



Gauging frosh view of Rotation and initiations

CONNOR ROSEN
Associate Staff Writer

In light of recent incidents, and in the interest of clarifying the vast generalizations made by various members of the community about what “everybody” feels, or how “all the frosh” react to initiation events in their houses, an anonymous survey was distributed among frosh via the Caltech Class of 2015 Facebook group and the mailing lists of the individual houses.

Due to time constraints, a complete census of the freshman class was impossible. Thus far, more than 50% of the freshman student body responded, and the following conclusions were drawn.

Overwhelmingly, freshmen were comfortable with initiations and frosh-specific activities in their houses, and encountered similar experiences among other frosh. 95.5% of frosh who spoke with others were comfortable explaining their initiations and frosh activities. 91.3% of respondents heard others speak positively about their experiences with initiations and frosh activities. 32.8% of freshmen said initiations and frosh specific activities were the most helpful events in easing into Caltech and house life. 92.1% of those who wrote additional messages wrote that initiations and frosh activities were helpful or positive – including messages such as:

“I observed no one being singled out, hazed, or harassed during all

activities and everyone seemed to enjoy them.”

“They’ve [initiations and frosh activities] been fantastic and without them I would not be surviving well here at Caltech.”

“To this date I do not feel pressured by the house, or hazed, or in any other way negatively effected by house traditions and initiations.

occurring, either in their house or another. 6.9% of respondents (nine students) said that the social pressure to participate was so great that they did not feel comfortable not participating. One student responded “even though I liked my current house and ranked it highly during rotation, these frosh activities make me doubt whether I

group (See the Hazing in View link below, page 14 of PDF file). Here, the number is less than one-fifth of that. In fact, the rate of frosh here reporting discomfort is lower than the national average of students joining academic honor societies.

In addition, we have a high rate of awareness about hazing – 73.8% of freshmen reported that

a hazing prevention workshop given by adults (Hazing in View, p.32).

Third: Initiations and frosh events seem to serve their purpose from the frosh perspective. As stated above, over a third of frosh believe that initiations and frosh activities were the most helpful in easing into their house and Caltech. 93.8% said that these activities helped them get to know other frosh, and 88.5% said the activities helped them to get to know upperclassmen. In fact, just under half of respondents (45.4%) said that initiations and frosh-specific activities helped them get to know their RAs and ACs.

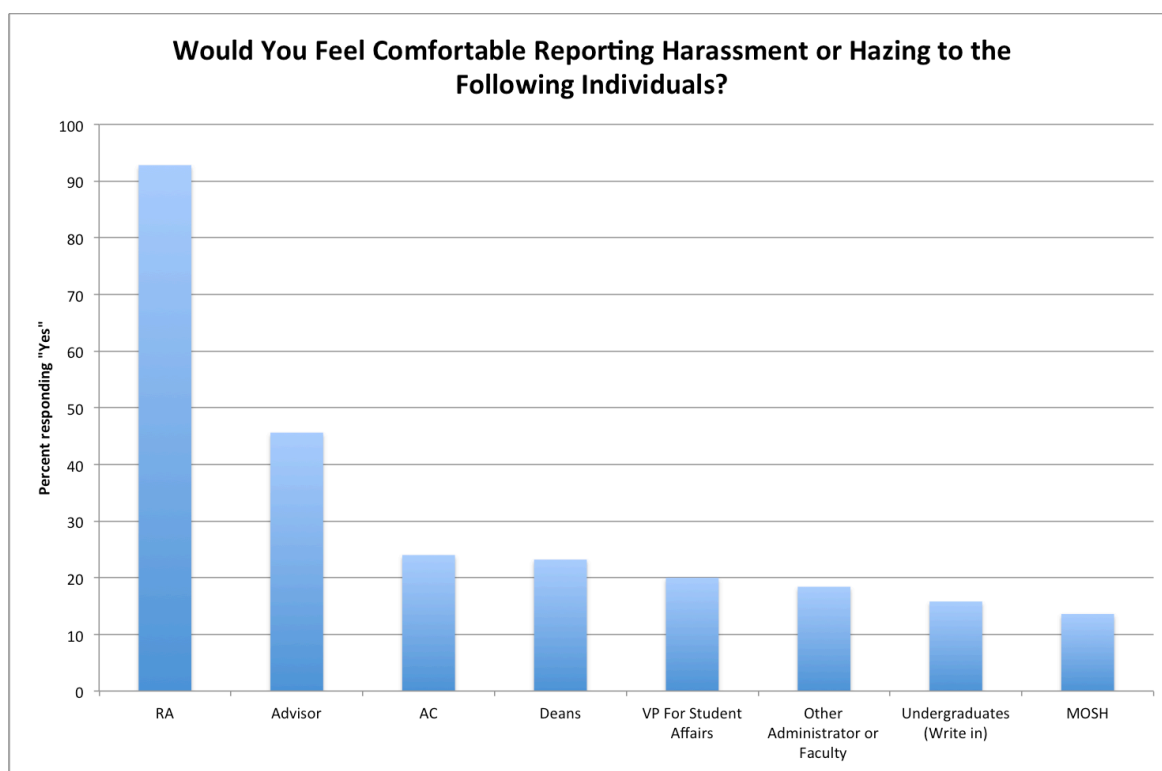
In the words of frosh:

“I think it would have taken me far longer to meet everyone in the house and learn about it without some of the frosh-specific activities, from talks with RAs and ARC members to fun events to help meet the other frosh and upperclassmen.”

“I feel better connected to my house because of these activities. I am also overall happier as a result of them.”

“All activities are done with a good intent; this is Caltech and it’s stressful, houses are communities where school is made easier or less of a boring reality. Most people like the individual personalities of different houses and it makes all students feel distinguished in a[n] impersonal school environment. No matter how small the school is, it is still easy to feel lost or generic in an academic setting (especially when a frosh).”

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Quite to the contrary, they’re a ton of fun!” Five students reported that house activities have failed to help them ease into Caltech and house life. Fourteen students (10.7% of those responding to this question)

reported that they felt uncomfortable or unsafe while initiations and frosh events were

made the right decision.” Another said simply “I don’t like it here.”

On the other hand, these statistics still reflect well on Caltech compared to other colleges and universities.

Nationally, 55% of college students report activities that are humiliating, degrading, abusive, or endangering as part of entry into a

they had read the hazing policies. Nationally, only 39% of students are introduced to anti-hazing policies when joining an organization (Hazing in View, p.31). Also, every frosh was required to attend the discrimination and harassment discussion during freshman orientation – whereas nationally, only 15% of college students attend

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Interview with Dean Kiewiet

Tech: Could you tell us about the process that’s generally used to deal with issues similar to those that have arisen in Ricketts?

Dean Kiewiet: We actually do not like to troll around looking for trouble. Please be advised that that is not what happens.

But if we receive, and we have, a written complaint about sexual harassment, house, or workplace violations, or hazing, we have no choice about what to do at that point. What we must do is first talk to the person making the complaint and figure out which way they want to proceed.

If we believe, at that point that there is validity in the complaint being

an issue, then we have to follow very explicitly the procedures that are laid out in the Caltech Catalog.

We first appoint a group to perform an investigation—I don’t do the investigating, but I do appoint a team to go and do fact finding—to figure out what is going on, what happened, and whether there was, in fact, a violation of guarantees against sexual harassment in house or workplace conditions.

And if the investigators find that there was, then they will make recommendations about what the Institute should do to make sure that it does not happen anymore.

It is a process that has its own logic and is automatically triggered.

At the end of the day, as the dean, I get a report back and then implement the recommendations that are important.

T: So does the logic you have to follow not include input from student government organizations like a CRC or BoC case would?

DK: We do not have the freedom to treat that as a BoC case or as a CRC case. That is not an option for us. We have to follow what the catalog says. That may be a major source of confusion. We need to follow institute policy, and California state law trumps everything else.

T: Currently there is an interim hazing policy. Could you briefly outline it?

DK: There is not much of an interim policy. The interim policy is that we obey CA state law. But if you look, CA state law just says there shouldn’t be any hazing, so it is not particularly helpful. We also have guidance from twenty other universities who have explicit anti-hazing policies.

So, that is something that the committee formulating a new policy is working on. In the meantime, I would say the best way to go would be not to do anything until you check with us. When the committee writes that policy,

they will be anxious to not make it merely a laundry list to try and navigate. It has to be better than that.

T: Do you have any comments on the, perhaps, vague nature of the current interim policy?

DK: Let me just say, it had to be vague. I apologize, but it just had to be vague.

