

Hidden Camera Title IX Case Drags to an End After 16 Months

**Cristian Ponce,
Maxwell Montemayor**
Managing Editors
News

In a Title IX case characterized by incessant delays, non-disclosure agreements, and frustration, a conclusion was finally reached late last November.

The case dates from July 17th, 2022, when a student participating in the Freshman Summer Research Institute (FSRI) hid a camera in a communal bathroom in a Bechtel Residence suite. Within the first 72 hours, the owner of the camera was identified, video footage of the camera's installation was discovered, and members of the suite received an apology letter from the owner of the camera. However, despite the prompt discovery of an abundance of evidence, the case took more than 16 months to resolve.

The unexpected length of the case has come at the expense of the other students in the suite (the "complainants"). Four of these students, who were interviewed by the Tech, say they are disappointed by the numerous delays and lack of consistent communication from the Title IX Office. "I'd be having a good day, and then I'd get an email from the Title IX Office..." one of the suite members recalled. "I just wanted it to be done."

The Deans' Office expelled the respondent on November 27th, marking the end of a painful saga. The timeline was triple the length of what complainants were told as a best estimate by Hima Vatti, Caltech's Title IX Coordinator, at the onset of the investigation. Some of the complainants even accuse the Title IX Office of "deflecting and delaying" and working to protect the Institute's image during the drawn-out process.

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THE INCIDENT

According to a letter from the Title IX Office sent to the complainants and reviewed by the Tech, suite residents alerted Caltech Security after discovering a device in the shared bathroom. Security took the camera into their possession, conducted a sweep of the restrooms, and notified the Pasadena Police Department (PPD). The device had the appearance of a charging block and contained a hidden camera and microphone. It allegedly recorded individuals without their consent from approximately 4:00pm, July 17, 2022 until 3:30 pm July 18, 2022.

The student in the suite who owned the camera (the "respondent") admitted to Caltech Security he was the owner of the device, that he had intended it to record, that he had set it up and enabled recording, and that he intended to do something with the material recorded, according to the letter from the Title IX Office.

Pick this up...

Yakov Shalunov
Opinion

...and once you're done reading it, put it somewhere it belongs or throw it away. As long as I've been on campus, one thing has been prominent outside of Red Door. The COVID tents have come and gone, the windows have broken and then been repaired, but one thing has not changed: the litter. Inside Red Door and outside it alike, receipts and napkins are scattered across the floor, empty food packaging lays on the ground next to the trash cans, and, now, copies of the *Tech* are left

indiscriminately on surfaces by irresponsible readers.

It's an embarrassment—you made it into Caltech, surely you have the capacity to do better—and, perhaps more importantly, it just looks ugly. It's not only rude to the CDS staff – it's an Honor Code violation. A minor one, but a violation nonetheless. So next time you're eating, do CDS and all your fellow students a favor and pick up your fucking trash. And when you're done reading, don't just leave this on a random table. Take it with you, throw it out, or put it back wherever you got it.

Do better.



"yum, microplastics..." (Photo credit: Yakov Shalunov)

Note from the Tech Editor-in-Chief: We want to hear your perspective!

Specifically, I'd love to hear it from YOU directly, even and especially if you're not a student. We live in a society with e-mail technology; it is not difficult to communicate with us. The *Tech* receives emails very rarely, yet to my bewilderment, I frequently hear people's complaints about the *Tech* second-hand through my friends in student leadership. Caltech's Office of Strategic Communication even contacted me via email claiming to have received "several comments and questions" about a recent *Tech* issue. Why these comments and questions were sent to the OSC instead of the *Tech* is beyond the comprehension of my feeble physics-major mind. For those unaware, the *Tech* is a publication independent of Caltech, run by the Associated Students of Caltech (ASCIT).

We strive to represent every voice in the Caltech Community with fairness, accuracy, and impartiality in our news reporting. If you think we missed something, or just want to share your thoughts about a topic we've reported on, I encourage you to submit a Letter to the Editor. Feedback, positive or negative, is always welcome and appreciated.

Cheers!

-Mich"print journalism"ael Gut"is not"ierr"dead"ez
Editor-in-Chief, *The California Tech*
Ay '25, Dabney/Ricketts

Send submissions or contact the *Tech* editorial team at

tech@caltech.edu

(Due by 12 p.m. on the Saturday before each biweekly Tuesday publication)

Corrections

In the previous November 28, 2023 issue of the *Tech*, the article titled "Vice President of Student Affairs Addresses Controversy Over Discontinuing Rotation Events" incorrectly stated that undergraduate women were first admitted to Caltech in 1960. The correct year is 1970. In fact, Caltech first hired a woman as part of the tenure track faculty (Professor Emeritus Jenijoy La Belle) in 1969, who subsequently had to fight for ten years to obtain tenure.

Additionally, admitting undergraduate women was not a change "forced on students whether they like it or not," as stated in the article. Rather, it came about as a result of very strong student advocacy as well as support from the faculty and administration in 1967 and a special push by Caltech president Harold Brown in 1970, despite opposition by some alumni. Thanks to Richard Wright (BS '68, Fleming) for this info.

In the article titled "Caltech Unionization Effort" published October 31st of last year it was claimed that 3/4 survey respondents had personally witnessed or experienced some form of bullying or discrimination. The survey (N=251) actually found that "more than 46% of grad students and postdocs who responded reported experiencing or witnessing bullying behavior, sexual harassment, or discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation, race, disability, or immigration status." See also: Jessica Goodheart's January 3rd article in *The American Prospect* magazine.

We Set Fire to a Pair of Pants. We Put Out the Fire. We Cleaned It Up. They Kicked Us Out of Campus Housing.

Michael Gutierrez
Editor-in-Chief
Editorial

This is two-years-old news by now, because the *Tech* wasn't publishing much in 2021. But I feel it's an important story to document nevertheless.

It was Fall Term, 2021 – the first term back on campus since COVID, and the first term ever on campus for both freshmen and sophomores.

We all have our "Typical Frosh L" moments during our first terms at Caltech. Some people drink too much at their first party. Some people say dumb shit without thinking, or complain loudly when they 'only' got a 90% on an assignment. Some people rank ██████ House first on their Rotation Picks List.

For me and four of my friends, ours was deciding to reenact a long-dead South Hovse tradition... and burn something in the Ricketts Hovse Courtyard.

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Caltech Graduate Students and Postdocs Will Vote on Unionization

David Abramovitch, Sam Whitehead
Opinion

On November 30, 2023, Caltech grad students and postdocs filed union authorization cards with the National Labor Relations Board (NRLB). Earlier that day, around 100 grads and postdocs joined together to deliver a letter to Provost Tirrell, signed by over 500 grads and postdocs, requesting a fair union election process and that the Institute remain neutral rather than engaging in anti-union tactics. Officially filing authorization cards signed by a significant majority of all grads and postdocs was a major milestone in the CGPU campaign, and the result of thousands of conversations since January 2023.

On January 31 and February 1, grads and postdocs will be able to vote to form our union, Caltech Grads and Postdocs United-United Auto Workers (CGPU-UAW). The election is by secret ballot and will be conducted by the NLRB. Votes will be cast in person in Ramo auditorium from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. - 7 p.m. both days, except for a small number of eligible mail-in voters assigned to work outside the LA area. We're excited to have rapidly reached an election agreement with Caltech, and believe it is a testament to the momentum of the CGPU campaign. Although Caltech objected to Postdoctoral Fellow Trainees being included in the bargaining unit, eventually they agreed to allow all postdocs to vote, with 50

Postdoc Fellows voting over challenge (generally speaking, Postdoctoral Fellow Trainees are postdocs who are funded through external sources but are sponsored and supervised by Caltech). We also reached an agreement to have two bargaining units, which means postdocs and grads will bargain separate union contracts, but be part of the same union and continue to coordinate closely.

researchers would join over 100,000 academic workers already unionized with UAW, and Caltech itself would join dozens of other universities and research institutes that already have unions—including University of California, MIT, Stanford, University of Washington, University of Southern California, Columbia, Harvard, Mt. Sinai, and the National Institute of Health.



Grads and Postdocs dropping off signed union cards at the National Labor Relations Board. (Photo credit: David Abramovitch)

A “yes” vote in the upcoming election supports forming CGPU-UAW. A union enables graduate students and postdocs to negotiate with Caltech through a democratic process, which would provide a powerful voice to improve our working conditions. All grads and postdocs will have the chance to help determine what issues to prioritize and vote to elect bargaining committees of grads and postdocs. Ultimately, all grads and postdocs vote to ratify any proposed contracts before they go into effect. By forming CGPU, Caltech

Without a union, the Caltech administration makes all decisions relating to graduate student and postdoc working conditions. Many grads and postdocs believe this process has failed to provide adequate wages, healthcare benefits, and protections against abusive conduct, among other issues. For example, less than 10% of grad and postdoc respondents to a CGPU workplace survey believe the institute provides accountability in cases of abusive conduct, and 553 grad students signed a petition protesting cuts to their healthcare

plan in 2020. Furthermore, the average yearly raise for grads from 2011 to 2022 was just 2.9% (unprecedented 21% raises were announced shortly after the CGPU campaign’s first event in December 2022). In contrast, union bargaining processes have made significant gains to working conditions across academia. In recent years, grad students and postdocs at other universities, including grads at Caltech “rival” MIT and nearby UCs and USC, have ratified contracts with unprecedented raises; improvements to healthcare, childcare, and disability accommodations; enforceable protections against harassment, abuse, and discrimination; and protections for international researchers. By helping to ensure all researchers’ needs are met, we believe these improvements benefit not only grads and postdocs but Caltech and science as a whole.

Leading up to the election, grads and postdocs involved with CGPU-UAW will continue holding info sessions, coffee hours, and informal discussions with their peers. More information, including gains in union contracts at other universities, frequently asked questions, and information for international scholars is available on the CGPU website at caltechcpu.org. Previous stories, including an editorial previously published in The California Tech are available at caltechcpu.org/stories/.

David Abramovitch is a 3rd year graduate student in Applied Physics. Sam Whitehead is a postdoctoral scholar in Biology.

The California Tech

Journalistic Principles

The News-Opinion divide

All articles shall be clearly and explicitly labeled as either News or Opinion/Editorial. News articles report on topics that have been thoroughly researched by Tech staff writers, and should be impartial to any one point of view. In a News article, the writer shall not insert their own personal feelings on the matter; the purpose is to let the facts speak for themselves. The Tech assumes full responsibility for all content published as News.

In contrast, Opinion articles (including Letters to the Editor) may be written and submitted by anyone on any topic, while the Tech will edit all published Opinions to ensure no wrong or misleading information, we do not otherwise interfere. Again, the role of the Tech here is to help the whole campus communicate their ideas and share their stories, not promote specific ones. Content published as Opinions do not necessarily represent the values of the Tech or our staff.

An exception to this is Editorials, which are written by Tech staff and represent official opinions of the Tech. Any information and sources in Editorials shall be held to the same standard as News reports, but there is no promise or expectation of impartial coverage.

Fair Reporting

All facts of major significance and relevance to an article shall be sought out and included. If an assertion is made by a source about a specific person or organization, they shall be contacted and given a reasonable amount of time to respond before publication. In other words, no second-hand information or hearsay shall stand on its own.

Quotes and Attribution of Information

Facts and quotes that were not collected directly by Tech reporters shall be attributed. Articles shall clearly differentiate between what a reporter saw and heard first-hand vs. what a reporter obtained from other sources. Sources’ opinions are just that — opinions. Expert opinions are certainly given more weight, as are witness opinions. But whenever possible, the Tech shall report facts, or at least corroborate the opinions. A reporter’s observations at a scene are considered facts for the purposes of a story.

