Bianca Lepe named Marshall Scholar for study in UK

Senior Bianca Lepe, a bioengineering major from Granada Hills, California, has been named a Marshall Scholar, winning one of the most coveted fellowships for study in the U.K. The Marshall Scholarship is widely considered one of the most prestigious scholarships in the world. Approximately 1,000 Americans, mostly graduating seniors, apply for, at most, 40 fellowships awarded each year. The Marshall Scholarship provides funding for two years of post-bachelor’s degree study at any university in the United Kingdom. The Marshall Aid Commemoration Commission, which oversees the fellowship, provides many cultural opportunities for Marshall Scholars during their tenure as scholars.

Lepe will spend the 2016–2017 academic year at the University of Edinburgh studying for a master’s degree in synthetic biology and the following year at Imperial College London, completing a master’s degree in science communication.

The Marshall Scholarship was founded by a 1953 Act of Parliament and named in honor of U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall. The scholarships “commemorate the humane ideals of the Marshall Plan and the fellowships express the continuing gratitude of the British people to their American counterparts.”

The British Marshall Commission website said, “As future leaders, with a lasting understanding of British society, Marshall Scholars strengthen the enduring relationship between the British and American peoples, their governments and their institutions. Marshall Scholars are talented, independent and wide-ranging, and their time as Scholars enhances their intellectual and personal growth. Their direct engagement with Britain through its best academic programmes contributes to their ultimate personal success.”

At Caltech, Lepe has participated in research with James Heath, Elizabeth W. Gilboa Professor and Professor of Chemistry, developing a diagnostic tool to detect a specific protein that causes malaria, and with David Baltimore, professor emeritus and the Robert Andrews Millikan Professor of Biology, studying RNA and immunology.

Three is not a crowd: Butkovich sisters follow similar paths at Caltech

Dave Zorel
Caltech Media Relations

This article was originally published online at caltech.edu.

The public high school in Blue Springs, Missouri, just outside Kansas City, graduates more than 500 seniors each year. Remarkably, the valedictorian in 2013 was the younger sister of the valedictorian in 2014—who was the younger sister of the valedictorian in 2013. And all three are now Caltech undergraduates.

These are the Butkovich sisters: junior Slava and sophomore Nina, both majoring in chemical engineering, and freshman Lazarina (“Laza”), currently deciding between chemical engineering and chemistry.

“In the nearly half-century since Caltech began admitting women to its undergraduate program, 2015 is almost certainly the first year we’ve had three sisters enrolled in three different graduating classes at the same time,” noted Barbara Green, interim dean of classes at the same time, “All our applicants are reviewed independently and without regard to siblings, parents, or other family ties.”

News briefs from around the globe

A brief list of events from the past week, compiled by the editors

Adele’s 25 breaks single week sales record
3 million copies sold in first six days shatters previous record set by “NSYNC

Oakland A’s pitcher hosts Thanksgiving dinner for Syrian refugees
17 families living in Chicago were given food to “welcome them to America”

“Li-Fi” debuted outside of lab for the first time
100 times faster than Wi-Fi, Li-Fi uses visible light instead of radio waves to access the internet

Pirates attack Polish cargo ship
5 abducted, 11 confirmed safe after Nigerian pirates ransack ship; no demands have been made yet

Officer, civilians injured by active shooter near Planned Parenthood
3 killed (one police officer, two civilians) after shooting in Colorado

ISIS claims responsibility for attack on Bangladeshi mosque
1 killed, three injured by gunmen attacking Shiite mosque

Suicide bomber strikes Nigerian Shia march
21 killed; leaders say Boko Haram is to blame for attack on annual procession

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Women’s basketball scores win over Illinois Tech

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Caltech Y Column

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In 2014, Lepe was a member of the Caltech’s undergraduate iGEM (International Genetically Engineered Machine) team, which participated in an international competition to create artificial biological systems from a kit of standard biological parts. “Our project’s goal was to implement a non-native gene circuit system in E. coli to manufacture a biological compound and regulate its concentration outside the cell,” Lepe said. “We had the chance to attend the iGEM Jamboree to present our research, for which we received a bronze medal.”

Lepe’s experiences on the iGEM team spurred her interest in synthetic biology, which she will pursue at the University of Edinburgh during the first year of her Marshall Scholarship. “Edinburgh is unique because it has a research center, called SynBioX, which specializes in translating research into commercial applications — a skill I hope to gain while there,” she said.