T: Was the interim policy just a side effect of not being able to have a distinct policy until a distinct policy is ready?

DK: Right, it all comes down to just checking before doing anything. And a lot of people have checked. We just really do not want you guys in trouble. It is one of our major goals.

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Editors' Note

This is a special edition of the *California Tech*, which was put together in light of recent events involving the student-administration relationship. What is contained herein represents a mix of unbiased researched reports and articles expressing opinions. The *California Tech* does not intend to bias or influence the proceedings in any way. We only mean to inform our readers in order to allow the Caltech community to generate its own opinion on the matters at hand. Opinions printed in this issue solely reflect the views of their writers.

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A brief chat with Dean Kiewiet

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T: There was a meeting on Monday concerning the hazing committee and hazing policy rewriting. Does it seem like there is some sort of progress being made?

DK: Yes. They are working really fast. I think that—I don't want to promise—by the end of the month they could be pretty close. It shouldn't be a long time.

T: Throughout the student community, there have been accusations thrown this way and that way. Could you outline how you feel about the house system as it currently stands?

DK: What I think Caltech does better than anywhere else is that students look out for each other. I like that a ton. I hear of other schools where they do not, one way or another. I believe there is a tremendous sense and shared collective obligation that Caltech students feel to look out for each other. And if that is the house system, that's fabulous. Having said that, there are those CA anti-hazing statutes, and we must ensure that they are followed.

T: Have things changed a lot in the time since you were last dean (1993 to 1996)?

DK: There were issues kicking around back then. What I remember was a book called *Broken Pledges* and it was the standard story of kid joining a fraternity. Part of their initiation is that they drunk, and he dead the next day. That led to a massive sea of change in fraternity and sorority life.

They became pretty good about being in compliance because it was pretty simple enforcement—if there was a problem in a particular chapter, the national organization would be alerted.

Since not "cleaning up their act" would result in the loss of recognition at the university levels (and a subsequent loss of dues), the incentives for fixing mistakes was quite good.

One of the interesting things, and that's why the house system is such an interesting concept, is that they are not sororities, fraternities, or residence halls—they are in their own category. And so that makes it a little interesting as to how we think about it administratively.

But that was what was kicking around sixteen years ago. Things are really tight right now. I think there was a death up in Chico in 2007 or so and that triggered a dramatic tightening of CA statutes. That is when the bar got raised to felony and jail time.

Just so you understand, I don't think anyone at Caltech is in any danger of going to jail. That, I think, happens when you have a drinking

issue that ends up badly. But there are a lot of intermediate issues that can be very unattractive.

T: So it is less of an issue, perhaps, that the potential of hazing has gotten worse and more of an issue that there has been a tightening of the statute and we have to be more careful?

DK: I think there is an expectation to be more careful. I think that expectation always was there. Is it heightened now? I don't know. I just started this school year, so I don't know what it was like five or ten years ago. But I am pretty sure that even five or ten years ago, if administrators were notified that something nasty was going on, they would have to intervene. I am pretty sure of that.

T: Relating to the specific events, could you walk us exactly through what happened at Page House and what exactly happened at Ricketts?

DK: No. I cannot. They are disciplinary issues that I am not able to comment on at all. Again, we responded to it in the way the institute requires us to.

T: Are we allowed to know what types of complaints were raised? Were they both sexual harassment complaints?

actual complaint or might have been too strong in terms of what the actual complaint was.

DK: I cannot comment on that but I would just say get on the Internet and check out what is going on at other schools. We just exercised our best judgment.

T: So you think this sets a precedent for action against students without the input of student organizations?

DK: No, it does not set up a precedent at all. I do not know when the Caltech harassment policies were written. I believe our policies right now are virtually identical to what they were when I was last dean. They have been in place a long time.

T: Do you have any opinion on the alumni involvement in this matter?

DK: The alumni are great. The alumni, like the students, have a fierce loyalty to Caltech and that is fantastic. So, anytime they hear that something is going to turn Caltech into something they do not recognize, they get upset. And I understand that. It is a function of their mass loyalty to this school.

T: If you could synthesize your goal as dean, what would it be?

with the hazing policy and various other incidents as something that will change Caltech in the long run? Is it more like a brief speed bump in the road for you?

DK: It is a speed bump right now, but we are going to get better with a Caltech hazing policy that makes sense for Caltech; we are going to be a lot better. That is going to be a good thing, and we are not that far away.

T: Can you tell us what sort of changes you expect to see?

DK: I am not on the committee. Phil Hoffman is the committee chair.

Geoff Blake, the MOSH, and the two associate deans, Felicia Hunt and Lesley Nye, and your student representatives, Laura Conwill, Chris Hallacy and Christian Rivas, comprise the committee.

I cannot guarantee that anyone will like what they have come up with, but I can guarantee that Caltech will be better when we have that policy.

T: When you say, "will be better", do you have specifics?

DK: Basically, there will be less trouble with the dean's office and the legal ramifications. We will just have a much clearer idea about what is and is not okay. And that is what a lot of the concern and fluff is right now. There is tremendous uncertainty about that, and I appreciate that and apologize that there is. But I would rather have a committee think about it and work and be careful than, say, have me come in some morning and write a policy. They are going to do a great job.

T: You've mentioned that you know you're not the most loved person on campus. Can you comment on this?

DK: I am not trying to be disliked. I am not going out of my way to be provocative. I just have to do my job. Right now, I just don't have any luxury to do a popularity campaign. I have to do what is in the interest of the Institute and the students, and I have to do the best I can.

T: And at the end of the day, do you think students have reason to worry that the Caltech that they are used to and the Caltech that they love will be changed?

DK: Well, there's going to be interhouse; there's going to be ditch day.

Go to Page Interhouse on Saturday night by all means; you'll see that there is an interhouse just like before. Obviously, there are things that won't happen anymore, but you'll still know that you're at Caltech.



I am not trying to be disliked. I am not going out of my way to be provocative. I just have to do my job.

- Dean Kiewiet



DK: They are complaints that we have to act on—that we were, without question, legally bound to act on. I do not want to give the impression that I am just a robot obeying the law mechanically. While it is true that I am, to the best of my ability, making sure that Caltech is in compliance with the law, it is more than that in my mind; I have greater goals. I actually think what is going on now is really good. I want us to think about how we treat ourselves and how we treat each other here at Caltech.

T: So you're unable to speak as to the disciplinary actions that have been taken against Ricketts House members?

T: So you're unable to speak as to the disciplinary actions that have been taken against Ricketts House members?

DK: That certainly is my view.

T: There has been concern among students that any punitive actions that have been taken might not have been fully directed at the

DK: I have a lot of goals. One of them is to improve our graduation rate, which is currently about 90%. This may seem high, but Stanford and Harvard are about 99%. The reason people do not actually finish here is not their lack of ability—it is other things, and I want to work on those things.

We know, for example, that many students had trouble with Ma1a because they had never seen anything like this before, and so the first thing I did was to create Ma0. And it looks like, at least right now, it is paying off quite nicely. I think there are a lot of things we can do to improve the educational offering. I mean, it is true that we are number one, but with that comes a complacency we have to fight. And we can get better in a lot of different ways. My goal is to make this happen.

T: In other words, you do not view the ongoing conflicts that we have

An open letter from concerned alumni

We the undersigned are alumni of Caltech. Having learned of recent actions by the administration against undergraduates, we are deeply concerned.

There have been allegations of misconduct by undergraduates. While we respect the Institute's responsibility to protect the members of its community from hazing and harassment, we are concerned by the way that individuals are apparently being swept up in a rush to heavy-

handed judgment. In the absence of all of the relevant facts, the rush to judgment is alarming. What would it say about our training as scientists if we reached all of our conclusions in this fashion?

In the first half of this term, the administration began to ignore its own policies--those concerning murals, alcohol, and hazing come to mind--in favor of arbitrary and capricious decision-making at the highest levels. Our strong tradition of student leadership and self-

governance via the Honor Code is being quickly dismantled. Due process has been abandoned. We are alarmed that this confluence is no accident.

We are troubled by the rush to reshape Caltech's undergraduate education and experience. By their nature, students have traditionally been eccentric and quirky; it gives rise to the peculiar undergraduate culture. Academics at Caltech are undoubtedly stressful. The student houses provide avenues of

support and outlets for expression to mitigate these challenges.

We derive our cherished college memories from this culture. Admissions emphasizes this uniqueness to prospective students. This is no coincidence: It is what differentiates Caltech from its competition. How can we attract the best and brightest minds in the future if we are unable to set ourselves apart?

