



Student Values

An assessment of student values following the November, 2015
Student No Confidence Vote & Results

December, 2015

The Ithaca College Student Government Association has held four one hour long in-person sessions, as well an online form, to assess what students at this moment in time value in a college president. Presented in this document are the findings that have emerged from our assessment. We will be continuing this process moving forward, and will seek a college president at Ithaca College that is committed to and reflects these values.

Assessing and projecting values is the second piece in a three-part process that SGA has put in place following the initiation of the vote of no confidence in President Tom Rochon. The first piece was to assess the level of confidence that students have in President Rochon. Students spoke loud and clear with 54% voter turnout and a 71.75% no confidence vote. Now we are projecting our values, and we are continuing with our process of assessing our current college governance structure and taking an inclusive look at how we can improve it moving forward toward a better and excellent Ithaca College.

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Our findings came from four part peer-led discussions. The first part of the discussions asked students what they value in a leader, assessing what traits we want to see reflected overall. The second part explained that a college administration exists to facilitate learning, and support for that learning. We asked students

what they value in an administration. The third piece was asking students what they value in their current education at Ithaca College. This section was focused on positives that we recognize and how we can strengthen those even further. The fourth part brought together all of the previous pieces and asked “What do you value in a college president?”

Leader

An effective leader cannot properly act without inclusive and open **communication**. The ability to articulate goals and project messages is important for a leader to enact change and empower the people that they lead. More importantly, however, a leader must be able to listen. Our students seek a leader that is accessible and responsive. We seek a leader who will not only give feedback but reach out for input. Without the ability to value and have empathy for the people they serve, a leader is ineffective in creating and maintaining an environment appropriate for betterment or empowerment.

A leader must also be **open minded** and **listen** deeply, not only when addressed, but also in a proactive manner. It is important that a leader be a lifelong learner, and couple their learning with reflection. They must **adapt** with trends and be **flexible** in their approach to issues that arise as times change. Students also brought up the concept of diplomacy, an artful conduct of negotiations and differences.

Students expressed the utmost importance of **integrity**, seeking a leader who is able to make the right decisions at the right time, not just for themselves, but for the people that they serve. A leader must be **honest**, and

have a strong, unwavering moral compass. Doing the right thing is more valued than doing the politically ambitious thing.

Service Leadership was a theme brought up by students. Service leadership is the philosophy that a leader serves first, and shares their responsibilities with others. Servant leaders must encourage, support, and enable others, allowing their skills and abilities to flourish.

Leaders must be **multilateral**, not only focusing on one-versus-the-other situations, but assessing the situations of three or more constituencies at one time. A multilateral leader rejects binaries, and embraces everyone that they must lead.

Administration -

Facilitation for Learning and Support

Students had a chance to express what they value in an administration, a body that facilitates learning, and support for that learning. The conversations were based in the expectation that the administration be held accountable for their decisions and actions.

One of the most important and in depth discussions that we had was how the administration should define and create *safe spaces*. Students expressed that *safe spaces* must offer students a space to retreat, rejuvenate, and be validated and empowered. **“Safe spaces are not zones to become coddled, but spaces for empowerment to proliferate.”** Safe spaces are not zones to become coddled, but spaces for empowerment to proliferate.

Safe spaces must encompass open mindedness, not judgment. Debates, conversations, and disagreements can happen within them, and can help students to have their experiences and their story validated, while validating others’ as well.

Safe spaces must be a minority support network. It has become clear that minority students at Ithaca College are in need of meaningful support, and an expansive network to fall back on. Just as the college has established an LGBTQ resource center, students of color are seeking these more intentional and engaging

spaces.

Throughout the discussions, it was made clear that we cannot fool ourselves into believing that our entire campus can be a safe space in the current climate, or what will be immediately birthed from our climate. Instead, our administration must create and facilitate a network of safe spaces that come together to generate an intersectional dialogue through which our community is allowed to improve and become more inclusive. A quote from a student when discussing safe spaces was “If we are waiting for everyone to be ready, it’s already over.”