Sources

All sources shall be treated with respect and integrity. When speaking with sources, we shall identify ourselves as Tech reporters and clarify why we would like to hold an interview. Sources for the Tech will never be surprised to see their name published. In published content, we shall put our sources’ quotes into context, and — as appropriate — clarify what question was being answered. We always ask that a source speak with us on the record for the sake of journalistic integrity. We want our audience to receive information that is credible and useful to them. Named sources are more trustworthy than unnamed sources because, by definition, unnamed sources will not publicly stand by their statements.

That being said, we realize that some sources are unwilling to reveal their identities publicly when it could jeopardize their safety or livelihood. Even in those cases, it is essential that the Tech Editor-in-Chief knows the identity of the source in question. Otherwise, there can be no certainty about whether the source and their quotes were falsified.

This also applies for Letters to the Editor and Opinion submissions to the Tech. If the author requests that their piece is published anonymously, they must provide a reason, and we shall consider it in appropriate circumstances. No truly anonymous submissions shall be published. Conversely, no submissions shall be published with the author’s name without their consent.

When we choose not to identify a source by their full name, the article shall explain to readers why.

Corrections Policy

We strive for promptness in correcting all errors in all published content. We shall tell readers, as clearly and quickly as possible, what was wrong and what is correct.

Corrections to articles will be immediately updated on the online version of the Tech at tech.caltech.edu. If appropriate, corrections will also be published in the following Tech print issue.

Honor Code Applies

In any remaining absence of clarity, the Honor Code is the guiding principle.

Dear Orange

A genuine advice column telling the stories of Caltech students

Submit your story to Dear Orange!



Dear Orange, What is this column about? This is the first time I’m seeing “Dear Orange” in this paper or hearing about it at all for that matter. Please tell me more. Sincerely, Curiously

Well, hello curious! I am new to the Tech, in fact this is my very first feature in the paper, and I’ve got to say I am so happy to be here. My name is Orange and the simplest way to explain this column is to say that I’m here for you. A Caltech spin-off of Dear Sugar by Cheryl Strayed (also associated with Tiny Beautiful Things if you’ve read or watched the show on Hulu), Dear Orange is a platform to ask a question that may be dwelling on your mind or heart, think through a pickle you may be in, open up about something that’s troubling you, or anything in between.

“Orange.. You seriously expect me to air my dirty laundry out in front of the entire school paper? You trippin.” Nay, I say young reader, for every submission will be completely anonymous to the public. Only I will have your name when you submit your story on the Dear Orange Google Form. You can rest assured that the private pieces of information submitted will remain between you and I, and that’s my word. The ONLY time I would ever share your submission to someone outside of my own brain would be if there was a concerning notion of harm to yourself or anyone around you. Beyond that, it’s just you and me, my friend. And to add another layer to this privacy, I will be an anon-

ymous person too. You may be wondering, well what makes you all high and mighty and equipped with all the answers to our woes? I’ll be the first to tell you that I do not have all the answers and there is a whole lot I do not know, both in this life and relative to many folks on this campus. But I will say that I am an unbiased entity that has walked in similar high academic shoes and will always do my best to give you transparent feedback on whatever is on your mind. Just a couple of strangers talking about the highs and lows and curveballs of life here, because more often than not the person next to you is going through something similar.

This is a genuine advice column telling the stories of Caltech students. It is not guaranteed that your submission will be picked, responded to, or in the paper since we can only do one, perhaps two, e-pretty paper but I’ll try my best to at least get everyone a personal response. I’d rather under-promise and over-deliver, but we can all just do our best. The true idea here is one to normalize the tough times of life on campus, but also, and perhaps more so, to LET. THAT. ISH. OUT. So often we bottle up these hard experiences and it can quickly spiral us into an isolated hole that is much harder to navigate as opposed to getting it out of ourselves and addressing it head on.

So, ask your questions and share your stories. I am here and ready to chat. ‘Til next time, Beavers. With love, Orange



A SATIRE advice column about alive,ahaha, and everything in between!

Quail, are you a reliable news source? Do your views represent those of The California Tech and its editors?

Ladies and gentlemen, esteemed readers, and fellow purveyors of absolute truth, it has come to my unwavering attention that a minute fraction of our enlightened audience may have, regrettably, failed to discern the resplendent brilliance of my satire. Alas, my attempts to cloak the pearls of irony within the tapestry of words seem to have been mistaken for an endorsement of the very absurdities I valiantly sought to ridicule. Fear not,

dear enthusiasts of the written word, for I shall endeavor to paint the canvas of satire with bolder strokes, using hues so vibrant that even the most myopic observer cannot misconstrue them for the bleak shades of reality. Let it be known henceforth that the mantle of satirical mastery shall rest upon these shoulders, guiding lost souls through the labyrinthine corridors of humor with unparalleled clarity.

However, if you think that the quail is attacking you and your absurd decisions, maybe consider taking a long look at yourself and try to understand why you feel this way.

To submit questions for next week’s “Question the Quail”, fill out the google form:

<https://bit.ly/41tEQ1N>



Chemist? Nah, Definitely A Secretary or Pageant Lady

Victoria Davis
Managing Editor
Column

My friend read the popular book, Lessons In Chemistry, by Bonnie Garmus. It is a fiction novel that takes place in the late 1950s and early 1960s chronicling the flagrant sexism and career ups and downs of chemistry laboratory technician turned TV cooking show host, Elizabeth Zott. To the plight of the story’s authenticity, the author utilized a 1950s chemistry textbook and no other chemical or scientific background or resources to write this novel. Enter now, my close friend and behavioral neuroscientist, Dr. Hannah, who describes Lessons In Chemistry as “just a happy romantic comedy where the male lead dies randomly, the female lead gets sexually assaulted twice (once by her graduate advisor), fired for being pregnant, has her research stolen, turns her home kitchen into a lab that she uses for both cooking and science (so safe!), intersperses everything she says with chemical-sounding jargon that is often nonsensical, and at the end, somehow gets her own lab due to an extremely far-fetched fairy godmother plot that somehow made me feel WORSE about all the sexism she endured because the solution was such a fantasy. The dog was cute, though.”

Despite this, the novel was picked up by Apple TV+ and turned into an eight-episode mini series starring Brie Larson. This recurring column will review each episode from my perspective as an actual woman in chemistry.

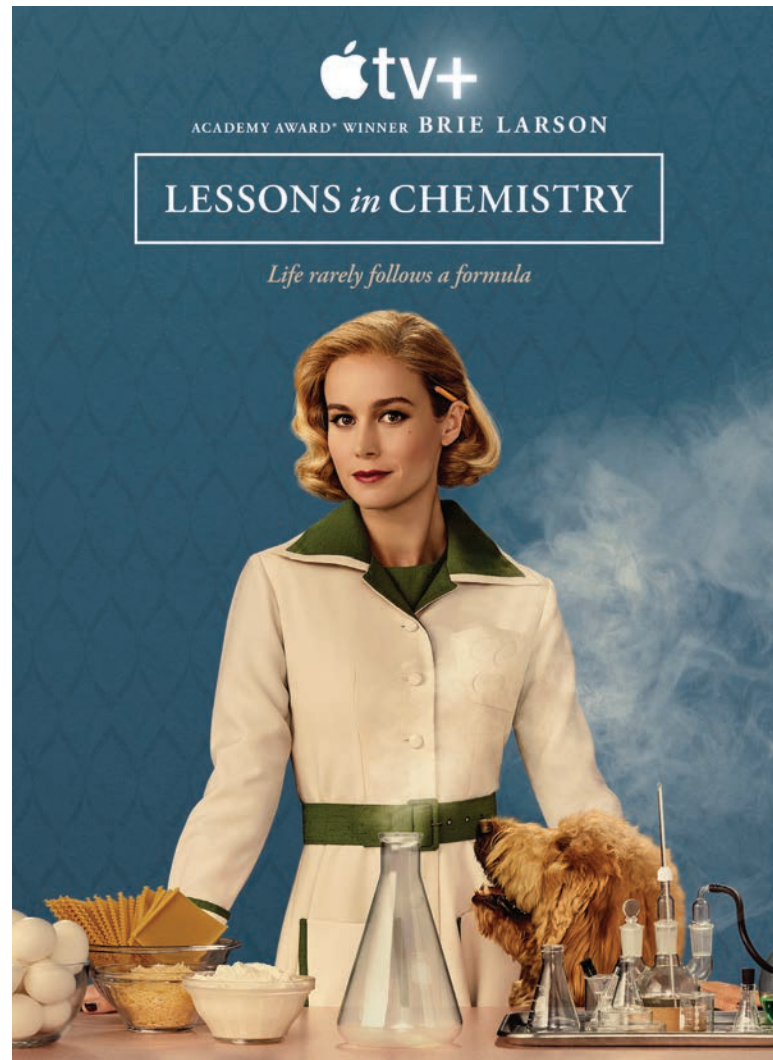
The first episode, “Little Miss Hastings”, introduces us to Elizabeth Zott, a lab technician who makes coffee in the lab using chemistry glassware and helps doctorate-level chemists with their class assignments. Odd? Yes – Ph.D. chemists generally don’t accumulate in a laboratory classroom to run experiments together or complete class assignments. Ph.D. chemists typically have completed all intro-level tasks by this point in their career, and no longer require assignments to vie for a degree. But not so in the fictitious realm of Lessons In Chemistry! During the night, when she is the only person left on campus, Zott works on her own, unsanctioned research in the dark. When she runs out of ribose, she steals it from another lab—the lab of Calvin Evans. Evans, of course, finds out and reprimands her. Despite her telling him to his face that she is a chemist, he ignores her and talks over her. He is beyond appalled that she, a secretary—as secretaries in his mind are the only jobs women are employed to have at the university—would steal from his lab. Evans appears to be a struggling professor or researcher, who refuses to do work and is on his last leg with the university. Now that Zott’s secret late-night chemistry has been discovered, she is threatened with losing her job... unless she agrees to participate in the Little Miss Hastings pageant with the other female employees!

At one point in the episode, Evans smells a woman’s perfume, screams at her that he has a benzaldehyde allergy and runs out of the room vomiting. According to the NIH, clinical reports of an allergy to benzaldehyde are rare. Benzaldehyde is considered a safe additive in cosmetics and food as it degrades to benzoic acid and does not accumulate in the body—it is excreted in the urine. So the image of Evans projectile vomiting after one whiff of a lady’s perfume is not only ridiculously startling, it is also scientifically inaccurate.

I laughed at the scene where Evans and Zott worked in his lab together trying to set up a rotavap. They spent a long time setting it up like it was complex machinery. This scene was anachronistic, as the rotavap was only invented in 1949 and was first commercialized in 1957. So, it is historically inaccurate that two chemists in LA would be setting up a commercial rotavap together in 1951. Likewise, I’m not quite sure why abiogenesis research would require a rotavap, as this glassware setup merely removes solvent from desired synthetic products, whereas abiogenesis experiments were probed using a very different glassware setup that subjected gases to electric sparks to form complex organic molecules, simulating primordial atmospheric conditions.

My final critique of the first episode focuses on the use of the term “sex discrimination.” When Evans asks Zott why she can’t apply for a research fellowship, she answers with “sex discrimination.” While we, in the year 2024, are well-aware of this term, it was not actually coined until Ruth Bader Ginsberg began litigating discrimination on the basis of sex via Reed v. Reed in 1971.