These concerns leave us worried about the students back at the place

we called home. Already, over 1450 alumni have joined the group on Facebook tracking the events on campus.

For some perspective, this constitutes over one eighth of all living undergraduate alumni.

We implore the administration to discuss its aims with us and to consider the consequences of its actions, lest the campus become a less happy and less supportive environment for its undergraduate experience.

Robin Abraham, B.S. '09
Lada Adamic, B.S. '97
Peggy Allen, B.S. '11
Olivia Alley, B.S. '08
Timothy Barnes, B.S. '06
Yaear BenAssa, B.S. '09
Yakov (Yasha) Berchenko-Kogan, B.S. '11
Clifford Blakestad, B.S. '11
Nathaniel Borneman, B.S. '09
Regina Cheung, B.S. '01
Tien Chiu, B.S. '91
Abhiram Chivukula, B.S. '11
Geoffrey Dairiki, B.S. '84
Cesar Del Solar, B.S. '04
Ryan Denlinger, B.S. '11
Arkya (Misha) Dhar, B.S. '09
Mary Dorman, B.S. '09
Cathy Douglass, B.S. '10
Jonathan Einav, B.S. '10
Allan Elkowitz, B.S. '70
Daniel Erenrich, B.S. '11
Brent Eubanks, B.S. '95
Joshua Feingold, B.S. '08
Leighland Feinman, B.S. '08 (IHC Secretary '08)
Sarah Ferguson, B.S. '08
Amy Peterson Fisher, B.S. '01
Paul Fleiner, B.S. '11
Natasha Cayco Gajic, B.S. '09

Nick Goeden, B.S. '09
Rachel Gollub, '93
Jeff Graham, B.S. '07
Pallavi Gunalan, B.S. '11
Josh Gutman, B.S. '06
Peter Haderlein, B.S. '08
Nick Halpern-Manners, B.S. '06
Anne C. Hanna, B.S. '01
Lucas Hartsough, B.S. '11 (Lloyd President '10)
Daniel Hass, B.S. '11
John Hasier, B.S. '09
Oren Hazi, B.S. '10
Kathleen Holland, Ph.D. '99
Helen Hosein, B.S. '02
Andrew Hsieh, B.S. '04
David M. Hull, B.S. '86
Matthew P. Johnson, B.S. '94
Kirit Karkare, B.S. '11
Brian Kearns, B.S. '08
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Scott Medling, B.S. '06
Ankita Mishra, B.S. '10
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Marcus Ng, B.S. '06
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Benjamin Steele, B.S. '10
Valerie J. Syverson
Elaine To, B.S. '10
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Edward Truong-Cao, B.S. '07
Eric Uhrhane, B.S. '96
Amber Valdés, B.S. '10
Adam Villani, B.S. '96
Glenn Wagner, B.S. '09
Mary Wahl, B.S. '08
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Jennifer Wang, B.S. '98
David Waylonis, B.S. '07
David Weinschenker, '79
Talia Weiss, B.S. '11
Chris Whelan, B.S. '11 (Blacker President '10)
Michael White, B.S. '08
Claudia Whitten, B.S. '11
Stephen Wilke, B.S. '10
Sami Zerrade, B.S. '08
Patrick Xia, B.S. '11
Adrienne Yang, B.S. '00

Crippling Depression: Not just a comic

GAL BARAK
Contributing Writer

With emotions running high in response to recent administrative actions, people have been quick to pick sides, make and spread incorrect assumptions, and reject any opinion that is not identical to their own.

We have turned against each other, arguing over policy and legal or moral issues as they all get muddled together: harassment, hazing, freedom of speech, the Honor Code, Rotation, House culture.

I want you to put those issues aside for a few minutes to mourn with me – to try to understand what the administration's actions have meant for Ricketts.

The recent PNG-ing of four Ricketts members has stripped the House of its leadership, but worse than that, it has taken away our neighbors, friends, and peers.

As many of us try to keep up with our work, we are crippled by how empty Ricketts feels without four of its own. All it takes is a trip down the hall near the now-vacated rooms to be reminded of our helplessness. So the impact is

not just an emotional one; it has academic consequences for many of us.

For the freshmen, the PNG means losing four of the people they got to know first in the house, through their strong involvement in Rotation.

“

The most concerning impact the PNG decisions have had on Caltech students is fostering an environment of distrust between the students and their support system.

It means losing the first people they grew to trust. The ones, whose passion for House culture and respect for people's personal boundaries, encouraged our freshmen to be in Ricketts and made them feel safe while there.

For the upperclassmen, the PNG means loneliness, frustration, and guilt. It means losing people we relied on to defend the House we call home.

Losing loved ones, friendships forged as defenses against social alienation, disappointing grades, or painful breakups. It means frustration at the blatant treatment of these individuals as scapegoats and guilt over our inability to help them.

I just feel like we're being taken advantage of because they know we are so busy. I feel like it's my duty as a senior to be active in voicing my opinion, but there's NSF proposals and applications due... We can't react quickly and write a bunch of articles and protest... If I have to pick one emotion that is killing me right now, it is guilt.

– Jordan Theriot

We have also lost these individuals as valuable sources of emotional support from the already dwindling pool of resources.

When the consistent message we get from the administration is that our mental health is not their concern, our happiness subsidiary to their convenience, our spirit loathsome to their definition of justice – that is when the administration stops being a resource for us.

Even RA's and AC's, whose personal opinions and agendas may vary, still report to the administration. There are few people we can talk to and trust that they have only our interests at heart.

Our UCC's are feeling the brunt of it, lined up at the forefront of our never-ending war on stress and depression, now combating a sense of helplessness.

These frustrations resonate among many students, regardless of House affiliation.

The most concerning impact the PNG decisions have had on Caltech students is fostering an environment of distrust between the students and their support system.

Contrary to what people may assume about Ricketts, we care about our family feeling safe and do not want anyone to suffer as a silent victim; we want to provide outlets for communication within the community and cultivate a positive experience within the House.

Unfortunately, administrative actions have made it clear that they will use any opportunity to define a singular complaint into one of culture and environment, taking scapegoats as casualties in their harmonization agenda.

To those of you who don't know Ricketts, I'm begging you to look at us as people and make the effort to understand us.

Perhaps your only experiences with us have been during Rotation – and perhaps you don't know us because Ricketts was not the right place for you.

But it was for me. And it was for a lot of other people.

Ricketts was the reason I got through the mental and emotional stress that comes with being a Caltech student.

Ricketts was the reason that until one week ago, I never questioned my decision to come to Caltech.

The last call for the kitchen: On Page

SUE JIANG
Contributing Writer

When I first came to Caltech on Pre-frosh weekend, I was not excited. I already knew about the amazing education I would receive, but I had little faith in the social life. I accepted that if I matriculated into Caltech, I would spend my four years studying alone in the library, attending awkward parties, and telling nerdy jokes about how much the students work and never have fun. Which was why I was more than surprised when I met my Pre-frosh Weekend host.

A Pageboy, she was outgoing, stylish, and dare I say, normal? I told her about my concerns about not having a normal college experience. Not to worry, she said. There will always be people in Page House who enjoy the typical college extracurricular activities. At dinner that night, I started to understand what she meant.

At 6:45 pm, I entered the Page House dining hall to a bunch of guys, some shirtless. They were serving our food, drinking beer, poking fun at each other, and yelling at the diners, but all in good humor. I loved it, and instantly fell in love with Caltech.

Here, I thought, I will work hard and learn math and science from the best, but I can also have a semi-normal college experience and experiment with alcohol (responsibly, and under the watchful eyes of RAs and upperclassmen, of course). This group of guys, the waiters, represented friendship, camaraderie, and tradition—what the House System is all about, so I thought.

However, in the past three years that I have been at Caltech, the administration has taken away everything that contributed to the Page House I knew as a pre-frosh and as a freshman. It started with Bubbly, in which Pageboys

celebrated the end of term at Milikan Pond, then it moved on to the Beer Room, where a few friends used to socialize and drink on the weekends.

As a result of last year's Eco-Rotation, the IHC took away the Holly, Page's off-campus alley, without any prior notice or warning given to its residents.

As it stands, Page is currently the only house without an off-campus alley. And now, they have banished the waiters based on exaggerated accusations of hazing of the freshman class.

The group of guys who brought Page house together for a simple 30 minute dinner filled with laughs, beloved traditions, and humorous announcements, is now gone.

Without organized dinners that gather Pageboys together to catch up after a long day of classes and sets, freshmen have little reason to leave their rooms daily and get to know other members of the

house. A house that was once filled with sociable, fun, and occasionally rowdy Pageboys has been replaced with feelings of antagonism towards the powers that be.

