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WIIT, SGA host interview with President Anderson

Kori Bowns

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

With the President and Provost Forum only coming once a semester and often running out of time to take every question from students, the IIT community often seeks additional opportunities to voice their concerns to university administration. In a recent event sponsored by the IIT Student Government Association (SGA) and WIIT, Illinois Tech's radio station, students were given the opportunity to ask questions of IIT's President John Anderson.

During the lunch hour on Wednesday April 9, President Anderson joined the WIIT studio hosted by Kevin Zheng, Interim Station Manager, with questions facilitated by Harshita Iyer, the outgoing SGA Vice President of Student Life, and Sonia Kamdar, the newly-elected SGA Vice President of Student Life.

In this radio interview with President Anderson, the IIT Community had several ways to participate; students could submit questions for the President via a Facebook page for the event or call in live to the radio studio. For students just planning to listen, they were able to tune-in to WIIT at 88.9 FM or visit their website at radio.iit.edu to listen to a live audio stream.

The first few questions came from those in the studio; President Anderson was asked what he saw as the most important issues related to IIT that he was currently working on. "The issue of facilities is one of the most important ones. We need to work on money for improving our physical location. Maintaining our campus is something I worry about every day," President Anderson responded. "The second big issue is finding money for student scholarships, and a third is finding more support for our faculty."

President Anderson went on to make additional comments as to the state of improvements of campus facilities. "Renovations on Engineering 1 should be starting this summer. Our second project is renovations to the Life Sciences building. We're hoping to start that project within 12 months," said President Anderson. "A third new project that is building a new building, which we refer to as the innovation center. We've received major funding from alumnus Ed Kaplan. With that building, we hope to break ground by the end of 2015 or early 2016, and there's been much public announcement about the future of that building on campus."

Next up, President Anderson was asked about what he thinks is the best part of his job as president. "The best part of my job is witnessing the successes of our students and faculty," he said. "When students do well, when we have high retention rates, we feel really good about that. The same goes for faculty. I feel extremely good when the faculty achieves success. I don't think there's anything better as a leader than to witness success by those in your organization."

"The second thing I like is that I really like alumni events. I really enjoy going to an event and talking to alumni, added Anderson. "I enjoy interacting with students; that's another part I really enjoy."

President Anderson was then asked why his office no longer offered open office hours for students to drop by and speak with him. President Anderson responded that the office stopped offering hours because students stopped signing up for them. He emphasizes that any student is more than welcome to make an appointment with him, and that he's very interested in learning about what students are doing and listening to their concerns. For interested students, he recommends calling his office and making an appointment to meet with him, promising that he's never turned down a student for such a meeting.

The next question was about the state of smoking on campus, and sought

President Anderson's thoughts on how we can keep both smokers and nonsmokers in our community happy while keeping our campus clean and healthy.

"I have experience with problems from secondhand smoke, and I think it's extremely dangerous," said President Anderson. "On the other hand, when you're outside, secondhand smoke is dispersed, so I don't believe that it poses a danger to everyone else. I'm not a person who tries to dictate how others should live. I think smoking is dangerous and addictive, but some people do feel the need to do it. We need to enforce no smoking near entrances and intakes to air-handling systems. If people smoke walking down the street, I have no problem with that, unless they're throwing their cigarette butts on the sidewalk."

"My stance is that I will defend the law against smoking indoors and near air intake systems, but if people want to smoke some other place, that's their business," he added. "I caution them against it, because it's known to be extremely unhealthy."

An additional question came in via Facebook, from IIT student Omar Ibrahim, asking how the president saw the future of healthcare-related majors developing at IIT in the future, asking if there would be any growth in the variety of medicine- and biology-related majors. President Anderson answered that, while he doesn't think IIT will ever have a medical school, as we have many in the area and many collaborations with medical schools, we will expand in the content areas surrounding food technology. He stated that he thinks IIT will be developing majors in those fields, and students will see more majors in the food, science, and health realm in the next 10 years.

Another question asked how student government at IIT plays a role in the strategic plan of the university and asked President Anderson how he sees student representatives working as liaisons between

students and administration. "Students can play roles in a couple of ways, said President Anderson. "Student government and student officers can help with communication. It's difficult for the President or the Provost or even the deans to get a lot of information out to all of the students."