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Students want to see our administration show their passions, and to be innovators. Each of our administrators has had a career encompassing deep and exciting passions, and we as students want to see that. Whether it’s the administrator with the illustrious wrestling career, the one who studies leadership, or the one who is a renowned foreign language scholar, we want to see those passions at Ithaca College, and to watch them proliferate.

Similar to discussing leadership in general, students value an administration that takes a shared and multilateral approach and focuses on empathy for the students, faculty, and staff members that they lead.

Our administration should grow and learn alongside us. We discussed the possibilities of administrators teaching classes on their passions, joining us in cross cultural experiences on campus, and being given more flexibility to understand the jobs of others that they lead. The goal should be that students, faculty, and staff support and trust those who are administering learning and support for that learning. Students expressed the need to be seen as scholars, and as student colleagues.

In order to effectively administer learning and support, we mustn’t just accept and tolerate diversity, but encourage, empower, and celebrate it as well.

The IC Educational Experience

We wanted to focus on positives of students’ Ithaca experience, and project those alongside what improvements are needed in regards to leadership. These are some of the most

valued experiences students have while at Ithaca College.

One of the first things students cite when asked what they value at IC is “opportunity.” Students talk about the opportunity to network, receive internships, build relationships with alumni, gain campus employment, and participate in undergraduate research.

Another highly valued part of the IC experience is the upper echelon and relatable professors. Students expressed that overall, their best professors were honest, empowering, and went above and beyond what was expected of them to better the experience of their students. Students spoke of the moments that professors realize and embrace the importance of diversity and inclusion in the classroom, and what a positive impact that has on us in our lives and in our campus experience.

Students value services the college offers very highly. The most spoken of service in the values sessions was the Office of Student Engagement and Multicultural Affairs (OSEMA). OSEMA has become an amazing safe space for many students, and has a staff that is supporting, interested in the lives of students, and committed to growth outside of the classroom. Other services such as the Academic Advising Center, the Office of Civic Engagement, and the Writing Center were also praised by students. This was not to say that students did not wish for improvements however, highlighting the need for an improvement in the funding of services like CAPS.

College President

The final part of each value session was spent directly talking about what students value in a college president at Ithaca College. The other prompts each built up to this assessment.

Students are seeking a college president who fits many of the leadership traits mentioned previously, one who administers learning to the standards set by the community being served, and proliferates the pieces of the IC experience that are most valued while not letting the other pieces slip away.

A college president should understand the “master control” of our college, knowing how it works, down to many of the minute details, able to be prepared and informed as they approach people and issues across campus and

beyond.

Our college president should show their **passions**, being able to express their interests as well as their experiences to our community. Our president should build on their passions and the passions of others to create positive and sustainable relationships.

Our president must be a **servant leader**, putting their constituencies and serving those constituencies above leading them. Shared, equitable governance tactics will be a good first step for Ithaca College to rise to the occasion and take servant leadership seriously.

Students are seeking a college president who is openly reflective and analytical. **Critical self reflection** is imperative for excellent leadership, and our president must be open and honest about processes of governance, failures, and how they are growing or thriving in their position.

Ithaca College’s president must be **empathetic**, and their decisiveness must come from that empathy. Emotional intelligence is key. Putting people first, and understanding on a deep level those who are being served must be well within the purview of our college president.

Ithaca College students do not believe that Ithaca College has kept its commitment to bettering our environment, and value a college president who is **environmentally progressive**, and can put us back on the course to be not only a sustainable institution, but one focused on bettering our world.

Multilateralism was a theme throughout the value sessions, and it is imperative that our president focus on each constituency deliberately within decision making, priority setting, and institutional processes.

The Ithaca College president must **recognize their privilege**, and reflect on how they can best leverage that privilege to make a substantial difference in the educational experiences of minority students at our institution.

This document is a window into Ithaca College students’ values and our hope is that it becomes a tool used by current campus leaders and used in the process of hiring future leaders on our campus.

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