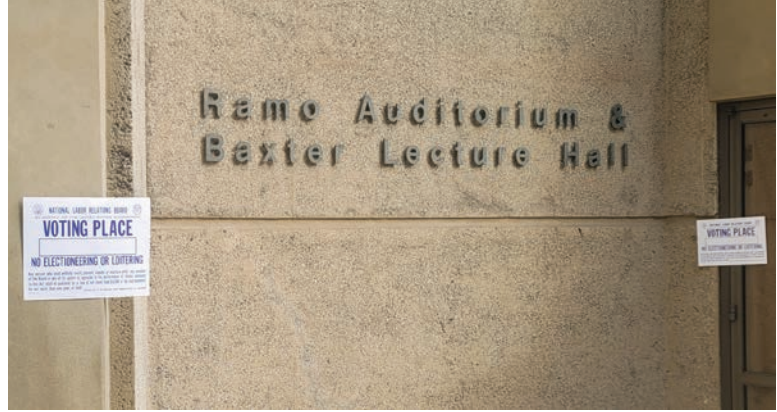


## Caltech Graduates and Postdocs Vote In Favor of Union Representation



**Victoria Davis**  
News

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) held elections for Caltech graduate students and postdocs earlier this month to vote on whether they wanted to unionize and be represented by Caltech Grad Researchers and Postdocs United-UAW (CGPU-UAW). With affirmative votes from seventy-six percent of grad students voters (799 out of 1045) and eighty-three percent of postdocs voters (240 out of 290), the Caltech graduate and postdoctoral community has voted to unionize. Seventy-three percent of graduate students (1,045 of 1,439) and fifty-two percent of postdoctoral scholars (290 of 558) came out to vote. On February 15th 2024, the NLRB certified CGPU-UAW to serve as the collective bargaining representative for Caltech grad students and postdocs. Caltech is now one of thirty-seven universities in the United States where gradu-

ate students are members of a union. According to the CGPU, Caltech is also the first school where grads and postdocs voted to unionize at the same time. Caltech union organizers are now preparing to bargain with Caltech administration to negotiate a contract that sets minimum standards for working conditions. CGPU is in the process of forming two new committees: the Working Conditions Research Committee (WCRC) and the Initial Bargaining Demands Committee (IBDC). CGPU will also request nominations and hold elections to decide the representative bargaining team of grad workers. CGPU leaders are encouraging grad students and postdocs to help with the crafting of the best contract possible by coming to organizing committee meetings on Mondays at 5pm (location subject to change), reaching out to any organizer in-person or via email ([organize@cgpu.org](mailto:organize@cgpu.org)) to learn more.

## Faculty Petition Speaks to Broader Implications for Undergraduate Admissions

**Mahak Mathur**  
News

Last month, over 140 professorial faculty signed and submitted to the administration a petition calling for the reinstatement of the SAT as a criterion for admissions. In other words, rather than continuing with the testing moratorium which has been in place since 2020, signatories are urging the admissions committee to return to a test-optional platform for future cycles. "We have more qualified students applying than there are spots at Caltech," noted Centennial Chair Professor and petition signatory John Dabiri in an interview with the Tech. Standardized testing "helps quantify the level of rigor the students are capable of." Dr. Dabiri was first a SURF intern, then a graduate student, and now a professor at the Institute. According to him, Caltech is a place where "the best and brightest...come for the most advanced education." However, determining exactly which students are the "best and brightest" is the challenge

the admissions committee faces year after year, a challenge only worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. With testing center closures across the globe, the admissions committee made the decision to implement a "testing moratorium" in order to increase access to Caltech. An internal study conducted by Caltech faculty concluded that "standardized test scores have little to no power in predicting students' performance...as students progress through the first-year core curriculum," according to an official Institute statement. Caltech's decision to adopt a "test-blind" approach is not solely influenced by the pandemic, but is the product of increased scrutiny of standardized testing as a whole. Many believe that what the SAT and ACT promise is an arbitrary academic benefit that comes at a very concrete financial cost which can act as a barrier to low-income or minority students. Consequently, colleges and universities have been re-evaluating their SAT/ACT admissions requirements in an effort to increase diversity...

continued on page 2

## Students Voice Concerns Over Title IX Effectiveness in Recent Poll

**Maxwell Montemayor, Cristian Ponce**  
News

From January 29 to February 2, the Tech conducted an anonymous poll regarding undergraduate students' experiences with Caltech's Title IX Office. The poll was conducted via a Microsoft Office Form, requiring respondents to sign in with Caltech credentials to confirm their identity, but did not save their identity with the responses. The Tech received verbal approval from the Institutional Review Board to publish the results of the poll in aggregate form. The poll yielded 125 responses from Caltech undergrads. Responses highlighted issues regarding student perception of the Title IX Office.

### Poll Results

Information regarding the house affiliation, gender, year of

study, and major of poll participants was collected to identify demographic-based patterns. A majority of poll participants identified as women (51%), while non-binary individuals and men constituted 9% and 36% of participants, respectively. Significant differences in answers based on demographic data were not observed.

In addition to demographic information questions, students were asked the following questions on a scale of 1-5 (1 = Least, 5 = Most) regarding their perception of Caltech's Title IX office:

*How familiar are you with the Title IX office at our institution? Based on your understanding or experience, how effectively do you believe the Title IX office addresses issues of unlawful discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, national origin, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, and other individual characteristics protected by federal and state law?*

*How likely would you be to file an official report to the Title IX office if you encountered or witnessed an incident that falls under its purview?*

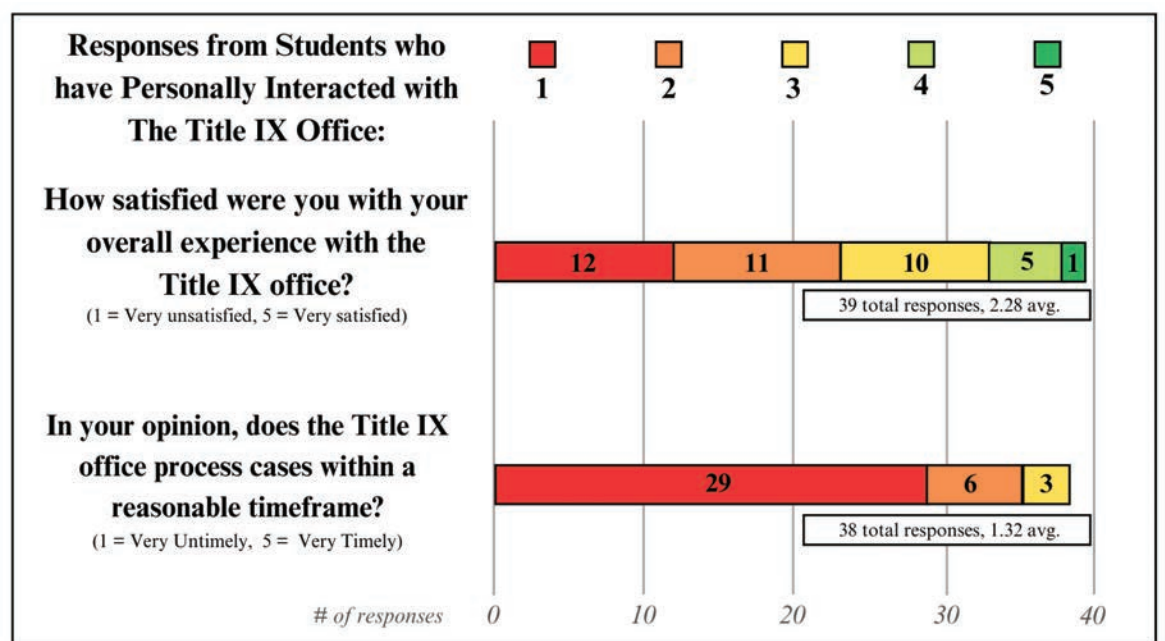
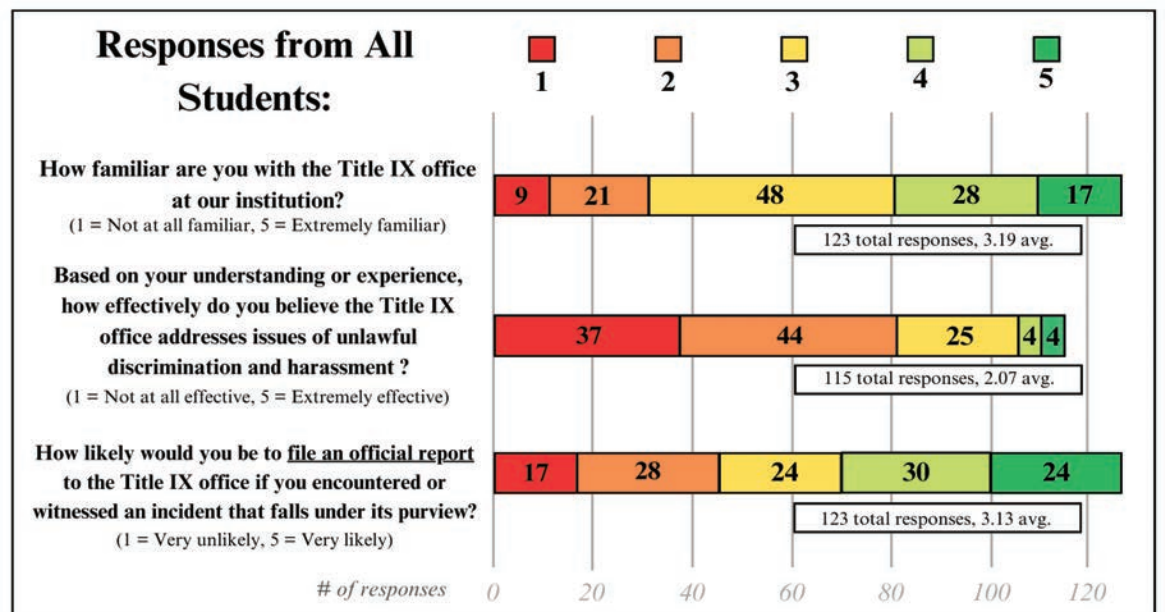
Participants were also asked if they had personally interacted with the Title IX office, which 39 out of 125 reported that they had. 27 of these individuals identified as female, non-binary, or did not wish to disclose their gender. 12 of these individuals were men. These participants were asked two additional questions, regarding their experience with the office:

*How satisfied were you with your overall experience with the Title IX office?*

*In your opinion, does the Title IX office process cases within a reasonable timeframe?*

Results to these two sets of questions are visualized by the graphs below.

continued on page 2



Follow us on Instagram to keep up with story updates and exclusive content!  
**@thecaliforniatech**



## Inside This Issue:

2 This Week in Tech History...

3 Letters to the Editor

4 ASCIT Winter Elections Candidate Statements

6 The Inside World

10 Humor, Opinion, Culture

### New EAS Graduate Student Advisory Board!

"The Division of Engineering and Applied Science (EAS) is proud to announce the formation of the Graduate Student Advisory Board (GSAB). This pioneering initiative seeks dedicated and inspired graduate students to work closely with the Director of EAS Programs for Student Success (DPSS), offering crucial insights and feedback to elevate student life and enhance program quality across the Division.

- Why Join?**
- **Influence and Advocacy:** Directly impact the development and refinement of holistic student services and programs
- **Community Building:** Foster a vibrant, supportive community by identifying and leading initiatives that bridge academic, social-emotional, and cultural needs
- **Professional Development:** Receive up to \$1,200 in professional development funds as recognition for your contributions

- We're Looking For Students Who Are:**
- Analytical and creative problem solvers
- Eager to collaborate and provide constructive feedback
- Committed to serving as ambassadors and advocates for EAS programs
- Open to different views, with a friendly and patient approach

- Membership Details:**
- Open to all graduate students within the EAS Division
- 9 to 11 members serving one-year terms, with the possibility of renewal

- Apply Now to Make a Difference!**
- **Application Period:** February 5 - 29, 2024
- **Review Period:** March 1 - 14, 2024
- **Notification Date:** March 15, 2024

For more information and to apply, please visit <https://www.eas.caltech.edu/student-programs> or contact Yazmin Gonzalez at [yazminyg@caltech.edu](mailto:yazminyg@caltech.edu). Join us in shaping a supportive, enriching environment for EAS students!"



### Undergraduate Admissions

concluded from page 1

Consequently, colleges and universities have been re-evaluating their SAT/ACT admissions requirements in an effort to increase diversity on campus by lowering the hurdles to higher education. And many colleges chose to drop the testing requirement over the COVID-19 pandemic. MIT was one of those such colleges, suspending their SAT/ACT test requirement from 2020-2021. However they reinstated it in 2022 citing it as an important predictor of student success for the rigor of math based classes students at MIT are required to take. What Dr. Dabiri did point out was the need for all students on campus to be fully literate, so to speak, in science and technology, especially given Caltech's infamous rigor. After all, as he put it, it's "very difficult to make progress in French with students who don't speak French." And given the sheer number of research opportunities avail-

### Title IX Poll Results

continued from page 1

#### Free-Response Comments

All respondents were invited to leave additional free-response comments regarding their perceptions of the Title IX Office. It is worth noting that the comments listed here are a sample of the responses. Though all comments conveyed a negative or neutral opinion of the Title IX Office, there were no overly positive responses received.

Some comments accused the office of caring more about legally protecting the institute than helping students:

"The office protects the school rather than the people it's [designed] to serve. We've seen them let sexual assaulters get off with little punishment."

"The office seems like a very barebones attempt to meet the legal requirement of Title IX, largely in the hope of avoiding being sued."

Multiple students were under the impression that the office lacks resources:

"The current office is just so overworked that they're too busy to handle the cases they have with care."

"Cases take far too long."

Issues with the Title IX Office caused some students to lose faith in the office, and consider not reporting cases:

"It sucks how we already don't feel safe on this campus and even if an incident happens, we still aren't supported enough for us to think it's worth it to report it."

"I was told by a Title IX advocate that reporting my case to Title IX office would be too much of a pain; that the details of my case would be dragged out for months, my stalker would be given free reign to spin his own stories and verbally attack me in person, and no change would happen. So I stayed silent."

Students who reported having interacted with the Title IX Office were also asked to provide any additional comments about their experience with the office.

Multiple students reported that they regretted coming to the Title IX Office:

"Dealing with the Title IX office for months only to end up with nothing more than a mutual

no-contact order was probably more traumatic than the act of getting sexually assaulted itself."

"They claim for the process to be quick and to help you but honestly the system is made to protect the [accused] more... If I could go back and stop myself from ever going in [and] filing a complaint, I would."

Some comments accused the office of not prioritizing the care of alleged victims of incidences:

"The people there are kind and seem well-intentioned, however their loyalty to following rules and upholding Caltech's reputation prevent them from handling cases in a way that actually is meaningful."

"You guys [the Title IX Office] try to protect and coddle abusers while gaslighting the victims."

However, other students think that the failings of the office are due to legal limitations or a lack of resources:

"I blame federal policy for this. Obama era policy ensured Title IX issues to be one of the schools, and in the hands of federal channels would not only be taken more seriously but would face less of the policy issues."

"I think the people that are in the office are doing their best to provide a good support network. However, they seem to be incredibly short-staffed and limited by law on the scope of things they can do and the timeline they can do things in."

#### 2019 AAU Survey

In 2019, Caltech (amongst other schools) participated in the Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct conducted by the Association of American Universities (AAU). 877 Caltech students (501 undergraduate and 376 graduate students) participated, incentivized by a thousand-dollar award for the house with the highest completion rate. Though the survey did not directly ask questions about their impression about Caltech's Title IX Office specifically, some questions revealed student sentiment regarding the institution's handling of Title IX-related incidents.

Two questions involving Title IX affairs included:

"If someone were to report a sexual assault or other sexual misconduct to an official at Caltech, how likely is it that campus officials would take the report seriously?"

"How likely is it that campus officials would conduct a fair

investigation?"

In response to these questions, Participants could answer "not at all", "a little", "somewhat", "very", or "extremely". In response to the first question, an overwhelming 73.6 percent of participants answered either "very" or "extremely," placing Caltech above average. Similarly, Caltech was marked above average on the second question by four points; however, fewer students believed it likely for campus officials to conduct a fair investigation at 55 percent of respondents answering "very" or "extremely."

In comparison to a 2015 AAU survey that Caltech also participated in, the 2019 AAU results represented small decreases across both of these questions. It should be noted that across schools surveyed, there was a positive trend noted from 2015 to 2019 in responses to the first question, and negative responses noted in responses to the second question.

While a new AAU survey would enable a more comprehensive picture of student perception of Title IX affairs, the Tech's poll has highlighted serious concerns amongst those surveyed.

#### Additional Information

The Tech had originally planned to keep the poll open for an additional week past February 2. However, three days after the poll was released, Vice President of Student Affairs Kevin Gilmartin contacted the Editor-in-Chief instructing the Tech to immediately stop data collection, since it "meets the criteria for human subject research" and was therefore subject to approval by Caltech's Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects - Institutional Review Board (IRB). The Tech complied. In a subsequent meeting, the IRB confirmed that journalistic activities such as this poll are excluded from the definition of human subject research as provided in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) 2018 Requirements of the regulations for the protection of human subjects (45 CFR Part 46), and consequently do not have to satisfy the requirements of those regulations or receive approval from the IRB.

But this does not mean that student-athletes at Caltech are any less dedicated or deserving of funding, which seems to be ignored by the head athletics director, Betsy Mitchell. We are not asking for over-the-top merchandise like some top-Division III schools (some teams in Pomona-Pitzer annually are given matching sneakers and socks). In fact, we are not asking for any money from the department at all. We are simply

*Special thanks to Jonathan Booker for independently facilitating this survey, coordinating with the IRB, and ensuring the privacy of those who responded to the poll.*

### Athletic Donations: A Call for Fair Play

**Editor's note: We offered anonymity because the author feared reprisal from the athletics department if they expressed these views publicly. Given the Tech's shortage of reporters, this topic would likely never come to light otherwise.**

To the Editor of the California Tech,

I write to you in hopes of shining light on an issue that has been a fork in the road for many Caltech athletic teams. I am requesting to stay anonymous due to a fear of the likely repercussions on my athletic career by the administration if I exposed my name. However, please understand that this, by no means, undercuts the severity of this issue. In fact, I hope this highlights the problematic administration we have in place at the athletics department as of now.

