

Students Speak promotes dialogue among university leaders

By Mike Purdy

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Blustery winter winds gained momentum and snow began to accumulate steadily while members of the Students Speak committee hosted the 2012 Students Speak Summit inside the MTCC auditorium.

These committee members presented the results of the campus-wide Students Speak survey, which was conducted in November, to a large host of campus administration.

Despite the frigid conditions outside, inside the auditorium on the night of Friday, January 20, the atmosphere was warm and welcoming; faculty leaders appeared receptive and intent on hearing the outcome of a survey that is known for being a catalyst of change on campus.

To kickoff the presentation, university president John Anderson opened with a few preliminary remarks before handing it off to Bruce Fisher, director of the Center for Research and Service, and the Leadership Academy at IIT, who welcomed those in attendance with much enthusiasm and introduced the team of student presenters.

The presentation team included Paola Arce, a third year Architecture undergrad; Jacqueline Roche, fourth year psychology; Mike Purdy, second year Journalism of Technology, Science, and Business; Karl Rybaltowski, a second year Stuart School of Business student; Jeremy Thompson, project manager for the Center of Research and Service; and Elnaz Moshfeghian, a fourth year computer science major and the current student body president.

The formal presentation itself was brief, outlining the survey results and providing the statistics and recommendations to those departments in need of improvement being

its core objectives. Purdy began the presentation with an introduction to the Students Speak survey, along with a response summary and some of the main headlines to be covered.

Perhaps the most significant of these headlines is the fact that overall student satisfaction has improved at IIT, which continues a trend from previous years and shows promising evidence not only that the survey has been achieving its aim, but that university faculty and staff have been putting forth a solid effort toward making students happy.

Indicated by the survey, students feel respected by staff, generally feel safe on campus, and most (70%) would recommend a friend to IIT based on their overall experience. Presenting the survey's core items across various departments was Karl Rybaltowski, who is a veteran of the Students Speak committee.

These core items included such topics as departmental timeliness, quality of services, respect to students, and provision of accurate information. Among the most favorably rated departments were the Office of Financial Aid, the Center for Diversity and Inclusion, and the Registrar. Those least favorably rated by students in terms of core items were Housing, the CMC, and Public Safety, which were the three departments in need of the most improvement according to this year's survey.

Speaking with much experience, Elnaz Moshfeghian followed Rybaltowski with her presentation on the comment analysis portion of the survey, along with the new "capital priorities" item, in which students selected the area that they would prefer the university make



Image courtesy of IIT Student Speak

capital investments.

According to the results, most students would prefer improved classrooms and labs, followed by a new or improved athletic and recreational facility. This section proved to be a subject of much debate and dialogue throughout the summit, and appeared to be a hot item in the minds of the university leaders in attendance.

To finish out the presentation, Jeremy Watson, Jacqui Roche, and Paola Arce each provided the audience with recommendations and feedback regarding those departments rated least favorably.

Watson indicated that the Students Speak Summit was the initial step in generating positive change on campus, but much more must be done; student advisory groups should be created to assist Housing, the CMC, and Public Safety, and departments will be asked

to provide updates on implemented plans and changes in coming TechNews issues.

Roche and Arce presented the specific recommendations for these three departments—for Housing, facilities and maintenance proved to be in most need of improvement, especially concerned with response time and transparent communication between students and department faculty.

Although the CMC has shown signs of improvement, Arce pointed out that more collaboration with student organizations along with increased professional opportunities and services for international students would result in improved student satisfaction with this department.

Upon completion of the survey presentation, Provost Alan Cramb facilitated the question/answer portion of the Summit. This forum allowed a platform for rolling questions and comments, and provided for open and honest dialogue between the Students Speak committee and university administration.

The most prevalent discussion topics were capital priorities, campus life, diversity and cultural awareness on campus, and student involvement. The discussion went smoothly, and the presenters, along with other significant student contributors including Rhani Shah and Megan Christenson, were able to generate ample and knowledgeable responses to any concerns the faculty appeared to have.

Altogether, the 2012 Students Speak Summit achieved its goal in producing open dialogue amongst university leaders, departmental staff, and invested students. The mood seemed jolly as attendees filed out of the auditorium to face the snowstorm building outside; with increased awareness and inspired insight, the leaders of IIT appear ready to make positive and lasting change.

Financial Aid Office: Submit your 2012-2013 FAFSA

By IIT Office of Financial Aid

The Office of Financial Aid would like to encourage students to begin preparing for the 2012-13 academic year. To begin, fill out your FAFSA! This application (accessible at fafsa.ed.gov) for federal student aid is available to citizens and permanent residents.

The Office of Financial Aid will begin preparing student award packages for the 2012-13 year in March. Some forms of federal and state aid are limited so the earlier you submit

your FAFSA, the better! The Department of Education has indicated some changes to federal aid requirements for the 2012-13 academic year. We want to inform students of these changes early on so students have time to prepare and our office has time to properly adjust accounts.

For students selected for verification, tax returns will no longer be accepted. All students selected for verification must submit tax transcripts directly from the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The time it takes to request a transcript will be approximately two

weeks, which means a delay in how quickly we can finish your verification.

If you know you are selected after filling out your FAFSA, request your transcript immediately after filing your tax return to expedite the process. Additionally, for students receiving food stamps, additional documentation will be required so the Office of Financial Aid can confirm your benefits.

Watch your portal account for specific details on what is required!

Finally, we encourage students to look for outside scholarships for the 2012-13

year. IIT tuition tends to increase each year and outside scholarships are a great way to help with the increased costs.

Please visit the Financial Aid website (http://www.iit.edu/financial_aid/resources/index.shtml) to search for opportunities.

You can also stop by our office and look through our scholarship books during business hours, Monday through Friday 8:30a.m. to 5p.m.

If you have any questions about the upcoming year, please feel free to contact us at finaid@iit.edu or 312-567-7219.

CRAB Lab opens on campus

By Ciaran Shaughnessy & Mariah Kuitse

TECHNEWS WRITERS

"I've got crabs!" is not something that you might hear an undergraduate saying too often, but for a growing number of IIT undergraduate researchers, this phrase is meant quite literally.

The CRAB Lab (Creative Research in Animal Behavior), which opened last Fall, is a student-directed laboratory specifically created for unfunded undergraduates to research in a range of fields relating to the marine environment.

The 25 by 11 foot lab in Life Sciences Building is outfitted with two recirculating seawater aquariums and an experimental linear-flow tank system—all totaling over 1,100 liters.

The lab is home to 65 live European shore (aka "green") crabs (*Carcinus maenas*) and expects to receive a giant Pacific (Northwest) octopus (*Enteroctopus dofleini*) in the coming weeks.

The lab was founded within IIT's chemistry department to identify a chemical compound from an octopus that could help counteract the invasion of the non-native species of green crab in marine ecosystems of the Pacific Northwest.

But, since its initiation with one chemistry undergraduate, the project has grown

to include two more students from biology.

Since then, the CRAB Lab has begun collaborating with a number of other academic departments to perform additional related studies in the lab, including the Institute of Psychology (with three students), microbiology (possibly two future students), and an IPRO (specifically, three students).

If you are interested in learning more about the CRAB Lab, you can follow the crabs, the octopus, and the researchers on Twitter (@IIT_Crabs, @IIT_Octopus, @IIT_CRABLab), view live-streaming video (including the crab and, soon, the octopus), read the lab's blog, and find out more about the research projects at the CRAB Lab website: is.gd/crablab.



Photos by Ciaran Shaughnessy & Mariah Kuitse