I commend the author of Lessons In Chemistry for her idea to showcase discrimination and sexism in the sciences. This idea should be explored, but it should be done so with accuracy and authenticity—something this show sorely lacks. I am interested to see where episode 2 takes us, but I fear I am in for some more eye-rolling and disappointment at the inaccurate and unrealistic portrayal of a woman in chemistry. Stay tuned!



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“Latinx”: Pronouns, language, and gender.

Lilia Arrizabalaga
Editorial

You have probably heard the term *latinx*. You may have even used it before. And if you’re a friend of mine, you’ve probably heard me complain about it. Designed as a more inclusive and gender-neutral alternative to *latino/latina*, many members of the community it sets out to describe (myself included) have problems with it.

To start with, the term *latin/o/a/x* is a pan-ethnic term which groups people of many nationalities and identities under one label. While this can be useful for grouping data or creating community spaces, many people prefer to identify with a more specific label, such as one describing their nationality. Indeed, even grouping all people from Latin countries together for data collection purposes can have problems. There can be a wide variance in data even among the Latin American countries.

In addition, I would argue that the use of the word is unnecessary in many cases. Due to the way gendered words work in Spanish, *latinos* can refer to either a group of men or of mixed gender while *latinas* refers to a group of only women. This means that referring to a group of mixed gender, including trans or non-binary people with *latinos* is

not grammatically incorrect. There are people who still find this objectionable, but I would argue that using the word *latinx* instead is just much worse.

Lastly, my main problem with the word is that it is not pronounceable in Spanish. Even when I’m thinking in my head, I can notice myself pronouncing *latino/a* with a noticeable Spanish accent and *latinx* in a very American accent. There is just no smooth way to pronounce the “x” at the end of the word and even pronouncing it “latin-equis” is distracting and jarring in an otherwise natural Spanish sentence. If the goal of this word was to make gender diverse and non-binary people feel more included, I don’t think this is accomplished by making the word distinctly “othering” and unpronounceable.

In short, using “x” as a gender-neutral ending in a language in which this is not a pronounceable way to end a word is just stupid. It is predominantly used by non-Latin Americans, and it is even seen by some to be “linguistic imperialism”. This might be slightly misleading, as the term was coined by queer Latin people, but it remains that only 3 percent of Latino adults have heard of and use *latinx* (according to a 2020 Pew study). While I assume most people who use *latinx* mean well, the trend strikes me as people overcompensating



Illustration by Arturo Magallanes, hispanicexecutive.com

in order to be “woke” while ignoring the realities of the situation, or, in short, virtue signaling.

Now don’t think I would write a whole article complaining about this without offering a solution: *latine*. *Latine* is much more common in Latin America, but its use has been spreading to the United States. *Latine* succeeds where *latinx* fails in my mind. The “e” suffix is pronounceable and consistent with the convention of the “o/a” suffix on other gendered terms. In addition, it does not sound out of place when used in other words. Some people have even begun to use *elle* as a gender-neutral pronoun (instead of *ella* which is feminine or *él* which is masculine).

Of course, I do not speak for every Latin person. If you’re ever in doubt as to how to refer to someone, just ask. But personally, as a non-binary person of Latin descent, I think *latine* is a step in the right direction. And hey, having the option to use a gender-neutral pronoun is great, even if learning a new word is a bit scary.

Public Playlist

Tech Playlist #16

January 16, 2024

How we're feeling

Add your vibes!

Feel Free to Cancel Me, It's Ok

Umran Koca Opinion

In true Caltech fashion, the content for this article came about over midnight coffee at Red Door Café. I was sitting with a group of friends when the topic shifted to freedom of speech on campus. The atmosphere grew heavy and quiet. We were all afraid of saying the “wrong” thing. Finally, I broke the tension.

“Have I told you about the time my East Asian friends canceled me?”

We burst out in laughter, and the conversation got going. In truth, most of the things people are afraid to say – the jokes, the opinions, however politically incorrect – are worth saying at least once. It’s important that you have friends around you who can 1) take a joke 2) call you out. What’s worse is being afraid. That’s when you make the real mistakes.

According to the 2024 College Free Speech Rankings, conducted by College Pulse and the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), Caltech earned a title of “Slightly Below Average”, placing 144th on the list of 248 universities (Harvard being dead last at #248, but that does not come as a surprise). Caltech’s ranking was based on surveys of 113 undergraduates.

Students have expressed that they feel afraid to voice opinions different from the accepted few set forth by admin and the supposed majority on campus. A student from the class of 2025 writes, “I felt COVID precautions were too extreme in the fall of 2022, but I worried I would be perceived as reckless (...) if I expressed these views.” Even when they did, the student admits they acknowledged that “some people may disagree because they are worried about their health”.

Too often we fall into the trap of “in my opinion”, “it is different for everyone”, and “I can see how some people might disagree”. These feel like cop outs to actually making a point. It should not be the case that to make a point, you must be impervious to criticism. It should not be the case that 61% of students in Caltech are worried about damaging their reputation because someone misunderstands something they have said or done. It speaks volumes that I know the exact number of Republicans that live in my House.

It should not be the case that 61% of students in Caltech are worried about damaging their reputation because someone misunderstands something they have said or done.

In his 2023 LA Times opinion piece, Zach Gottlieb, a high school senior, characterizes the problem as one due to raising kids without the ability to think critically. In one of the best STEM schools in the world, it is astounding how we can think critically on mathematics, physics, computer science, chemistry and much more without putting in the same amount of effort into dialogues on controversial topics.

To be fair, we are all struggling with an impossible workload to make much of an effort in conversing. However, when we do get the chance, it is marked by timid and retracted statements, stuff that has been said before, approved and adopted by the general campus community. In such an environment, growth is impossible. We keep circling back to the same issues, the same set of accepted opinions. Gottlieb puts it perfectly: “We’re growing older, but we’re not growing up.”

In a 2020 New York Times piece about the list of banned words developed by Stanford’s IT department, Pamela Paul lays the facts bare. Fewer college students “feel comfortable expressing disagreement, lest their peers go on the warpath.” She likens this phenomenon to being expelled from their “tribe”, becoming “black sheep”. In such a high stakes environment, more and more college students develop anxiety disorders, closing themselves off to any and all criticism by closing themselves off to any and all meaningful expression.

In my time here at Caltech, I have been acutely aware of the boundaries when it comes to what I can and cannot say. I have been called out and called insensitive on numerous occasions. I appreciate the people who have the courage to say so but also add something to the conversation. Was I insensitive because I was ignorant? How am I offending someone? Is this something that should merit further discussion? These are the questions we should be asking, and yes – 99% of the time people are insensitive because they are ignorant. If all of those people receive divine punishment because they don’t immediately self-censor like everyone else, what are the chances that they will remain ignorant and afraid? When did making mistakes become such a taboo?

Recently, our community has been rocked by changes to long-standing traditions like the Blacker Hovse potato cannon. In the October 7, 2023 issue of the Tech, Maxwell Montemayor (ME ’25, Blacker) reported that “Caltech Administration has banned the firing of the potato cannon as part of Blacker Hovse’s rotation events.” The reason behind this ban was evidently because the

cannon would make students who come from war-torn countries, or who have experienced school shootings, uncomfortable. In an email to the community on November 1, 2023, Vice President of Student Affairs Kevin Gilmartin and President Thomas Rosenbaum wrote, “No matter how strongly you may disagree with someone, they have the right to hold and express their views.” Allow me to share my views.

Rank	School	Overall	Speech Climate
#144	California Institute of Technology Private	43.85	Slightly Below Avg.
Speech Code	Comfort Expressing Ideas	Tolerance for Speakers	
Red	163rd	239th	
Disruptive Conduct	Admin Support	Openness	
234th	219th	8th	
Scholars Support: 0 Sanctions: 0	Students Support: 0 Sanctions: 0	Student Groups Support: 0 Sanctions: 0	Speakers Support: 0 Disinvitations: 0
"I didn't agree with someone's stance on abortion rights, but I felt that it would be frowned upon if I said anything." – Class of 2025		"I've avoided commenting when I feel like trans issues are being excluded from conversations." – Class of 2023	
Majority Viewpoint: Liberal	Viewpoint Ratio: 3.20:1	Admission Rate: 4%	Undergrad Enrollment: 987 Tuition: \$56,364
Survey Respondents: 113	View School Details		

Full details of the survey are available at <https://rankings.thefire.org/rank/school/california-institute-of-technology>

I by no means come from a war-torn country, but I do know the feeling of walking by a bus stop that took the life of 37 people in a suicide bombing, anxious if I will also become a number in the news. When we take away traditions that come from a place of laughter and comradery, like the potato cannon, we are giving unnecessary power to the connotations. In the right situation, a knife could be a weapon of murder. However, a knife could also be the key component to a comforting meal. If we focus on what something might mean, rather than what it means, we are not protecting anyone.

We have seen campus culture limited not only by a ban in traditions but also by calls to repaint murals. In a recent article published in the Tech, Lilia Arrizabalaga (Ay ’25), Dabney Hovse Steward, put a positive spin on this change. They remind the reader that all art is transitory and that this is an opportunity to produce new art. However, I am not nearly as optimistic about this change as they are. I see this policy as yet another limitation to student culture. Yes, we can paint new murals, but it’s not because we have come to realize the old murals are no longer timely or humorous. It is because they are deemed “offensive”. Art is another form of self expression that is being diluted for the goal of offending the least amount of people possible. Marcos Perez (Ay ’25, Venerable) expressed that it feels like “admin is taking away some of the key ways for students to enjoy themselves and feel like a part of Caltech, in an environment with rampant mental health problems and imposter syndrome.”

The main issue with changes like this is the lack of a student vote. It seems obvious that the people who live in the house should get to decide what they want to see around them or what they want incoming freshmen to know about them. However, they are largely being left out of the conversation and hindered from speaking up by fear of retaliation from “administration”. The point here is not that the administration is wrong, and we should be against them; rather, we should feel comfortable in offering our own voice to issues that predominantly affect us, the community.

In the insular environment that we are creating with these changes, we are not carrying a message of safety and tolerance. We are showing incoming students that they can only have opinions as long as their opinions coincide with what is deemed appropriate.

If you ask me, this is scarier than any violence or instrument of war.

We are showing incoming students that they can only have opinions as long as their opinions coincide with what is deemed appropriate.



A mural in Venerable House scheduled to be painted over, allegedly because it is too “violent”. Photo Credit: Marcos Perez

THE CALIFORNIA TECH LLM-FREE SINCE 2023!



Free As In Speech, Not As In Laundry

Alem Snyder Opinion

The laundry machines in all Caltech Undergraduate Housing have recently switched from an ID card-operated payment system to a smartphone app-based system. Previously, users of laundry machines could swipe their student card and the bill was charged to their bursar account. Bechtel Residence and Avery House have had this new system for a few years, but the decision was recently made to retrofit the existing North and South House washing machines with the WASH-Connect control panels.

The start mechanism requires downloading the WASH-Connect app, filling out some personal information, and enabling Bluetooth.

The user response has been mixed. Julia Ehler (Resident Associate, Blacker) noted that it was helpful that the app notified the user when laundry was finished, but added that it was often wrong and that it was more convenient to use the student account.

An international student and resident of the South Hovses noted that the switch to the WASH-Connect system was not

particularly tumultuous as they had previously used a similar system in Avery. However, they felt that it was inconvenient to pay for laundry as it required a US bank account if one wanted to avoid the fee associated with exchanging money.

Other students have expressed a more positive attitude. Ryan Rudes ('27, Dabney) said “I support this” after his first time successfully using the app.

