

LETTER FROM THE

president



Sustainability

I am confident that I will fit in well at IIT: I am getting rid of one of my cars.

For me, this decision answered questions of both need and want—specifically, do I need two cars in the city, and do I really want the hassle of owning two cars while living downtown?

In academe, issues such as sustainability have a tendency to unite the needs and wants, bringing together those who pursue research for the benefit of society and those who explore the same topics for the benefit of science.

Many of our students and faculty are exploring sustainability through their work because they want to improve the environment. They are now joined by millions of people for whom the term “going green” has become a cultural phenomenon. While improving technology may be a positive residual, theirs is a motivation to ignite change in society, and a mountain of statistics supports the need. Through their work, they will educate and persuade others to take part in this movement; the IIT Green Home [page 6] and Cool Globes [page 4] projects are two such examples.

On the other end of the spectrum are those who are responding to a shift in the needs of the market and of science. As consumers increasingly demand eco-friendly products—cars, fuels, building materials, food, and clothing—the science behind and design of these goods in many cases require a shift in technology. Having identified a need, these researchers want to be on the cutting edge of advancements, indeed changes, in this exciting area of research. For someone like alumna Susan Solomon [page 30], research that may yield environmental ramifications is not a matter of politics but of science.

Ultimately the reasons for the pursuit are not as important as the determination to take on the challenges that this pursuit inevitably presents. The challenges are many. Can greener technologies be more cost effective than current technologies? What are the costs versus benefits in the relationships between energy and green technologies? How is the public culture shifted toward greener technologies, for example hybrid-powered vehicles, when the economics are not persuasive in today’s world? How does the United States become a role model for the entire world in sustainability?

At IIT a determination—call it attitude, spirit, or ambition—to explore these questions and others like them is rooted in a strong passion for both learning and seizing challenges. The university is united in its determination to create change, no matter how disparate the reasons for pursuing it may be. IIT’s tenacity is infectious, and certainly played no small part in my decision to go to a one-car household.

On a fundamental level, the want and need to pursue sustainability both lead to the same outcome—to leave the world for our children in the same or better condition than we inherited it. This is an important part of the IIT mission, one that has already affected me and no doubt countless others in both societal and scientific contexts. Thank you for welcoming me into the IIT community and for giving me the opportunity to share this bold mission with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John L. Anderson". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

John L. Anderson