

SGA to create stronger consistency through events committee

Ethan Castro
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBER

One of the tenure goals of Student Government Association (SGA) President Hamze “Leo” Sukkar was the creation of a new Events Committee tasked with planning, organizing, and advertising regular events branded as SGA programs. A seemingly universal agreement among SGA’s executive board last fall semester was that such a task could not realistically be delegated to a single person; a full-fledged committee is necessary in order to more effectively generate strong, consistent events. Thus, with an approved constitutional amendment creating a dedicated events committee, all that was missing was a chair to lead this committee. Luckily, SGA would not have to look far to find a willing candidate.

As was described in our last issue’s coverage of the first senate hearing of the semester, the new chair of the SGA

events committee came from SGA’s pool of volunteers. Adeena Ahmed, the new events chair, had already established her presence among SGA members by regularly attending both senate hearings and committee meetings and being an active part of discussions within both settings. Now, she stands poised to establish SGA as an influential avenue of change within the lives of every student on campus. She sees the creation of the events committee as a prime opportunity to “lay groundwork for how future events should be set up and figure out the best way to reach out to students.” Indeed, when questioned about specific plans on addressing concerns about the planning of SGA events, she energetically responded with her experience and dedication to maintaining strict timelines for planning and especially marketing events. “Being part of Muslim Student Association for the past two years I have assisted in planning for numerous events on campus and have learned the ins and outs of a successful event.”

Ahmed has begun to live up to her

promise of advance event warning and this was evident during her chair report at the most recent senate hearing in Stuart Building 113, on the night of Wednesday, January 25. In her report, Ahmed laid out a framework for upcoming SGA events all the way through the end of March. Two of the more immediate events are continuations of the SGA Town Hall series, an open forum where the student body is invited to question and have discussions with a select department of campus administration. On the SGA agenda, under Ahmed’s events committee, Town Hall forums with both the Student Health and Wellness Center (scheduled for Tuesday, February 21 at lunch time) and with Public Safety (scheduled for late March) are chief among the organization’s list of obligations. In addition, Wednesday, March 8 will see the next President and Provost Forum, where students and faculty alike are invited to a question and answer session with President Alan Cramb and Provost Frances Bronet. SGA plays a role in moderating and advertising this event, and Ahmed’s notification of the event

now in January is a prime example of the latter task.

Ahmed has expressed her hope that the deliveries of these events will help spread general awareness of both the existence and purpose of SGA. “All these events are here to help better inform the student body of any questions or concerns they might have with different parts of the school. We are also in the midst of thinking creative ways to have a more fun way to get involved with the student body that people should keep their eyes and ears open for.” In addition to attending these events and learning about SGA there, students interested in bolstering their involvement on campus should also consider contacting events chair Adeena Ahmed and taking a role in shaping these events. “Anyone can join the committee, they can contact me directly at aahmed29@hawk.iit.edu or they can just email SGA expressing their interests and they will be directed towards the SGA interest group.”

SGA prepares topics for upcoming Board of Trustees meeting during latest Senate hearing

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Illinois Tech’s Student Government Association (SGA) Senate meetings could go on for days if it were possible; in these meetings, SGA attempts to hear dozens of unique opinions, discuss myriad relevant student issues, vote on prospective student organizations, and update all those present on senators’ and officers’ activities. There’s a lot on the agenda, which means that although meetings are often more than two hours long, there is a clear emphasis put upon efficiency. Rules state that those speaking must be concise, cannot repeat what has already been said, and must raise their right hand and wait to be acknowledged before speaking as to avoid chaos. There is also a clear order to the proceedings, and first on the docket, as always, are prospective student organizations.

The first prospective student organization to be heard at the January 25 SGA Senate meeting was an Illinois Tech chapter of the National Organization of Minority Architects (NOMA). The speaker representing this organization, Ricardo Chaidez, was dressed to the nines. Given five minutes to present to the senate, Chaidez explained that this prospective organization would be a way for Illinois Tech students to get involved with a national organization, and mentioned that most schools in the Chicago area already had a chapter on campus. Illinois Tech even had a chapter itself a few years ago, but it had since disbanded. The organization’s main goal would be to help every minority (any person not represented in some way) and push them forward in their career through networking events. NOMA would also be involved in outreach programs, such as a summer camp with hands-on activities such as hand drawing and model building designed to get young students excited about architecture. This organization had six officers in place, with an additional five members already committed, and their total proposed budget was a weighty \$4800 due to mandatory national chapter membership costs and travel costs for conferences and competitions.

At first thought, NOMA might seem redundant, as Illinois Tech already has a chapter of the American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS) on campus. However, Chaidez pointed out that the main difference between the two is that NOMA would put more of an emphasis upon networking and hands-on activities, something that some senators noted that AIAS lacked. However, these two organizations have already spoken together about collaborating to host events. When asked about which students would be allowed to join the organization, Chaidez made very clear that all students, even those outside of architecture, would be welcome to join. He

explained that the organization had an officer that is an engineer, and a member studying construction management. The organization was approved, with 20 voting yes, 1 voting no, and 1 abstaining.

