CMC semester achievements include new logo design

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The Career Management Center at IIT has had a very busy semester, hosting one of the largest career fairs yet, organizing many run-up events leading up to it in order to help get students prepared for the event, a couple of very successful etiquette dinners, leading up to a well-attended career connections event for students hoping to get internships for the summer, and finally launching a logo redesign competition for NaceLink, the online job portal with listing tailored exclusively for IIT students.

The semester began with the appointment of Andrés Garza as executive director of the Career Management Center (CMC). Garza previously served as director of the Office of Career Services at the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) for more than 19 years, managing staff that provide all aspects of career counseling and organize on-campus recruiting for more than 27,000 students. As the semester progressed students were invited to a special presentation to hear 'words of wisdom' from three individuals with more than 200 years of combined corporate experience, talking about what it's really like to transition from student to professional. These were the real life stories of Bruce Mueller, Bob Anderson, and Myron Gottlieb at a CMC presentation on Monday, March 4. These individuals have years of experience in academia or industry and had many practical tips on structuring our careers, starting from college.

For the second time in a row, the IIT Career Fair reached maximum capacity with 167 employers offering more than 3500 jobs, including 54% of employers offering jobs to international students. To help students prepare better for the event, the CMC held some unique sessions in etiquette, resume critique, networking with confidence, researching industry and companies, as well as formal dress and appearance. In a unique promotional event, Paul Mitchell Hairstyle Salon from the UIC area dropped by to offer free haircuts and also to announce deals for students. Mary Kay, a trusted global name in skin care, makeup & body care was on campus before the career fair as well, offering some great tips on latest beauty advice, makeup trends, virtual makeover & professional dress to impress strategies. Finally, there was a 50% discount for IIT students announced at Men's Warehouse for suits. These are great initiatives and one hopes that the CMC will continue to get more such deals set up for IIT students to take advantage of. When the Career Management Center surveys the companies that have attended the IIT Career Fair, the company representatives say the same thing: IIT students are exceedingly smart and polite but are not prepared to talk about the company itself or the industry they are in. A Career Fair Pro Tips Guide was created by librarians at Paul V. Galvin Library, using which students could find company and industry information that were aimed to differentiate, including threats and opportunities in an industry, or about a company's strategy and future direction. This could be helpful in indicating an interest in the industry and having a conversation beyond just the student's activity profile and personal interest level. The CMC also hosted a campus-wide Professional Dress Day on Tuesday, February 12, 2013. Faculty and staff members who came to work that day in professional attire were asked to pick up and wear an "Ask me about my outfit" sticker. The objective was to get students to be able to see different outfits that exemplify professional attire and ask faculty and staff members' questions about their professional dress.

As a follow-up for students who were still looking for internships for the summer, the CMC also hosted "Career Connections" in partnership with the INTM department, so that they may be exposed to opportunities at networking events conducted at least once during each Fall and Spring semester. Employers usually bring up to 3 representatives to speak with potential candidates as well as conduct on the spot interviews.

The CMC also organized successful Boeing and Chase Etiquette Dinners on campus, with industry representatives from both companies coming in to talk about their work, opportunities for students, career planning advice as well as get trained on how to survive a professional lunch or dinner meeting coinciding with the interview which might just change your life. These were very well attended and gave students some great insights into lessons they can hope to learn by simple networking or even at internships. Finally, towards the end of the semester, the CMC launched a NaceLink logo competition to rename Nacelink. This is open to all current IIT students and the winners who will be announced later this week will be receiving a $200 cash prize.

IIT students advance to finals of Idea2Product

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Four teams of IIT students competed in the Idea to Product (I2P) Regional Competition in St. Louis, MO on April 6th. The IIT teams competed against 12 teams from the Midwest and swept the field, with all four IIT teams making up the final four in the competition. The winning IIT team, who will advance to the I2P Global Competition in São Paulo, Brazil in November, is made up of Darya Ivankina (BSBA '13, with a concentration in Marketing and Finance), IIT Stuart School of Business; Yi Lu (MSF '14), IIT Stuart School of Business; Alex Stiles (MMAE '12), IIT Armour College of Engineering and Mauro Leos (MS IPMM '13), IIT Chicago-Kent College of Law.

The competition involved the team sending in an initial two page business plan and then subsequently a five page full plan to pitch their business idea in order to be considered for the competition. The winning team pitched their company, Samambu LLC, which markets and distributes AbhadiTM, a thin, flexible 100% nonwoven bamboo fiber mat that can be combined with plastics and formed into everything from furniture to appliances to sunglasses to parts for automobiles. As a B2B company, Samambu LLC operates within the "composites innovators" category, with a goal to disrupt the plastics industry and bring about lasting global change. Their primary client and suppliers are based in Central and South America, due to the abundance of natural resources. Low shipment costs, a strong, flexible, foamable and durable material product, an objective to reduce the amount of plastic by over 50%, and availability in different colors made the product all the more attractive. They are currently based off a small manufacturing R&D facility with help from small designer studios, the Institute of Design, the College of Architecture and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Alex Stiles was the one with the original idea over a year back, but it was the entrepreneurial guidance along with the sound advice regarding strategy, business, marketing, insurance and cost factors by Nik Rokop, managing director of the IIT Stuart Knapp Entrepreneurship Center, which really took them so further on into the competition. The challenge included working on visibility, funding and credibility for investors; as well as pitching the product for seed funding from venture capitalists to set up equipment and R&D lab testing space. The team also recently advanced to the final round of the Tepper Venture Challenge, hosted by Carnegie Mellon's Undergraduate Entrepreneurship Association. As part of their I2P Regional victory, the team received a check for $2,500 to support their start-up. In Brazil they will be required to have an actual prototype to show manufacturers how the product works and is manufactured.