Let us take a look at alumni donations to our athletics programs. On the Caltech Athletics website ([gocaltech.com](http://gocaltech.com)), the "Donate" header only has one subheader: "Reimagining Scott Brown Gymnasium." Thus, one might infer that this project was funded by the generous donations of alumni and parents of Caltech. However, this brings up the glaring issue of our underfunded athletics programs. Division III Athletics at Caltech are not the top priority, nor should they be. Caltech is a university that fosters intellectual ability over athletic ability. Student-athletes and coaches are well aware of the fact that we are students before we are athletes. This attitude actually fosters a welcoming environment for students to try out new sports, and allows students to use their respective sports as a way to destress from their academics and keep healthy.

But this does not mean that student-athletes at Caltech are any less dedicated or deserving of funding, which seems to be ignored by the head athletics director, Betsy Mitchell. We are not asking for over-the-top merchandise like some top-Division III schools (some teams in Pomona-Pitzer annually are given matching sneakers and socks). In fact, we are not asking for any money from the department at all. We are simply

## Letters to the Editor

asking the head athletics director to allow donations to individual teams.

Not many are aware of the fact that Mitchell does not allow donations to specific teams. Instead, she asks that they donate to all of Caltech Athletics, or one or more of their "enhancement funds." This means that these donations will likely not make it to any team; rather, they will be used for funding the renovation of Brown Gym or other facilities. If they do make it to sports teams, they are divided up equally among all teams, as Mitchell has told my parents and several alumni. This discourages many potential donors from donating to Caltech athletics, causing the negative feedback loop that keeps the funding for student-athletes low.

Switching gears quickly to the Supreme Court of the United States, we will take a look at the court case Citizens United v. Federal Elections Committee from 2010. This court case significantly altered campaign finance law in the United States, particularly regarding the role of corporations and unions in political spending.

The majority opinion held that previous restrictions on independent expenditures from corporations and unions violated the First Amendment's protection of free speech. The Court equated spending money with speech, arguing that prohibiting corporations from spending money on political advertising was akin to restricting their speech. Although our case at hand has little to do with politics and corporations, we can apply a similar line of reasoning.

Using the Court's interpretation of spending money as speech, it could be argued that the donations barrier infringes on prospective donors' freedom of speech. Allowing donors to choose where their money goes respects their rights to express their preferences and support causes or teams that are meaningful to them. If the lack of interest in the overall athletics department is the reason for the prohibition of specific donations, perhaps it is time to turn inward and investigate why alumni and other potential donors are hesitant to donate to the athletics department.

The Citizens v. FEC case faced criticism on the increased influence of wealthy corporations and special interest groups in politics, which had the potential to drown out the voices of average citizens. However, this criticism is not applicable to our situation. In fact, we are dealing with the opposite end of the argument's spectrum. Student-athletes are not receiving the support they need due to lack of funding, which would be easily fixed if donations were given to individual teams. A very small example is that teams cannot afford to give athletes any gear to keep, be it team t-shirts or practice jerseys. The bigger problem lies in the inadequate facilities and lack of food. Men's and women's fall season athletes were forced to change in the racquetball courts, with glass doors covered by brown paper, regardless of the fact that there were free lockers in Braun. Every year, athletes sit through a talk about the importance of nutrition. Yet, athletes who train throughout the school breaks (summer preseason, winter training, spring break training) have little to no access and money for food. Athletes are given around 14 dollars per day for food when they stay on campus during these school breaks. There are also no open dining halls on campus, forcing athletes to eat off campus or cook. Personally, I am very aware of the fact that I dropped around five pounds over a week when I came back to train during break in my freshman year. In an already stressful environment, it sometimes seems as though the athletics department strives to make our lives even more stressful, in ways that are borderline unhealthy.

The Caltech Athletic Department claims that they strive for athletic excellence. Yet, every team suffers from their inability to retain athletes, resulting in Caltech teams to be much smaller in numbers compared to most SCIAC teams. Perhaps the best (and easiest) way to foster excellence and loyalty in athletes is to provide more support and encourage a cycle of giving back through donations.

Sincerely,  
An anonymous student-athlete

In allowing contributions to specific teams, alumni and parents can directly support the sports they were involved in or have a personal interest in, fostering a stronger connection to the Institution. In the long run, this could encourage donors to continue to donate to other causes in the athletic department as well, increasing overall funds. On the moral side of the argument, let us bring up the question of integrity. The current model of donations is extremely opaque. It is very unlikely that a donor will be willing to give money to a department that gives very little detail about where the money is going. Targeted donations enhance transparency and accountability in how funds are used. Donors, as well as student-athletes, can see the direct impact of the contributions, leading to increased trust and ongoing support, creating a positive feedback loop.

One of the biggest arguments that we have heard from Mitchell is that of equality. We beg to differ. Targeted donations more effectively meets teams' specific needs, as donors are usually involved with the specific sport, and are aware of the costs they may bear. This is especially important due to the different sizes of teams. For example, using our current donation model, Men's Tennis and Swim and Dive would be given the same amount of money from a donation. This seems fair in theory, until we consider the fact that the men's tennis team consists of 12 people, while the swim and dive team consists of 21 men and 18 women. Is this what fairness and equality looks like?

Funding has been a glaring issue in Caltech athletics. We have a clear solution to this problem. Now, here is a cry to implement this solution. Dear Betsy Mitchell, randomly yelling "Go Beavers!" in the middle of practice doesn't raise team morale. This will.

Sincerely,  
An anonymous student-athlete

### Regarding the Title IX article

Editors:

It is a sad fact of life that in corporations, the HR department exists to protect the company from the employees. Based on the article, it seems that the function of the Title IX office is to protect the Institute from females.

I agree that it is reasonable to expect otherwise, and to demand otherwise. However, based on experience, I have developed cynicism, and now believe that society is litigious enough that nothing happens unless pushed for by a conscientious attorney.

Please check with the Student Defense Initiative early and often. (I am presently unemployed or I would make a donation to them in protest of this situation as I have in the past—not often enough, I admit.)

Sincerely,  
Lisa LePome  
Ricketts '89

### Court Injunction?

## ASCIT Elections Spark Threats

..Between Scylla and Charybdis. by Paul Levin

Aren't you glad you're not a member of ASCIT's BOD? You would be if you were faced with problems like these: "Have we accidentally invalidated our own elections? Will ASCIT be sued? Will the BOD be thrown in jail for tampering with corporate elections?" This was the unofficial summary by Derry Hornbuck, ASCIT Secretary, of an emergency meeting of the Board of Directors meeting called, or rather gathered at 12:42 a.m. Feb. 24. To run any meeting at that unearthly hour of the morning would require a dire emergency.

**It all started . . .** It all started with a seemingly trivial election Wednesday noon. This was not the choicest day for an election. By twelve noon,

when the elections were supposed to start, many people would have eaten and been on their way. Besides, how many people actually knew that an election was going to take place. It was to be handled by a grossly-undermanned committee headed by Paul Levin, the Elections Committee Chairman. He and one other person had to distribute ballots and ballot boxes to six houses at noon. All of the new houses and Blacker had their boxes and were voting reasonably soon after 12:00 p.m. The Elections Chairman suffered a slight delay in getting to his room after the 11:00-12:00 Glee Club practice, but if his memory and an erratic wrist watch serve him right, the boxes were delivered by eleven or twelve minutes after the hour. Unfortunately,

the President of Fleming House, John Forbes said after the results were announced he didn't find the ballots until 12:30 p.m.! In the old houses there indeed was a poor turnout; Fleming House had very few signatures at 12:40, when the Elections Chairman passed through again. The ballot boxes from the houses were duly picked up at 1:00 p.m. and counted in an hour.

At 5:00 p.m. the Elections Chairman was met at Louise Hood's office, where he had come to pick up the off-campus box, and was hurriedly escorted to a BOD meeting which was already in session. After the Elections Chairman hurriedly totaled the votes, the Board asked him if the election results were in order. Having heard no com-

(Continued on page 4)

## This week in Tech History...

February 27, 1969

### San Andreas Blues

## Throop Hall Declared Unsafe

by Nick Smith  
Caltech's Board of Trustees are meeting Monday to decide the fate of Throop Hall. A re-modelling study of Throop Hall showed that it could not stand a major earthquake.

In 1910, the main building of Throop Polytechnic Institute was dedicated Pasadena Hall. This building was renamed Throop Hall in 1920, when the school became Caltech. As the various departments spread out, Throop

Hall in 1920, when the school became Caltech. As the various departments spread out, Throop became the administrative center of the campus. For 59 years, Throop has served many functions, ranging from an office building to a publications center.

# ASCIT 2024 Winter Elections: Candidate Statements

### V.P. OF NON-ACADEMIC AFFAIRS / IHC CHAIR (2 CANDIDATES)



JONATHAN BOOKER (RICKETTS PH/CS'25)

Hey everyone! For those of you who don't know me, my name is Jonathan Booker. I'm a junior in Ricketts Hovse studying Physics and Computer Science. During my time here at Caltech, I've had the privilege to serve in many campus-wide leadership roles and have been deeply invested in the well-being and future of our community. I'm extremely eager to bring this passion and dedication to the role of IHC Chair and the accompanying role of ASCIT Vice-President of Non-Academic Affairs. We are in a unique situation now, a couple of years since the pandemic, and the campus has returned to fully functioning; however, we are still reeling from the impacts of the pandemic.