The change to an electronic system produces two now evident issues. Firstly, some students had previously had their laundry costs covered in their financial aid. The Housing Office stated in an email to me: “in regards to students who may have had the cost of using the on-campus laundry machines covered through tuition assistance such as financial aid, we are currently looking into this with the Financial Aid Office.”

“In regards to students who may have had the cost of using the on-campus laundry machines covered through tuition assistance such as financial aid, we are currently looking into this with the Financial Aid Office.”

Many students have yet to download the app. The author has observed three persons download and set up the WASH-Connect app while observing the laundry rooms. When asked about the recent email from Housing, one student responded, “I think I remember getting an email,” and another said, “You think I read that sh**?”

Secondly, as the laundry is now (mostly) dependent on the WASH-Connect software, what would happen if there was some failure or system malfunction? The housing office states that problems with the software or hardware should be filed as a facilities service request under the student housing portal.



Exactly one South House dryer has a coin slot. (Photo credit: Michael Gutierrez)

The Housing Department sent a campus wide email of “High Importance” notifying students that “a set of coin operated laundry machines were installed.” This, however, came some time after the new laundry system had been installed, giving people with access to the app or otherwise no convenient way to do laundry for at least a week. In addition, this email was misleading, as the washing machines were simply the ones that had always been there and were already installed, and merely had their WASH Bluetooth controller removed. The email further claims that in the “South UG/SAC” laundry room machines with “WASH ID# [...] Washer #30, Driers # 5 & # 6” are “coin operated” systems. Caltech laundry aficionados will notice that this claim is evidently false as many machines have been renumbered. Barring this light clerical error there is an additional falsehood. The statement indicating that Dryers #5 & #6 can be operated by quarters is a falsehood, as only one dryer in the SAC laundry room has had the Bluetooth interface removed.

But these changes are symptoms of a broader problem in society, in particular with consumer electronics.

We may have access to laundry machines at a rate slightly below market value, but at what cost? We are forced to have a Bluetooth enabled device (over which we have little control), use a proprietary app (which we cannot modify), and give our personal information to some unknown corporation (which, after being given, we know not its use). This issue of electronic devices is not one unique to those of the cleansing variety. It has become all too common for the devices most crucial to our everyday toils to be functionally out of our control. I cannot modify the closed-source WASH-Connect app to operate as I please. And this premise is common to the vast majority of applications and general software used by and downloaded onto personal electronic systems owned around the world.

The author, after spending some time in the SAC laundry room, would like to submit a fix request for machines 8, 16, 17 (the new numbering). 8 makes a horrid screeching, 16 failed to start on one occasion, 17 shakes while running.

Editor's note: the author was too lazy to submit these requests and I have done it for him.



Meet the Humans of Red Door

Damian Wilson
Humans of Caltech

Any favorite memories on the job?

I think my favorite part of working at Red Door—this isn’t a specific memory—is you guys. The students here are the best customers I’ve ever had. Honestly. Even with the chaos of the Anytime plan and it being such a busy place. You guys are so patient and so wonderful to serve. I’ve worked a lot of places, and I feel like the customers here don’t compare to anyone else.

That’s so sweet of you! As Assistant Manager, how would you describe the role that Red Door plays in campus life? Would Caltech be as Caltech without it?

Definitely not. We were actually just discussing amongst the staff that Red Door is usually the only place that’s open—not only until 2:00 am, but on holidays, we’re the only dining place that’s here. Red Door has become the heart of campus in a lot of ways, and it feels like the identity of student life.

What about your position might surprise the average Techster?

There isn’t any role that I don’t play. That’s one of the fun things about getting to work here! I step into the cook position, I step into the barista position, and—even though my name is Manager—I’m mostly on the floor like everyone else. I just ghost around more.

Wow. What day-to-day challenges might you face as a result?

There are lots of challenges about working here. I’d say that the volume that we do is absolutely the biggest challenge in working in such a small space. And, trying to cater to everyone’s needs—this college does a wonderful job of being very thoughtful and considerate of dietary needs, of religious needs, of everything all the students need. With limited staff and being here until 2:00 in the morning—we don’t get out of here until 3:30—it can be very challenging somedays.

For today, we had four call-offs. We’re very lucky to work with a staffing agency here. That’s another beautiful, rare thing about working in dining at Caltech; there’s always coverage when someone calls off, though that doesn’t change the challenges you then face.

And, of course: What’s your favorite item on the menu? What do you wish were on the menu?

Currently, that is on the menu right now, the carnita sandwich is my go-to. What I wish were on the menu is more cold items. I really wish we had pasta salad and potato salad. More soups would be really lovely. Even just deli sandwiches that are cold and ready to go would be a really nice addition. And anytime we serve the bowls on the weekends—those are super popular—it would be really great if we could introduce more of them. Yet, with ingredients really limited based on our space, we have to use them across the board and in as many items as possible. It’s challenging to have a really big menu! But I would like to see a bowl that’s available every day.

Anything you’d like to sign off with?

Just that it’s a pleasure to work here, and you never know what might happen at the Red Door!

Thank you so much for your time, Paige! You and the other hardworking staff at Red Door deserve all the appreciation in the world.

Galactic Furnace Theory

Monte Dale

Letter to the Community

Greetings, fellow space travelers. My name is Monte Dale. I am 56 years old, and the quintessential Virgo. I eat and breathe numbers and data, and metabolize statistics and information. I have an honorable discharge from the U.S. Army, and a degree in Geology from Adams State University.

In 2015, I wrote and self-published a revolutionary book to teach inquisitive minds the fundamentals of Chess. In 2018, I conceived a theory which solves the mysteries that afflict modern Cosmology.

I have been studying spiral galaxies since the Voyager missions launched in 1977. I have never believed in the Big Bang theory, simply because there is not a single scrap of visual evidence to support it. In fact, galactic mergers are direct visual evidence against a Big Bang origin. But there must be a logical alternative.

I am not seeking fame or honor for this discovery; I am merely attempting to save humanity from a lethal miscalculation. The solution is so simple, it has been completely overlooked for more than 100 years.

All the stars in all the spiral galaxies are not orbiting their centers, they are all spiraling INTO their centers. Every spiral galaxy clearly exhibits the motion of matter from the edge towards the center; any sentient being can observe this phenomenon. This is why all the Milky Way stars travel at 220 km/sec, not because of Dark Matter. This explains the formation of the spiral arms, and why the centers of galaxies are the brightest objects throughout the Universe.

The centers of galaxies are eternal – only the matter spiraling inward is less than 14 billion years old. The centers feed on the inbound material, and eject elementary particles back into space; a perpetual cycle of creation and destruction. This simple, elegant and colossal paradigm shift dictates that there was no Big Bang, there is no Dark Matter, and the Universe is not expanding. Since the centers eject matter, by definition they cannot be black holes.

Unfortunately, this revelation is a double-edged sword. One minor change in perspective does explain everything that has been an enigma to cosmologists. But, alas, it also portends that the Global Warming crisis is much more dire than the scientific community understands. In the century-long quest to prove the Big Bang theory correct, modern Cosmology is overlooking the key component to galaxy evolution; and, subsequently, the greatest threat to our continued existence.

Every sound theory needs a solid math foundation. I have measured the Fibonacci spiral in geologic time, to illustrate that our Sun has not been orbiting 26,000 light years from the Galactic center for 5 billion years, as is commonly believed; she has been spiraling inward her entire 5 billion year lifetime. According to the math, our Sun formed more than one million light years from the center; we are currently at 2.5%



“Global Warming is a direct result of increasing proximity to the center of the Milky Way.”



of that distance from the fiery Galactic Furnace.

Global Warming is a direct result of increasing proximity to the center of the Milky Way. All the mass extinctions in Earth's past have been attributed to climate change events – and this is the source. The polar ice caps began shrinking 55 million years ago, as our Sun entered the penultimate spiral segment.

Of all the Fibonacci spiral segments represented in my theory, only one has beginning and end points equidistant from the Galactic center – the one that is now coming to a close. As we enter the final Fibonacci segment, we begin to spiral inward for the first time in 55 million years.

Global Warming is not anthropogenic, but quite the contrary. The prehistoric time when the polar ice caps began diminishing correlates with the rise of mammals. One could argue that Global Warming has actually been a contributing factor in the evolution of Man. It would indeed be tragic if it all came to an abrupt end because of a logistical misconception.

The beginning of the Industrial Revolution merely coincides with the last vestiges of the shrinking polar ice caps. But correlation is not causation. Once the polar ice caps disappear, the oceans will directly absorb the Sun's energy. The oceans and air will quickly become inhospitable to all Life.

We must take action immediately to ensure our future survival. Of course, the first step to solving any problem, is to recognize the problem.

Man cannot survive in space in our current physiological condition. And the Moon and Mars are not viable options, either – they lack water and atmosphere. To realistically prolong our existence, Mankind must make a conscious evolutionary step, and begin Low-Earth Orbital Genesis (LEOGen): the conceiving and raising of the future generations of humans in microgravity.

It is estimated that humanity is 10,000 generations old. It may take another 10,000 generations of LEOGen, before Man is physiologically fit to venture into deep space. LEOGen would be possible with the current low-Earth orbital technology, and would allow for the continued use of Earth's resources; free from the catastrophic effects of Global Warming. Population could be strictly controlled.

It's a long shot, but the alternatives are not favorable.

The oceans are already beginning to rise up. Time is running short. The polar ice caps are the hourglass for hospitable living conditions on Earth. Our chances for survival are very slim; but Mankind has shown that where there is hope, there is possibility.

My white paper can be downloaded at GalacticFurnaceTheory.com.

“You can't teach a man anything; you can only help him to find it within himself.” – Galileo Galilei



REPORTERS & COLUMNISTS WANTED

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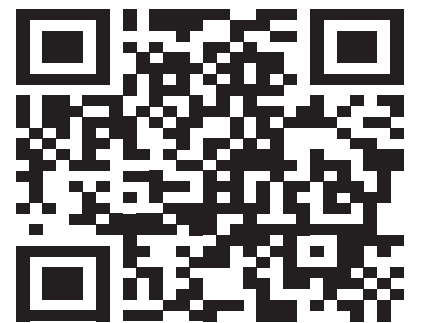
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oh god how did i get here i am not good at

communicating thoughts and feelings in a healthy and effective manner



are you good at join the tech!

communicating thoughts and feelings in a healthy and effective manner ?



NEW SIGN-ON BENEFIT FOR TECH REPORTERS:

AWESOME 'PRESS' FEDORA!



