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NOVEMBER 5,
2013**

Volume 177 | Issue 9

technewsiit.com

TechNews

Student newspaper of the Illinois Institute of Technology since 1928

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President Provost forum looks to future

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A unique IIT tradition that has formed over the past few years has been that of the once a semester President and Provost Forum. Hosted by the Student Government Association (SGA) and put on shortly after the midterm, the Forum provides an opportunity for students and faculty members to ask any questions they may have about the university and its policies to the two staff members in charge of shaping those policies and assembling a staff to make those policies happen.

This semester's Forum took place in the Hermann Hall ballroom over the lunch hour on November 1. The forum had fewer individuals in attendance than past forums, but the Ballroom still found itself full of people as SGA Executive Vice President Raghav Girijala brought the room to order and opened the Forum. Questions were posed both by people in attendance at the Forum and through a web form that was set up by SGA.

The first question of the forum was posed via the online form, and asked how the administration of the university could help increase school spirit and athletic involvement. President John Anderson began by responding with a few possible ideas, bringing up the fact that he personally purchased pizza for the attendees of early basketball games as an example of a potential idea, citing the fact that attendance double when he did. Provost Alan Cramb then took a chance to respond, mentioning his belief that increasing school spirit and athletic involvement was not something that the administration could do, saying that issues such as this one needed to be driven by the student body. He explained that students should support other students who are athletes just like they support other students who are leaders in student organizations, and that this was necessary to create a true campus community at IIT.

The next question, also from the online form, asked if the university could begin promoting itself as Illinois Tech as opposed to IIT. This question was answered by the Provost, who explained his personal preference for the name Illinois Tech due to the fact that it puts the

University in company with well-known schools such as Caltech and Georgia Tech. He went on to explain, however, that we promote ourselves as Illinois Tech and IIT because while Illinois Tech is a great university name for individuals in technical fields, students in non-technical fields, such as business or psychology, would probably have greater success in the job market referring to their university as IIT. The Provost concluded by saying that individuals should choose for themselves how they would like to refer to the university and which name they would like to call it.

The next question was the first question from a member of the audience, asking what the current status of the Innovation Center was. The Innovation Center is the proposed new campus building that would become the first new academic building on IIT's campus in over 40 years. The President responded by saying that there is still quite a bit of money that needs to be raised before the Center can be built. The Innovation Center will need \$45 million to be built, and only \$7 million to \$8 million of this had been raised. This amount has allowed planning to begin on the building, though. The President explained that five different architectural firms are currently submitting proposals for both the design of the building and the facilities the building will provide, and that the university will announce the final architectural firm chosen for the project in January.

This question was followed up by another question from the audience, in which a student mentioned a story that had been published in TechNews earlier in the semester. In the article, two students shared an anecdote about how their Resident Advisor had told them not to go south of 35th street; advice which they chose to ignore in order to visit a restaurant on 95th street. The student asked if it was the University's official policy to tell students not to go south of 35th street, explaining that the South Side is just as much a part of the city as any other part of the city, and not an area to simply ignore. The Provost took the lead on the question, explaining that this was not the official opinion of the University, and that the idea in and of itself is an old mentality, born 20 or 30 years ago and not relevant any more. The Provost advised students to stay smart and safe

no matter where they are traveling since IIT is in a city. He also brought up how many students at IIT give back to the city of Chicago in all of its communities, both north and south of 35th street.

The next question posed regarded many of the changes happening at the University currently, and whether or not the University had a roadmap for its future as all these changes were occurring. The President stressed that one of the biggest goals of the University for the future is to further improve its financial status, explaining that, "if your finances aren't in order, it's hard to do anything." The President also mentioned that goals for the future included increasing the total enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students to 9,000, and building a new recreation center for students, although he caveated that the recreation center was a very long term goal. The Provost further expanded on what the President said by mentioning that the University is working on becoming internationally known for what it does, and that it is investing in tech centers both on campus and in the city of Chicago in order to open up possibilities for students. The President closed by saying that the main goal of the University for the future was to take the advantages afforded to the University since it is small, and mitigate the disadvantages brought to the University by being small.

A follow up question was then asked by an attendee, who was wondering if newly renovated buildings would be made compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act. The President and Provost deferred to Bruce Watts, IIT's new head of Facilities and Public Safety to answer the question, who explained that all new and renovated buildings would be made ADA compliant, and that the University had hired one of the top firms in the city to do this. Watts also mentioned that capital funds were currently being spent to repair the crumbling handicap ramp into Hermann Hall in the upcoming weeks.

The next question again dealt with the upcoming renovations of campus buildings, asking if there was a timeline in place for these renovations. President Anderson explained that the first phase of the Engineering One renovations had already begun, and that they would be completed by August 31, 2014,

at which point in time the building will be renamed the John T. Rettaliata Engineering Center. He also mentioned that the renovation of the Life Sciences building was staggered a year behind that of Engineering One, so it would be complete by August 31, 2015.

One of the final questions was posed by an architecture student in attendance, asking how the administration could help with the frustration felt by many students in the College of Architecture regarding the many changes brought about by the new Dean of the College, Wiel Arets. The Provost answered the question, explaining that it was his belief that much of the concern felt by students within the College was due to lack of communication. The Provost stressed that, contrary to the belief of some architecture students, the Dean of the College was being held to the same standards as other Deans on campus, and that students should talk to the Dean and the Associate Deans of the College to learn all that is happening, which would help solve the communication problems that exist and alleviate student's concerns.

The final question posed was in regards to the IEEE Great Lakes Symposium, which was held on campus in September. The student talked about how exciting it was to have so many industry professionals on campus during the symposium, and asked if it was possible for things like this to happen again. Provost Cramb responded to the question by explaining that it isn't IIT that organizes conferences such as the Symposium, but the hosting organizations themselves and the departments at IIT related to the conference topic, ultimately saying that there is little we can do to decide whether or not a conference or symposium is to be hosted on campus.

With the end of the lunch hour approaching, the Forum was then closed. President Anderson finished the event by taking an opportunity to talk about the upcoming speakers that were a part of the Presidential Lecture Series. The series is currently focusing on the topic of Immigration, and the President shared that professors from both Princeton and the University of Washington were being brought to campus to speak, with the first lecture taking place on November 14.



Photos by Kevin Zheng