He went on to add that students can also be involved by being a part of the evaluation of university strategic plans and allowing students to help the university determine what targets are and how they are met.

The next question came in from a caller to the WIIT studio, IIT student Trevor Wasserzieher. He asked whether the university was planning to add a men's lacrosse team to follow the establishment of a women's team on campus. The President says that men's lacrosse is definitely in the future of athletics at IIT, but might be a few years into the future.

President Anderson was then asked about ideas he has to increase collaboration between undergraduate students and graduate students at IIT. President Anderson says that undergraduate students will have to be the ones to reach out to graduate students, and he believes that social events are a great step in getting graduates involved in the undergraduate community of IIT.

The next question, coming in from the Facebook event page, asked: "What is your attitude toward information transparency in relation to the school's decisions and expenses?"

"We welcome the input of the students on initiatives and decisions. We really need the input and so welcome that," said President Anderson. "I view SGA as the entrance to the student body. We also have forums where students can come and learn themselves or ask questions. Student input has been important to us, and if you want evidence that student input makes a

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Spanish courses offered in Humanities Department

Sijia Wu

LAYOUT EDITOR

IIT has offered Spanish language and culture courses over the past two years and will continue to offer them this fall. This is an achievement of a completed project initiated by SGA, consisting of four sequential Spanish courses offered by the Department of Humanities. The first and third course in the series, offered under the COM (communication) 125 and 225 designation respectively, will be available to register in the Fall 2014 term.

The first course, Spanish Language and Culture 1 (COM 125) is suitable for students with little or no background in Spanish. It covers basic grammar structures and helps build vocabulary. This course counts as a humanities or social science general education course. However, for those intermediate level Spanish speakers (students with two years of high school Spanish or equivalent), Spanish 3 (COM 225) would be the best choice, as it focuses on description and narration in multiple Spanish tenses and involves watching short

Spanish videos and reading Spanish journalistic texts. This course counts towards the 300+ level humanities requirement.

The instructor for these courses, Professor Kate Thompson, received her PhD in Latin American literature at the University of Maryland and has been teaching Spanish at the University of Chicago for eleven years.

"Learning another language helps us to communicate across cultural boundaries. It's also just plain fun to communicate in a different language—there is a thrill in being able to express yourself in a language that is not your own," said Thompson, stressing the significance and pleasure of learning a foreign language. She highly encourages IIT students to enroll in either COM 125 or COM 225 next semester, as they are helpful and well-designed.

"Conversation, reading, writing and listening skills are all emphasized in these classes, along with a lot of cultural content including reading and videos that showcase some of the different aspects of various Hispanic cultures." The feedback from students who have taken Spanish classes with Thomp-

son has been excellent.

Cara Karter, a second year social and economic development policy major, has taken the full sequence (COM 125, COM 126, COM 225 and COM 226) and has found the courses to be very valuable to her during her time at IIT.

"I came in with an interest in continuing language studies but was unaware that the opportunity existed. My brother, who is also at IIT, told me about the first course COM 125 and we were both enrolled in the course during its inaugural semester," said Karter.

She also mentions that the course has enabled her to vastly improve her Spanish skills which she has utilized while travelling to Nicaragua (in March 2013, and soon in May 2014) with Engineers Without Borders-IIT Student Chapter.

Precious Eboh, a third year biomedical engineering student, has also benefited from Spanish classes offered on campus and has enjoyed the teaching style of Thompson. "She employs a variety of methods to keep you interested in the class. She is a professor who

expects a lot from you and in return she gives her all, to help you meet her expectation," said Eboh.

He is not the only one who feels this way.

Rohit Agarwal, a senior student majoring in electrical and computer engineering, has also provided a positive review regarding the instructor: "Professor Thompson is very open and inviting to questions during class and always engages in an informative classroom discussion. She is helpful to students who are struggling more than others and does her best to make sure no one is left behind." Then he further adds that from his perspective, the class itself is conducted in a fairly professional manner that creates a friendly and successful learning environment.

All registered students at IIT with an interest in language studies are encouraged to enroll in either one of the two Spanish classes offered in the fall semester based on different individual backgrounds. If you have any questions, please email Professor Kate Thompson at kthomps8@iit.edu.