



# TechNews

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## President Provost Forum sparks debate, new ideas

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With rumors about the future plans of the university spreading like wildfire and student questions regarding the actions of administration beginning to pile up, it was time for the Student Government Association (SGA) to hold their semesterly President and Provost Open Forum. Students and faculty converged upon the McCormick Tribune Campus Center Ballroom during the lunch hour of Tuesday, April 10 to engage the President and Provost of the University in an afternoon of questions and answers regarding everything from university policy to future plans to curriculum changes to commencement.

The event was well-attended by university faculty and student leaders. Moderated by members of SGA's executive board, questions to the President and Provost were taken from attendees of the event and through an online form ran for those who were watching the online stream of the event.

After an initial opening statement delivered by the President and Provost, the floor was opened for student questions. An early question topic that brought forth considerable discussion was the upcoming moves that many university offices were going to need to make due to the recent news that Main Building was sinking into the ground. A student expressed concern that with all the movement that was required, the Office of Campus Life may have to move out of the MTCC. This rumor was quickly dispelled by Dean of Students Katie Murphy-Stetz. Murphy-Stetz said that the Office of Campus Life will be staying in the MTCC throughout these moves, and it was never even considered to move it out of the

MTCC. Provost Alan Cramb also explained that the university was using this opportunity to move all of the university offices that deal directly with students into the MTCC, creating what he called a, "one stop shop," for student affairs. Murphy-Stetz also confirmed that throughout all of these office movements, student organizations such as SGA, UB, TechNews, and others would not be losing their spaces in the Office of Campus Life.

An early question that seemed to catch both the President and the Provost off guard was a student's inquiry as to why no African-Americans were members of the IIT Hall of Fame. The student argued that many African-American IIT students were trailblazers in their fields, who made many positive changes both at IIT and in the professional world, and deserved to be in the Hall of Fame. President John Anderson explained that he didn't know why no African-Americans were members of the Hall of Fame, and in fact, he didn't know what must be done to add people to the IIT Hall of Fame. Cramb explained that even though no African-Americans were members of the Hall of Fame, many had recently won awards given out by the University to alumni. Cramb said that this may be a sign that it is time to update the process by which people are added to the IIT Hall of Fame.

A topic that received thorough discussion was making IIT friendlier for commuter students. A student expressed concern over how commuter students were often left out of university activities. He talked about how student organization meetings and campus events were often in the evening, making it difficult for commuter students to attend. Murphy-Stetz responded to this question, highlighting the new commuter lounge in The Bog and the availability of guest suites on weekends as steps

the school is taking to make life as a commuter student easier. The Provost also used this opportunity to say that it is his goal to have all IIT students living on campus in order to foster a better university community.

Also discussed were IIT's recent efforts to establish an interdisciplinary degree program. Anderson explained that although an interdisciplinary degree program can be very advantageous for some students, it poses a risk because many employers don't know what it means. Cramb explained that IIT had an interdisciplinary degree program in the past, and that the school is looking to bring back this program in the right fashion so that it is respected by industry and other universities.

Another issue brought up was IIT's recent efforts to establish a foreign language program. When asked about the state of the program and the lack of courses, Anderson frankly replied that he didn't understand why IIT doesn't have a comprehensive language program. Anderson commented that IIT needs more language courses which augment the diversity present at IIT. He also said that while the recent introduction of Spanish language courses is excellent, much more progress needs to be made. Cramb then took the floor, explaining that a priority he has regarding language programs is ensuring that any language courses at IIT not only teach language, but also culture. He explained that this ensures that IIT students are balanced individuals, and that this takes advantage of the diversity of the student body at IIT.

The President then began to discuss plans to construct a modern athletics facility to augment the existing facilities available in Keating Hall. Anderson explained that the main priority on the university's radar was to build an "Innovation Center" on campus, and

their second priority was to build a new athletics facility. The President elaborated, saying that this proposed facility would probably be a fieldhouse, and would be located across 31st street from Keating. Anderson concluded his remarks on Keating by saying that the only thing holding the school back from beginning construction was that they are currently looking for a \$35 million to \$40 million donation to pay for the facility, and that this new facility would begin to take shape within the next 10 years.

A topic that created heated discussion was the university administration's recent ban on hookahs. An online question was posed regarding the administration's view towards hookahs. President Anderson gave the floor to Provost Cramb on this issue, who gave a very heated response. Cramb seemed exasperated as he expressed his confusion over what scenario made it acceptable to discuss whether it should be allowed for people to communally smoke and, by doing so, kill themselves over time. He explained that Illinois and Chicago law made it illegal for people to smoke hookahs, or anything for that matter, indoors and inside university dormitories. Cramb also expressed his desire to see no smoking on campus, explaining that students have a right to not have to breathe secondhand smoke. Dean Murphy-Stetz ended the discussion on the new hookah policy by saying that it would be easier for all parties involved if those who wished to smoke hookah went to off-campus hookah bars to do so. She said that by doing this the university wouldn't have to hound those smoking, and those smoking wouldn't have to deal with administration trying to stop them.

One of the final topics discussed was the upcoming move of the Stuart School of Business into IIT Tower and back onto Main Campus. President Anderson explained that the entire Stuart School, except for its part-time graduate program, was moving into IIT Tower. The goal of doing this, said Anderson, was to expand Stuart School enrollment to approximately 400 students, turning it into one of the largest colleges at IIT. Cramb took an opportunity to express his excitement regarding the Stuart School move, saying that with the move, the school was taking an opportunity to update and redo their curriculum, making it modern and competitive. Cramb ecstatically described how much of a game-changer this was, and how excited everyone in administration is, about the potential of this new curriculum and of the move.

As the final concluding comments were made and people began to leave the Ballroom, it was clear that the overall experience of the Forum was a good one. While the environment of the Forum was tense at some points while controversial topics were being discussed, the forum was always able to move onto lighter discussion afterwards. The common theme of the afternoon seemed to be the future of student life and the future of IIT's curriculum. Many apt questions were asked and answered regarding these issues, which could lead to further exploration on how to improve aspects of these issues. This exploration will most likely lead to a more focused discussion on these topics at the President and Provost forum next semester, and more detailed answers being able to be provided to students regarding these topics.

