

# Introducing 'Tales From the Victory Lap'

**Miriam Schmid & William Syvongsa**  
TECHNEWS WRITERS

"Shouldn't you have graduated already?" is a question that fifth year students get asked quite frequently. But the questions that should be asked look something like this: "If you could change one thing about your undergraduate career, what would it be?" Or, "What has been your most challenging experience at IIT?" Upperclassmen provide insight and perspective to the undergraduate experience, and fifth year students have an extra year to develop this insight.

Many of you may have heard our names on campus or worked with us in some capacity. We are William Syvongsa, a Biomedical Engineering and Engineering Management double major, and Miriam Schmid, a Biochemistry and Math and Science Education major. Between the two of us, we have served as officers in Union Board, Alternative Spring Break, Greek Council, Greek chapters, Student Government Association, and Ultimate Frisbee. In addition, we have worked in the Office of Campus Life, Residence and Greek Life, Academic Resource Center, Office of the Dean of Students, Galvin Library, IIT Dining Services, and Mies Society. Through all of these

experiences, we have grown as individuals and leaders and hope to be able to share this perspective.

We are far from unique. We were lucky to learn and be inspired by graduating upperclassmen, which shared their stories and experiences with two first year students who were looking for direction for their time at Illinois Institute of Technology. If you were to ask any upperclassmen, you would find that he or she has had similar opportunities to be involved at IIT and has a unique perspective to offer. Unfortunately, this perspective and insight is often overlooked and undervalued by both students and staff. As these students graduate,

this experience and knowledge of the past is lost.

Before we graduate in May we hope to share some of our experiences and perspective through our opinion pieces that will be featured weekly in TechNews. Subsequent articles will feature a single topic that both authors will share their unique perspectives. Guest writers may make appearances from time to time bringing fresh perspectives and topics to "Tales from the Victory Lap."

Next week, we will discuss what it means to be a member of a minority group on campus, specifically being a woman and being a member of the Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender (GLBT) community.

## Cross-enrollment at Shimer College proves pleasant experience

**Austin Gonzalez & Kyle Stanevich**  
TECHNEWS WRITERS

Oddly enough, my parents are most concerned with me enjoying and getting the most out of the college experience. They worry that I'm moving too fast and pushing so hard in academics that I'm forgetting to smell the proverbial roses. Universities have always been seen as a magical wonderland of academic and emotional exploration. Freedom is king at college, I was told, and after receiving pounds of flashy college advertisement literature I believed it. I was ready for the academic ride of a lifetime, completely unprepared for some of the rough surprises ahead.

After being forced to sign up for one of a whopping three IIT humanities, all of which excited a groan, I learned of Shimer's offerings. Shimer College is a tiny liberal arts campus that's connected to IIT, but it is so much more.

Expansive and interesting just scratch the surface of the courses offered at Shimer. Classes range from Ethical studies to basic Latin. There is even a Kubrick film studies course! Kubrick just so happens to be my favorite director. I realize that at a tech

school's humanities will be scant, but three is preposterous. After being put to sleep by my required courses at IIT, the dream of academic excitement was reignited by the opportunity to study on my own terms. This is where the nightmare begins.

Even at a small school like IIT, you must fight for personalized attention with administration. Do you remember when you had to call customer service for the first time? Trying to get a class at Shimer was like that.

"Hi there, I'd like to enroll in a class at Shimer."

"Yea sure, go get a form, fill it out, and we'll review it. We'll get back to you in a couple of days. Make sure you put your email on it."

"Yes. I'm familiar with the form. I have one already, but I was hoping to talk to som-"

"No need. Just fill out the form and we'll get back to you."

"No, see. I need to talk to someone because I have a special case. You see, I'm a freshman and I-"

"You're a Freshmen?"

"Yes."

"Have you taken a 100 level humanities?"

"Well no, but you see I hav-"

"Ok, well. Fill out a form and we'll probably reject you for being new."

"You don't understand-"

"Yeah, go. Fill. Out. The. Form."

This went on for several minutes before I decided to leave with a crumpled petition and a knot of frustration. The next morning things were different. I met with Mr. Welter, explained the situation, and it went much smoother. By the time I left his office, I had an approved petition, and peace of mind. Now all I had to do was meet with the registrar at Shimer.

While I expected talking to the Shimer registrar, Jim Ulrich, to be just as painful as negotiating with the IIT administration, the experience was very friendly. Ulrich was an easy person to talk to and he told us plenty of stories about Shimer, IIT, and everything else. It was nice to finally sit down and talk with an administrator without being hassled.

After leaving his office, a professor, or should I say "facilitator" as they like to be called, came over to me and struck up a conversation. Turns out his daughter went to another well-known tech school, much like IIT. At her school, the aerospace engineers were asked what the hardest classes were, to

which they responded the humanities. The humanities kids said the hardest were the aerospace classes. Looks like I was in two of the hardest areas of study right now.