My candidacy for IHC Chair is underpinned by a vision of fostering comprehensive community engagement, ensuring the seamless flow of communication across our diverse house system, and skillfully mediating between the myriad groups that constitute our campus ecosystem. My experiences as ASCIT Secretary and Treasurer have not only expanded my network but also deepened my understanding of the multifaceted needs of our community, empowering me to lead initiatives like the reimagining of the Conduct Review Committee (CRC) and building the inventory of the ASCIT Social Closet. Serving as the Business Manager for The California Tech has further refined my ability to implement enduring initiatives when I was able to help with directly restructuring the newspaper so that it can publish regularly, reinforcing my commitment to fostering a cohesive campus environment. These roles have endowed me with a profound appreciation for the interconnectedness of our academic and social spheres, forming the cornerstone of my candidacy.

I am deeply committed to implementing initiatives that resonate with the needs and aspirations of our entire community. Herein, I outline these ambitious proactive measures and strategic approaches I plan to pursue to address the upcoming challenges that face us and to ensure that future IHCs will have the framework to solve issues that emerge.

**Housing:** It's clear to me that this is the most pressing issue currently on students' minds. There is a shortage of beds as well as decent housing on campus. Those who are unfortunate enough to not get a bed in their house or Bechtel get pushed to Marks and Braun. Currently, unaffiliated students get priority in Bechtel,

effectively guaranteeing them a spot. This guarantee for unaffiliated students and not for affiliated students has resulted in a pattern of affiliated students un-affiliating from their house before room-picks, picking into Bechtel, and then re-affiliating with their house. This switch results in houses losing money from dues and gives an incentive for people to unaffiliate where they normally would not. As IHC Chair, I want to continue the previous IHC's efforts to address this issue and to eliminate the uncertainty that currently accompanies room-picks. I believe that everyone should have a fair chance of getting decent housing and that the current process is not fair and equitable. Just as unaffiliated students should not be disadvantaged for not being part of a house, individuals who are part of a house should also not be disadvantaged.

**Rotation:** Rotation is the foundation of the house system at Caltech. The goal of Rotation is to place the incoming prefrash class into houses in a way that is fair to all prefrash, gives them the best opportunity to thrive, and will benefit the community. However, to accomplish this objective, we must revisit the algorithm. Currently, the algorithm uses a Convex Penalty process that minimizes the sum of squares of the rank the house into which each prefrash is placed. The algorithm's emphasis on minimizing dissatisfaction based on preference rankings, while neglecting diversity and flexibility, not only led to a failure in achieving gender parity in 2021 but also raises concerns about its ability to respect racial and socioeconomic parity, among other forms. Such oversights are critical to Caltech's mission for inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility, highlighting the urgent need for a revised algorithm that can adequately promote and balance these crucial aspects within the house system. The lack of flexibility in the current algorithm also means it struggles to dynamically adjust to changing priorities or unique circumstances each year, limiting its capacity to effectively respond to and reflect the evolving goals of the Caltech community. As IHC Chair, to solve this issue, I plan to push to incorporate input from the houses themselves into the algorithm. House input can provide valuable insights into the unique culture, preferences, and priorities of each house, enabling the algorithm to make more informed placements that consider not just individual prefrash preferences but also the broader objectives of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This approach would allow for adjustments that reflect the evolving composition and goals of the houses, fostering a more balanced and inclusive community that aligns with Caltech's mission.

**Extending the SFC:** I've seen firsthand the profound impact that both academic and non-academic factors have on the student experience. One of the big surprises I discovered is that there are very few faculty members directly involved with the non-academic aspects of student life. Yet, at least recently, there has been a significant number of faculty members calling for changes that pertain to certain issues of student life that are not directly related to academic ones, such as the calls to change the admissions pro-

cess and how honor code violations are handled. The current status quo shows a critical gap in our educational ecosystem, leading to overlooked issues that significantly impact student welfare and academic success. These issues include, but are not limited to: mental health, extra-curriculars, diversity and inclusion, and student-faculty interaction outside the classroom. To address these challenges, I propose an expansion of the upcoming Student Faculty Conference (SFC) to encompass a wider array of topics, strategically dividing the conference into two separate dates dedicated to academic and non-academic issues, respectively. The inclusion of non-academic topics on a distinct day will encourage more faculty to engage with issues directly affecting student well-being and success outside the academic realm. It will create a structured opportunity for faculty to contribute to and understand the complexities of student life, fostering a more inclusive, supportive, and engaged campus environment. This approach not only aims to bridge the gap between students and faculty but also offers a platform for collaborative problem-solving on issues that matter most to the student body. My commitment, if elected as IHC Chair, is to champion this expanded SFC format, promoting a more holistic, engaged, and responsive academic community at Caltech.

**Implementing the C3 Report Recommendations & Follow Up:** During the spring term of my freshman year, the Caltech Co-Curricular Group (C3) Final Report was released. The report directly highlighted the shortcomings of the student experience at Caltech. The most notable finding is that between 2017 and 2019, the percentage of respondents that disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, "Administrators at [Caltech] are genuinely concerned about my welfare," increased from 26% to 51%. Personally, from my experience, administrators treat students like they have to be managed. They have been imposing their own moral values, while claiming them as institute values, [MG8] on student life rather than being an advocate for the students and respecting student values. I've even overheard administrators refer to undergraduate students as "adolescents," which I find to be disrespectful and demeaning. This survey and accounts like my own have resulted in the formation of the Committee on House Assessment, Support, and Experience. A committee to follow up on these findings in the C3 report. I trust the people facilitating the work of the committee. As IHC Chair, I will actively engage with the facilitators of the CHASE committee, ensuring that the student perspective is accurately represented and prioritized in their findings and recommendations. My aim will be to facilitate a productive dialogue between the committee and the student body, advocating for changes that genuinely improve student life and address the concerns highlighted in the C3 report. By working closely with the committee, I will strive to ensure that the actions taken by Student Affairs and other areas of Caltech as a result from the CHASE Committee truly reflect the needs and values of students, foster-

ing a more supportive and respectful campus environment. **Forward:** To wrap up, I want to emphasize the practical aspects of what I'm proposing as your next IHC Chair and ASCIT Vice-President of Non-Academic Affairs. My focus is clear: continue efforts to reform the room-picks process to make it fair for everyone, push to overhaul the rotation algorithm to better reflect our community's diversity by incorporating house input, and extend the Student Faculty Conference to cover the non-academic issues that deeply affect our lives here at Caltech. These are necessary steps to improve our campus life, and I have the experience and the relationships to make them happen. Addressing the recommendations from the C3 Report and working with the CHASE committee is about ensuring our voices are heard and respected. It's about making sure administrators see us as partners in improving student life, not just problems to be managed. I'm asking for your vote to make real, meaningful changes that will benefit all of us. I've shown what I can do in my previous roles, and I'm ready to take on these challenges head-on. Let's work together to make Caltech a place where we all feel supported, valued, and heard. Thank you for considering me as your candidate. I'm ready to get to work, and I hope you'll join me in making these changes a reality.

If you have any questions, concerns, or just want to say hello, I'm usually hanging out in the Ricketts Lounge, or you can reach out through Messenger or Discord Jbookero53#9278.



EVAN PORTNOI (FLEMING AY'25)

To my dearest constituents, My name is Evan Portnoi. I am a junior Flem studying astrophysics, and I am running to be your next IHC Chair. Over my time at Caltech, I have taken pride in helping to run events rather than just participate. I've always preferred to ensure that other students' experiences come before my own, from sacrificing my time as a waiter during rotations to being on Orange Watch during inter-houses. My goal as IHC Chair is essentially to do that on a larger scale. You have elected your presidents and chancellors because they know how to advocate for your best interests; I just want to facilitate their goals and make working with the administration as seamless as possible.

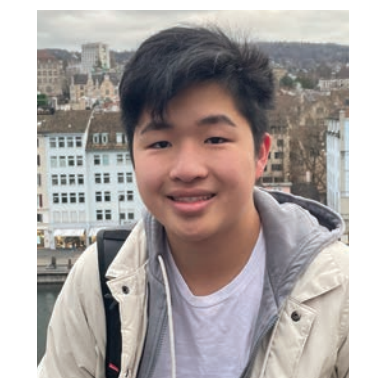
From attending IHC meetings, I know that I can work well with the other members of the committee. For example, current IHC Chair and next year's (likely) ASCIT President Sophie Elam and I have been brainstorming an entirely new way to handle room picks so people no longer feel the need to unaffiliate and improve Bechtel odds. On top of that, I have plenty of leadership experience from my time as a tour guide with the Admissions Office and a member of the men's basketball team. Because of that, I am very comfortable leading IHC meetings and can communicate clearly with administration, and I've developed the organizational and time management skills that are essential for this position.

