

AIChE-IIT sponsors alumni panel for career guidance

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CAMPUS EDITOR

It was a busy week for the IIT chapter of the American Institute of Chemical Engineers, following up with the Career Fair to organize a leadership development session with BP and a career guidance panel hosted by both recent and not-so-recently graduated alumni to help chart a career path after a degree in Chemical Engineering. The alumni panel was a fantastic mix of a healthcare professional, a beverage company employee, an expert in gas technology and a leading speaker in business strategy. Their insights and advice were clearly the hallmark of a successful career worth emulating and hopefully will help students of all levels and interest areas within the field.

The alumni were Babajide Oke (Tampico Beverages), Miriam Kittaneh ('03, currently working in the healthcare delivery sector), Dr. Manu Vora (Chairman and President of Business Excellence, Inc., a global management consulting services firm, with over 30 years of leadership experience in telecommunications and chemical processing industries) and Mr Dharam Punwani, (principal consultant, founder and President, Avalon Consulting, with over 45 years of energy technology experience).

The first thing they said was to take advantage of our time here at IIT! Over the years, we are more likely to regret the things we didn't do rather than the things we did; so keep that in mind while you approach each new day and every new college experience.

A question was asked that for students entering the workforce, what's the one thing they lack and they can work on? To that they replied a lack of confidence, crispness and conciseness, a 30 second elevator pitch experience, the ability to take directions well, "emo-

tional tolerance" for unexpected experiences, getting work done in teams, fostering collaboration, the experience of working with a social cause, and public presentation skills. They highly recommend not running to the boss at small problems, rather to give your perspective even while trying.

To that students asked how to best develop soft skills and the alumni replied that nothing works as well as practice to differentiate yourself from others. Have confidence in yourself and what you have learnt in school, they said, because there are tons of companies who would like to hire you! Remember that people hire other people with skills they lack, even if these skills are the wackiest. Learn how to articulate what makes you different and what makes you, you - and then explain how that connects to them.

Understanding what your passion is and "what you want to do for the rest of your life" can be very stressful, but ask yourself a simple, honest question: what are you most passionate about? If you can't answer it, ask others what they see in you. Positive thoughts create positive energy, so keep a very positive attitude especially when interviewing. There's no job small enough for anyone, so see what skills little jobs might have for you - but seek project management experience.

If nothing else, they recommend that students get out there and do something,



Photo by Utsav Gandhi

away from the IIT campus.

Other tips they gave out were to try and be accommodating, humble and flexible enough to receive orders, and to have a confidence that is slightly assertive, short yet concise. Understand the company's culture, and listen to the key words and the body language of those around you. Always know your limits, as well as your top 5 strengths, your talents and your experiences.

For the very pertinent question of graduate school vs industry/MBA vs research/ PhD; they advised getting some experience first, it's crucial in today's market; but to be a "lifelong student" and to never stop learning. See how you can apply your preexisting knowledge and gauge where you need further training - accordingly decide whether you would like to pursue higher education to rise up either the technical or the business side.

Since the career fair just passed, a student asked how a company analyzes students from just a single resume sheet and what advice they had to make an application stand out. The alumni responded saying that to stand out you have to be persistent, creative, keep networking with professionals in the

field and to send out emails. Don't hesitate to invite people for conversations and store their contact information from the career fair. For international students, there are ways around sponsoring you if need it, so think outside the box to make yourself irresistible for the company.

For those overachievers who find it hard to manage time well and to prioritize the not-so-interesting organic chemistry assignment over their extra-curricular passion, they advised to never lose focus of your goal in life. Pick one or two things you are good at and ask others to tell you what these are. See which courses and which social activities you enjoy enjoyed. Keep good friends, because they are like your mirrors. Isolate yourself once in a while and do different things.

Life's biggest lessons are learnt when you decide to face your fears, get out of your comfort zone, embrace what makes you different and never lose sight of your target. Speak up when in a crowd, look up when spoken to, team up when your individual skills just won't do, and never ever give up. Leadership is about managing yourself, knowing who you are, and what resources are out there.

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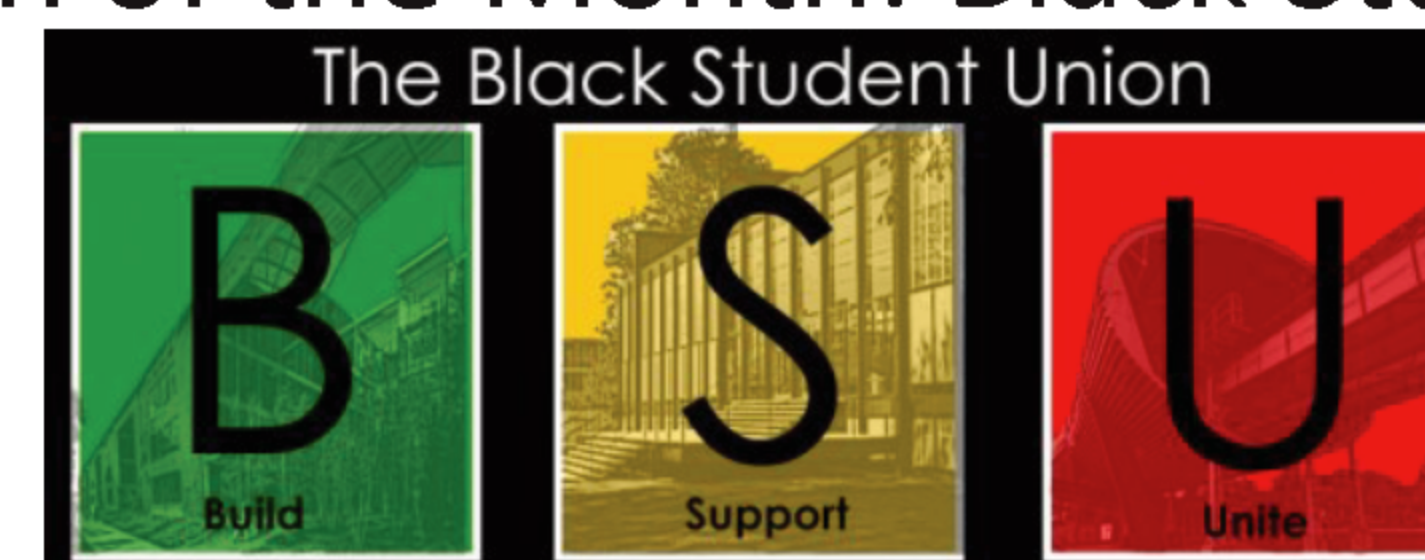


Celebrate Pi Day
with Campus Life!

3.14.2013

11:00am — 3:00pm

Congratulations to the February Student
Organization of the Month: Black Student Union!



Student Leadership Summit

Stepping Stones to Transition

March 9, 2013

MTCC, various rooms

Check in Welcome Center Time: 10:00 a.m.

RSVP: <http://bit.ly/T1Hq6k>