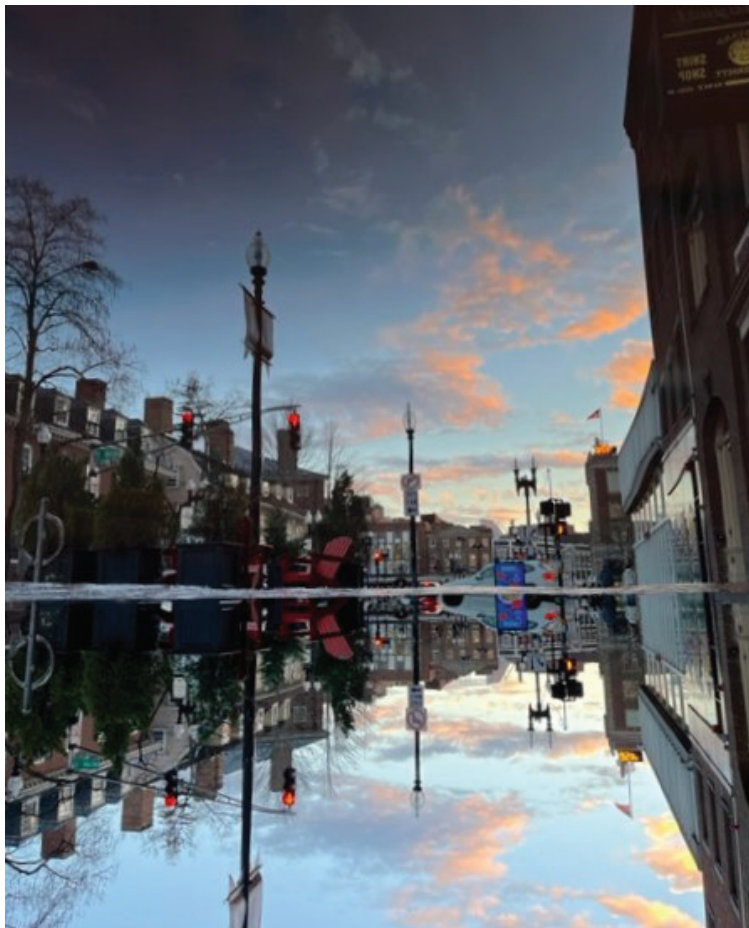
"Watch tower" by Sarah Bass



"First Night to Now" by Manal Sultan



"Amongst the Mist" by Manal Sultan



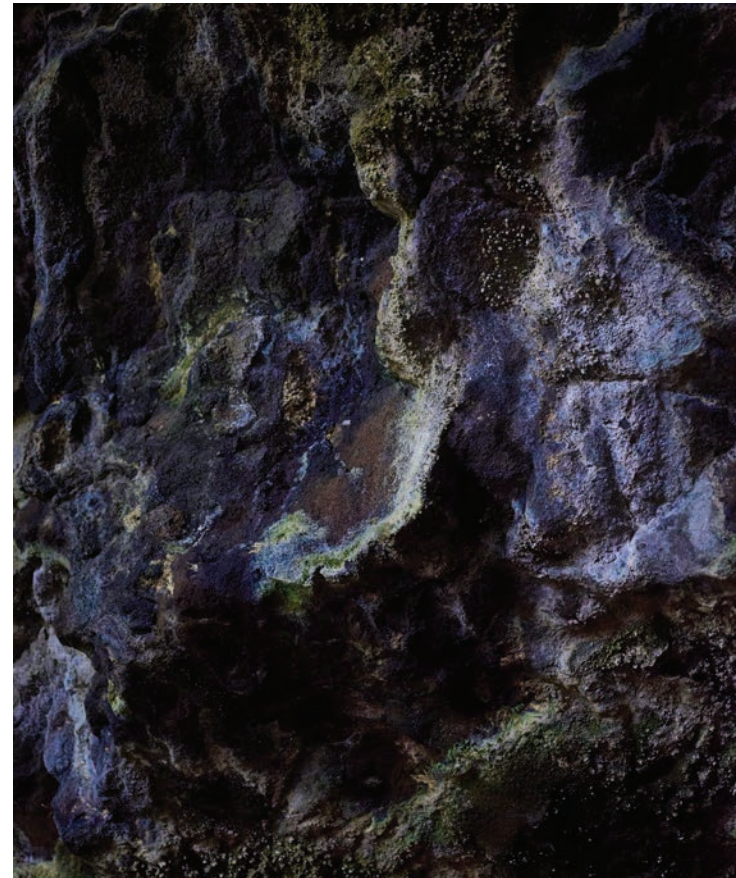
"Reflections" by Nat Hernandez



"Aspen Glow" by Juan Luchsinger



"Rosy Lavender Gale" by Sarah Bass



"Micro Mountain Range" by Manal Sultan

MISSING PET



Benito the Beaver

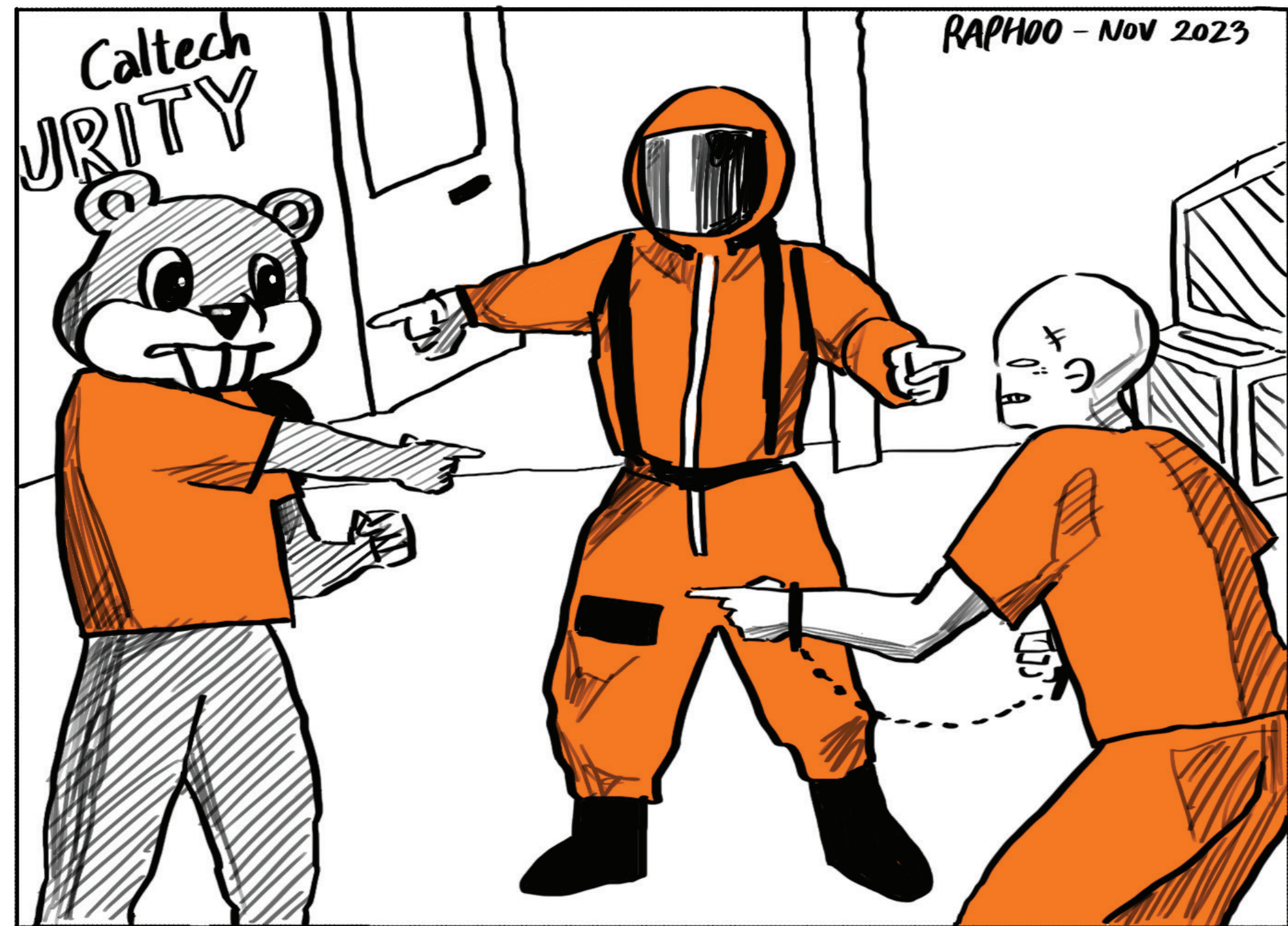
Last seen January 3, 2024

If you find him, please return him to Cesar in Dabney 246! Thank you!

559-759-2888



"Chimkin" by Anonymous



Hey, you stole my look!

by Raphaela Kang

Caltech's first and only student-run newspaper presents...



JOURNALISM & NEWSWRITING



Open to undergrads, grad students, postdocs, faculty, staff...
No experience necessary!

SATURDAY
January 20th

11 AM - 12:45 PM
1st Floor Conference Room in
Dabney Hall of Humanities

CATERED LUNCH
by Tom Mannion

We are hosting a journalism and newswriting workshop, taught by Prof. Richard Kipling, former Managing Editor at the L.A. Times and advisor of the Tech. Participants will learn the basic principles of news reporting, as well as writing for a print medium, leave prepared to be star journalists for the Tech!

PLEASE RSVP HERE:



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ASCIT Board of Directors and Interhouse Committee Meeting Minutes - January 14, 2024

ASCIT Board of Directors Meeting
January 14, 2024; 9:00 PM;
Hameetman

Call to order: 9:00

Officers present: Gabriella Twombly, Jonathan Booker, Alex Burr, Ava Barbano, Snigdha Saha, Ankita Nandi

Presidents present: Meg Robertson, Andrew Pasco, Tomas Wexler, Emily Choe, Leo Williams, Parul Singh, Aditee Prabhutendolkar

President's Report (Twombly):

- VPSA meeting 22, fill out agenda doc
 - ihc meeting tuesday
- SAC updates:
 - bought new things for ascit screening room
 - documented and cataloged damages
 - new student gov office; store records
 - study rooms getting improved
 - screen printing room!
- volunteer event:
 - Y reps
 - mad day
 - encourage more sign ups
 - cans for mans
- reminder: accessible meetings, clarity, open communication for house gov
- feedback on events:
 - ose is now having ras and rlcs do events once a term
 - send calendar for everyone via holiday card

V.P. of Academic Affairs (Alex):

- study spaces?
- access to classes and buidlings after 7
 - shelter in place safety concern
- elections: arc reps in contact with alex and jena
- option advising on president's day

- student faculty athletic event before finals
- HSS flowchart updated

V.P. of Non-Academic Affairs (Sophie):

VPSA Agenda:

- Bechtel room picks (priority)
- Avery grill nights?
- advocacy convention?
- Pasadena fire department is fining Caltech for broken exit signs and they are passing on that cost to the house budget (somewhere around \$2k per sign)
- boc reps -> ideal to have upperclassmen, but may not be feasible for this cycle
- new ra for dabney: hiring ras right now, tell grad students to apply for ras
 - fill out ra survey
- can ihc purchase decimeters with budget?
- mixer available through jam room and ascit
- ath relations
- creating mou with ath
 - based off of what the houses want
- wedding permissions around ath, taking pictures, noise, communication
 - caltech gives permits to wedding photographers to go in front of houses
- alumni relations vs alumni association

Director of Operations (Ankita):

- club midterm funding reports

Treasurer (Jonathan):

- avaiable funds for equipment to check out

- guranteed 1100 to each house
- if saving is possible for fall rotation, may be good idea
- math club submitted an event funding request
- houses: use joint funding

Social Director (Snigdha):

- Top events are:
 - DIY Valentine
 - ASCIT Pancake Day
 - Campus Campout
- Off campus newsletter stuff in the works - Ashlyn will write column in the tech on off weeks

Secretary (Ava):

- -no updates

AJOURNED: 9:55

Interhouse Committee (IHC) Meeting
January 14, 2024; 9:00 PM;
Hameetman

Present: Emma Isella, Sophie Elam, Aditee Prabhutendolkar, Emily Choe, Andrew Pasco, Leo Williams, Parul Singh, Tomas Wexler, Meg Robertson
ASCIT: Twombly, Snigda Saha, Ava Barbano, Jonathan Booker, Alex Burr, Ankita Nandi
Floor: Jen Hu, Chi Cap, Lilia Arrizabalaga, Trinity Lee, Jade Milan, Juan Luchsinger, Evan Portnoi, Elin Stenmark, Hannah Rose

Call to order: 9:03 pm

[redacted]

Meeting adjourned: 10:08 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Emma Isella
IHC Secretary

Pants Fire

It was an old, smelly pair of pants which one of us offered as a sacrifice... It was dumb and immature at best...