During the second year of her fellowship, Lepe will delve into the art of communicating science to the public. “When I study science communication at Imperial College, it will be beyond the traditional forms of communication into broader mediums and topics, such as television, ethics, and science policy. The skill sets I will gain at these universities will enable me to be an effective communicator and scientist as I pursue a career in synthetic biology.”

“Bianca Lepe has excelled in many areas at Caltech: classes, research, leadership, student government. She has reinvigorated the Caltech Latino Association of Students in Engineering and Sciences, and she chairs the undergraduate student advisory board for Title IX efforts,” said Lauren Stolper, director of fellowships advising and study abroad and the Career Development Center. “Bianca’s two years in the U.K. will surely be a formative experience as a scientist and as a leader in communicating science to the public. Her Marshall Scholar win is well deserved, and Bianca will take full advantage of the experience.”

In May 2015, Lepe received the Caltech Deans’ Cup — an award presented to undergraduates “whose concern for their fellow students has been demonstrated through their efforts to improve the quality of undergraduate life and by effective communication with members of the faculty and administration.”

“Bianca has been a great student, a real leader with strong values and a wonderful friend to her peers,” said Barbara Green, the interim dean of Undergraduate Students. “I am delighted that she won the Marshall and will miss her next year.”

International travel will not be too ‘foreign’ for Lepe — in the autumn of 2014, she studied abroad at University College London. Additionally, she has traveled to India as a part of the Caltech Y’s India-Khoj program in 2013.

The Marshall Scholarship was created in 1953 and was named after George C. Marshall, an American veteran and the 50th U.S. secretary of state. -http://en.wikipedia.org/
**Endless adventures: Fries at Islands**

ALEX WHITE  
Contributing Writer

Author's note: This is the first in a series of investigative journalism articles in which the author explores an "endless" item.

Islands was fighting an uphill battle from the beginning. At 7:53, before our full party arrived, we asked our waitress Bethany if Islands still had its endless fries deal. It did, and Bethany promptly offered to bring us our first round early.

8:08 – We lost hope in the fries. Morale was down, but we remained optimistic. We ordered six Kilauea burgers and No-Blame Grilled Veggie Tacos.  

8:18 – Our food arrived. Order parsing was more difficult than usual due to the extreme homogeneity of our selections.

8:20 – We finished our first round of fries and asked for more. Bethany was compliant. My burger was mediocre. The fries were average, not bad, but not too enjoyable.

8:26 – Our first enormous basket of fries arrived. The fries were getting worse.

8:41 – Our second ask for fries arrived. The fries were just plain bad at this point, but they were free, so...

8:42 – We asked for more fries. Bethany was surprised. Our one order of fries should have had Sriracha on it, but it has something that just looks like cilantro.

Photo courtesy of Alex White

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**The preferences of the bottom 90 percent of Americans have no impact on public policy, whereas the preferences of the top 10 percent (“Elite”) are closer to the ideal diagonal.**

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**Laksh Bhasin**  
Contributing Writer

America’s political and economic systems are objectively flawed. Since the early 1980s, worker productivity has continued to increase, while real median family income has remained largely flat. Yet we still see special interests fighting to maintain a starvation-level minimum wage of $7.25 as wealth inequality continues to grow. Basic healthcare is still not a right for all, and prescription drug prices are much higher than they were in Canada. Yet we still see politicians fighting for overpriced private insurers over universal single-payer healthcare (i.e., "Medicare for all"), and the pharmaceutical industry continues to maintain one of the highest profit margins of any industry. A Princeton University study established that “the preferences of the average American appear to have only a minuscule, near-zero, statistically non-significant impact upon public policy” (see graph).

Yet we still proudly call ourselves a democracy, even with the rise of super PACs, unrepresentative lobbying and a broken campaign finance system.

The deck is stacked against average- and low-income Americans, both politically and economically. The obvious question to ask, then, is “Why hasn’t anyone fixed this mess?” Shouldn’t the system have re-equilibrated at some point over the last 35 years to help out those who have so little?

Unfortunately, the exact opposite has happened. Republicans like Scott Jennings – longtime advisor to Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-KY – have become aware of the fact that “people on Medicaid don’t vote.” And with this realization, anti-welfare right-wing politicians have turned the middle 20 percent of income earners against the bottom 20 percent, rebranding and demonizing the latter as entitled slackers, without detriment to their electability. As these politicians get elected, low-income voters not only grow more cynical, but also face more obstacles, with recent voting restriction laws (purported to counteract election fraud) further diminishing their voice. The end result is a dystopian feedback loop where the poor get even less political representation and America grows even more oligarchical.