This is why I can no longer advocate Caltech social life, or the House System. I once thought the houses helped students find their niche at Caltech.

Whether someone likes having fun and blowing off steam by blowing things up, or throwing back a few beers, there was always a place for them.

But not anymore. Students who enjoy pretending Caltech social life is comparable to that of larger universities, where fraternities throw parties four nights a week and alcohol flows freely, will have no place to go except off campus or into their rooms.

Tightening the rules on rowdy traditions and alcohol consumption in Page House, and in all other houses, will force students to

become antisocial and hide in their rooms instead of making new friends.

College is not merely about the academics. In our first four years away from our parents, we learn lessons about love, loss, friendship, betrayal, and more.

By eliminating the social gatherings that allow students to grow personally as well as academically, the administration is contributing to producing class after class of intelligent children whose only memory of their college years at Caltech is the sets, midterms, and finals that made their lives miserable.

If this is the kind of student life and social activity that the administration wishes to condone, then my faith in the house system is lost.

To the freshman class, I can only say good luck, find ways to enjoy yourselves despite the odds, and keep fighting the good fight.

Deans obligated to investigate hazing

JOSE TORRES
Contributing Writer

Hazing is illegal. Regardless of what you may feel about its merits, or about how reasonable the relevant statutes are, it is illegal and Caltech's administration is obligated to make reasonable efforts to prevent it. This is not something which can be debated, protested, or changed.

Of course, hazing could be illegal like underage drinking is illegal. At nearly every college, minors consume alcohol, but we would never have a situation where the deans shut down campus in an effort to stamp it out.

This is not because they aren't aware that it happens, or because they're alcoholics, or even necessarily because hazing is worse. It's because they can honestly claim that they did not know about and did not approve of or facilitate any specific incident.

Caltech students past destroyed this ability with the adoption of our current house system. We've spent a long time pretending, to the point where most people don't see the pretense, but our Houses simply cannot be nearly as independent as a fraternity.

An administration-sanctioned rotation process assigns every freshman to a house, with both the intention and result that the house will be the core of their social life. As such, they cannot turn around and declare ignorance; their involvement with the house system gives administrators an obligation to ensure that the Houses are free of hazing.

I don't necessarily mean to give blanket support of the actions that have been taken, but the situation right now is much more delicate than I think we imagine it to be. The deans have recently processed multiple complaints, all of which are some variation of "You're asking us to stop vital traditions." This sounds very similar to an open declaration of intent to haze freshmen, both to a new dean of students and to anyone else concerned about hazing.

The severe punishments and restrictive hazing policy that have recently been laid out are not unconscionable power grabs; they are at worst paranoid overreactions to the apparent problem of widespread endemic hazing.

And fighting this is worse than useless. If it is on the record that the Houses can freely ignore hazing complaints, the house system will be forced to disband.

If the deans cannot impose punishment on people who declare their support of hazing, the house system will be forced to disband. Any course of action that starts with a fundamental reversal of the decisions laid down will very quickly end in the complete dissolution of every House.

This is not to say you have to sit and meekly accept whatever happens. By all means, complain about punishments you feel are unjust. Fight to keep traditions you care about alive. But some actions simply must be taken; you cannot demand that the deans back down on hazing, and refusal to understand this is what created the entire mess.

Students must speak up

ANNA IVANOVA
Contributing Writer

The Tech has long been considered a student newspaper without much of a student voice. This is a sad state of affairs. Most of the time, the excuses made are related to an overload of work and an underload of things to write about. Board food is pretty consistently bad, problem sets are usually hard, Houses have their own mailing lists for important announcements—news is sometimes hard to come by at Caltech.

However, in the last few months, there has been plenty to write about. Conflicts with the administration abound. The alcohol policy, pet policy, board exemption policy, and even hazing policy have all been put under attack, and yet not a single article has appeared in the Tech about any of them. How do we explain this apathy?

Students are certainly mad, if the House mailing lists and lounge

conversations are any indication. One student left for three days and came back to 300 e-mails waiting to be read, mostly about the changes in the hazing policy. Every lull in a conversation is met with "So has anything changed?" The students are talking, sometimes even yelling, about their disappointment and anger with the way things are going. So why isn't any of it being written down?

The explanation is not one that most people would consider. It's not that we're afraid of mockery, or think our writing skills are insufficient (in most cases). Simply put, we are overthinking. Caltech students want badly to be taken seriously, to present a united front to the administration and avoid any actions that could be deemed "immature". Why write an article if you're not absolutely sure you have all the facts straight? One misquotation or exaggeration, and you could give the administration reason to dismiss student concerns

as the whining of an uninformed, entitled group who doesn't understand the big picture.

While to some extent, this concern is reasonable, Techers are taking it too far. By remaining quiet until all facts are known, we are censoring ourselves, and hurting our cause.

If you have a strong opinion on something, check your facts with a source or two, then write, and submit. If you leave an article unwritten longer than a week, it will likely lose relevancy, and fade into the mass of ideas that never come to fruition. If you don't want to write, there are other actions that can be taken. Start a petition. Talk to influential parties. Make a banner. Make ten banners.

Do something to break the apathy, even if it seems pointless. If we don't take action, we are silencing ourselves, and ensuring that student concerns will pass unnoticed by the Caltech community and the world.

Caltech curtain call

TRAVIS SCHOLTEN
Contributing Writer

If we students had a dime for every time some melodrama played out between the administration and the undergraduates, I'm sure all of us would graduate without any student loans.

It seems the next act in this long and winding play has finally started.

About time, too.... I was getting bored. Nevertheless, I must ask - where's the action? the passion? the protest? the indignation? A plot device?

Perhaps these answers lie on the internet - no doubt Caltech's servers are overheating with all the e-mails bouncing back and forth.

In the spirit of ancient tragedies, I'd like to see a chorus of students, perhaps freshman, following these administrators and singing

their sad, sad dirges; cloaks of blue and maroon would be appropriate. Maybe some deus ex machina will save the students from themselves, or perhaps just another town hall meeting.

If anything, recent events have proven themselves to be a stimulating, if not necessarily entertaining, opening scene.

What's in store when the curtain rises again?

Alumni differ on Rotation: Point and Rebuttal

KARTHIK SARMA Alumnus

I have heard that many of you are outraged by the administration's unprecedented and extreme actions to curb what they believe is a 'hazing' epidemic that has corrupted the houses. I too, am outraged.

I am outraged that it has taken them so long.

18 yo M observed to have periods of heavy emotional instability, including transient cyclic episodes of heightened self-criticism and low self-esteem. In discussion, the student revealed that he was having a lot of trouble adjusting – the work was grueling and somehow everyone in his house seemed to hate him now, even though things had been going great for the first week or two.

I spent awhile in student government at Caltech. I was on picks every year and I worked quite a bit with the faculty to try to improve the educational experience at Caltech. I also became involved with the safety net and mental health resources at Caltech, both in my ASCIT capacity as well as in my personal capacity as a health advocate and UCC. I worked to try to reform an educational system that I saw as obsolete and demoralizing, especially in the first year. At least, that's what I worked on at first. Over time, I began to realize that the data didn't quite add up. There was something else going on in the freshman year, something that was causing a cumulative loss in retention that was leading to evident knowledge gaps in sophomore students. I assumed at first that it was simply bad teaching, but the TQFRs did not correlate properly. Something else was causing students to have poor retention of material specifically covered in the first two terms. Interestingly, the acts that the administration has labeled 'hazing' seem to fall primarily on freshmen during that time.

20 yo F observed with multiple indicators of depression. In discussion, student revealed that she had recently broken up with her boyfriend, with whom she lived in the same house. The house had a very uneven male/female ratio and she felt that everyone in the house now hated her because she was the 'bitch' who had walked out. She didn't have any real connections in the other houses and didn't know what to do.

Simultaneously, I began to work with students with suspected psychopathology, at first within my house, but then with students in other houses and off-campus who also didn't feel like they had access to adequate help. Many of these students had potentially serious underlying conditions and would have been benefited greatly by professional support (which, alas, they were almost always unwilling to seek). However, the

lion's share of these students (and freshmen in particular) weren't like that. They were just run-down and exhausted. They weren't happy with their life. The obvious explanation here was that the academics were just too much for them. However, by looking deeper, I was able to notice a pattern completely unrelated to academics. In fact, many of these students were doing just fine academically. Their problem was one of self-image. They were nerds (as, to be honest, are we all), and had been all their lives. Caltech was going to be their haven – a place where they would finally be rewarded for being the people that they were. Their house was supposed to be a welcoming community of friends just like them.