At this point, my personal statement is already getting a bit too long. And while I could end it here, I do think it's important to discuss some long-term plans for the campus. As we all know, the climate crisis feels like a runaway train, and we need an immediate answer for renewable resources. The answer, my friends, is quite simple. The old monkey labs under Braun are empty since their move to UCLA, so the space is open for us to finally harness zombie power. With a simple brain on a stick, we put them in a hamster wheel contraption. We all know the undead never tire, so let's make them never tire for us.

While that seems great, you may want something that will tangibly benefit you. That is why I promise a free pony for every Caltech student. On a campus of this size, forcing us to walk to class is nothing short of criminal behavior, and an obligatory horse is the least that the administration can do for us.

The only issue is the chaos brought on by the influx of animals. In my lengthy career in enforcing societal order, the only way to ensure a high degree of moral hygiene is with a high degree of oral hygiene. I will be enacting a mandatory toothbrushing policy, and any cavities found will result in Al-led imprisoned in the zombie labs. Join me, my dear constituents, and we can finally make Caltech ok again.

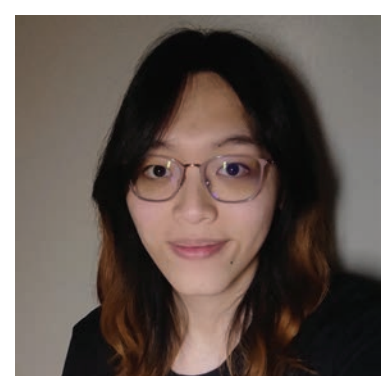
### BOC CHAIR (2 CANDIDATES)



BRYAN WANG (LLOYD CHE '25)

Hey there! My name is Bryan Wang, and I'm running to be your next BoC Chair. Over the past year as Lloyd BoC rep, I have sat many cases, and throughout all these cases, I have demonstrated my integrity and my impartiality. In the past year, we have seen faculty waver in their belief of the Honor Code through more in person exams and quizzes, more no-collab questions, and stricter extension policies.

As BoC chair, I want to help rebuild faculty's faith in us as a community and help keep the BoC a student-run organization. The Honor Code is a crucial part of the Caltech community. It allows us to have after-hours access to buildings, lenient extension policies, and take-home exams, among several other benefits. With your support, I am committed to accomplishing these goals and serving as your next BoC chair.



BELLE CHEN (BLACKER/DABNEY MS '26)

Hiya everyone! My name is Belle Chen and I'm a s'more running for BoC Chair and Secretary. Over the past year serving as Blacker's (only) BoC representative, I have sat on 12 of the 20 cases: twice the required amount and more than any other representative. Additionally, I have participated in numerous discussions with BoC leadership and admin to improve how the BoC functions and to ensure that it remains fair to everybody. I believe this experience has provided me a unique perspective and appreciation for the BoC and its inner workings, and I am ready to step up and play an even larger role within it.

I believe that honor code affords us many of the few nice things we have at Caltech, and it pains me to say that trust in BoC leadership, I hope to work towards restoring this trust through improvements to the BoC's function and image. There are admittedly shortcomings to the BoC process, and I hope to make a number of internal improvements to smooth these out, including an overhaul of the BoC representative training process. Additionally, I hope to make the BoC process more transparent through the availability of information concerning BoC procedures, along with more data and statistics concerning BoC rulings. Finally, I will use these changes, along with redoubled efforts of community outreach, to advocate for the efficacy and necessity of the BoC to admin and faculty. I would be honored to serve within BoC leadership and would strongly appreciate your vote.

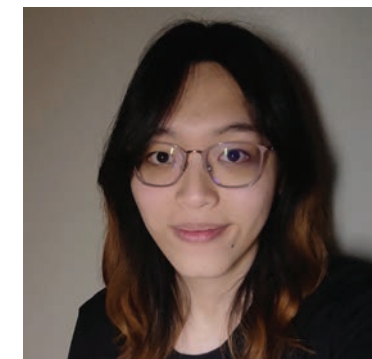
### BOC SECRETARY (2 CANDIDATES)



GIULIA MURGIA (FLEMING AY '26)

Hello everyone! I'm Giulia Murgia, a sophomore studying Astrophysics, and I'm running to be your next BoC Secretary. Throughout my time at Caltech, I have gained an appreciation for the privileges and communal trust associated with the Honor Code. The current system is something unique to Caltech and as the next BoC Secretary I would work to protect and uphold the academic integrity of the student body. In the past year, I've proudly represented Fleming House on the BoC, gaining valuable insights into the crucial work that protects our community.

Recently, I've been gaining experience serving as BoC Secretary, and preparing for the role. I believe my dedication, fairness, and experience uniquely position me to best serve the community as BoC Secretary. Feel free to reach out to me by email (gmurgia@caltech.edu) if you want to ask me anything or have any questions about the BoC. Thanks for taking the time to read my statement!



BELLE CHEN (BLACKER/DABNEY MS '26)

Hiya everyone! My name is Belle Chen and I'm a s'more running for BoC Chair and Secretary. Over the past year serving as Blacker's (only) BoC representative, I have sat on 12 of the 20 cases: twice the required amount and more than any other representative. Additionally, I have participated in numerous discussions with BoC leadership and admin to improve how the BoC functions and to ensure that it remains fair to everybody. I believe this experience has provided me a unique perspective and appreciation for the BoC and its inner workings, and I am ready to step up and play an even larger role within it.

I believe that honor code affords us many of the few nice things we have at Caltech, and it pains me to say that trust in the honor code and between students in general is at an all-time low. As a member of BoC leadership, I hope to work towards restoring this trust through improvements to the BoC's function and image. There are admittedly shortcomings to the BoC process, and I hope to make a number of internal improvements to smooth these out, including an overhaul of the BoC representative training process. Additionally, I hope to make the BoC process more transparent through the availability of information concerning BoC procedures, along with more data and statistics concerning BoC rulings. Finally, I will use these changes, along with redoubled efforts of community outreach, to advocate for the efficacy and necessity of the BoC to admin and faculty. I would be honored to serve within BoC leadership and would strongly appreciate your vote.

### CRC CHAIR (1 CANDIDATE)



MELISSA FOSTER (DABNEY BI '26)

The Honor Code is one of the most important parts of life at Caltech. It's the reason we can have take-home exams and leave things in lounges and expect them to be there the next day. It's been a privilege to be

part of a community where we have this kind of trust, and I'd like to contribute to upholding it as CRC co-chair. The CRC is integral to the functioning of the Honor Code, as is the collaboration and trust between the students, faculty, and administrators who serve on it. As co-chair I aim to continue to maintain that trust and collaboration and advocate for a fair, equitable response to honor code violations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at mfofoster@caltech.edu. Thank you!

### TECH EDITOR (1 TICKET)



MICHAEL GUTIERREZ (DABNEY/RICKETTS AY '25)

Hi friends!

Howdy enemies!

This is my 15th issue as Tech editor, and boy howdy, so much has happened since March 3, 2023. It's hard to believe it's been almost a year since I've had a single scrap of free time! Yes, it hasn't been easy resurrecting the Tech from its two-year shallow grave with my bare hands, but it's been such a rewarding process. A labor of love.

As a former Dabney Hovse Athman, I know how hard it can be to get people to do stuff. This skill came in very handy when trying to coerce people into writing articles for the Tech as a Managing Editor this past year.

As a current Tech Editor, I know how much work it is to pull together an issue every two weeks. This skill came in very handy when procrastinating on all my other responsibilities.

(in unison) So that's why we've decided to run together to be your co-Editors for The California Tech Vol. CXXVIII!

I'm qualified for this position because I am capable of writing at least 5 words. I know so many words; the best words; nobody else knows better words than I. Unfortunately I can't read, but luckily my co-Tech Editor can, so it should balance out.

I'm qualified for this position because I am capable of reading and writing English, I passed my frosh hums, and I'm best friends with Caltech's Vice President of Student Affairs Kevin Gilmartin. Unfortunately I was born with my heart a few shades too light, so there's this ever-so-slight tinge of irony or even irreverence in everything I write, which gets mistaken a lot for being unprofessional. Luckily, the degree to which you take life seriously is a gauge of freedom of the universe, so it should balance out.

As proof of my commitment to both the role and the bit, I would like to demonstrate my

skills by writing a brief poem about the news.

O news!  
O journalism!  
O how I long for thee,  
Your tender embrace of soft paper informing me of happenings.  
Your pages so sterile I could deliver a baby in them  
Your breaking news and your satire alike  
How I mourn your loss when you are not there  
When there are stories unreported  
When the writers are not writing  
I crave you, I desire you (carnally), I long for you  
So I write this ode to thee, this sonnet (not), this love poem  
In the hope that I can help you thrive

Help your pages flow with the blood of your kind (tnk)  
Help keep you alive

M: As proof of my commitment to both the role and the bit, I present to you two gifts: 1) the rest of this issue of the Tech, and 2) the 50% late penalty on my unfinished Ph 106b problem set.

M+L: (in unison) Goodbye! So long! And as always, WRITE FOR THE TECH!

# VOTE HERE!!!

## Election Day is March 4, 2024

Voting Opens at 10:00 AM  
Voting Closes at 11:59 PM



<https://donut.caltech.edu/1/surveys>

## Vote Early Vote Often Vote NO!

## Corporate Democracy

As proof of my commitment to both the role and the bit, I would like to demonstrate my

MACH 33: The Festival of New Science-Driven Plays at Caltech

# AXIOMS

Written by Aubrey Clyburn / Directed by Kevin Delin

Math is easy. People are not.