If you’re reading this and thinking, “Enough is enough,” independent Sen. and Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders agrees with you. A democratic socialist from Vermont, Sanders has consistently – over the past 24 years he has been in Congress – fought for average- and low-income Americans. He is committed to repealing the Citizens United v. FEC decision, which allows corporations to make unlimited anonymous political donations to organizations like super PACs. He is determined to establish universal single-payer healthcare, so that the average American – who often has less than $10,000 in savings – isn’t crippled by a physical or mental illness. He has introduced legislation to make public colleges tuition-free with the proceeds from a minuscule tax on Wall Street speculation, a move that is set to give ordinary Americans an affordable and accessible education.

In several ways, Sanders is a unique politician. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he refuses to sacrifice his principles for special interests like the fossil fuel industry, the banking industry and the pharmaceutical industry. His campaign’s political contributions come from 750,000 donors (almost one of the highest profit margins of any industry).

This is the time around. Someone asked for Sriracha.

8:50 – We received the Sriracha. It consisted of a small cup of green leaves, presumably cilantro.

8:57 – Our third basket of fries arrived. Each fry coats my throat and stomach with a thicker layer of oil.

9:00 – Bethany got too excited and asked us if we wanted more fries this time. She may have asked sarcastically, but we accepted.

9:07 – Our fourth basket of fries arrived. I was able to down two without throwing up. Three would have been pushing it. The smell of oil became unbearable. Overall review: We ate an estimated 15-20 potatoes worth of fries and an estimated 1.12 pounds of oil among the seven of us.

Cost to Islands: $2.62  
Cost to us: French fry PTSD and $15 each for a mediocre burger and these fries.

Rating: 2 out of 5 fries. But the sad ones that they leave in for too long and turn brown.

Take home message: If you want endless fries, go to 5 Guys. Their food is orders of magnitudes better and their fries are virtually undetectable.

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Humans of Caltech: Meet Librarian Kristin Buxton

The California Tech brings you stories of Caltech community members

ALEXANDER HSU
Contributing Writer

How long have you been at Caltech?
Eight years!

What does your job typically consist of?
Lots of different things … answering questions, answering email questions, finding books, teaching classes, currently maintaining the website, lots of meetings, committees for reding the library catalog.

Why did you choose to come to Caltech?
I actually have undergrad degrees in physics and computer science, and was a software engineer for nine years, and so I figured coming here, I could have some idea about what I was helping people on … and it doesn’t involve doing storytime for kids.

Why did you decide to become a librarian?
I wanted to work with people more … don’t ask me how I actually got the idea of librarianship as the next path… but again, it was the working with people part of it that appealed … so I had to get a master’s and switch careers.

A master’s in?
Library science.

Interesting fact about yourself?
1 DJ for swing dances on the side.

Anything you’d like to say to the students here?
Don’t be afraid to ask for help!

Contributing Writer

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Wong lights it up again in win over Illinois Tech

GOCALTECH.COM

EAGLE ROCK (Nov. 27, 2015) – Senior Stephanie Wong (Palos Verdes Estates, Calif.) / Palos Verdes Peninsula) tied her own program record with seven three-pointers in another 24-point performance that fueled the Caltech women’s basketball team to a 79-38 win over Illinois Tech in the opening game of the Caltech-Occidental Fall Classic on Friday afternoon.

The Beavers improve to 1-1 overall while the Scarlet Hawks drop to 0-4.

Wong kicked things off three treys over the first two-and-a-half minutes to open up a 9-0 lead, which junior Kate Lewis (San Antonio, Texas / Ronald Reagan) made took to double digits as she went 1-for-2 at the free throw line. Illinois Tech knocked down consecutive threes but Wong hit her fourth in as many minutes to keep Caltech well in front and the rest of the Beavers soon joined in, ending the quarter on a 17-2 run to lead 30-8 at the first break.

A reshuffled Beavers lineup took a few minutes to get on the board in the second quarter, but did manage to limit the Scarlet Hawks to just two points over the first eight minutes while eventually building up a 30-point lead with 2:42 remaining in the half. Illinois Tech continued to enjoy brief spurts of offense but could not keep pace with Wong, who sank another three three-pointers in the first three minutes of the third quarter and hit her seventh three minutes later. Caltech held Illinois Tech scoreless over the final 6:38 to record the 41-point victory.

