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TEDxIIT makes big 'Impact'

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The 4th annual TEDxIIT took place April 5, 2014 in the IIT Tower Auditorium. This was one of the rare occasions when the IIT community could share the same platform at the same conference, receiving equal attention and interest. That's the core value of TED: everyone can have a special idea to share no matter who they are. As in previous years, it was another sell-out event with 370 applications for 100 tickets. An estimated 200 guests showed up throughout the day. A number of them were on the wait list. The event was also broadcast live worldwide. An overflow area was set up in the lobby for those who were waiting for a seat or needed to leave during a session. The audience was requested to remain seated during each entire segment which lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

TED is a nonprofit event devoted to ideas worth spreading. It started out in 1984 as a conference bringing together people from three worlds: technology, entertainment, and design.

Since then, its scope has become even broader. TEDx is a program of local, self-organized events that bring people together to share a TED-like experience. IIT's event is TEDxIIT, where x indicates an independently organized event. TEDxIIT is a university event organized by the student organization, working with Amy Lee Segami, IIT alumni.

Segami is a former TEDx Speaker at TEDxPeachtree and the founder of TEDxIIT in 2009. This year, she served as the co-organizer, advisor, and curator of the event. The theme for TEDxIIT 2014 was "Infinite Impact".

TEDxIIT 2014 reached the heights of success only because of the IIT community and the students of IIT who worked to plan the event. TEDxIIT 2014 consisted of diverse group of students in the team working for one goal: the success of the event. Students coming from 12 different countries came together to make this all happen. Isabelle Romero, President of TEDxIIT, and Yoetzin Diaz, Vice- President of TEDxIIT, did an outstanding job in bringing the team together and working for the big day. The speaker buddies (who accompanied a particular speaker for entire day) were a great help. Hours of time were spent at rehearsals in auditorium with speakers, board members, and volunteers. It was a great moment of joy to see that all the hard work was finally paying off.

The speakers talked about the inspirational stories which captivated the audience. Dr. Hamid Arastoopour, a faculty member of IIT and a well-known scientist,

Above: TEDxIIT speakers for the main event.
Below: TEDxIIT's organizers.
Photos courtesy of Nirja Shah & TEDxIIT's Facebook Page

shared his experience with the multiple applications of energy as a source. Carol Ross Barney, also a faculty member and renowned architect, shared her experience as an architect to improve and work on the Chicago transit system by introducing boats for transport. Ian Beacraft of Leo Burnett emphasized one of the most important things of the 21st century, the cell phone, and its immense use in our daily lives and how today's generation is obsessed with taking their own pictures of themselves. Katherine Darnstadt, an IIT Alumna, brought the idea of innovative design to those in resource- or budget-limited environments through a holistic, creative approach to design driven by community needs that leverage other partners and assets to address project challenges. Jessica Ann Hubert, whose parents are both IIT Alumni, received a standing ovation from the audience.

Despite being paralyzed, she shared the idea of never losing hope in life and having the belief in oneself to make things happen. There is only one thing that can keep you motivated, telling yourself that "you can do it". Andrew Little shared his ideas of things to discover in space, and motivated students to pursue opportunities in space exploration. Sanjib Sahoo encouraged the audience to use amazing technology and collaborate it with the stock market. Read Tawil, an IIT student, talked about his work on project of designing drones and bringing revolutionary change in 21st century. Monica Weila, an entrepreneur, shared the idea of reusing the boxes received from online shopping for charity, thus closing the loop from shopping to giving. Xi Zhang, another IIT student, shared her story of changing her career direction at the age of 28, sending the audience the message that it's never late to pursue your dreams.

The diverse backgrounds of attendees were an excellent mix of professors, students from different majors, as well as alum; they were handpicked to represent the best of the IIT community. Despite their diversity, they all had one thing in common–a love for inspiration and new ideas. Many of the attendees and speakers expressed how much they had enjoyed themselves and how much they were already looking forward to TEDxIIT 2015!

It was a very rewarding experience for everyone who attended. Breakfast, lunch, and all-day refreshments were provided as well as a networking reception.

People exchanged business cards, shared insights, and discussed the ideas learned from the conference. Improv workshops were held to involve the audience which encouraged them to speak up and share their skills in speaking spontaneously and developing leadership qualities. The workshop was a great success with many laughs and much entertainment.

The flow of the speakers was excellent. Intermixed with TED Talks video, the audience experienced a rich variety of emotional and intellectual journeys.

It is apparent that the organizers had put in a lot of thought to design the program. In fact, the whole event was well-planned, well-organized, and professional.

TEDxIIT thanks President John Anderson, Provost Alan Cramb, Vice-Provost Jerry Doyle, Dean of Students Katherine Murphy-Stetz, and Alex Carlson of Campus Life for their continuous support.

TEDxIIT 2015 will be even better when you are a part of it. To know more about TEDxIIT, sign up for the mailing list at www.tedxiit.com.

If you missed the event and the talks of the inspirational speakers, go to: http://bit.ly/txi14live.

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