

Student leaders meet with Presidential Lecture Series Speaker

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CAMPUS EDITOR

Braving some frigid temperatures and strong winds, a few student leaders made a trek on the afternoon of Monday, January 27, to the Idea Shop for an exclusive opportunity to meet with Presidential Lecture Series speaker, Dr. Charles Herschel. The series intended to bring leading experts in energy, sustainability, health, innovation, and other areas of societal challenges to Chicago to lend us their views and engage in discussion.

Chairman John Rowe and President John Anderson host the series, with three lecturers each year devoted to a particular theme. With this year's theme being immigration reform, Dr. Hirschman, Professor of Sociology and Public Affairs at the University of Washington delivered the second installment of the lecture for this academic year. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses on demography, immigration, ethnicity, and comparative social change. He spoke of the



Photo by Utsav Gandhi

contributions of immigrants and their children to American society, and in particular, to the development of the American performing arts, science, and other cultural pursuits.

Before his lecture, he took some time to meet with few student leaders in the Idea Shop for an extremely enlightening and enriching conversation about our stories and backgrounds. The group was a varied mix, typically representative of IIT—culturally diverse, pursuing careers ranging from computer science to ITM to architecture—with incredibly different life stories about how they

came to IIT, but united in their shared spirit of visionary student leadership. First generation Indian and Chinese immigrants, a student of Polish descent, students from Nigeria, India and Syria, as well as a student who has lived in many different countries around the world. In hindsight, it was quite humbling to even realize how far we had all made it and just how much we owe to our parents and educators.

After brief introductions, Dr. Hirschman asked us all a pertinent question, "What do you think it means to be American?" We spoke about poverty, about opportunity, about taking chances, about following your dreams and the platforms this country has traditionally provided millions of individuals. Dr. Hirschman told us about his own humble beginnings in small-town Ohio and how education afforded him plenty of opportunities to pursue his passions and leave his mark. We spoke at length about intercultural exchange of ideas, and how it is important to embrace opportunities to step out of our comfort zone, whether it is tackling fear of the physical

unknown, or taking the time to learn about what is happening in the world around us.

There is some incredible diversity in this world and it is only by asking questions that we can expand our horizons. He mentioned how official authority governs U.S. society less and there is greater emphasis on the strength of the individual to bring about change; there are benefits and costs to this.

Soon enough it was time for the actual lecture, but we realized we had hardly heard from Dr. Hirschman at all—a testament to the incredible stories that our classmates and friends here at IIT have brought with them. He left us with an important message that will probably resonate with most students reading this right now; no matter where we come from, and where we end up going in our lives, we must continue to work hard towards achieving our professional goals. That is the only way the country that has given so much to us will be able to provide the same opportunities for generations to come, and the only way we can march towards progress as a whole.

Chinese New Year Celebration transforms MTCC

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Chinese New Year is the longest and the most important celebration in the Chinese calendar. This year the Chinese year 4712 began on January 31. According to the Chinese horoscope, 2014 is the Year of the Horse. Each year, they give a different animal name to the year according to the horoscope.

Chinese months are calculated by the lunar calendar, with each month beginning on the darkest day. New Year festivities traditionally start on the first day of the month and continue until the fifteenth, when the moon is brightest. In China, people may take weeks of holiday from work to prepare for and celebrate the New Year.

Student Center of Diversity and Inclusion and Sodexo celebrated Chinese New Year on campus. There was table set on the MTCC bridge, where students were given away free treats such as: New Year crowns, fortune cookies, a horoscope, decoration stuff, chocolate coated pretzels, candies and lots warm hugs and wishes.

The best part was when the Chinese students were sharing their experience with other students of how they celebrated New Year back home and the concept behind the lantern festival. In China, the New Year is a time of family reunion. Family members gather at each other's homes for visits and shared meals, most significantly a feast on New Year's Eve. This is somewhat similar to the celebration of Thanksgiving and Christmas Eve.

Whereas Sodexo served Chinese food for lunch: shrimp fried rice, tofu fried rice, stir-fried chicken, brown rice, stir-fried beef and fortune cookies. This food was the best food of this semester. What made the environment of the Commons livelier was that all the Chinese students had a big smile on their faces and one could feel their happiness.

A student shared that at Chinese New Year celebrations people prefer wearing red clothes, and give children "lucky money" in red envelopes because they believe that red symbolizes fire, which—according to Chinese legend—can drive away bad luck. It is also said that people in China would light bamboo stalks instead of lanterns because they believed that the crackling flames would frighten evil spirits