Wong also hit her only two-point field goal to go 8-for-12 and added six rebounds and six assists without committing a single turnover. Lewis matched her season-opening score as well with 16 points and completed the double-double with 14 rebounds, in addition to four assists. Junior Michelle Wong (Palos Verdes Estates, Calif. / Palos Verdes Peninsula) and freshman Madeline Schermel (Westport, Conn. / Staples) rounded out the double-figure scorers with 13 and 12 points, respectively. Wong was 3-for-6 from long range, grabbed six rebounds, made three steals and dished out six assists while Schermel pulled down seven boards and shot 6-for-8 from the field. Freshman Nika Halefiras (San Diego, Calif. / Our Lady of Peace) also impressed with nine rebounds, four assists and four steals and freshman Madelyna Stroder (Springfield, Mo. / Greenwood Laboratory) scored her first career points on her only hot of the day.

Head Coach Sandra Marbut and the Beavers will host UVU Mercury (0-1) on Saturday, Nov. 28 at 3 p.m. Following the Occidental vs. Illinois Tech matchup at 1 p.m.

Stephanie Wong goes in for the kill. It is speculated that she is a cross between a deadly viper and a ferocious yet cuddly bear.

- http://gocaltech.com

Photo Courtesy of Alexander Hsu
ASCIT Minutes
(from last week; no new meeting)

ASCIT Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes for 17 November 2015. Taken by Phillip.

Officers Present: Nima, Sean McKenna, Phillip An,
Cat Jamshidi, Kalyon Chang

Call to Order: 12:04 pm

Guests: Chris Dosen

President’s Report (Nima):
- Midnight donuts are Wednesday night
- Registration on Thursday morning
- Dean’s advisory council met yesterday
  - Mary Morley will be looking into advanced humanities fill up to look into alternate strategies
  - Nick is working with Math department to finalize the due times initiatives
- Movie is confirmed for Friday at 10:45am

Officer’s Reports:
- V.P. of Academic Affairs (ARC Chair: Jay):
  - Absent
- V.P. of Non-Academic Affairs (IHC Chair: Cat):
  - The IHC will be meeting with Joe Shepard
- Director of Operations (Sean):
  - Nima and Sean went on the ARC retreat discussing various student issues and concerns
- Treasurer (Kalyon):
  - None
- Social Director (Robin):
  - Absent
- Secretary (Phillip):
  - Midnight donuts will be Wednesday

If anyone has any questions or concerns about a section of the minutes please email the appropriate officer. We are happy to answer any questions.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:31 pm

NEW BOOK BY CALTECH ALUM
AVAILABLE IN THE BOOKSTORE

From Jupiter to Genesis by Anthony Sneed is now available in the Caltech bookstore. According to the author, the book discusses three heroes (Alex Lidow, Dale Prouty, and Pete Wilzbach) and the Caltech Honor Code.

The Caltech alum and author is also an avid unicyclist and finished first out of 13 competing in the Harvey Mudd Alumni Day 8.7-mile unicycle challenge.

Vice Provost’s Office Hours

Vice Provost, Chief Diversity Officer and Professor of English, Cindy Weinstein, offers weekly office hours beginning Thursday, Oct. 15, in Room 104 Parsons Gates. She views these hours as an opportunity for undergraduates, graduate students and postdocs to meet and discuss whatever you’d like to talk about. Professor Weinstein oversees the Council on Undergraduate Education, Caltech accreditation, the Staff and Faculty Consultation Center, Student-Faculty Programs, the Center for Teaching, Learning and Outreach, the Caltech Diversity Center and the libraries.

There are four appointments per hour, 15 min. each. Sign up the day of the meeting in 104 Parsons Gates, Vice Provosts’ Offices (x6339).

Fall Term Hours:
Tuesday, Dec. 1, 12pm-1pm
Wednesday, Dec. 9, 12pm-1pm

REMINDER FROM COUNSELING CENTER:

Meditation Mob
(drop-in mindfulness meditation group)

Meets every Tuesday, 12:00-12:50 p.m.
Bottom floor of Winnett

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Butkovich sisters look ahead

Continued from page 1 legacies. For three family members to receive consecutive offers of admission indicates how tremendously talented all three of them must be.

For their part, Slava, Nina, and Laza find their own nearly identical trajectories unsurprising. “We were taught at a young age that science majors can do a lot of good for society,” Slava explained. “Anyway,” added Nina, “science is more objective than other things, like English and law. It has right answers.”

Instead, they give much of the credit for nurturing their talents to their father, who is a lawyer, and their mother, a chemical engineer. They also single out recently retired Blue Springs High chemistry teacher Evan Manuel. “He’s the above-and-below teacher,” said Slava, “the one who is aware of how they were brought up. And they’ve generously shared that just of themselves but of others having “high expectations — not too high, of course — but of the trajectory of their future.”

