

# ILLINOIS TECH INTERSTRIDE: A Case Study, June 2018

## Illinois Tech Quick Facts

Source: [Illinois Tech](#)

**7266**

Total Enrollment  
(Fall 2017)

**62%**

graduate students  
who are classified as  
international students

**21%**

undergraduates  
who are classified as  
international students

**100**

Number of countries  
represented by Illinois  
Tech's student body

*"An amazing tool for international students interested in increasing their chances of getting a U.S. job, learning about potential risks, growing professional network and so much more. Great information and useful resources." – International student at IIT*

## THE PROBLEM

The dream for most international students is to attain professional experience in the U.S. However, the majority are unable to actualize this dream because of the unique challenges they face while studying and finding employment in the U.S.

Unfortunately, many solutions, offered by technology companies, aimed at higher-ed students lack sufficient understanding of the difficulties these students face. Furthermore, often they have not incorporated the latest tools and channels available. Technology not only improves the employment prospects for international students but also enhances their overall experience. As a result, this helps universities to increase student satisfaction and retention.

Career services at Illinois Tech (IIT) initiated a collaborative and co-creative "proof-of-concept" case study with [Interstride](#). This was with the aim to support the internship, co-op, and full-time career opportunities for their 4,000+ international students, who originate from over 100 countries. The case study would also examine how to extend the available resources to U.S. students in search of a global career.

## THE PROPOSAL

The initial proposal involved introducing the *Interstride* solution to a small group of international students.

Based on the popularity of the solution, it would then be tested with a wider group, at different campuses within the university. If the feedback from the pilot were favorable, the career services group would integrate the solution into their experiential learning curriculum.



## THE PROCESS

*Interstride* was introduced to the international student club. After working closely with the club's President, access to the mobile app was given to a small group of undergraduate students. Following positive feedback from this sample group, further introductions were made to over 250 students at different IIT campuses. A few weeks after piloting the solution, the team collected feedback on two different subjects - the overall technology solution and the personalized career reports.

## INITIAL FINDINGS & REPORTS

**Two surveys were sent out to students. Nearly 50 students participated in the surveys. The results of the surveys can be found below:**

- *Interstride* Mobile Application – IIT Survey Results April 2018 [Results](#)
- Personalized Career Reports – IIT Survey Results April 2018 [Results](#)
- A sample personalized career report [Results](#)

## INTERSTRIDE AND ILLINOIS TECH LEARNINGS

There was an overwhelming positive response to both our technology and the personalized career reports.

- Of the 50 respondents who took the survey on the mobile solution:
  - 95% of respondents:
    - would recommend this service to other international students;
    - thought the app provides useful information on opportunities;
    - will consider using the solution in their networking efforts.
  - 80% of respondents found the *Interstride* app useful for their career search process.
  - Visa & Company Insights, Jobs, Gameplan and Checklists were some of the most liked features.
  - Going forward, students were interested in a Desktop version, along with the personalized reports and international student placement.
- Findings from the personalized career report survey revealed:
  - 100% of the respondents:
    - would prefer access to this service;
    - will consider using the report in their job search.
  - Over 85% of the respondents would recommend this service to others.
  - 80% of the respondents rated the report very useful.
  - Over 70% of the respondents would like these reports monthly.

Along with the desktop application, there was also a great deal of interest in introducing a mentorship tool that would connect IIT international Alumni to current students.

## TESTIMONIALS FROM STUDENTS

- “Great Initiative for international students, if possible then I would like to see alumni from Illinois Institute of Technology in these listed companies.”
- “An amazing tool for international students interested in increasing their chances of getting a U.S. job, learning about potential risks, growing professional network and so much more. Great information and useful resources.”
- “Fantastic tool.”
- “Easy to navigate and very interactive. I’ll definitely recommend to all of the international students I know.”

## REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS, CHRIS LONG, SASDI Fellow, 2017 - 2019.

International student advisor Strengths:

- Content is contextualized for internationals, which is rare and can be hard to find.
- Curated high-quality resources and content. By pulling from a plethora of sources and posting in one spot, this could potentially save career centers and students a lot of time.
- The decent sized Visa section with useful information. This is an area where international audiences struggle significantly.
- The job search function has an H-1B filter, which could be great when you are trying to efficiently search for companies that are willing to sponsor.
- The tool can integrate IIT specific advertisements for events on the home page.



**Overall thoughts:** I believe this tool could save significant time for international job-seekers. This is because you have a team who is curating content that is applicable to this audience rather than having students sift through numerous websites and platforms to find the same information. If using *Interstride* primarily for learning and H1B job searching (both surfacing companies and positions) and then transferring over to LinkedIn (which they conveniently provide a link to do so) for actual networking, it could be a very efficient way to job search.

## NEXT STEPS

Based on the positive feedback, usefulness, and overall acceptance, of the solution, the career services office at IIT decided to provide the service to all their international students.

### Fall 2018

- Initiate a university-wide launch of both desktop and mobile versions.
- Introduce a data module showcasing leading institutions, beyond the private corporate employment sectors, who are hiring international students. This includes higher educational institutions and research institutes.
- Introduce the resource to 3rd and 4th-semester students who have not participated in an EL/CPT internship/co-op.
- Incorporate *Interstride* into experiential learning programs through courses and curriculum.
- Introduce a reporting tool on the *Interstride* platform that will allow IIT to record international student job placement data accurately.
- Create a profile questionnaire which supports a global career trajectory of U.S. citizens and permanent residents.
- Explore integrating companies that have hired IIT students and graduates for OPT and EL (CPT) within the *Interstride* database to further inform the matching and search opportunities for student/alumni participants.
- Map *Interstride* participants through HandShake to evaluate contribution/correlation to placement results, as well as metrics for career services satisfaction.
- Collaborate with Griff Housemeyer to provide *Interstride* access to international students who will attend the annual Bridges International conference.

## THE PEOPLE

- **Gerald Doyle**, Vice Provost for Student Access, Success, and Diversity Initiatives - Spearheading the launch of *Interstride* at IIT
- **BJ Engelhardt**, Director of Operations - *Interstride* program management, oversight, and budget

- **Gladis Herst**, Career Development Coach - Assists with student outreach, program operations, and feedback collection
- **Jackie McGee**, Budget and Office Manager
- **Akshar Patel**, Director of Alumni Engagement & Giving Programs (formerly, Armour College of Engineering, Career Development Coach)
- **Scott Downs**, [SASDI Fellow, 2017 - 2019](#), Career Catalyst and Curriculum Development
- **Chris Long**, [SASDI Fellow, 2017 - 2019](#), International Student Advisor
- **Manthan Kapadia**, International Student Advisor
- **Ashley Su Wen Dan**, President, International Student Organization
- **Nitin Agrawal and Christian Eder**, Co-Founders, *Interstride* - Student success team

## ABOUT ILLINOIS TECH

[Illinois Institute of Technology](#) is a private, technology-focused research university offering undergraduate and graduate degrees in engineering, science, architecture, business, design, human sciences, applied technology, and law.

- One of 21 institutions that comprise the [Association of Independent Technological Universities \(AITU\)](#), IIT offers exceptional preparation for professions that require technological sophistication, an innovative mindset and an entrepreneurial spirit.
- One of 22 institutions that comprise [America's Urban Campus](#).
- One of 11 institutions that comprise the [South Metro Higher Education Consortium](#).

## ABOUT INTERSTRIDE

The Co-Founders of [Interstride](#) began their journey in the U.S. as international students. Both successfully graduated from their respective universities and went on to complete their MBA from the Haas School of Business at UC Berkeley. After several years, working at internationally renowned financial institutions, they decided to combine their experience as international students and business professionals to create *Interstride* – an app designed to assist international students with their employment search, visa status and overall university engagement. The resource sources all the information that they need to optimize their educational experience in the U.S. through a user-friendly and intuitive technology platform.

\*Disclaimer: The information contained in this case study is to be used only as an example for technology review purposes. The opinions formulated by the participants of this case study do not represent the views of the institution. July 2018.

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**Interstride**