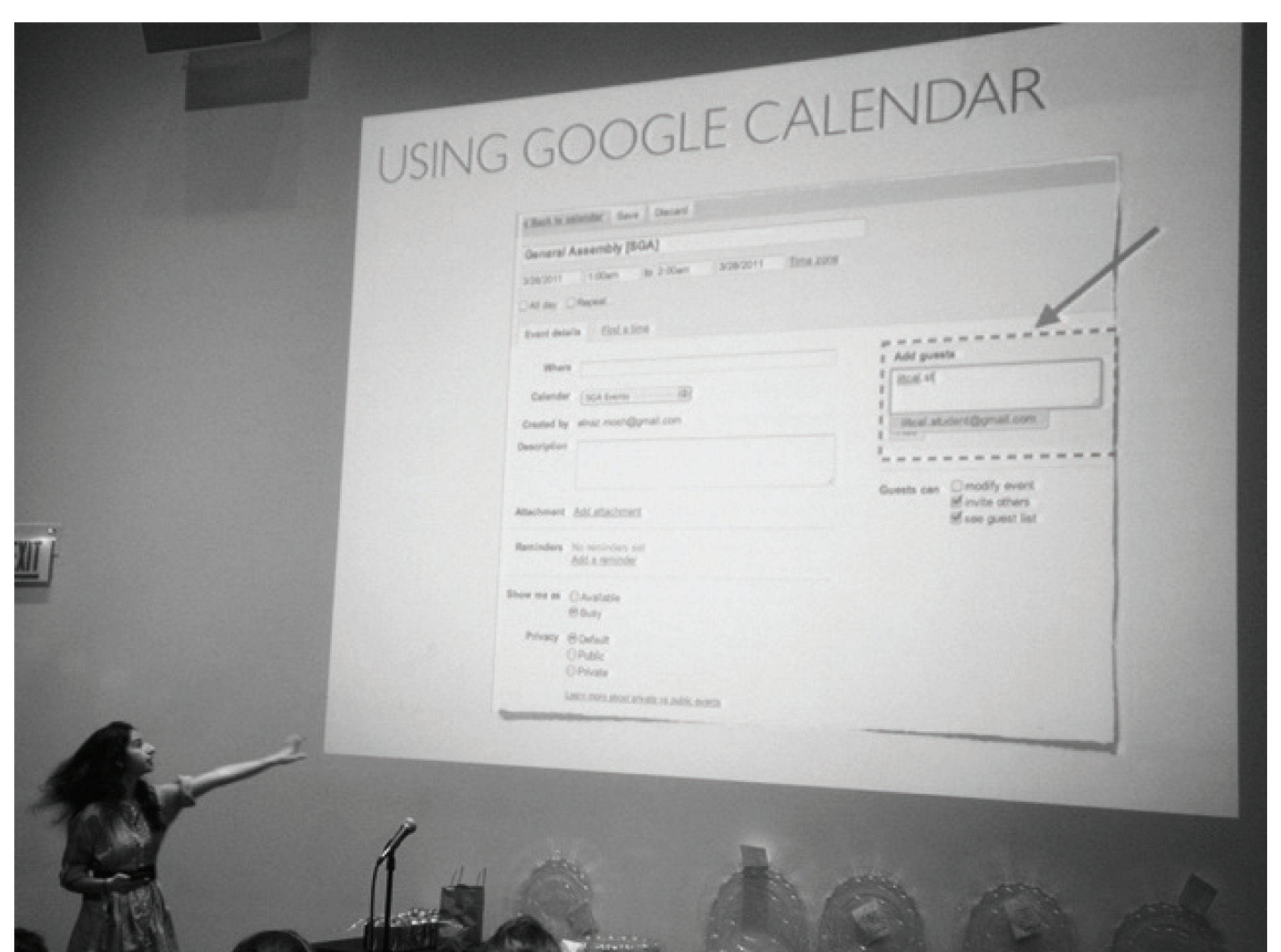
Last Thursday, SGA (with the newly elected Executive Board in attendance) unveiled its ambitiously completed project — the UCal, or Universal Calendar. Initially planned as an all-inclusive academic and co-curricular calendar listing mostly all the events happening on campus at a particular time, the UCal is also a sustainable and dynamic Google calendar that hopes to list faculty office hours and the ARC schedule. With the university's move to Google Apps for e-mail service, the Universal Calendar may become the go-to resource for all levels of the IIT community.

This idea might change the way the newspaper you're reading right now goes about getting its stories covered. It represents a giant leap forward in keeping students informed about what's happening on campus — thus increasing the potential for getting students more involved in opportunities they might not

have been aware of in the first place. Though an ambitious project, it started as a minor idea last summer, during a meeting of the newly-elected SGA Executive Board. "We were all talking about how good it would be to have a single place to check out all events," said Elnaz Moshfeghian, outgoing VP of Communications and President-elect of SGA. "I said, 'we could do a Google calendar!' ... but it was just one of those daunting tasks that no one ever really wants to tackle."

Within short order, however, the Communications committee, and in particular Moshfeghian and more recently SGA Senator Ariel True, set to work on tackling that very task. Though various general calendars exist already, the goal with UCal was to create a resource that was as easy to use as it was to access. "We didn't want a calendar where you'd have to fill out a form that someone would have to review," Moshfeghian said. What they decided on is "really natural, easy to deal with, and I don't think it's going to be too much work."

The calendar is divided into manageable segments (such that events can easily be found) - iitcal.student@gmail.com (listing all student and student-org sponsored activities on campus); iitcal.university@gmail.com (for university-sponsored events), iitcal.athletics@gmail.com (for sports and intramurals) and iitcal.hours@gmail.com for announcing deviations from regular office and business hours and publishing faculty office hours. Publishing your own event, following the naming convention (to ensure uniformity) and exporting to csv or iCal format are just some of the features this project offers. Organizations creating events in Google calendar only need to invite the UCal account - an accepted invitation



Newly elected SGA President Elnaz Moshfeghian explains the basics of the calendar (Photo courtesy Utsav Gandhi)

means the event will be part of UCal, making it a simple and fast process. Students need only subscribe to UCal in order to gain access to any or all of these events.

At the unveiling event, SGA thanked Angela Ng, outgoing President of the Union Board (which has its own comprehensive calendar listing student organizations' events), True and Jeanne Hartig, Vice President for Marketing and Communications at IIT. The calendar's functions were shown to a sizable group of student leaders and university staff, and Moshfeghian was happy with the reception. "Right

after the meeting, I turned on my computer and had invitations from orientation - all the orientation events are on there now. EWB uses Google calendar widely, and they're going to convert their material over."

With the response UCal has already received, and its administrative support, it's easy to see the initiative become the new go-to for all campus events.

To check out UCal right now, go to bit.ly/illinoistechcal. For any setup or subscription assistance, email calendar.iit@gmail.com.