The second prospective organization that presented for the senate was the proposed Bioengineering Journal Club. The student representing this club was Robert Jackson, a second year PhD student studying chemical and biological engineering, and his casual clothing contrasted starkly with the last presenter. With a very serious demeanor, he began his five minutes of presentation explaining that the idea to create this organization began between himself and his advisor, Professor Ali Cinar, and many other faculty. There were 11 total students involved as well, mostly chemical and biological engineering students. Each monthly meeting, one student will supply a bioengineering research journal article to discuss, preferably an article that includes a connection to their own research. The proposed budget for this Journal Club was only \$250, which exclusively covered the cost of pizza at meetings. When asked about whether this could potentially be more of a class than a student organization, Jackson answered that he had discussed this with Dr. Cinar as well, but they would rather not have academic pressure associated with it, no stress about grading, just a relaxed and formal setting. When it was time for senators to discuss this organization before voting, many had concerns to voice, such as the problem of using student activity funds to pay for faculty to eat lunch. Another concern was that the presenter himself didn’t seem convinced that he wanted this to be an organization, and perhaps he was doing it purely because his professor wanted him to. One senator thought that the organization might be better suited as a “breakfast club type thing,” not an actual organization; it was hard to envision executive board meetings or other programming that was typical of a student organization. The organization was not approved, with seven votes for yes, fourteen for no, and three abstaining.

Moving on, Executive Vice President Sonia Kamdar brought up the idea of a new senator project spotlight, featured on the SGA Facebook page, to keep senators motivated and showcase work done to the student body. Senators would have the opportunity to nominate another individual when significant progress was done, not just completed, so that long-term projects could be more recognized. Senators received this idea well, snapping in approval. The spotlight would ideally occur weekly or biweekly, and increase both the organization and the senators’ visibility.

Next, President Hamze “Leo” Sukkar called for volunteers to help move the SGA office, which is being moved from the OCL suite to next to the One Stop. The move is occurring

on Monday, February 8th. Additionally, ideas were needed for issues to bring up to the Board of Trustees, which were meeting on February 16th. Issues needed to be bigger in scale than simply wanting a “pizza vending machine,” but issues that SGA cannot handle on its own. Akash Raina, the vice president of academic affairs, asked senators to talk to their friends and ask what core issues they thought needed addressing. This discussion was continued during open floor later in the meeting.

Jelani Canty, the Vice President of Communications, shared his experience with Senator Ethan Castro when they volunteered at the Boys and Girls Club, helping students with their homework. The after school program is from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Canty thought the impact Illinois Tech students could theoretically make would be immeasurable. Castro explained that he thought it was a good way for Illinois Tech to get its name out in the general area, and encouraged all who were interested to get in touch with Canty to get involved. Canty can be reached at comcom.sga@gmail.com.

Qianran He, the Vice President of Student Life, is working on finding a remedy for the death rate of birds that flew into the glass walls of State Street Village (SSV). One idea, she said, is to find a way to deter the birds, like a drawing on the windows. Another project she was working on, stemming from one of the most common student complaints gathered by SGA last semester, was to control the amount of smoking on campus. Some potential solutions to this problem, explained He, were to ask public safety to help enforce the 15 feet rule, contact the Student Health and Wellness Center and ask for their help to keep students aware of the health risks of smoking, draw a line on the ground 15 feet around the nonsmoking area, or ask for the help of the employees inside buildings with the most smoking problems.

Finance Board Chair Sung Min Choi Hong announced that the Finance Board Hearing was taking place on February 4th in MTCC Conference Room from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m., and was open to anyone in the student body. This hearing is especially useful for new treasurers, new presidents, or those who just want a free meal. Rolling admissions for a new finance board advisor next year are also open.

For the very first report of the Events Chair, many dates were announced. The Health and Wellness Fair will take place on February 21st, the President and Provost Forum on March 8th, the Public Safety Town Hall in late March, and the SGA Banquet on March 24th. Other tentative events in the early stages of planning include a campus-wide field day, a student organization display competition, and a “donuts with Public Safety” event.

Some senators chose to report progress on their projects. Caitlin Simpson

announced that healthy food options in the form of Hello Goodness vending machines were coming soon. Healthy snacks are also going to replace some duplicated snacks in vending machines that already exist on campus. Some of these healthy snacks include protein Clif bars, veggie chips, and fruit strips. Additionally, extra vending machines are planned for McCormick Student Village (MSV) and the Stuart Building. Simpson says that students should see these changes later in the semester.

Nathan Jones also updated those present on his work with the SGA website, which has been known to be poorly updated in the past. Jones is working on updating member names, photos, and bios.

Last was open floor, a time for anybody to raise their hand and speak about a concern, whether an SGA member or not. Sukkar brought up an idea for a new rule, suggesting that even if someone seconds a call to vote, etc, there should be a call for no objections before the senate moves on. In this way, the senate could avoid unintentionally suppressing a voice. There were many snaps of agreement to this. Another topic discussed was that WebAssign, a program used in many Illinois Tech math classes, had a large price tag; could there be a solution to this? With tuition already as high as it is, some thought that there should be alternative options for students. After all, there are other options for textbooks, such as photocopying pages in the library, but there is no other option for WebAssign. One broad issue that was suggested to be brought up for the Board of Trustees was the number of students getting hit by traffic on campus. Many senators thought that the crosswalk situation needed to be remedied. Some ideas were huge flashing lights that lit up when pedestrians pressed a button, or signs that are solar powered. Additionally, many senators expressed concerns about professors that seem to care more about research than teaching. On a similar note, some students from Lewis College voiced opinions about often feeling like a “side note.” Some were insulted by professors often saying things like, “I know none of you are actually majoring in this, so it’s going to be an easy semester.” The absence of Academic Resource Center (ARC) tutors for Lewis College classes, excluding psychology, was noted as well. Many agreed that this was a serious problem, and therefore discussion will continue at the next Board of Trustees Meeting.

SGA Senate meetings occur every other Wednesday night at 9:15 p.m. in Stuart Building room 113, and attendance is open to all students.