18 yo F observed during rotation final intake. Upon being informed that she had not been placed in her first-ranked house, student became agitated and demanded to know where she was. Eventually, she was informed that she had been placed in house X. She became silent and then began to cry profusely, saying that she had felt very uncomfortable in most of the houses but had been assured that she would get one of her top choices.

Unfortunately, they were wrong. Either they hadn't gotten placed in a house they wanted to live in, or they were now uncomfortable with a house that they thought they liked. Now, they were stuck. They could ask for a transfer or move off-campus. Some moved off-campus, where they were lost to the system entirely.

Others decided to try to stick it out for a year. Of those, some adapted, and others felt their mood sink further and further. Many of them thought of themselves as 'losers' – they didn't want to do the things that their house enjoyed doing, so they were pariahs.

18 yo M observed seeking academic advice due to poor performance. When standard options were provided (study skills training, tutoring, and personal office hours), student admitted that he hadn't had a chance to study for much of the term because he was building interhouse. He enjoyed building interhouse quite a bit at first, but then once he became involved found it increasingly difficult to have any time to work. Interhouse came and went (a huge success), but now he was behind and didn't know what to do.

Also simultaneously, I was working with my house on rotation planning and picks. I'll never forget my first time on picks. We were trying to secure placement of a student who had ranked us at the top of her list who we felt would be a good fit. We spoke to her second ranked house and asked if they would be willing to help us secure the student. The house informed us that they would be willing to do so only if we helped them avoid matching with three students. Taken aback,

we asked them if they felt the student would really be a better fit with them. In reply, we were told, "Are you kidding? Just look at her!"

19 yo F observed asking for advice. In discussion, she explained that she was distraught because she had been very offended by an incident that she felt was sexually demeaning. However, the other women in her house told her that she should stop being such so 'uptight' and relax. She was worried that she was indeed too 'uptight.' The student explained that the incident was a House ritual in which students would pretend to have intimate relations with a mannequin in front of others.

I was infuriated for a while after my first picks was through, but I soon realized that there was nothing I could do. Discussing the rotation process, after all, was against the rules! I appealed to IHC members for help, and was told to shove off in no uncertain terms.

Frustrated, I gave up, and eventually ended up doing picks again and again, and even helped develop a predictive algorithm that helped us get an edge in future picks.

12-15 individuals ~18-22 yo M/F observed attempting to break into a locked door with knives. Several individuals had knives and were actively hacking wildly at the door, while another was attempting to pick the lock by putting a knife between the double doors near the lock and wiggling it furiously. An EtOH smell was perceived to be emanating from the crowd, suggesting the presence of some intoxicated individuals. A health advocate was on scene observing and noted that he was afraid that someone would injure themselves or another student and that he would have to try to get through a mob of drunk, knife-wielding students to help. An RA failed to disperse the crowd, and eventually security was called. The event was explained as a house tradition (though it was conducted in a different house), and no sanctions were ever imposed by the administration.

During these picks, I (and many others) realized that there was another problem. Some houses seemed to be purposefully making themselves seem unattractive so that they would have a higher probability of only getting the students that they wanted (to whom they explained what was going on). Unfortunately, this had the side effect of forcing some students who weren't interested in those houses into them. Some procedures were put into place by the IHC that were supposed to discourage this behavior. They didn't work. I am still haunted by the news that I had to give to the students who had wanted to come to my house but were forced into another. Of course, many of these students eventually adapted to their new house and reported that they later began

to like it (though not all). Regrettably, that knowledge has not diminished the effect that the grief and fear they had on their faces when I told them the news has had on me. Of course, some of them also simply assumed that we hadn't liked them, and that they had been 'picked last.' I couldn't explain the truth to them, of course; that would be against the rules.

20 yo M observed asking for advice about an article for the Tech. He had interviewed faculty involved in a review of Rotation and included on the record quotes from them. He had submitted his article and the editors had accepted it. Then, his editors retracted the acceptance, saying that the IHC had decided that it should not be published. He contacted the IHC and was told that the article was in violation of the rotation rules, and that he (and his editors) would be in danger of investigation for rotation rules violations if he tried to distribute it. The Dean's office denied any threat of sanctions, but he was still afraid that something would happen to him or his editors if he continued.

There are many who would argue that the administration's acts constitute an intolerable restraint against student freedom. They certainly do restrict student freedom. However, I cannot help but wonder if we haven't forgotten what freedom means. Freedom never meant that we could do whatever we wanted to do. Freedom meant responsibility – students themselves would ensure that the system would respect the rights that all humans are due.

I ask you – is it right that houses with truly extreme personalities should be allowed to compel freshmen that do not fit to live with them? Is it right that female freshmen should be placed based not on their preferences, but on their physical attributes? Is it right that nervous freshmen should be put under such undue influence to 'be cool' in the first two weeks that they arrive?

Some might argue that I'm missing the point – that the house system has been a force for good, and that it has protected generations of students. Make no mistake; I too believe that the house system can be a force for good. I am a success story. I fit perfectly into my house, and I now miss it terribly. I reject, however, the claim that we cannot have a house system without the "freedom" to coerce freshmen.

Others might argue that freshmen do have a choice: they have the option to refuse to participate in rotation, or to refuse to participate in any house activities. They do have that option, of course, and some houses genuinely would not hold a refusal against a frosh. This is akin to saying that I have fully obtained informed patient consent by giving a consent form to an illiterate patient.

The freshmen most often have come from backgrounds where they did not fit in, and they want desperately to fit in now. Right off the bat, however, they're told to do things that for many of them are quite uncomfortable. Are they truly not under undue influence to comply?

My greatest regret from my time at Caltech is that I never tried to fix this broken system. I was afraid – afraid that it would define my entire tenure and prevent me from helping anyone, afraid that it would turn me into an instant pariah because I had dared to offer an opposing view, afraid that it would bring down consequences on me and my house. Perhaps I am simply a coward, and none of those things would have happened.

But given the immediate and highly personal reaction to the administration's actions and the enormous quantity of misinformation and FUD that has been floating around, I cannot help but suspect that I was right. Nobody is interested in thinking rationally about these issues. The IHC has become nothing more than a bickering, partisan, and ineffective committee. The administration has been forced into this, after years of repeated failure of student government to address the clear violations of the rights of some freshmen that were committed every year. We've brought this on ourselves, and I'm tired of being forced to cover up abuses under the guise of 'protecting' freshmen through the rotation rules. I'm not going to do it anymore – feel free to ask me anything and I'll be happy to answer.

Enough is enough. We need to fix this system in order to save it. I believe in a future where the house system appropriately balances personality and creativity with a healthy respect for human dignity. If you don't like the way that the administration is handling the situation, fix it yourselves. No more excuses, no more delays, and no more failures. Enough is enough!

Author's note: the case synopses in this article have been altered and mixed to protect the identities of the students involved.

Karthik Sarma is a first year MSTP student at UCLA, where he spends most of his time relearning what it's like to be below average. Before that, he was ASCIT VP of Academic Affairs, where he spent most of his time crying in his little corner of the Millikan boardroom.

Response to rebuttal:

1. De-identification is not the same as 'fictionalization' - nothing has been made up, but multiple stories have been combined to form the case studies. The case studies have not been altered in a manner that substantially alters any aspect of 'wrongdoing,' and in fact one of them came out less unfortunate than it should have.

2. I was never on the IHC. However, I'm very close to quite a few past presidents and IHC chairs from multiple houses, and I am absolutely certain that I know the whole story. I could try to prove this, but I'd have to release my knowledge of the rules to do so or force another alum to speak out and open himself to the nastiness that I have experienced. I am willing to do neither at this point.

Editors' note: Articles were printed in smaller font for size considerations.

DANIEL ERENDRICH Alumnus

If we ignore the pseudo-medical and fictionalized anecdotes in Kathik's editorial, he really makes just one point. That point is not what constitutes hazing. That point is not the importance of an open dialogue between the students and faculty. That point is not whether the administration should afford students due process. Those are the issues of the day. Karthik's point is that rotation is unfair and inhumane. Is that point valid? Is it relevant? I think not.

Karthik was never a member of the IHC and so is not aware of the full picks rules. There are several safeguards built-in to the rules to ensure freshmen are matched fairly. But we don't even need to discuss the rules because the proof is in the numbers. This year, 90% of freshman were put into one of their top three choices of houses. Of those that were not, 80% were still placed into a house that was ranked better than neutral. Overall, just 1.5% of freshman were placed into a house they ranked non-favorably. Freshman do have a strong say during rotation.

