Vis-à-vis: A few parting words

By Vlada Gaisina
OPINION EDITOR

After three years on staff, it's time for me to finally leave TechNews and IIT. Part of me is relieved to be rid of some stress that comes with deadlines and the extra work, but part is reluctant to let go. No real-world venue (save for actual newspapers) can provide the same experience as working on TechNews has.

I first became interested in TechNews freshman year and was thrilled to learn that anyone could submit articles – at my high school with a student body of roughly 3000, working on the newspaper was a competitive deal, and I never made the cut. Those who have written for us will agree that seeing something you toiled hard on in print is probably one of the most rewarding experiences. TechNews has given that to me and many other people.

Another aspect of being a staff member or staff writer is being in the loop on campus affairs. A lot of administrators, departments, and student organizations use TechNews to spread information to the community, so the staff is frequently the first group to know about what's going on. Moreover, TechNews tends to attract people who want to be aware of new developments at the university and like to be involved. It was exciting to be among such a group of students over the past three years, some of whom I still keep in touch with. My fellow staff members have played a large part in my continued involvement with TechNews and made it a lot of fun.

Whether you pick up the newspaper for campus news, movie reviews, or just the Sudoku, the same dedicated team works hard to make sure every section is presentable. Being on that team has definitely given me a new respect for all the effort that goes into producing an issue, and hearing slurs against TechNews or unconstructive negative criticism was unpleasant. On the flip side, I was very lucky to get feedback from a few people who actually did read my articles (when I'd assumed that I've been preaching into an abyss).

There is one more thing I'd like to address in my very last Vis-à-vis entry. I have been sticking up for women in my column for the past four semesters, as being a feminist is part of my identity. Thanks to that lens, I've also observed IIT and its approach to women with a critical eye throughout my time here. Since this is a predominantly male institution, I believe much remains to be done to empower its women and address their needs.

For instance, not all women's bathrooms have feminine product dispensers and of the ones that do, most are empty or nonfunctioning. On a campus with such a large commuter population, I consider this an especially crucial need, let alone a basic necessity for women everywhere. In addition, IIT needs to do a much better job facilitating dialogue and educating its community about sexual abuse. Considering that at least one in four women will be sexually assaulted during her time in college, I find it shocking that no one really brought the issue to the forefront until Feminists United did their first Take Back the Night week last semester. In short, IIT still has a long way to go in order to be considered truly female-friendly.

However, there is effort on the part of the administration to reach out to its underrepresented sex, with the Office of Admission's Women's Day, Women's History Month events, Women's Information Network, etc., etc.. I learned that males at IIT also tend to be more respectful towards women and their intellectual capacity, as opposed to some other schools. As the stereotype goes, they may not know how to approach us, but at least we're not looked down upon. Being a smart female at IIT is actually generally viewed as attractive, rather than intimidating. All of this means there is hope.

Farewell, dear readers. Thank you for your attention. And if you feel so inclined to continue following my musings, check out my blog http://poetarossa.blogspot.com/, set to begin updating at the end of the school year. Best of luck, and remember, "You don't have to be anti-man to be pro-woman."

Idea Shop positive in theory, but still a work in progress

By Jenny Beverage
TECHNEWS WRITER

The Idea Shop is a space that opened last fall in a corner of IIT's campus. It is home to projectors named after Star Wars characters – Yoda, Chewie, R2D2, and others. It was opened using only money the school already had, a 3-year free lease of the space, and donated items that may have included the 3-D printers and laser cutters (according to an earlier TechNews article by Elnaz Moshfeghian). Just as Star Wars was about technologies too far away in time for us, this area is for innovation for the future. It was without a doubt worth the small price tag, but can be an even greater asset with a few minor changes.

The Idea Shop is an invaluable resource for IPROs. IPRO 362, M.O.R.E. (Mobile Operating Room Engineering), is a prime example of this. I have witnessed this course use many features, such as the wide space on the east side of the shop to hold the tent and wall designs, the laser cutter to make numerous prototypes, cameras and tripods for documentation, the projector screens to present research or competition material, and even the professors that are often in the Idea shop – their feedback and enthusiasm are as helpful as any other feature.

The use of prototypes is essential for design. Linda Pulik, the Institute of Design professor in charge of M.O.R.E., has stressed this many times in her course. To have and hold a prototype is to understand a product. One can see design flaws and generate ideas. Without the Idea Shop, this IPRO would not have had the necessities to advance the idea with professional quality. Students can now make precise prototypes with the materials and machines in the Idea Shop. Prototypes no longer have to be only of the final product; one can be made for every step of the way.

However, it could be expanded even further, which is no doubt in the plans of the tireless staff, who often stay much later than their scheduled hours to help students. 24-hour access to certain areas would be amazingly helpful, as many IPRO students know that working irregular and long hours is normal, especially when prototyping a physical product. This could even create a new student position by hiring someone to scan IDs and watch over the area. More students in general should have more access to this location. Entrepreneurial students would value this, but many are not certain if they can use the shop and whether or not it is free. It's free for all students, and this should be publicized. Many would benefit from the resources, not just IPRO students.

These last few are minute but highly important details – there must be new printers and vending machines. The vending machines do not accept TechCash (who carries cash all the time?) and sometimes only accept change, but food is necessary for working hard and, you know, life. However, this is not controlled by IIT.

Further, there are no printers that use student printing accounts in the Idea Shop, which has no doubt hindered many people who needed to print something quickly during a class or presentation. Small details can escape planning, but not the student or faculty eye.

The Idea Shop was well worth its implementation, as it has easily changed many things about the IPRO process. The shop has already proven its worth – but could it open its doors even wider? Could it offer even more things that the Institute of Design offers, or change the way entrepreneurs could work? Stay tuned!

CLASSIFIEDS

TechNews Corrections:

Issue 11: In our article about the Lego Art IPRO, we mistakenly referred to it as IPRO 335. The Lego Art IPRO is, in fact, IPRO 361.

Issue 12: Our Sports article, IIT Soccer teams volunteer at St. James Food Pantry, was mistakenly attributed to Ashlie Ingold. The article was, in fact, written by Heather Bickerton, and the photo credit belongs to her as well.

TechNews regrets the errors.