March 1, 2024 @ 7:00pm  
Frautschi Hall  
Hameetman Center, Caltech  
(above the Red Door Cafe)

Caltech THEATER

MACH 33: The Festival of New Science-Driven Plays at Caltech

# FIVE DEGREES ABOVE POLARIS

Written by Karen Howes / Directed by Adam Lustick & Maggie Marion

The only thing harder than discovering a comet is getting credit for it -- a comedy about an astronomer, a priest, and a revolutionary

March 2, 2024 @ 3:00pm  
Frautschi Hall  
Hameetman Center, Caltech  
(above the Red Door Cafe)

Caltech THEATER

MACH 33: The Festival of New Science-Driven Plays at Caltech

# SPACE

Written by L M Feldman / Co-Created & Directed by Larissa Lury

At the dawn of two different Space Races, a group of 7 women traverse time, Newtonian physics, and U.S. governments to reach for a radical re-start.

March 2, 2024 @ 7:00pm  
Frautschi Hall  
Hameetman Center, Caltech  
(above the Red Door Cafe)

Caltech THEATER

### Meme Spotlight: @therealcaltechedu

therealcaltechedu WAKE UP ITS GLITCH DAY

therealcaltechedu In this economy??



## The Inside World

In Page House, we've had an interesting past two weeks. We had a laser tag event where Pageboys competed against each other while enjoying pizza and snacks. We just cleared out the piano room and are preparing it for renovations for either an art room or expanded kitchen. Furthermore, we just appointed new excomm and new social and ath teams, and are looking forward to a new year with this amazing team. As with any other week, we've been having happy hours every Friday, relaxing with each other after a long week of classes.



The past few weeks in Fleming has been filled with many fun festivities and events. After a successful turnover following elections, our newest Soc Team ran a splendid Wine and Candlelight, an event that has been an annual occurrence in Fleming for many decades. Other than that, our new Ath Team has led us to victories thus far in Interhouse Volleyball, a group of flems received construction training as we begin to prepare for our interhouse, and we are excited for the year ahead with our new excomm!

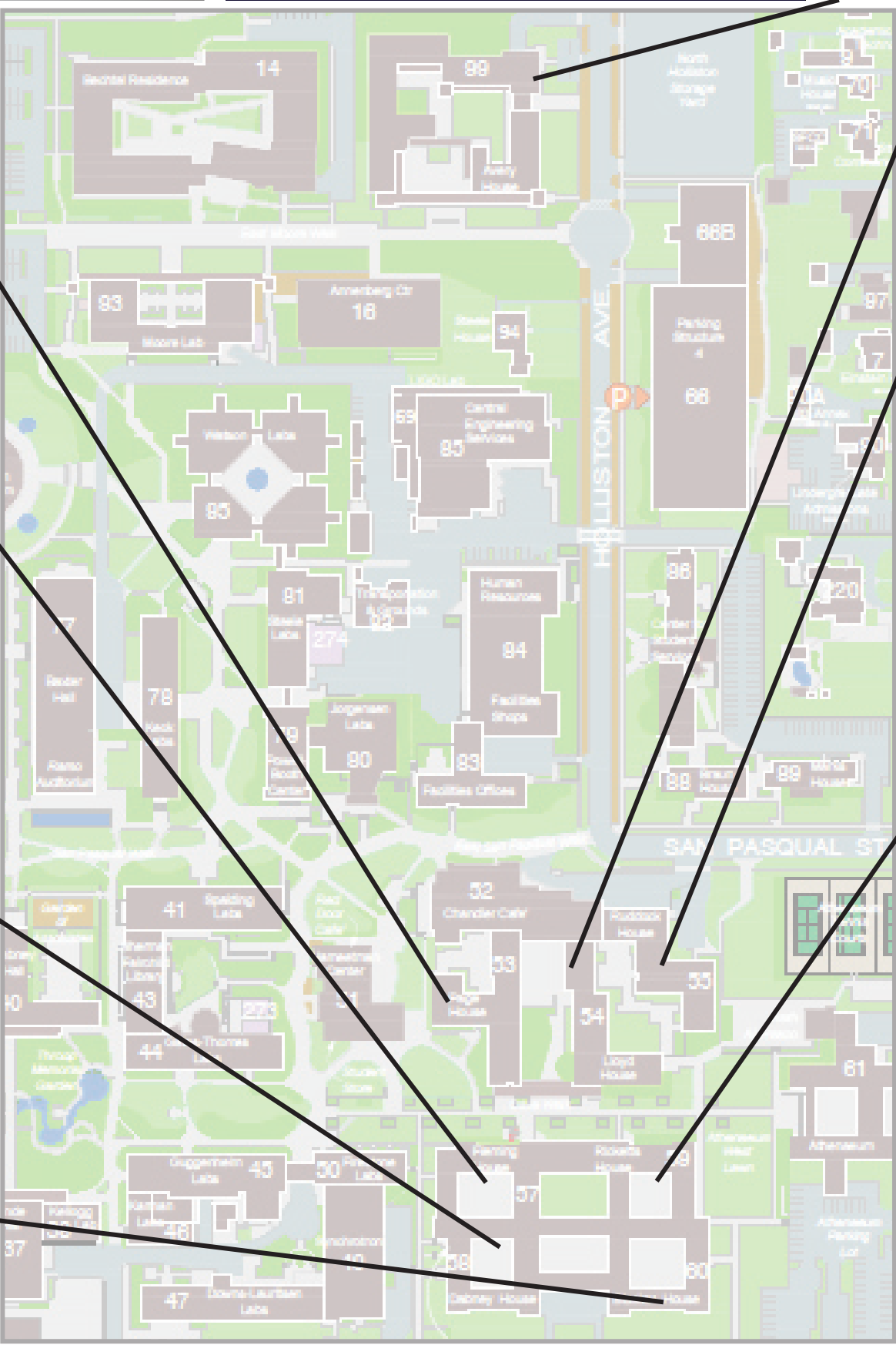
This week, Dabney House hosted our annual interhouse party! Our theme this year was "Dabney's Ecliptic Interhouse." We built a geodesic dome (decorated as an observatory from the outside and a planetarium from the inside); cooked lots of space-themed food; and painted a steampunk zeppelin mural. Alongside, we had our traditional ball pit and a fabric maze with many small, custom rooms from darbs. We had a lot of fun, and we hope you all did as well!



this past week we had karaoke night yesterday, and we played crew with dabney during their travelling dinner

weve also had a shit ton of movie screenings the past two weeks (parasite, la la land, lord of the rings, everything everywhere all at once, the imitation game)

also last week we had our valentines event where all the moles write something nice to each other and include gifts, and the weekend before that some moles also went to death valley to see the lake there



In Avery House, we've been preparing for SURF applications, with SURF proposal workshops for the past two weeks with snacks from H-Mart. Two weeks ago, we also celebrated Lunar New Year with Lloyd and Venerable. Egg rolls and gyoza were provided by Tom Mannion. We also had a variety of popular Asian snacks such as shrimp crackers, Hello Panda, and Chocorooms. Our Faculty in Residence are still hosting amazing events. Their spring event two weeks ago included a coffee cart, fortune teller, and V-day activities. We were able to get a barista drink, make a valentine, and see into our futures. We also hosted Avery Tea Time where we sipped on a selection of quality hot teas and munched on some delicious snacks and pastries.

In Lloyd, we just had a Frosh-Senior Valentine's Day brunch. Lloyd smores and juniors cooked and served for the seniors and the frosh. We made sausages, hash browns, waffles, with an assortment of jams and syrups. Two weeks ago, we also celebrated Lunar New Year with Venerable and Avery. We also held a formal dinner, where all the Lloydies showed up in their finest attire and all looked stunning.