What about longer term happiness? Last year 92% of freshmen said they were happy or

very happy with the house they rotated into. Only 3.2% of freshman last year and 2.5% of freshman the year before said they were unhappy or very unhappy with their house. It seems the house dissatisfaction problem is not as severe as Karthik suggests.

Rotation is what sets houses apart from dorms. Without it houses lose their character. Last year 53% of freshmen indicated that the house system was one of the reasons they came to Caltech and 84% of freshmen believed that their house was a significant part of who they were. Karthik fails to address the importance of defending the house system while improving Caltech's support structure. This is why we've seen

such a strong negative reaction to his editorial.

Could things be improved? No question. Are people being hurt? Yes. Karthik has valid points, but there is plenty of time before rotation to address them. What we need is more evolution and fewer threats to undermine the IHC. One thing is for sure, the student body does not need more on its plate right now.

Daniel Erenrich is a first year masters student at Stanford. He would like to make it clear that he, like any alumnus, cannot speak for the current student body.

Freshmen polled on rotation events

Continued from page 1

“I really feel like the upperclassmen arrange events because they want the frosh to enjoy their time at Tech.”

Fourth: When asked to indicate whether or not they would feel comfortable reporting harassment or hazing to specific individuals, the frosh responded as indicated in the chart.

Frosh were by far most comfortable approaching an RA with complaints about harassment or hazing. In fact, 92.8% of frosh said they would feel comfortable

reporting incidents to an RA. Just under half (45.6%) of freshmen would feel comfortable approaching their advisors. After that, no more than a quarter of frosh feel comfortable approaching other figures – 24.0% would approach an Area Coordinator, and 23.2% would approach the Deans.

Intriguingly, 15.8% of frosh wrote in that they would talk to undergraduates in their house or house leaders (neither of which was a stated option) – and 14.3% of students responded that they would feel comfortable talking to upperclassmen but would not feel

comfortable talking to the deans. For more information on hazing nationwide, see the Hazing in View survey at http://www.hazingstudy.org/publications/hazing_in_view_web.pdf.

In conclusion, we see that there are clear general trends among the freshmen class, but they are not without exceptions.

Initiations and frosh activities are generally well received and fulfill their purpose of helping the frosh get to know their house and assimilate into Caltech life.

Students here are aware of what hazing and harassment are, and feel

comfortable reporting incidents to certain individuals – most of all, RAs and frosh advisors. Frosh report low levels of social pressure, and widespread support from the upperclassmen.

I’ll end with a few more quotes from frosh about their experiences.

“I know some frosh who decided not to attend one event (simply because they were busy, not because they didn’t want to do it) and they were not treated any different by fellow frosh or upperclassmen. Some upperclassmen even went to talk to them to ensure they felt

safe and they were told then that they wanted to attend but were just busy.”

“I opted out of a frosh initiation activity because I was worried that I might aggravate a prior injury to my knee. There was absolutely no pressure from upperclassman to participate once I explained the situation. Their responses showed sympathy, understanding, and regret that I might be missing out on a fun activity. My decision was respected 100%.”

“If what has been going on here is hazing then hit me with a paddle because I love it.”

Poll on “Safety Net” staff

ISAAC SHEFF
Contributing Writer

In 2011, Caltech added several new offices, and some new faces, to its administrative support network.

In an attempt to gather student opinion concerning the network and how students feel they are being helped (or not helped) by its various components, I released an opinion poll pertaining to a variety of administrative offices, as well as RAs, to the spam lists of all 8 houses (including Avery). I asked how students felt about the people involved as components of the network to support them.

The response to the poll was overwhelming. Despite students’ traditional apathy, especially towards email polls, 311 votes were cast: 32% of the student body. The opinions expressed were equally strong.

Poll results show an incredibly low opinion of Dean of Undergraduate Students, Professor D. Roderick Kiewiet, as well as North Area Coordinator, Meg Donnelly, and Assistant Vice President for Housing and Dining, Peter Daily. Despite being relatively new to Caltech, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Students [sic, studaff.caltech.edu/organization.htm], Lesley Nye also received a negative response. From the anonymous comments provided in the polling responses, it seems likely that these opinions are associated with recent events

and policies instituted over the last year. As one student commented:

“By far, Dean Kiewiet and Peter Daily are the most offensive figures on this list. They have shown repeatedly that they do not care for students’ wellbeing and are instead dedicated to satisfying the whims of higher powers of which we, as undergraduates, have no knowledge.”

Many students felt a particular need to elaborate on Dean Kiewiet. For example:

“Many of the actions taken by Dean Kiewiet have not only failed to act as a support network – they actively make me and many other students feel alienated and harassed.”

Some students feel the recent decisions of administrators go beyond merely poor choices, and constitute breaches of the Honor code:

“What happened to the honor code? It applies to ALL members of the Caltech community. Why, then, do we have administrators who believe they are above it and are permitted to behave with no regard to our code?”

Area Coordinators are relatively new office, and for most of campus, living with professional AC’s is a new experience. The installation of AC’s was an extremely contentious issue last year, so it comes as no surprise that student opinion in the poll was strongly against ACs as an office. Even amongst freshmen, AC’s as an office fared poorly (only marginally less so).

Amongst the individual ACs, South Area Coordinator, Taso Dimitriadis was well received, both by south house members and campus at large. Campus at large had mixed opinions on Avery & Off-Campus UG Area Coordinator, Joe Bennethum, but voters who listed themselves as associating with Avery had

more positive reviews. North Area Coordinator Meg Donnelly was extremely poorly reviewed by North House members and campus at large.

Most of the other administrators mentioned (who are not new this year) received mildly positive reviews, or low vote counts due to low interaction with undergraduates.

RAs, on the other hand, received fantastically positive reviews, displayed both in the “RAs as an Office” category and in individual polling results. As a traditional and non-professional component of the support network, the RAs requested that I present their individual polling data only in aggregate. The aggregate response, however, is overwhelmingly positive, most strongly among voters who claimed to associate with the RAs’ house (many people did not read the poll instructions, and voted midrange on people they did not know). In fact, of the non-RAs present in the Poll, only Tom Mannion (with whom most students interact primarily via free food) and Dean Green received average reviews in the same range as RAs, and the top-reviewed individuals in the poll are RAs. I began the poll because I felt that while the people around me had clear and strong opinions on the components of the support network, I had no way of knowing what the campus as a whole thought on the matter, and neither did the rest of the institute. The poll was not without its flaws (the email in some houses did not include one RA and Tom Mannion due to an oversight), but after such a strong response, student opinion is clear. Some students are terrified that any complaints at the current support network will only result in more administrators being installed, students displaced to off-campus, and culture squashed. It is my hope that by clarifying where the students stand, we can move beyond outraged conversations in halls and lounges, and work constructively to rectify those elements of the support network we feel are least effective. The full data set, including comments is available at <http://bit.ly/sm031e>.

Understand, then act

ANONYMOUS
Contributing Writer

The House system at Caltech needs to be improved. It should be one that empowers incoming freshmen and supports the upperclassmen, encourages them to use their time in a productive and creative fashion, and helps keep students in contact with one another.

The students have done nothing of substance to address the lingering issues that concern the Houses. Having spoken to multiple upperclassmen who earnestly

“_____”
[Administrators] should not be surprised when we grow to view them as nuisances from whom we need only hide our activities.

“_____”
believed that upholding House culture is more important than the happiness of a House’s members, it is easy to see what people can and will compromise for the sake of upholding the cultures of these dormitories.

Unfortunately, Caltech is a difficult school. It’s hard enough for a student to pass classes, sleep, and not be a social pariah without trying to change the very fabric of our social existence as well. Thus I’m happy that the deans are trying to rectify the problem, and I suspect that if the changes brought about are deep and cultural rather than superficial, there’s a good chance that student life will improve.

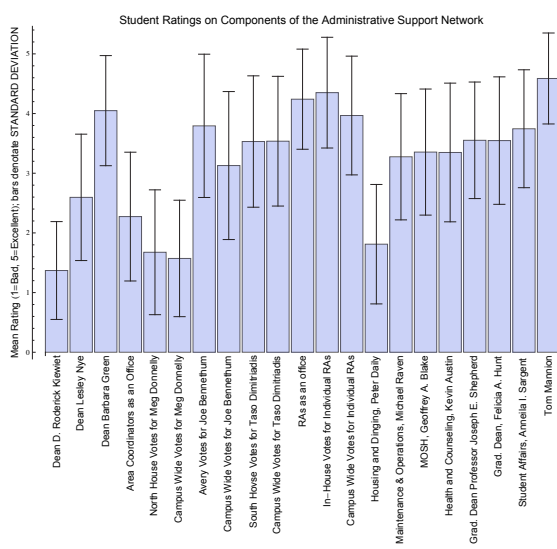
The effort taken by Dean Kiewiet and others have been misguided, to say the least. Although it is now one of the administration’s top priorities to curb hazing-like activities, this fact was in no way meaningfully communicated to the Houses before Rotation.