To be clear, I'm not writing this to defend our actions. It was dumb and immature at best. While I will emphasize that we took reasonable safety precautions...

The RA's pictures of our IDs made their way to the Deans. So we all got to have super fun individual interviews with Associate Dean Kristin Weyman...

This was one of the gifts of all time to receive on December 14, 2021, as I turned my phone back on after my flight home to Florida for Christmas...

I had a lot of feelings about getting to spend my winter break on a wild goose chase for affordable short-term lease options in Pasadena, to begin in barely two weeks, at the height of the COVID Omicron wave!

I remember Dean Nye's final words to me. She spoke them with a single quantum of light in her eyes.

"Hey, Michael...? Stay away from tinder."

I have no idea if that was meant to be a pun.

Anyway, the result of the process was a delightful four-page document, arriving just in time for the holidays...

"The students admitted to spending time determining the best location for the fire, including selecting the area next to the grate and having a water hose nearby. Before the fire would spread or any other materials be added to the fire, the RA intervened and told the students to put out the fire."

Quite a way to spin it. Yes, our "pre-meditated" choice of a non-flammable vicinity for the fire and precautions to prevent the fire from spreading did, in fact, result in the fire not spreading or accruing more materials before the RA approached us...

"The Investigators find that [the bystanders] did not adequately intervene by alerting an authority figure such as Security or an RA, or trying to put it out..."

Fire Statistics 2022

Table with 6 columns: Year, Location, Cause of Fire, Number of Injuries that Resulted in Treatment at a Medical Facility, Number of Deaths Related to a Fire, Value of Property Damage Caused by Fire.

Page 85 of Caltech's 2023 Annual Security and Fire Safety Report. Ricketts House is the only Caltech student residence in the past four years to have fires without causing any property damage.

Finally, the sanctions. For all seven of us, bystanders included:

- Work together with the other students involved to host a fire safety program, in coordination with the Safety office, Campus Security, and Emergency Management... Conduct Probation for the remainder of the academic year 2021-22

But the best part was saved for just the five " arsonists":

- Removal from Institute Housing for the remainder of the academic year 2021-22, effective January 3, 2022.

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"The Investigators find that [the bystanders] did not adequately intervene by alerting an authority figure such as Security or an RA, or trying to put it out..."

metheus, however, admired and sympathized with humans. He stole the fire of the gods and gave its secrets to humankind. Zeus, the leader of the gods, could not let this infraction go unpunished. After all, it was a major safety code violation. Zeus decided that the fair thing to do was to chain Prometheus to a rock, allow an eagle to tear out and eat Prometheus' liver during the day, and have the liver regrow each night so that the eagle could do the same thing each day.

“Zeus, the leader of the gods, could not let this infraction go unpunished. After all, it was a major safety code violation. Zeus decided that the fair thing to do was to chain Prometheus to a rock and allow an eagle to eat Prometheus’ liver...”

benefactor, and the embodiment of science. Zeus might still be worshipped today had he devoted more of his concern towards his worshippers' advancement."

Unfortunately, none of those petitions were even acknowledged by Caltech administration.

The Caltech Student Affairs Policy on Fire Safety (available on studentaffairs.caltech.edu), of which we were found to be in violation, states:

"Violations of this Policy may result in investigation and disciplinary action by any of the following, including but not limited to: the Housing Office, the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean of Graduate Studies, or the Graduate Review Board. In addition, the setting of a fire or tampering with fire safety equipment in violation of this Policy will result in a fine of up to \$500 for each person involved, in addition to reimbursements for damage. Further violations will result in eviction from Caltech Housing. In the event of a violation of law, state and federal authorities may also take action."

Of course, this was our first offense of the Policy, so the above passage would seem to rule out the possibility of being evicted from our dorm rooms.

"Throughout human history," he wrote, "it has been understood that fire, while alluring and powerful, can be dangerous in the wrong hands. An early occurrence of this idea in our mythology can be found in the story of Prometheus. The gods, having decided that humans were not entirely reliable creatures, had chosen, purely for safety reasons, to withhold from them the secret of fire. The mischievous titan Prometheus, however, admired and sympathized with humans...

ed in your appeal that the sanction of removing campus housing is arbitrary and upholding the violation would constitute a failure of Caltech administration to follow their own policies. On the contrary, the Fire Safety Policy states [v]iolations of this Policy may result in investigation and disciplinary action by any of the following, including but not limited to: the Housing Office, the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Student Affairs. The recommendations support the Policy sanctions of disciplinary action."

So, essentially, their interpretation of the Policy boils down to, "We can punish you however we want."

“Zeus, the leader of the gods, could not let this infraction go unpunished. After all, it was a major safety code violation. Zeus decided that the fair thing to do was to chain Prometheus to a rock and allow an eagle to eat Prometheus’ liver...”

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"Violations of this Policy may result in investigation and disciplinary action by any of the following, including but not limited to: the Housing Office, the Dean of Students, the Vice President for Student Affairs, the Dean of Graduate Studies, or the Graduate Review Board. In addition, the setting of a fire or tampering with fire safety equipment in violation of this Policy will result in a fine of up to \$500 for each person involved, in addition to reimbursements for damage. Further violations will result in eviction from Caltech Housing. In the event of a violation of law, state and federal authorities may also take action."

Of course, this was our first offense of the Policy, so the above passage would seem to rule out the possibility of being evicted from our dorm rooms.

"Throughout human history," he wrote, "it has been understood that fire, while alluring and powerful, can be dangerous in the wrong hands. An early occurrence of this idea in our mythology can be found in the story of Prometheus. The gods, having decided that humans were not entirely reliable creatures, had chosen, purely for safety reasons, to withhold from them the secret of fire. The mischievous titan Prometheus, however, admired and sympathized with humans...

partment of Education could decide to perform an investigation, which wouldn't be pleasant for anyone involved. (If you think our administration is draconian now, imagine how things would be with the federal government actively breathing down their necks.)

The Clerly Act defines "arson" as any intentional setting of fire, even to one's own property. So if you've ever lit a candle in your dorm room (strictly forbidden by Caltech's Housing Contract), congrats: you're an arsonist too!

Also, to Gilmartin's credit, he did push back the effective date of our eviction to the end of March 2022, allowing us the winter term to find an apartment. And we did. We lucked out and found a place near Caltech we could rent for 6 months, up until the end of the summer. It was fine. (It actually ended up being cheaper than Caltech housing, all told.)

I don't know if I have a specific moral or call to action for this story. It's in the past. I mainly just wanted to tell it. If I had to pick a note to end on, it would be the last paragraph of the professor's letter to VPSA Gilmartin:

"It isn't just the students expelled from housing who are watching. They are in communication with all their friends and how this case is resolved may impact the way in which students interact with faculty quite broadly. If they see you carefully following the letter of the law and exacting the pre-ordained penalty, they will see us one way. If they find you looking for a compromise and trying to return them to the fold, they will see us another way. It is easy to imagine situations in the near future in which we will need their cooperation and good will. Why miss a chance to earn it?"

Hidden Camera

continued from page 1

The respondent was relocated from Bechtel to another house on the night of July 18, 2022. The Title IX Office established a no-contact order between the complainants and the respondent, who left Caltech campus some days later due to the Title IX Emergency Removal process.

The letter also stated that on July 20, 2022, the respondent faxed an apology addressed to all his suitemates through the printer in the suite. In the apology, he asks for forgiveness, saying "I tried to do something that breaks the trust you all had in me."

On July 22, 2022, a campus-wide email was sent by Hima Vatti, Assistant Vice President for Equity Investigations and Title IX Coordinator, informing the Caltech community that a hidden camera was found in a private restroom, the device was secured, associated restrooms were swept of devices, and that the owner of the device was no longer on campus.

According to the complainants, the respondent attended Caltech classes remotely for the 2022-23 academic year.

THE INVESTIGATION

A visual timeline of the investigation is also below.

Seven of the students in the suite filed a formal complaint to the Title IX Office, which decided to pursue an investigation of the incident. The following information was communicated to the complainants via emailed letters from the Title IX Office...

On August 23, 2022, more than a month after the incident, the complainants received a letter from Vatti. It outlined the procedures for the investigation, and gave an explicit timeline.

She told the complainants, "I estimate the process to conclude, with notification to the parties of the outcome, inclusive of appeals, by December 20, 2022." Additionally, they were informed that "status updates generally will be provided every 30 days or otherwise as deemed appropriate."

REPORTERS & COLUMNISTS WANTED

Calling ALL members of the Caltech community - not just undergrads. The California Tech is the voice of the people, and we need you to speak!

Visit tech.caltech.edu/write (or QR Code) to see story ideas and open positions

tech.caltech.edu/submit tech.caltech.edu/discord tech@caltech.edu



This is in-line with Caltech's Procedures for Complaints of Sexual Misconduct Under Title IX and the California Education Code, which states that "Complaints will be investigated and resolved within a reasonably prompt time frame after the complaint has been made, generally 120 calendar days" and that updates will be provided "every thirty (30) days."

On October 24, 2022, the complainants received a letter informing them of the first of many delays in the investigation. The delay was due to "the time required for the investigator to interview the numerous parties and witnesses, and for a Campus Security Responder to produce a report on video material captured on the device."

According to the letter, the complainants would receive draft evidence reports (the first iteration of the evidence reports that resulted from the Title IX investigation) on November 14, 2022, and the new projected conclusion date was February 27, 2023 (70 days past the original estimate).

53 Days went by without an update from Vatti or anyone in the Title IX Office. The evidence reports were not sent on November 14.

Concerned about the lack of a draft evidence report and updates in general, one of the complainants emailed Vatti about these matters on December 16. Later that same day, complainants received an email from Vatti which notified them that the release of the draft evidence reports would be pushed back to January 23, 2023 (70 more days past the previous estimate).

Said delay was necessitated by "the need to prepare a declaration concerning the video evidence, the significant number of persons to be interviewed in this case and need for follow up by the investigator [of the case]."

The December 16 letter also asked the complainants to sign a Non-Disclosure Agreement (NDA), which would have prohibited sharing any portion of the draft and final evidence report. However, none of them chose to sign it.

On May 10, 2023, the complainants were informed via email that the final evidence report was estimated to be released on May 22, 2023.

On May 22, 2023, another email pushed back the final report release by two additional weeks, due to a "good cause accommodation" given to the respondent.

Finally, on May 31, 2023, the complainants got the final report.

Three months went by without any communication from the Title IX Office. The evidence reports were not sent on January 23. "Hima just straight up ghosted us for a while," said one of the complainants.

An update was sent on March 6, 2023, which informed the complainants that they would get their draft evidence reports on March 20, 2023 (56 additional days from the last estimate). According to the letter, the delay was made "for good cause to accommodate the respondent's ability to participate in the investigation."

A letter sent on March 17, 2023 pushed back the draft report distribution by another week due to "illness and other factors," making the new projected date March 27, 2023.

On March 24, 2023, Vatti informed the complainants that more work was needed on the draft evidence reports, and pushed back the distribution another 14 days.

On April 13, 2023, the draft evidence reports were shared with the complainants. The reports were shared even though no one had signed the NDA. However, the complainants were instructed not to share any information about them. The complainants and the respondent were all given 10 days to submit comments on the draft reports, with the goal of producing the final report.

