

Campus-wide sustainability efforts aim to meet 2020 goal

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In recent years more than ever, the topic of sustainability has been at the forefront of the world's goals. Nations, companies, universities, and individuals are all taking steps to ensure that they live in ways that are more environmentally friendly and sustainable. An IIT student doesn't need to be on campus long to see that IIT's commitment to sustainability is large. This commitment manifests itself in many ways: the College of Architecture ensures that all architecture students learn about sustainable building practices and the College of Engineering's Engineering Themes focuses both on sustainable energy and water practices. Another key manifestation of IIT's commitment to sustainability is the Office of Campus Energy and Sustainability (OCES.)

OCES has its roots in a university published plan to become the most sustainable urban campus in the country by the year 2020. This original plan contained metrics to track the progress towards this goal, and it quickly became clear that some of these metrics were unrealistic, while others were too easy. OCES came into existence in order to ensure that

progress was made at achieving the goal set out for the year 2020, but also to refine the metrics set in place so that they were challenging, yet attainable.

OCES has two jobs on campus. The first is that they are in charge of energy and utilities billing for the university. They receive all of the university's bills, and then work to split them up by building, department, and entity. The second job of OCES is to handle our university's sustainability efforts. OCES has a staff of full-time employees, and student employees that allow them to focus on transportation, storm water and landscape management, supply chain and waste management, food, energy, and emission. They also have a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) specialist that allows them to focus on green construction. These staff members work both independently and as a team to further the university's sustainability goals in each of these sectors. Some things that the staff members are working on independently include helping Sodexo embrace sustainable cooking methods and determining steps the school can take to collect rainwater for use.

The office currently is working on

several projects to make our campus greener. One project is to determine IIT's carbon footprint. This is being done by determining the emissions produced by campus buildings, students and faculty commuting to and from campus, university-funded travel, the co-generation plant, and more. Once this is known, steps can be taken to lower our carbon footprint by doing things such as encouraging commuters to rideshare and using resources more efficiently on campus. Another project is to redesign the garbage and recycling bins across campus.

"Our campus is only recycling about 30% of what can be," Stephen Pepper said, an OCES student employee. "We decided that this can probably be attributed to the current recycling bins being too complex."

By redesigning the bins, the office hopes to make it easier for students to recycle, raising the amount the university community recycles. Another thing OCES is doing to help boost recycling on campus is having students staff the trash bins at large events such as the Homecoming Carnival to ensure that items that can be recycled or composted aren't thrown out.

One final major project OCES has undertaken is retrofitting all of the exit signs on

campus so that they use LED bulbs. According to Pepper, switching the exit signs to LED will save the school about \$4,500 a month.

OCES' key projects have garnered them a lot of visibility on campus, but much of their work is behind the scenes, not visible to students. This includes the office partnering with the city of Chicago. The city just hired a sustainability coordinator that often meets with OCES for advice. The office also performs quite a bit of community outreach to help Chicago residents be greener, and this can be seen through their support of national bike to work week and community gardens.

IIT's commitment to sustainability and meeting their 2020 goal is clear because of the hard work of the Office of Campus Energy and Sustainability. While the office takes care of the big sustainability efforts, what can the average student do to help OCES meet the university's goal?

"Recycling is huge," Pepper said. "Focusing on the easy stuff: turning off the lights when you leave the room, not opening windows when the air conditioner is on, and being cognizant of how much energy and water you use."

International students should expect whole new world @ IIT

Utsav Gandhi
CAMPUS EDITOR

Coming to the United States of America for my undergraduate studies was my first real time going abroad. Between deciding I wanted to take up IIT's offer, my US VISA interview and my flight to Chicago, I barely had six full days of hectic packing wherein I didn't even get a moment to fully comprehend what exactly I was getting into. There wasn't an online community on any "Admitted Undergraduate" Facebook page for me to orient myself about IIT or any known acquaintances for me to talk to in the Chicago area before I turned around and said that tearful goodbye to my parents at the airport. I remember that everything was so new to me that I stood perplexedly, trying to learn how water fountains worked at O'Hare International Airport Terminal 5, while waiting for IIT's International Center shuttle bus to come pick me up. Somehow, intuitively, I never looked at anything new as a scary prospect of revisiting my fundamental belief systems – instead, I was always curious to try and learn something new every day. America, even in the post-recession world, presented a gamut of opportunities and a personality-molding education I could never have access to back home. And that in itself was the single biggest factor which kept me going despite all the homesickness of freshman year.