Furthermore, the incident in Page House that resulted in the end of waited dinners was witnessed by the Area Coordinator, who said and did nothing at the time to suggest that what was happening was inappropriate or unacceptable. Instead, these acts were simply reported to the administration.

Likewise, the Frosh Wash incident that got four active members of Ricketts House removed from Caltech housing was a tradition of giving the new freshmen shirts emblazoned with vulgar and black humor. This tradition existed long before any current undergrads were frosh. The fact that students were punished for a tradition that was completely ignored by the administration until this year is rather odious. Ironically, although the majority of Ricketts House participated in the Frosh Wash, only certain members were disciplined; one of those disciplined was in fact absent from the event altogether.

While Dean Kiewiet won’t currently allow UCC ice cream nights because they could single out particular alleys, he has no qualms about punishing a group of people simply because they are endowed with House responsibilities and act exactly as anybody would expect them to act in their position.

Given the administration’s concerns about hazing and harassment, it is confusing that they would employ a pathologically retroactive and punitive approach. Why did they not instead choose to become familiar with the traditions and culture of each House, to understand the sources of questionable incidents, and to discuss those traditions with the members of the Houses in order to alter or prevent them? The student body has so far only learned one lesson from the current measures taken by the administration: The figures of authority lack the respect to work alongside the student body, and treat us like children until our behavior accommodates their views. I for one support eliminating the aspects of a House’s culture that are detrimental to its students, but if the administration cannot bother to engage us in the changes that they are trying to enact on the student body, they should not be surprised when we grow to view them as nuisances from whom we need only hide our activities.



Punitive action against Ricketts was unfair

SAMANTHA PISZKIEWICZ
Contributing Writer

In recent weeks the undergraduate deans have severely punished four members of my house for allowing the distribution of t-shirts to our new frosh following rotation.

Although I recognize that the deans have valid concerns, I do not believe they have handled the situation properly.

At the end of Rotation, Ricketts House informs its new frosh that they are Skurves in an event called frosh wash. We tell them they are new members of Ricketts, offer them a free shirt of their choice from a table, and then encourage them to try to get the House President wet.

I would like to stress that we try to make it clear to the frosh that taking and wearing a shirt is optional. Each shirt has a different, politically incorrect statement on it. As an example, the shirt I received my freshman year says "President of the Necropedophiles of America (NoA) Caltech Chapter" and has a skeleton drawn on the back.

I recognize that the shirts are crude, but they are not meant to harm anyone.

From my perspective, the intention of these shirts is to express that as a member of Ricketts

House you should not be afraid of what others think of you. Within our culture we make fun of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, everything.

At the same time we have the most minority students of any house, we have the most LGBTQ students (at least openly so) behind Dabney, and although we have fewer women than many houses, I am a Skurve because the women in Ricketts House are encouraged to be independent and strong-willed. Yes, we make fun of stereotypes, but at the end of the day this is the first place where many of us have felt accepted for who we are, myself included.

Karen Blake and the north house AC Meg Donnelly brought these shirts to the attention of the deans. To my knowledge, no student came forward to the deans and claimed to have been sexually harassed.

Many, if not all, of our new freshman were interviewed about the incident, and to my knowledge none of them expressed that they had been sexually harassed. It is unclear to me who actually accused Ricketts House of sexual harassment.

The deans launched an investigation regarding the making and distribution of the shirts and eventually held four members accountable.

The first to receive punishment purchased the blank t-shirts and markers.

The shirts were placed in our library, and Skurves helping set up for frosh wash were told that they could make shirts if they wanted. It was not particularly organized, so there is no way of determining who made which shirts.

The second person to receive punishment directed frosh to the table of shirts during frosh wash and told them they could take one if they wanted.

The third person to receive punishment was asleep when the shirts were made and was present during distribution but otherwise was not directly involved.

The fourth person to receive punishment, whose responsibilities were entirely limited to housing matters and room picks, was asleep for the entire incident. After becoming severely sleep deprived throughout the course of rotation, I also slept for most of that afternoon.

The difference between my involvement and that of the fourth person punished is that I woke up 15 minutes before frosh wash started and was there. I would be upset if the house had been punished, but the deans instead punished 4 people for the actions of the entire house, which I find unjust.

The individuals that the deans have chosen to hold responsible for the actions of Ricketts House have been banned from entering our house and from participating in any house social activities for the remainder of their time at Caltech.

They were also forced to move into Caltech-owned off-campus housing before they had the chance to appeal. An effort was made to isolate them from each other, although this was not possible with two of the individuals because it was difficult to find gender-separate housing. After this term, all four of them will not be allowed to live in Caltech-owned housing.

I believe this to be an incredibly extreme punishment, particularly since they are already being punished individually for the actions of the house as a whole.

I think it would be much more reasonable for the administration to demand that they alter the frosh wash tradition to avoid the recurrence of this problem. I would also accept a reasonable punishment affecting the house as a whole.

This type of case in the past would have first gone through the Conduct Review Committee (CRC), a group of elected undergraduates and Dean Green who hear cases of non-academic violations of the honor code, before being reviewed

by the deans, who have the power to alter the CRCs decision. One could make the argument that the deans wanted to promptly address such a serious claim, except it took them a month and a half to handle the situation themselves.

The deans made little effort to understand what the undergraduates thought of the situation, which I find disrespectful. I came to Caltech partly because I liked the idea that the students largely governed themselves by the terms of the honor code. After living here for a year I believe this to be a largely effective system, and I am greatly saddened to see it so disrespected.

Although I have stated what I believe to be the intention of the shirts, I am not particularly attached to this tradition. I understand that the new frosh may not realize at first that when we say things are optional we mean they are optional, and we will not judge those who choose not to participate.

I greatly treasure the frosh traditions of my house because they helped me get to know some of my closest friends and allowed me to become more comfortable with myself.

I'm okay with eliminating the shirts from frosh wash, but I do not think initiation activities should be banned entirely.

Houses provide a necessary support system

PAULINE KU
Contributing Writer

In 2004, Rotation was very different. One only needed to rank 4 houses minimum, and you were guaranteed not to get into a Hovse that you did not rank. Avery was not a Hovse back then either. Curiously I did not feel harassed at Dabney's reception even though there was naked hot tubbing. I remember one member was just walking around completely naked and talking to people. I just did not look down. Everybody seemed to be comfortable with him and Dabney never got screwed over for this tradition they still continue. I feel like it is a part of the Hovse culture and to refrain from doing it during Rotation would be tantamount to lying about the true nature of Dabney, where one can feel completely comfortable around people in their own skin. I think Rotation better served the interests of the Frosh when only 4 Hovses needed to be ranked because it meant they did not get into Hovses they felt uncomfortable in. I would like to see a return to this in the future.

Everyone has different sensibilities and will react to different situations in their own way. I am truly sorry if the Ricketts Frosh Wash shirts offended anyone. However, I think the PNGing of Ricketts Hovse members was

extremely unfair because they were not directly responsible for the shirts. They did not make them and they did not wear them nor force any of the frosh to wear them. Everything about Frosh Wash was opt out, and we did not force anyone to participate and indeed not all of the freshmen who got into Ricketts participated. I feel like the vague warning that they were told did not accurately convey the consequences of their inaction to change a Hovse tradition that has been going on for years now.

The Hovse system is the reason I was really drawn to Caltech, apart from the grueling academics. I really think it fosters supportive relationships between upperclassmen and freshmen.

If we were forced to live in all freshmen dorms, these relationships would be much harder to form. We really make a concerted effort during Rotation to get to know the Frosh and we only want what is best for them.

I know for a fact that I would not have been able to get through Caltech (this is my last term here) without the support of the Hovse system. I truly believe I got into the right Hovse. I have this habit of complaining about classes that really hasn't gone away, but which has led to many fortuitous circumstances. I complained that Bi 24 was no longer being offered in the fall and that I may have to

take Ch 91 without an adequate understanding of chemistry. Upon hearing this, the housemates I complained to suggested I take E11 instead.