The remaining three finalist teams from IIT were all from the Biomedical Engineering department at IIT Armour College of Engineering, and were coached by Prof. Jennifer Kang-Mieler, Prof. Derek Kamper, and Nik Rokop.

One of the team members, Darya, indicated how incredibly beneficial it is to use the startup community in Chicago as well as the resources available on campus for students to start their own businesses while in college. With faculty, alumni, mentors and resources like the Idea Shop; her team could really apply the business operations and strategy lessons she learned in her classes to an actual application while learning how to work on an interdisciplinary team with real world deadlines.

AIAS round table discusses 'repositioning'

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A few days ago I had an opportunity attend one of the round table discussions by IIT's chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS). I was informed about the topic that was going to be debated and its current status as a discussion at a professional level as well: the topic being "repositioning". It is interesting how this kind topic becomes a dialogue on the issue of relevancy not just to academia but to the architectural profession as a whole. In fact the discussion's core was that of how do we define new architecture in the 21st century?

What needs to be changed to make architecture education better so that people can create their own perspective of what architecture is for them? Can edits in curriculum promote changes needed to redefine a new architecture? Changing certain aspects of the curriculum seems to be a promising opportunity to build a bridge between academy and practice. The new architecture has to prepare architects to deal with more complex problems, understand aspects like global relations, significance of structure and aesthetics, and design more innovatively. Historically it had been an individual planning out to the core of the project like a composer and others following. Now that conception does not fit along with the complex environment that we are currently confronting. Today, we need a team involving architects, developers and engineers to work together; also, to express creative solutions to the built environment. There is an immense necessity for communication and collaboration for every facet of the field to work for the requirements of the clients.

In a team of architects, everyone thinks that their design works the best and that their ideas should be implemented, hence many different good ideas collide with each other. They don't have the ability to combine all the different ideas and working with other disciplines is like working with two year olds. This field of architecture is not a room full of drafters anymore in fact, there is a necessity for diversification, where the team is compiled with various professionals. The main question is how to continue cross-disciplinary work? Is there a way or a structure that can be implemented to get this? In architecture major, design is an ongoing process, there is never a right answer, while other majors have definite things. The work ethic of an architecture student is rooted to the process of making things better and better but ultimately getting the work done, as there is no full stop in architecture. The classroom, in no doubt, provides the experience of finding the essence of architecture, but not everything can be taught inside a classroom. We all know there is more to architecture as we get into real life situations, the complexity increases drastically. To get that understanding of working professionally, 5 years seems short. The experience of combining the knowledge gained during the course to that of the professional ethics comes when we confront situation similar to real life. Universities say that internships are great opportunities for this but not many implement it. Internships are more like mentorship and guidance that prepare the students to what's there at the end of their 5 year course. Not all students have the knowledge of how the process works after they graduate. Even a week of internship is incredibly valuable for the students to observe and understand the profession better and also to gain skills to deal with people with different professions.

Redefining architecture is a complex process as it involves so many elements that have to be considered. The stage at which this profession has reached, architects cannot afford miscommunication between themselves, the contractor and mainly the client. The need and significance for collaboration and communication in this profession is brought to the limelight again. It also brings us to the question of whether is it architects fault if there is any fault in the building or someone else who is involved with the building process. It opens the possibility of another issue of blaming others, rather than pointing the problem to others it is better to except the problem and claim to solve it. As an architect, it is easier to transfer from one thing to another; these are people who adapt to any kind of situation hence acknowledging the ability of problem solving, which keeps the profession running.

Another aspect that was discussed regarding pushing architecture to the next level while keeping the essence of it was how to make design more accessible to general public. Should there be more small firms that emphasizes on bringing design to general public? The functionality and other variables like budget regarding the structure that is being built influence the perspective of the people. The question is what is important to public if cost is out? The notion of having a style is not new to architects. To bring design to people along with conception of style, architects need to give significance to the people who are going to occupy that space. Being successful in this profession depends significantly on the fact that the client/occupant feels satisfied with the creation of the architect. A good design does not have to be really fancy but that design can be cost efficient, sustainable and just could adore simplicity.

These deep and concentrated issues regarding what good design involves and how to present it to the public have multiple solutions. Having this kind of intense topics with a time span that seems to be so short, the students involved in this discussion brought out some significant opinions and ideas regarding "repositioning" of what a new architect is and the responsibilities associated. From what I got from the meeting, I feel that there is no end to this kind of discussion as there is always never-ending ideas and opinion coming out all the time, which I think is an element that is in blood of architecture.