However on April 23, 2023, the complainants were notified via email of a week-long delay of this deadline due to a "technical accommodation" given to the respondent.

Fed up, a complainant sent an email complaining about the delays, citing how the once 4-month timeline had more than doubled to a 9-month one. This email resulted in Vatti meeting with this student in-person, during which she reassured them that the Title IX Office was trying their best.

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Finally, on May 31, 2023, the complainants got the final report.

Hearings were held on July 24-25, 2023. A decision from the Deans' Office was originally scheduled to come out on September 1st. Though, on August 31st an email from Vatti notified complainants that the third party responsible for writing the decision letter needed up to 3 extra weeks.

On September 15, 2023, the complainants received the decision letter. In the letter, the Deans decided that the respondent would face "Permanent Separation from The Institute." The respondent had until September 25, 2023 to appeal the Deans' decision to the VPSA. During the appeal process, the respondent was not allowed back on campus.

In total, there have been 7 delays, with only 3 of them being accommodations for the respondent. The process has taken 401 days since the start of the investigation -- over 3 times the original estimated length of 120 days.

THE IMPACT

The four complainants, interviewed by the Tech late in 2023, said that the unexpected length and numerous delays have drawn out the healing process for them. Dealing with this, a lack of a resolution, a Caltech workload, and adjusting to college life, has taken its toll.

"That was very depressing, I think for all of us. Like, the first week we were at Caltech, and something like this happened," said a complainant. "And something that happened so quick is now taking a million years to take care of."

"So we initially felt pretty confident that the Title IX Office was going to take care of business but you know, as time kinda went on, we started to feel uncertain... And I'm just like, really mad," said another complainant. "I'm really, really mad that they won't do anything about it, even though it should be an open and shut case."

The unexpected delays are justified by Vatti, who says, " Oftentimes, the complexity and scope of a Title IX case is not apparent at the very beginning... Title IX regulations allow for the stated target timeline of 120 days to be extended for good cause."

One complainant described how they felt the day they got the evidence report: "That was actually a lot to handle in one day - it was too much. Since it had been so long, I just suppressed it... And then I got that email [for the evidence report]."

Though Caltech has offered resources such as accommodations and counseling to the complainants, many of them said it's not what they want or need.

"There's no need for them to be like 'oh [do] you guys need emotional support or ... [do] you need any accommodations?' I don't want that, I want to finish the case. It's taking forever," said a complainant. "Why are we still dealing with this, instead of getting the actual help we need, and not just the help they say we need?"

Another said, "I think they just do everything by the book so as to not get in trouble with the law but don't do anything in terms of actually helping victims."

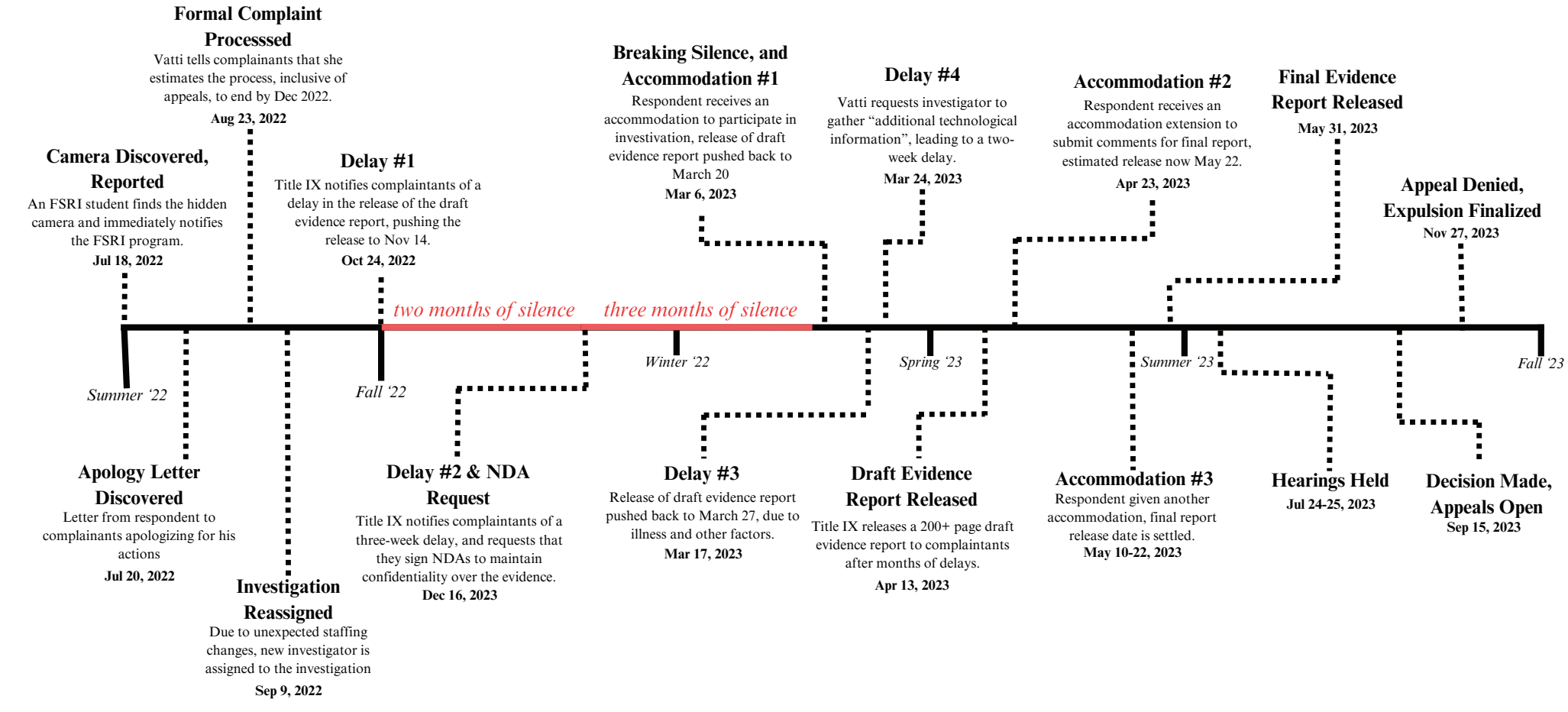
The complainants said the drawn out process by the Title IX Office has caused them to lose faith in the office, and even question its motives. "We [the complainants] get the feeling that they really just want to protect Caltech's image," one complainant lamented. "All the Title IX Office does is deflect and delay," said another.

When asked to comment on the delays, Vatti told the Tech in an email (Editor's Note: email published in full on tech.caltech.edu) that they are balancing the need for a speedy process, with "the obligation to be fair, accurate, thorough, and compliant with complex legal requirements. The time it has taken reflects the dedication of many people to administer this process not only as required but also with a high degree of care for respecting and protecting the privacy interests" of such a case.

Vatti acknowledged the discomfort caused by the delays. "We are aware and deeply empathize with the frustration and stress that parties experience with timeline extensions."

The unexpected delays are justified by Vatti, who says, " Oftentimes, the complexity and scope of a Title IX case is not apparent at the very beginning... Title IX regulations allow for the stated target timeline of 120 days to be extended for good cause."

This story is the first in an ongoing project exploring the state of Title IX affairs at Caltech. If you have any information you would like to share with us regarding this, contact us at 626-476-4435.



ARC Tip of the Week:

Upcoming January Dates:

- Friday Jan 19th noon-1pm: Ombuds Training
- Wednesday Jan 24th: Add Day
- Friday Jan 26th noon-1pm: Student Faculty Lunch

More on those...

- **Ombuds training** is this Friday January 19th over lunch in CSS 360 (the 3rd floor of the CSS building, CTLO Workshop Space). If you are an ombudsperson or planning to become one, please attend this training! Lunch will be provided
- **Add Day:** Wednesday January 24th is Add Day. This is the last day to add courses, switch between practical and analytical sections of math and physics, and finish E's.
- **Student Faculty Lunch:** see below

Student Faculty Lunch January 26th

The winter term student faculty lunch will be held from noon-1pm Friday January 26th in Lloyd Dining Hall. The professors attending are Konstantin Batygin (GPS, Planetary Science), Frederick Eberhardt (HSS, HPS), Stanislav Djorgovski (PMA, Astrophysics), Eric Mazumdar (CMS, HSS), Nicolas Wey Gomez (HSS), Hosea Nelson (CCE), and Justin Bois (BBE). Please sign up here: <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSff6o38kgAkmW4vVxB-XlssSkOgFjWLGX2KJeIF4ufmX7YZA/viewform>. The ARC will confirm which prof you will be having lunch with after the form closes on Sunday January 21st at 4pm. Lunch will be catered from Corner Bakery.



Research List

The ARC is compiling a list of professors who are looking for undergrads to work in their labs. The Research List is now available here: https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1FVJ_sReIJ7sljxnIzzO5rep0QNRC8Mv8DeqQasf9Q2A/edit?usp=sharing. These are great professors to reach out to about doing research during term and for SURF! We will be adding to this list as we get responses from more faculty. Disclaimer: The research list is not a complete list, and it contains a mix of summer and during-term opportunities that may be updated as the year goes on. Please check that the position you're looking into is accepting students in your year and for the term you're interested in using the information on the sheet.



How to Reach Out To Labs About SURFs

SURF application season is approaching! SURF applications are generally due at the end of February, but students tend to start reaching out to labs about potential research opportunities from now through January. The ARC's website has MANY resources to help you find research, write your SURF proposal, and learn more about research. The first step is sending a potential mentor an email to express your interest. Please read our tips and example email here: https://sites.google.com/site/arccaltech/resources/research?authuser=0#h.p.2ZELu6cp4D_t



SURF Application Deadline is Thursday February 22nd!

Find letter of recommendation writers ASAP if you haven't already.

Updated HSS Flowchart

The ARC has updated the HSS flowchart to hopefully clarify what the HSS requirements are (see next page). Please let us know if you have questions/suggestions on how to improve it.

Caltech's first and only student-run newspaper presents...

JOURNALISM & NEWSWRITING Workshop

Open to undergrads, grad students, postdocs, faculty, staff...
No experience necessary!

SATURDAY January 20th | **11 AM - 12:45 PM** | **CATERED LUNCH** by Tom Mannion

1st Floor Conference Room in Dabney Hall of Humanities

We are hosting a journalism and newswriting workshop, taught by Prof. Richard Kipling, former Managing Editor at the L.A. Times and advisor of the Tech. Participants will learn the basic principles of news reporting, as well as writing for a print medium, leave prepared to be star journalists for the Tech!

PLEASE RSVP HERE:

tech.caltech.edu/rsvp

Best of: TQFRs

by Tech staff

Teaching quality feedback reports, or TQFRs provide an opportunity for students to share their experiences, either positive or negative, about classes they have taken. In this new column we will look at some of the most iconic.

FA 2023-24 — Ae/CE 221 Space Structures

Dear Ae221, what say to you?

Nobody once told me, this course was gonna roll me, Not the sharpest gore in the balloon volume.

She was looking kind of dumb with her finger and her thumb In the shape of a dihedral angle on her forehead.

Well the tears start coming and they don't stop coming. I saw the Beckman dodecahedron fountain, traumatized, I hit the ground falling

Didn't make sense, this inextensional equilibrium nonsense, Most undergrads dropped and PFd the class, the rest of us were dumb.

So much to prove, so much to read So what's wrong with my truncated octahedral prism?

You'll never know if you don't fold You'll never pass if you don't code.