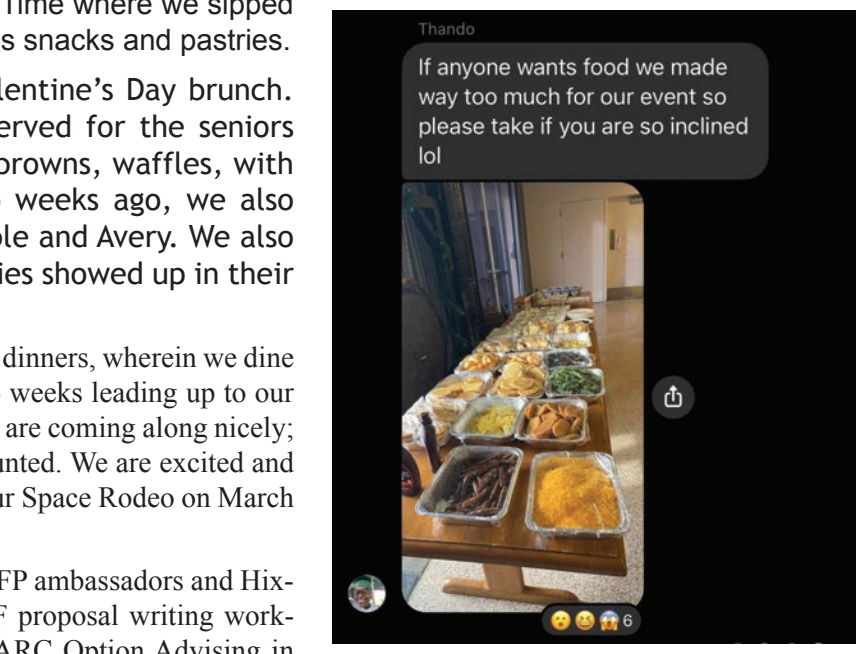
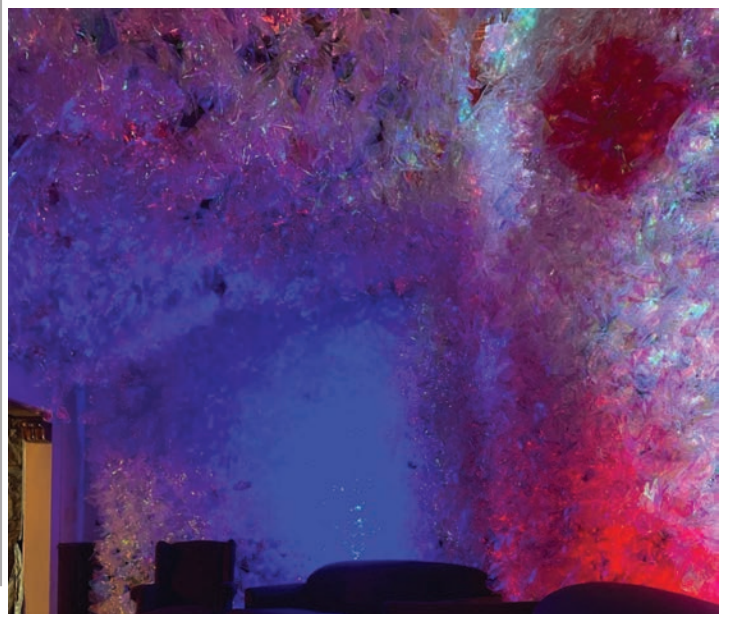
Last week saw the start of Venerable's traveling dinners, wherein we dine with a new House every weeknight for the two weeks leading up to our Interhouse, OPI. On that note, OPI preparations are coming along nicely; wallboards are painted and floorboards are mounted. We are excited and ready to welcome Caltech Undergraduates to our Space Rodeo on March 2nd at 10 PM!

Venerable also saw a productivity spike, with our in-house SFP ambassadors and Hixon Writing Center tutors joining forces to organize a SURF proposal writing workshop. A myriad of students also lent their expertise at the ARC Option Advising in conjunction with Registration Day.

Last but not least, this past weekend was a testament to the excellence of the Caltech performing arts. Several Vens took the stage in orchestra concerts and theatre productions, only outnumbered by their supportive Venerable peers in the audience.

It has been heartening to see the passion of The People (□) in action, as well as to connect with Houses across campus. We're excited to see everyone at OPI!

In Ricketts, we just hosted our interhouse two weeks ago. It was a great night, and I'm glad that everyone was able to see the hard work we placed into making it happen. Dabney and Venerable also visited us on the same night for their traveling dinners, and we extended the invitation to the rest of the houses.





# ARC Tips of the Week:

Sign up for Student-Faculty Dodgeball this Friday!

Find CS 3 Groups & Sections!



## The Roots of PBU at Caltech

Taylor Knapp  
Opinion

When I sat down with Elena Priesen-Reis, a 2nd-year graduate student in Material Science, to discuss Plant-Based Universities (PBU) at Caltech, one word frequently reappeared: "community". Elena brought the idea of PBU from her experiences at her undergraduate institution, the University College London (UCL). Over this year, she has spearheaded the PBU effort under the Graduate Student Council Sustainability Committee.

The global PBU initiative began with the idea that student activism and radicalism have driven some of the most drastic sustainability changes. For example, some of the first institutions to divest from fossil fuels were universities through student-driven petitions. PBU hopes to achieve the same effect through university-student-driven initiatives on divestment from animal agriculture. Animal Rising is the larger, UK-based organization that houses the PBU campaign. The parent organization focuses on tackling climate change by reconnecting humans with animals by encouraging institutions to transition to 100% plant-based catering and dining products. Their resonating mission is to enact "change through campaigns that build social pressure to tackle the animal, nature, and climate emergencies and create a better world for all life."

While there are likely to be around 100 PBU campaigns globally by the end of the 2023-2024 academic year, there are only 3 active campaigns in the US, with Caltech leading the

charge. The other two chapters are Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts, and Columbia University in New York City. Elena emphasized that while there aren't many chapters in the US yet, the support and guidance she received from the PBU overhead leadership has been astounding and helpful in getting Caltech's chapter off the ground. She also mentioned being in a group chat with the leads of the other US chapters.

Not only has PBU at Caltech gotten off the ground this year, but they have already had smash-hit events and seen marked changes in Caltech dining. The PBU Launch event on 30 January had over 300 attendees, so many that an additional round of food had to be ordered from Veggie Grill. Veggie Grill is a vegan restaurant on Lake Street that serves a variety of options that are almost indistinguishable from their non-plant-based counterparts. Elena emphasized how wonderful the staff at Veggie Grill were to work with and how eager they were to show up for PBU's Launch Event when the initial catering plan fell through on the day of the event. When Elena went into Veggie Grill after the event to get dinner for herself, she found they were cleaned out of food from pouring everything they had into supporting the plant-based Caltech event.

This kindness and investment from members of the plant-based community is something that came up frequently in Elena and my conversation about connecting Caltech and the larger plant-based community. At another recent event, the GSC Champagne and Chocolate Night, the snacks offered



were almost entirely plant-based. The charcuterie (usually an extremely difficult item to make entirely plant-based) was provided enthusiastically by local plant-based butchershop Maciel's. Caltech's Undergraduate Vegan Dessert Club provided part of the desserts for this event, with the other part baked by Elena. Following this event, the GSC plans to make their events at least 50% plant-based. Both events share the same message: the plant-based community shows up for each other.

In a recent poll from the GSC, they found that over 1/6 of the graduate community is vegan or vegetarian, and at least 60% would like to see more plant-based options on campus. True to its vision to act as a liaison between the Caltech students and dining services, PBU began discussions with Caltech Dining to increase the number of plant-based options offered in Browne, Broad, and Red Door. PBU was met with enthusiasm because Caltech Dining had unsuccessfully attempted to pilot Meatless Monday a few years ago. Caltech Dining recounted that students were not entirely aware of why Meatless Mon-

day was implemented. Elena expressed Dining's excitement that PBU could act as the "voice and connection to students" to communicate the sustainability significance of an event such as Meatless Monday or any other changes implemented by Caltech Dining to improve plant-based options.

Since this dialogue has begun, Browne has opened a plant-based station at Browne with a dedicated chef. The plant-based station is part of a push, alongside implementing oat milk as a default milk option at Red Door, to make the most convenient option the sustainable option. "This is why the link with Caltech Dining is crucial," Elena said. "Personal change of the students as a result of our efforts is absolutely amazing and what we strive for, but the big change that we want to see is Caltech itself choosing more wisely what it invests in. What is served on campus is a reflection of Caltech's tolerable and agrees with in terms of investment." There has also been feedback from undergraduates about increasing the plant-based options for students who are heavily reliant on the variety of options

available at on-campus dining. The meal plan is rigid for plant-based undergrads and "not very plant-forward" so this is yet another change PBU hopes to undertake in the future. Any university is an extremely powerful place, as we've seen in the incredible brainpower at work each day on Caltech's campus. Particularly for a place such as Caltech, a very sustainability-oriented institution, PBU sits at an optimal location to foster discussions and education about its mission. PBU hopes to bring in a speaker soon to tap into this quality of Caltech. Going forward, PBU hopes to continue their passionate petition for a plant-based Caltech from the research and science-driven direction we all can align with as future scientists ourselves.

For more information about the PBU initiative, check out plantbaseduniversities.org. For more information about PBU at Caltech and information about future events, check out their Instagram: @pbulcaltech. For Elena's extensive (and delicious) library of vegan recipes on a student budget, check out her Instagram: @chefelena.

## Movie Review: The Boy and the Heron

Danela Lira-Perez  
Culture

(Note: spoilers ahead, brief mention of self-harm)

Coming out of retirement once again, Miyazaki's latest film *The Boy and the Heron* is wonderfully filled with themes of love, grief, and accepting change. Fans of Studio Ghibli are no stranger to different film's use of vibrant colors and mystical elements, as seen in *Howl's Moving Castle*, *My Neighbor Totoro*, and *Spirited Away* just to name a few. As with much of his work, Miyazaki's own life inspired parts of *The Boy and the Heron*. We follow the story of Mahito Maki after an unexpected event sends him away from Tokyo into the countryside during war. Once at his new home, a gray heron flies close to him as if it were welcoming him, something out of the ordinary. Struggling with the abrupt changes in his life,

Mahito injures himself, taking a rock to his head. Unbeknownst to him, this sets off his adventure. With the heron by his side, Mahito traverses across new lands and meets all sorts of characters: the cute Warawara that look like marshmallows with arms and feet, Himi, a girl with magical fire powers, and human-sized carnivorous parakeets just to name a few. But his adventure isn't without purpose. Mahito's on the search to find his mother.

