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Students get exclusive opportunity to meet with Presidential Lecture speaker

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Instituted last year, the Presidential Lecture Series is hosted by the Office of the IIT President, Dr. John Anderson and focuses on bringing highly reputed speakers to campus to engage and enlighten the audience about some of the most critical and relevant issues of our times. After last year's theme of sustainability, the theme this year has been chosen as Immigration Policy, one of the most hotly debated issues of our time. To kick things off for this academic year, the first speaker invited to campus was Dr. Douglas Massey, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at Princeton University and one of the country's leading experts on demography, urban sociology, race/ethnicity, international migration and Latin American society (particularly Mexico).

Before his actual lecture to the IIT community, several students received an exclusive opportunity to meet with him in a smaller, more informal group setting where they had a chance to ask him some questions on his career and work. The group had representation from the Student Government, the RA Diversity Committee, the Undocumented Students Association, TechNews as well as a sophomore enrolled in the new Economic and Social Development Policy program, also affiliated with Engineers without Borders. The students had some great questions for the speaker, ranging from national level policies regarding immigration to the undocumented student movement on college campuses, to media representation on the topic to his own career and interest in the field.

Dr. Massey spoke at length about

how he was disappointed in the national government, saying that the elected officials don't want to fight and follow through with their promises regarding immigration reform. He believes that the country is in the midst of a major demographic transition, and it is no longer just California wherein undocumented immigrants are filtering in - in 1970, towards the start of his career, 4.7% of the American population was foreign born. Today, it is almost 16%. There needs to be stricter voter ID laws and control of the borders. He talked about misrepresentation in the media regarding the issue, especially Fox News. He recommends NPR, CNN International, BBC and the New York Times as more trustworthy sources of unbiased information on the topic. He spoke about how his career has been an amalgamation of psychology, sociology, demographic studies and anthropology as well as his work at Princeton; and mentioned how universities can be a major asset in aiding and assisting undocumented students in securing equal rights as other students.

It was a fantastic opportunity for students to take advantage of in learning more about a topic not discussed too widely at IIT, but highly relevant for our times. The next lecture hosted by the President will be a special presentation by renowned Chicago civic leader John W. Rowe will be held on Wednesday, November 20, 2013 at 4:00 p.m. He will be discussing the 2013 report published by the Commission of the Humanities and Social Sciences of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences and its relevance to higher education. Dr. Rowe is an IIT regent, current member and former chairman of the IIT Board of Trustees, and chairman emeritus of Exelon Corporation.