Nina. “His passion for the sciences was evident from the beginning. He taught us that science is not just the study of the ‘how’ of things, but the ‘why’ as well. His enthusiasm for understanding the world around us was contagious.”

For example, the three young women, whose own heritage is Slavic and Filipino, cofounded the National Association of Cultural and Ethnic Diversity and Slavic and Filipino, cofounded two clubs at Caltech: the NERF club. Their course loads are quite challenging, with an overload. “I don’t think extreme course loads are the key to success,” Slava explained. “It’s more about the dedication and passion one brings to their studies.”

They also tutored classmates in between sitting for a combined total of almost four dozen AP exams, many in subjects not even offered by their school.

At Caltech, all three will be pursuing summer research opportunities. Slava, who is planning a career in anti-cancer research, was named a Howard Hughes Medical Institute Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowships (SURF) fellow last year. She is active in the undergraduate house system (Nina is a member of Ruddock House; Laza and Slava are members of Dunby) and have taken part in yoga, tennis, tai chi, karate and the NERF club. Their course loads are challenging, but none is carrying an overload. “I don’t think extreme units is smart,” Nina said.

In fact, according to all three, one of the biggest challenges they have faced since leaving high school has been learning to rely on something they had honestly never needed before: study groups.

But what does all of this have to do with Caltech, a school whose political apathy is so well-known that the admissions department tacitly describes this as a perk of attending? Call me crazy, but I hope that, as scientists, we can recognize the benefits of a candidate without conflicts of interest, who loudly refuses to be bought by special interests and super PACs. I hope that we can realize the objective systemic flaws I have highlighted, and support a candidate whose entire life’s work has focused on fixing these flaws. I hope we can recognize that a country with a 9 percent turnout in its 2014 midterm elections — an election in which 80% of young people did not vote — is not a representative democracy, and that we need a political revolution to get more long-term youth involvement in politics.

And, as members of the Caltech community, I hope we can understand the benefits of Sanders’ strong, nationwide social safety net, one that includes universal single-payer healthcare. I know I’ve personally benefited from Caltech’s mental health services, and I feel it would be downright inhumane to let a less-fortunate American succumb to mental illness because of high insurance deductibles or unemployment.

Lakh Bhasin is the president of Caltech Students for Bernie Sanders, a group of Caltech volunteers who work to elect Bernie Sanders as president. Visit the group’s Facebook page at http://facebook.com/Caltech4Bernie to get involved in volunteering.

Sanders is a candidate students should support

Continued from page 3

75 percent of whom donated less than $200) and organizations that represent ordinary workers, and he refuses to be bought by special interests and super PACs. I hope that we can realize the objective systemic flaws I have highlighted, and support a candidate whose entire life’s work has focused on fixing these flaws. I hope we can recognize that a country with a 9 percent turnout in its 2014 midterm elections — an election in which 80% of young people did not vote — is not a representative democracy, and that we need a political revolution to get more long-term youth involvement in politics.

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I’d like to conclude by inviting you, the reader, to reflect upon the power of our collective voices to effect change. To quote FDR, and aptly summarize Sanders’ career, “I hope the test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

Crossword

Across
1. Smell
6. Discharged a debt
10. Written leave of absence
14. Mature
15. Skin condition
16. Plant with fleshy spiny leaves
17. Spotless
18. Small bunch or bundle
19. Noisy
20. Hair dye
21. Distribute playing cards
22. Country, initially
23. Part of the mouth
24. Proponent
25. Also
26. Subject or object, can be common or proper
27. Talon
28. Optical device
29. Civil wrong
30. Adhesive

Down
1. Curved shape
2. Irritate
3. Overt
4. Miserly
5. Chronological account of events
6. Animal foot
7. Corrosive material
8. Gasset
9. Leave
10. Buddy
11. Not silently
to
12. Bronchial
13. A closed litter for one passenger
14. Closed circuit
15. Strong, restless desire
16. Arctic or Antarctic regions
17. Vertical back fin
18. Male offspring
70. Center of a storm

http://puzzlechoice.com

— Franklin D. Roosevelt

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

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Solace in Numbers

Dear Frost,

*An Workout Plan*

Oh, you're feeling stressed about chemistry, just hang in there.

As the Laundry King himself...

You have the same number of hotel texting...?

Crippling Anxiety

Gooooo

- [Image of a comic strip with various drawings and text]

Answers to the current crossword (page 7)

[Image of a crossword puzzle]

http://puzzlechoice.com