I got in contact with the professor before summer started and she agreed to take me on even before she found out that she only got funding from the E & AS and PMA divisions.

This meant she could not take on Biology or Chemistry students, but she made an exception for me. I know in no uncertain terms that I did better in that class than I would have ever done in Ch 91.

I expressed much fear over having to take Ph 1B again (I had failed both practical and analytic tracks before), and I found a tutor I knew as a result of this as well.

Likewise, I complained about Bi/Ch 132 (Biophysics of Macromolecules) and found out that one of my friends had taken it the year before. He agreed to tutor me, and he has been a humongous help this term. If I was cut off from the people of other classes,

I would be doing much worse at this school. My grades would be much worse, and I probably would have failed even more classes than I already have.

The emotional support of people who have also struggled through the same classes as I have has been tremendous too, and there is a definite can-do attitude that pervades the Hovse cultures. Interactions with upperclassmen

(all psychiatric disorders that are most likely found to be more prevalent in Caltech students than the normal population).

College is typically the time when these illnesses first surface, and catching them can be pretty tricky.

Luckily UCCs and RAs are trained to look out for warning signs and provide an effective safety net. The close knit nature of

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affect the courses one takes, and they can make recommendations that really affect your school career and help you garner those much needed easy classes.

This place is difficult, but it becomes even more difficult when one comes down with a mental illness such as major depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia

the Hovses supports students who might otherwise fall through the cracks at a different school.

I sincerely hope that no more students get PNGed from Ricketts, because I feel that if more do, the mental health of all Skurves may further deteriorate from the condition it is in now, which is already precarious.

BY ORDER OF

The High Inquisitor of Caltech

All Student Organizations, Societies, Teams, Groups, and Clubs are henceforth disbanded.

An Organization, Society, Team, Group, or Club is hereby defined as a regular meeting of three or more students.

Permission to re-form may be sought from the High Inquisitor (Professor Kiewiet).

No Student Organization, Society, Team, Group, or Club may exist without the knowledge and approval of the High Inquisitor.

Any student found to have formed, or to belong to, an Organization, Society, Team, Group, or Club that has not been approved by the High Inquisitor will be expelled.

*The above is in accordance with
Educational Decree Number Twenty-four.*

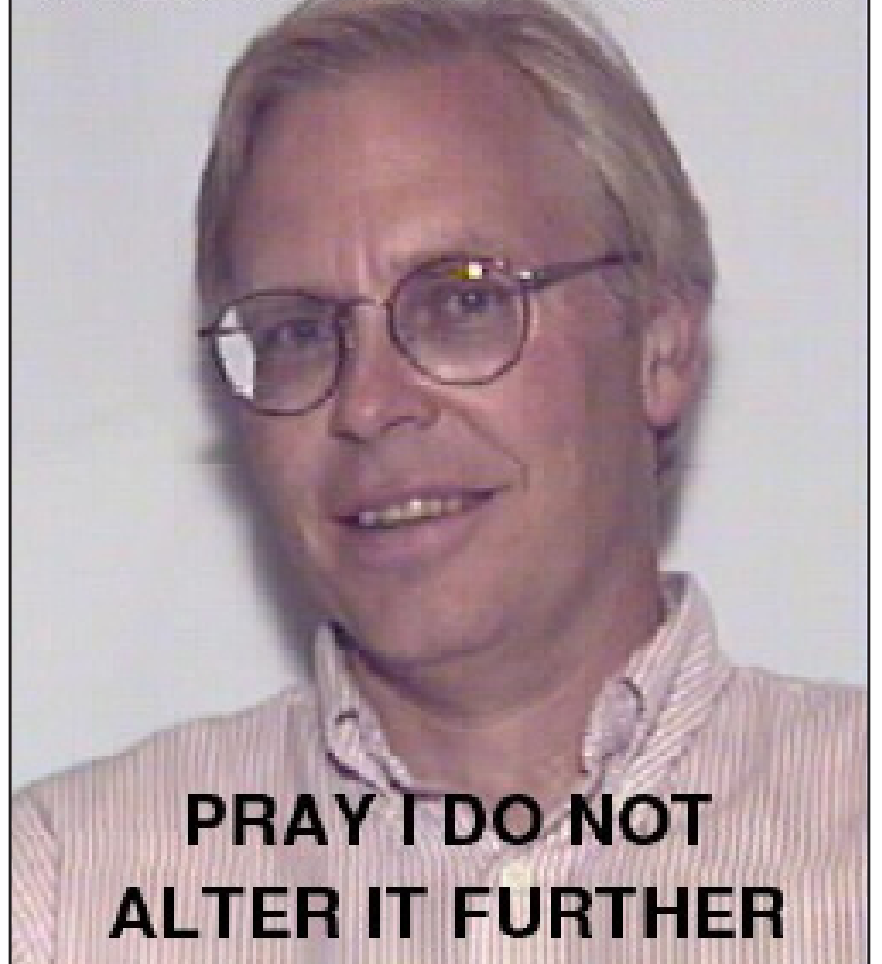
Signed:

Dennis Roderick Kiewiet

HIGH INQUISITOR



I HAVE ALTERED THE DEAL

PRAY I DO NOT
ALTER IT FURTHER

Happenings of first term: A satirical outlook

ANONYMOUS
Contributing Writer

PASADENA, California - A survey released by the Gallup Poll reported yesterday that happiness at Caltech is at an all time high.

Caltech students often stated a source of their satisfaction with Caltech was the existence of the honor code and how everyone, especially Dean D. Roderick Kiewiet, follows Caltech's principal tenet.

For instance, the dean does not bypass the historically effective student-run Conduct Review Committee and Board of Control disciplinary committees.

Nor does he ever fail to notify students to change their behavior before removing them from their houses.

In fact, he has already not failed to do this to five members of Ricketts Hovse. Dean Kiewiet and the rest of Undergraduate Student Affairs showed mercy to a freshman and four upperclassmen of Ricketts.

In particular, the upperclassmen were not respected, or level-headed members of the student body. Student Affairs invoked the Leonard Law to not permanently ban them from Ricketts' events and property for offensive t-shirts. One upperclassman was not banned for sleeping through the making and handing out of the shirts.

Because of this, these Skurves will not have to live separately in Caltech housing until the end of the term, after which they will not have to find non-Caltech housing.

On a different note, the Board of Trustees reported they were also quite happy when Dean Kiewiet

stated before them that he himself wholeheartedly believes in the honor code. He emphasized that it applied to him as much as all others in the Caltech community.

The Caltech undergraduate community also noted that the small size of the school has allowed them great input into administration decisions, which further increased their reported happiness.

For example, when student and faculty committees met to interview and discuss the hiring of the new Associate Dean Lesley Nye, their opinions, as well as Princeton's stellar recommendation, were given due influence.

However, the undergraduates did have some gripes.

Many stated that the housing system was not one of the few reasons that they chose Caltech. Rather, the reason was that Caltech provides phenomenal teachers and research opportunities at a sleep-allowing workload, which are absolutely unavailable elsewhere.

The housing system also fails to be the main mental health safety net for undergraduates. In fact, most feel that the Area Coordinator system, especially in the North Houses serves as an improvement.

AC Meg Donnelly has been readily available, she has never yelled at students on the Olive Walk or called anyone inhuman, and everyone in the North Houses knows what she looks like.

None have felt the need to go meet with the South House AC. As a result, a popular sentiment is to remove the housing system altogether.

Dean Kiewiet, however, is against the idea, preferring to think about how the houses could

potentially fulfill students' needs in their social lives and mental health. He is also against treating long-standing house traditions involving freshmen as hazing.

The majority of the student body did reveal that when they were freshmen, they felt upset when Freshman Orientation and anti-freshmen slurs uttered by upperclassmen singled them out.

Such phrases included "Go to sleep, frosh. Ditch Day is tomorrow" as well as "Pass/Fail, frosh," which were not said to encourage the

freshmen to not burn themselves out or to lightly tease them, but rather out of spite.

Frosh have also stated they became depressed when upperclassmen gave them cupcakes and paid for their first dinner after they became members of a house.

For more elaborate events, freshmen were not allowed to freely opt-out without question, and so felt trapped doing hazing house traditions.

At other times, they thought they were forced to not opt-in.

They believed they had as much of a choice over their lives as preschoolers.

Overall, however, the community is satisfied with its choice to come to and work at Caltech.

No undergraduates have felt the need to transfer and discourage prospective freshmen from matriculating.

They all feel safe expressing their opinions without repercussions from Student Affairs or the MOSH's secretary and wife, Karen Blake.

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