Hey now, you're a sucker, get your space frame, go deploy Hey now, you're a MechE, get your inner angles, space fill.

And all that we make are folds, Only grad students break the mold

Space is a cool place and they say it gets colder You're self-stressed now, wait 'til you get older

But inextensional mechanisms beg to differ Judging by the miura-ori satellite picture

The origami paper is getting pretty thin The Matlab computers getting warm so you might as well take a Twinkle Tea break

My world's on fire, how about yours? That's the way I like it and I'll never get bored

FA 2023-24 — Ma 001A Calculus of One and Several Variables and Linear Algebra

the vibes - im going to tear my hair out if i hear the word 'partition' again AHAAAAHHHHHHHHHHH-HH oh my god... this class is doable but it feels like your mind is getting hammered over and over and over and over like I've never felt so dumb while doing homework. but it is really satisfying when you finally figure out a nice proof.

Humanities and Social Science Requirements

Updated for 2023-2024

If you matriculated in 2023 or earlier: 36 Units Hums + 36 Units SS + 36 Units Misc. HSS = 108 Total Units (12 Classes)
If you matriculated in 2024 or later: 36 Units Hums + 27 Units SS + 36 Units Misc. HSS = 99 Total Units (11 Classes)

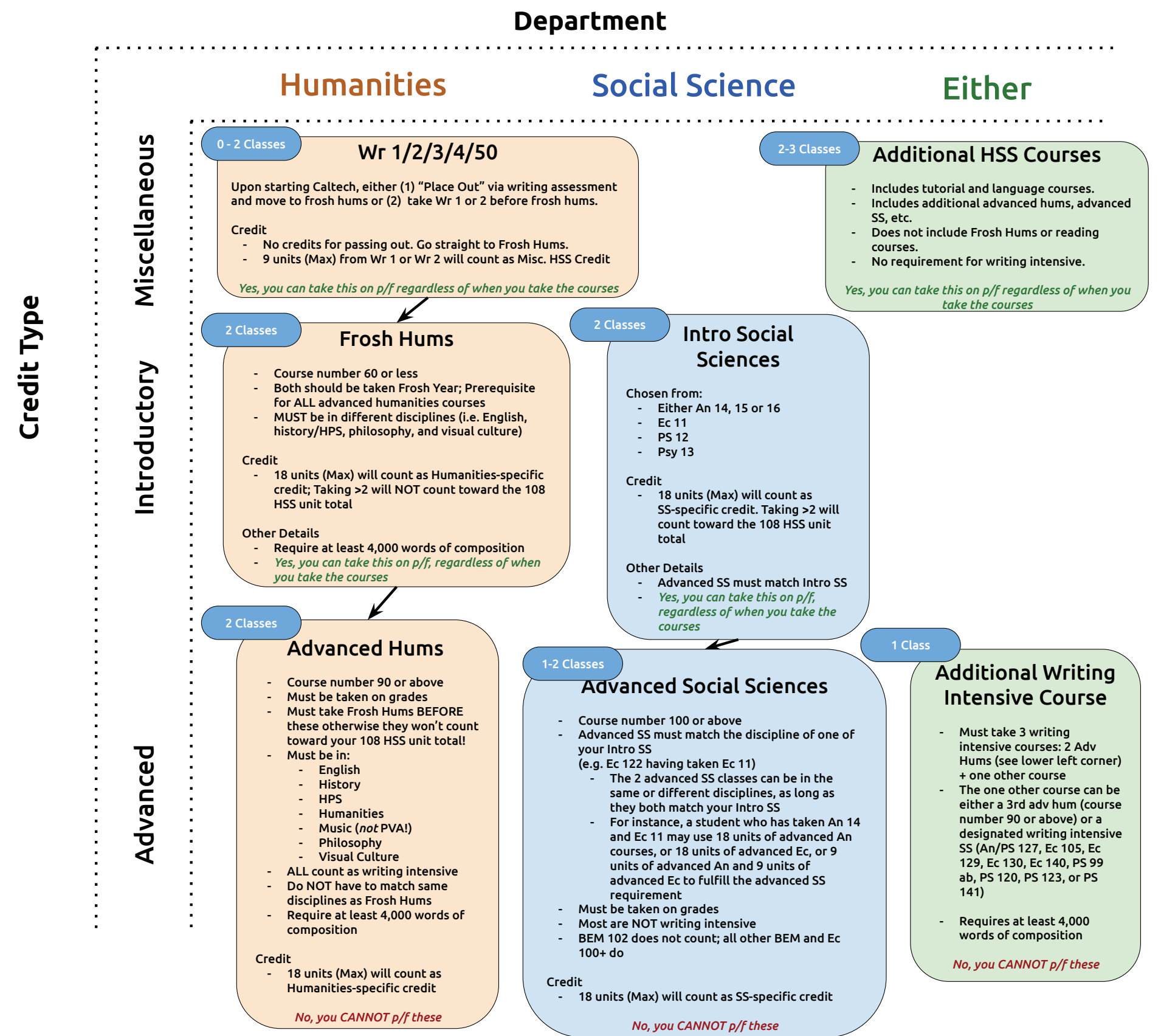
18 Units Frosh Hums + 18 Units Advanced Hum = 36 Units Hums
18 Units Intro SS + 18 Units Advanced SS = 36 Units SS

Of the 108 Units, 27 of these Units must be Writing Intensive Advanced Classes

18 Units Advanced Hum + (9 Units of Miscellaneous Advanced Hum OR 9 Units of Writing Intensive Advanced SS) = 27 Units Writing Intensive

Arrows designate prerequisites

Please also reference the Catalog. Additional resources are available at arc.caltech.edu and at the [HSS Course Schedule Viewer](#)



FA 2023-24 - ME 11a Thermal Science

The professor is good, but wastes way too much time complaining to his students about cheating. I understand this was a large issue last year, and I fully support the prof. doing what is possible to prevent it. I even get scaring students into not cheating. That being said, this point could have been made about 1/8 as frequently and still have been effective. Every day the good students were told they were cheaters, it sucks as a student. The prof. should BOC the cheaters and move on with his day.

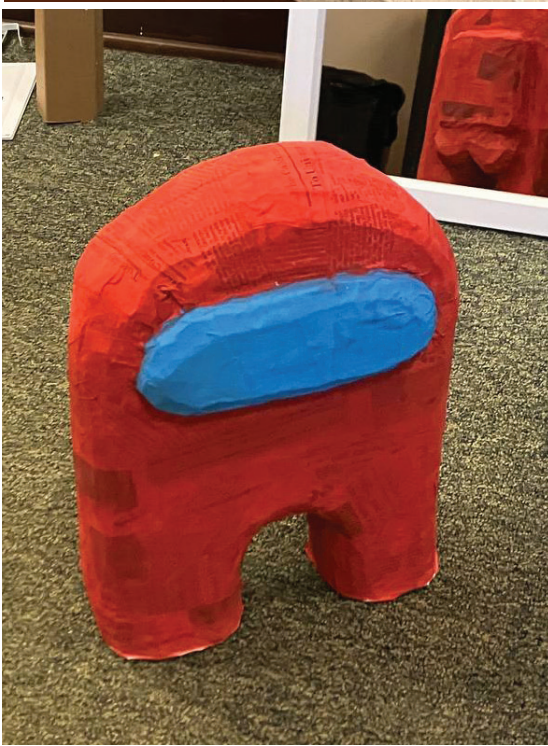
SP 2017-18 - Ph 106c Topics in Classical Physics

Physicists, like the drug dealers my elementary school gym teacher warned me about, like to get them hooked early. They start you off with the weak stuff—a hint of group theory here, a cryptic reference to Noether's theorem there. If you were smart, you would keep your head down, Wolfram your way through to the end of Ph12, and wash your hands of the whole affair. But you're a physics major, and if there's one thing you know, it's that there's

something good hidden here. Something pure. Something you *need*. And so you find your way to junior year. You should have noticed something wasn't quite right when your fingers began pattering away of their own accord, engraving a ghostly Stirling's approximation into every writing surface you encountered. But 127, surely, was an anomaly—statistical mechanics, after all, is only a few short hops away from the well known and poorly understood occult forces of electrical engineering— and with 106a offering ever stronger hits of that real good symmetry, you press on. How could you not? Just around the corner, surely, lay beauty

bare, the long awaited wellspring of the high that even now courses through your veins— a generally covariant paradise without a free parameter or delta "function" in sight. And then, halfway through winter term, it stops. No more beauty. No more elegance. Only expansion by spherical harmonics remains, the lone testament to your loss. Electromagnetism, to be sure, opens with the same comforting platitudes as every other physics class— focus on the physics, not the algebra. Don't get bogged down in calculations. Try to find symmetry arguments. But there are no symmetry arguments to be found. At times,

What to do with the Tech after you've read it...
by Lilia Arrizabalaga



What CDS Food Option Are You?

an eye-opening personality quiz
by Ellie Chen
(based on a frosh's first impressions)

- 1) Choose a color from the following:
a. Red; b. Orange; c. Blue; d. Purple; e. Yellow
- 2) Choose a word from the following:
a. Invitation; b. Solid; c. Indelible; d. Iridescent; e. Open
- 3) Choose a number from the following:
a. 80; b. 125; c. -14.6 ; d. 31.2; e. 64
- 4) Choose a water body from the following:
a. River; b. Ocean; c. Stream; d. Bathtub; e. Lake
- 5) Choose a biome from the following:
a. Deciduous forest; b. Rainforest; c. Desert; d. Tundra; e. Grasslands
- 6) Choose a problem from the following:
a. Confinement; b. Inadequacy; c. Mediocrity; d. Monotony; e. Isolation
- 7) Choose a solution from the following:
a. Community; b. Fulfillment; c. Conspicuity; d. Variety; e. Availability

Results

Mostly a's: Red Door. You enjoy the company of a variety and multitude of people and, as a result, might feel pressured to always be emotionally available. Remember to keep some time and space for yourself.
Mostly b's: Browne. You tend to satisfy the needs of those around you while carrying an abundance of personality in your person.
Mostly c's: Broad. You stand out and carry yourself with an air of elegance and presentability. You strive to not be overlooked, forgotten.
Mostly d's: Avery Ramen. You are driven by your consideration and unique character. You wish to provide for others what you lack yourself.
Mostly e's: House Dinner/Open Kitchen. You are always willing to help out a friend and seek out opportunities for gatherings. You are likely a "social center"; many enjoy your company.



The California Tech

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Introducing...

#5

The California Tech CalGuesser

Every issue we'll show you a different location on campus. Find the place and find the QR code hidden there to sign the log book and **win a fabulous prize?!?!**

("On campus" is defined by the bounds of the map on caltech.edu/map/campus. The QR code will be hidden somewhere within the pictured area.)



Last issue's winners!

>>>

CalGuesser #4 – November 28, 2023

Congrats, you found it!!!

Leave your name/pseudonym, year/department, and date found!

indifferent, undergrad senior / MS, 11/28 10:58AM

john, g4 cce, 11/28 3:14 pm

Henry, community member, 12/31/23 3:31 PM 🍀

End the Climate Crisis! Join us at
PBU Caltech Launch Party



Live Music

Jan 30th, 5:30-7pm

Chen 130

Learning Resources

Goodie Bags

Q+A with PBU members

Raffle for free food from local vegan restaurants

Plant-based food

Scan QR code to join our WhatsApp!



Instagram @PBUcaltech
[PlantBasedUnis@caltech.edu](https://www.instagram.com/PlantBasedUnis@caltech.edu)