This is in contrast with IIT. I heard one horror story from a colleague who also tried applying for a class at Shimer but this class would require overloading his schedule. His advisor had verbally approved the overload and class, but when he went to Mr. Welter, his word was not good enough for approval, even though he is a Camras Scholar and an Eagle Scout. He had to go to his advisor, who would then email Mr. Welter with a hopefully approved overload. In order to take this class, he had to jump through hoops that the bureaucracy of IIT made impossible. Luckily, after a very anxious weekend, he too was finally granted permission.

I've only been to a few classes so far and I assert that this course at Shimer will be one of the best decisions I've made at IIT. The staff is friendly; they make the atmosphere relaxed, yet professional. Shimer College has an odd, homey, discombobulated atmosphere. Shimer may not be as prestigious as IIT, but IIT has much to learn from the way Shimer handles its students.

## Campus self defense workshops useful in Windy City

**Shireen Gul**  
COPY EDITOR

The Windy City is a dream place for many people as it is the third most famous city of the USA. Like any big city, there are many concerns especially when you are a female and away from your family for the first time. Everyone will advise you that no matter what, you should not go out alone especially when you live on the South Side. My father was really worried when I decided to move to Chicago. However, deep in my heart I was worried too but I knew that it was my dream and I would have to live it without fear.

Walking down the street after sunset is not a very favorable thing to do here, but when you are a student who has late classes and

multiple assignments you sometimes do. While working on them you don't realize how much time elapses and by the time you get done it is already way past sunset. So, now what should one do in order to stay safe? It's very simple: either go back to your place with a group of people or join a self-defense workshop to learn how to protect yourself from any ill-fated incident.

This week IIT offered students a free self-defense workshop which I was fortunate to attend. The workshop was led by IMPACT Chicago. IMPACT Chicago was founded in 1987 and it is a not-for-profit organization which is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and an Administrative Team. They offer women and girls with an opportunity to learn and practice prevention, assessment, verbal boundary setting and physical self-defense skills in simulated

scenarios with a padded attacker.

Molly Norris, who is an instructor at IMPACT Chicago, conducted the workshop. Norris is an awesome individual who knew exactly how to grab her audience's attention and teach them the best. It was a 90-minute workshop where we learned about personal safety tools, such as awareness, safe distance, and verbal and physical self-defense tools. We were told how we can stay protected even without carrying any weapon because carrying weapon can be dangerous for ourselves.

One thing that I learned at the workshop and really want to share with our dear reader is that if ever you are caught up in such a situation where you feel you are in danger, the best weapon to use is your voice. You should not be scared because the attacker will be more confident if he knows that you are

scared. You look into their eyes and tell them politely, "Please stay away." If they refuse, you then raise your voice and tell them, "Stay away," and if they still refuse, you shout out even louder, "Stay away now!" By doing this simple thing you will give them a signal that you are not a coward and not an easy prey. Apart from this you never know if someone might hear your voice and show up to help.

After attending only one workshop I now feel more protected and walking down the street is not that scary as it used to be. I wonder if I ever get a chance to attend any of their programs, how brave and protected I will feel.

You can like them on Facebook: IMPACT Chicago or visit their website for further information <http://www.impactchicago.org>

## GLBT History Month Book Club: 'Meaning of Matthew'

**William Syvongsa**  
TECHNEWS WRITER

IIT students, I want you to pick up a book and read it. I want you to experience the emotional roller coaster that a book can bring you. I know what you will tell me: "I'm too busy to read," or "Why would I read a book?" For me, reading lets me lose myself in another world. It flexes the creative side of my brain. It is a constructive distraction from school. Don't get me wrong. I love League of Legends, Reddit, and going to the Bog, but when I get the chance I pick up a book and I enjoy it.

I also enjoy educating myself on current issues. So when Alex Carlson, Coordinator of Campus Life and Women's Services, asked me to help plan an event for Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender (GLBT) History Month (October), I immediately wanted to organize a book club that could satisfy both our goals. A book club is a group of individuals who have read the same book and get together to discuss their views, opinions, and outlook on the book. As intelligent individuals, we really should try doing this more often. It's a learning experience that is also really enjoyable.

The book I am proposing we read is

"The Meaning of Matthew: My Son's Murder in Laramie, and a World Transformed" by Judy Shepard. Matthew Shepard was the victim of a hate crime in the small college town of Laramie, Wyoming on October 1998. It was speculated that he was targeted because he was gay.

With the national coverage for GLBT rights and equality, his story is important. He was a college student just like us, and many of you probably know someone personally who identifies themselves as a member of the GLBT community. This book tells us about his life, his murder, and his impact after his death through his mother's perspective.

I want us, as intelligent college students, to be able to read this book and talk about it. When asked why it was important to read this book, Alex Carlson said, "I want you to read it because it will shock you. It will wow you, it will confuse you, but most of all, it will get you thinking, and talking; and what better time to talk than October?" The book club starts the first week of October, and the discussion is planned for October 29, 2013 at 7 p.m. in the MTCC Ballroom. Weekly discussion prompts will be sent out that I hope will engage you.

The link to sign up is [www.tinyurl.com/iitGLBT](http://www.tinyurl.com/iitGLBT). I hope you'll read it with me.