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RHA participates in Illinois-wide conference

By Utsav Gandhi
CAMPUS EDITOR

Aiming to get residents more involved in creating a positive living environment, the Residence Hall Association (RHA) attended the third Illinois RHA (IRHA) Conference at DePaul University in Chicago, and came back enlightened, entertained and transformed. More importantly, they came back after spending some unforgettable time with other campus contingents, and are now raring to go apply the skills and values learnt at the conference to try and create a fun residential experience. Utsav Gandhi interviews two RHA Exec Members, Russel Houser and Madhushree Ghosh.

1. The theme last year was 'students by day, leaders by night'. What was the theme this year? How was it profiled and marketed across the conference? How did the IIT delegation respond to the theme while preparing for the conference?

This year, the theme was 'Rock n Roll'. The conference did a pretty good job in promoting this theme by providing cool booklets detailing the conference scheduling and bringing out Rock Band games for anyone to play, but I think the theme was more influenced by the various RHA chapters themselves! It seemed like the IRHA exec board this year had a more hands-off approach to promoting their theme as to allow other colleges to show off their IRHA spirit through displays, banners, and roll call performances. One particularly unique feature of this year's conference was the opportunity for delegates to keep posting on Twitter about their IRHA experience as part of a competition!

2. What are your thoughts about the host's campus and their RHA as a visitor?

I must say that I was extremely im-

pressed with the way the Residence Hall Council at DePaul had managed the IRHA conference. There were a couple of hosts whom I actually had first met at the IRHA 2011 conference, where I found out that their RHC is quite involved on campus. DePaul University is located closer on the North side of Chicago, and the campus size is much larger than that of IIT. Also, even though I haven't encountered a college with as diverse of a student population as IIT, it seemed like the university still had a strong ethic with promoting diversity on campus. I could tell that the RHC of DePaul was very passionate about the work that they do through their own university values, and I respect them for hosting IRHA over the weekend!

3. What are your thoughts about other school contingents? Were they different or similar in any way to IIT's contingent? Anything you especially wish to highlight about the IIT contingent?

As a returning participant of IRHA, I've noticed that once you participate in IRHA, virtually anyone can start getting excited about their school and be filled with school spirit. I've seen some impressive displays of school spirit from all of the colleges that participated, including our own!

About 10 schools had participated in the conference. Some universities like Eastern Illinois University, Western Illinois University, and DePaul University have been long-time veterans of IRHA and have even competed on the regional and national levels! Other schools such as Millikin College and St. Xavier University are newer on the IRHA scene and are participating more for the fun of it...even though that's what everyone is also there for. I'd say that IIT lies somewhere in the middle in terms of experience. Our chapter has been involved

for several years now, and we've brought home awards each year. This year, both of our programs were placed in the Top 10 Programs!

If there is anything that particularly highlights our own group from the others, I believe it's our incredible creativity. Not to mention that fact that we are an incredibly diverse group! Throughout the conference, I think we had easily adjusted to the IRHA scene and started making up our own displays of school spirit on the spot!

4. What did you do at IRHA? What workshops did you attend and how does the delegation aim to enrich the IIT residential community with this new knowledge?

Basically, we first arrived at DePaul University with our banner, display, and some extra materials we used for item donations. After checking our group in and submitting the banner and display, we soon joined other schools for some general IRHA group cheers. Afterwards, we received a welcome speech from the IRHA Executive Board and advisors, and then competed against other schools with the roll call that we came up with!

On the CC side of things, the roll call is the only delegation activity that happens. Soon after, the boardroom gets set up and serious business pertaining to residence halls' activities, bids, awards and plans for the next conference is undertaken. The entire two days is spent in the boardroom discussing, facilitating the agenda for a successful conference every year. There were a couple of other meetings before the actual conference for the CC, namely the semi-annual business meeting and the winter business meeting where preparatory discussions and decisions are made for the conference. A goal of the conference is to facilitate community spirit and love for your own residence halls and after the conference,

getting IIT more involved and bringing about positive changes are our new found goals.

5. Were there any costs associated with the trip? How were they met? Did you do any fundraisers? How did the delegation bond before the trip?

Yes, registration for each delegate had cost approximately \$100-150. We had fundraisers last year, but that was meant for purchasing supplies as a part of competing in the Philanthropy section of IRHA. RHA had provided funding for the actual costs of registration. This year, we had established a book drive, where an empty box was placed on each residence hall front desk on campus. Students could place any books inside the boxes, and we ended up collecting over 100 books in the end.

Most of our delegation had already known each other, since we were a part of the RHA executive board. For the new additions, it was the group activities including the roll call, programs, and all the preparations that helped us bond better. Here we would like to mention that our advisors helped a great deal in keeping us together throughout the process, ensuring we get everything done and continue to work as a group. Not to mention that it was only a matter of time that teamwork and excitement for the conference took over! Also for most of the delegation, it was their first time going to IRHA, but we all had quickly joined in the fun once we all knew what was going on.

6. Is there a National conference? When/where/will IIT send a delegation and who can apply to go?

Right now, there is an annual national RHA conference which is open to colleges and universities across the nation and is programmed in a similar fashion to IRHA. This conference is known as NACURH (National Association of College and University Resi

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Photo by Utsav Gandhi