You'll miss home-cooked food, you'll probably condemn the Chicago weather multiple times, you'll feel jealous of your local friends who can easily hop onto the Metra suburban train every time they miss seeing their little siblings and, if you're anything like me, you'll wonder why Americans don't play cricket, eat dinner at a normal dinner time like 9:00 p.m. or watch Bollywood movies at the rate of one new release every weekend. You'll also probably question, at some point, why they can't pronounce your name right, and why you have to resort to an alias at Starbucks or Einstein's Bagels. But if you care to take a moment and appreciate what makes this country different – and special, in its own way – you'll start growing in ways you never thought possible. Every day, every conversation, every new acquaintance will be a window into a new culture, and with that realization you will hopefully come to understand one thing which is by far the best piece of advice I have ever received: take advantage of every opportunity you get to step out of your comfort zone – that's always where our biggest growth happens. Never shy away from exploring a new part of the city, participating in 'foreign' traditions like Thanksgiving, learning more about American history, or taking advantage of the large set of resources that IIT and our wonderful city of Chicago provides. Even three years later I cannot understand how baseball works, or why bipartisan politics can become such a touchy

topic, or how the current state of weather or football (not "soccer", you'll soon understand what I'm talking about) are guaranteed to initiate a conversation for you. But what I do know is that I've had some great conversations based on a bilateral curiosity to explore and explain cultures. Of course I'm not telling you to abandon your identity and become a new person altogether – even though I've had the fortune of traveling across America and making friends from many different states, I remain authentically Indian and love my country very much.

More than that, I think (and you'll probably hear this a million times) that one of IIT's most unique strengths is its international student body. Residence halls, the cafeteria, and your classes will abound with fellow international students from places all around the world that I cannot even point out on a map. I've made friends from Rwanda, Iraq, Bolivia, Mongolia and Romania during my time here. It's these out-of-the-box experiences that you have access to during your time at IIT which might just enliven your IIT story a whole lot more. Get involved in student organizations – there are over 150 catering to literally every possible student interest, professional degree, religion and thinkable quirk (there used to be a Beard and Moustache club, and it's up for revival, if anyone reading is interested!). If you don't find one you're looking for, create one of your own. Use the student transit card to lose your way on the city's transportation system (always keep a friend and a CTA map with you, of course). Bored of the residence halls? Check out IIT's Greek system (trust me, it's very, very different from anything you ever saw portrayed by mainstream media). Even if you have no interest in joining a Greek organization, you're guaranteed to hit it off with someone, and make at least one new friend! Greektown, Devon, Italian Village, Chinatown, and the Ethiopian restaurants on the North Side – Chicago probably caters to cuisine from most parts of the world at some location or the other in the city – so when you're craving that Pad Thai or Biryani, go out into the city and get it, and don't forget to take along a friend to introduce them to something new as well!

Finally, another cause for thought in your mind is (most likely) that job. Employment. Work. The main reason you're here in the first place. You'll hear all sorts of rumors about on-campus employment, social security numbers, "here's a quick way to make money!" and the works. My advice is to study hard and develop soft skills, not get sidetracked by the gazillions of distractions around. The job will come at its own time, and there are resources on campus to help you get there. Don't worry about it, at least for now.

Resident Advisors, the International

Center staff, the many different cultural student organizations (African, Syrian, Indian, Korean, Caribbean – just to name a few), the various offices on campus catering to student needs, the International Students Organization, the Student Counseling Center, even your professors and classmates – IIT has every built-in support system you might need to make your time here feel enjoyable. You just have to take the initiative to go out and ask for what you need. Studying abroad doesn't have to be

a scary, nervous time filled with uncertainty about the next experience and apprehension to try new things. It can definitely be the most rewarding few years you might experience.

So, welcome to IIT, and congratulations – taking that plane ride was itself a first step towards stepping out of your comfort zone. I hope you take advantage of the many more similar opportunities an educational experience like this provides.

Good luck!



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