As the movie progresses, we see Mahito's character embrace one of the crucial themes of the movie: how one lives. In the beginning, Mahito's grief is obvious and as a result, leads to him being distant from his new environment. It's difficult for him to accept his new reality, even more so when he's thrown into a realm of magic. His character's defensiveness and wariness of others he meets makes it difficult for him to navigate a new world. But as he searches

for his mother, he's inevitably forced to work with those by his side, eventually forming friendships. Though these bonds were formed out of necessity, a genuine connection is evident. Moreover, Mahito transforms from a reserved person to someone bold, brave, and certain of his choices.

Setting aside the themes, the movie's visuals are dreamlike. Human-sized carnivorous parakeets, a half-man half-heron, a world balanced on a few building blocks, and magical stones felt like watching a dream awake. Everything happened all at once somehow, and yet, it made sense. The movie does a wonderful job guiding the viewer from an ordinary world to a world that's just so nonsensical at times.

If you have about two hours to spare, want something intriguing, and don't mind weird visuals, *The Boy and the Heron* is a great watch.



## Rain: Secrets from a Brit (Who's Seen it All)

William Feasey  
Humor

When I pinged off my Caltech grad application, a little over a year ago, it started something like: *I am passionate about applying to the California Institute of Technology in order to escape the effing rain.*

I herald from a small, mountain-ridden, Jet stream-bitten island, quite far East of our Californian Eden. Such topographical (mis)-fortune means that Brits are a little more accustomed to the weather of late than many of you West Coast folk. If I had a buck for every time someone had asked me whether I felt more at home among the inclement weather of late, I could probably feed myself for a year on Mongolian grill alone. The only floor I see in such a plan being the propensity of Browne dining hall food boxes to disintegrate under the influence of their own grease and so how it might survive being carried under the incessant rain beats me. The recurrence of such conversations made me realise there might be a market for some rain-counselling from a battle-hardened veteran like me and so we are.

A recent New York Times article informed me that a frequent refrain of Californians is that their state has three seasons, wildfire, earthquake and flood. Without wanting to sound like an Earth, Wind & Fire tribute band, there is definitely something in the fact that steady sun is the norm, and beyond that, hell is let loose upon our Golden State. We are so addicted to this norm that our brains, our sports centres, our graduate student accommodations blocks, are woefully under prepared to function as soon as the talk of rain is in the air, let alone when actual spherical assemblies of dihydrogen oxide molecules are tumbling

towards you. I was gobsmacked to see life grind to a standstill here on campus: classes cancelled, tennis dates put on hold; the only thing that perked up in activity was my email inbox as emergency alerts came thick and fast reminding me to 'wear shoes with large surface area' and 'avoid quick changes of direction'. Out the window went my plans to practise my tight ballet pirouettes on Beckman lawn. Credit must be given, however, to the newly formed Caltech Rugby Club (*all welcome 6:30pm Wednesdays, Sports Field*), who proved that Caltechers do indeed not dissolve in the rain and enjoyed a wonderful session of touch. Without wanting to sound too much like a doomsday prophet, rain appears to be on the rise out here in LA: February '24 has the all-time rainfall record in its sights, needing only another inch or so in the coming week to place top of the drops, since records began in 1870. 'Unprecedented weather' sadly seems to be the meteorological sentiment of our times. But now it is raining more than ever, I hope to convince you that the future is not as bleak as it might seem by the end of this article.

If it were not already apparent, rain is fundamental to my very being. Despite being a fluid mechanic by trade, I prefer not to dwell on discussions of maximising Gibbs free energy, but rather consider rain as an inexplicable creation of the heavens, to which we mere mortals have nothing to say but 'so-d it' and accepting our sopping fate. In fact, in whatever you currently happen to be reading, I'd wager the author has tactically employed some convenient spout of drizzle in order to dampen the mood, such is the ubiquity of the pathetic fallacy.

One such example can be found in the American classic,

*The Catcher in the Rye*. J. D. Salinger's wonderfully cynical protagonist Holden is met with a freak downpour: 'Boy, it began to rain like a bastard. In buckets, I swear to God'. Like the rest of us, he appeals to some higher authority. He describes the rush of mothers and their children taking shelter under the nearby carousel, much like a stampede of Frosh evacuating their leisurely Red Door lunches as the Heavens begin to let loose. And yet, Holden doesn't move an inch, instead accepting his 'soaking' and embracing feeling 'happy all of a sudden'. A character so determined to never enjoy even an ounce of the new and exciting adult world, 'damn near bawling', at something so inexorable, so simple. The rain gives us perspective, reminds us of our ignorance to much of the world's mechanisms; and provides a periodic reminder (as occasional as that can feel out here) of the power that lies above. Next time you feel a rain coming on, don't think for a moment, just feel; there are scarcely more tactile experiences.

Perspective is one lesson, but patience is quite another. In whatever ancient culture you choose, the flood has always encapsulated a twinned anger and disappointment from the Gods. Recall the story of Noah and the flood he was instructed to navigate, while ensuring the survival of a pair of all the fauna of his green Earth. But from green quite quickly came blue and that was all he saw for 150 days, or 1.78 Caltech terms for those more in tune with the pace of life here. The rain and the flood taught Noah patience.

By my count the LA onslaught of early Feb '24, lasted 72 hours or 0.034 Caltech terms - and frustrating eternity for anyone who could feel water wriggling its way in through the Catalina apartment windows or who's

structure of the play, to be one of the summits in the range of contemporary theatre. I shall not attempt to refrain from invoking the names of... Kafka; Shakespeare; Cranor and Fink; Rhett and Link. Being a huge fan of the aforementioned Jeffrey Cranor and Joseph Fink's *Welcome to Night Vale*, a fiction podcast with an iconic absurdist aesthetic derived from the New York Neo-Futurist theater troupe, I was immediately drawn in by Hound's similarly-spirited oratorical motifs and recurring jokes. Additionally, I wasn't expecting much from the experience. And I was really not expecting to be surprised.

Yes, EXPLICIT's production of British playwright Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound*, directed by Miranda Stewart, was one of the most interesting stories I've experienced IN MY LIFE! Throughout the entire play, my expectations, predictions, and preconceptions were continuously yanked from my hands and thrown into a wood chipper. I was fascinated to learn that Hound was written in the early 1960s. I truly consider its cerebral, absurdist humor, which percolates deep beyond the dialogue down to the very

and subsequently *Welcome to Night Vale*. Dabney Lounge was the perfect venue, and its glowing gold and brown backdrop really allowed costume designer Linda Mugeridge's phenomenal savvy to come into its own. The set design was very effectively executed: it enabled the players to manipulate time as though it were as malleable as space, and the space as though it were as fluid and continuous as time. The card game scenes, already a masterful stroke of dialogue on paper, were cast into four dimensions as the audience realized the second game was a mirror image of the first - spatially, temporally, narratologically, and oratorically. Master cards sharps Cynthia Muldoon (Sahajni Dassanayake), Felicity Cunningham (Arabella Camunez), and Magnus Muldoon (Eitan Levin) truly brought the scenes to life, as their increasingly tense and chaotic poker hands rapidly surpassed mere metaphor status and established themselves as perhaps the most straightforward exposition of what was really going on. Even and especially toward the end when they just start yelling "BINGO!" and throwing cards at each other. But where it really got interesting was around the 30-minute mark, because that's when the play lit the gas on the "who-



only pair of shoes, a formidable pair of Reebok Club Cs, finally caved in and made traversing campus an endless exercise in hopscootch. For once people's pleas were not for their problem sheets to abate, not for this current epoch of politics to step aside, their first instinct was to rid of this god damned rain. It felt like Britain. Yet Noah had all this - 50 fold over - and without reception to watch his daily TikTok bible verse. He sent forth a dove in search of dry land and twice she returned to no avail. Only, on the third time of asking did she return, a fresh olive branch leaf tucked under her wing. Noah knew only then had his rain begun to taper. So the next time the rain begins its cascade and shows no sign of slowing, remember Noah and his TikTok-free patience, the new possibilities of you returning dove, and the freshness of life that follows the flood.

Fast forward and our modern day thought-leaders are still cognisant of the importance of the power and influence of the rain. Notably, Queen Riri made it rain on the Billboard 100 for almost an entire Caltech term (10 weeks at number 1), with her hit single 'Umbrella'. The song is an exposition of Rihanna's commitment and dedication to the relationship, powerfully promising to keep their mutual ship steadfast, no matter what torrents life might

throw their way. A number of practical strategies are presented as means to survive the rains of life. Jay-Z ingeniously suggests 'flying higher than the weather'. The man is operating on an intellectual plane of existence equal to that of even some GalcIt professors; recall Professor Pellegrino's infamous declaration that there are in fact, 'no fluids in space'. Rihanna answers back with one of the most oft-karaoke-ed choruses of the modern age. She provides a dove's hope for the future: 'when the sun shines, we'll shine together', but in the meantime, 'you can stand under my umbrella'. I think it is here Riri highlights the greatest lesson of them all, if you have an umbrella, good for you. If you don't, look around you for someone who might - we the Rihanna Navy are large in number.

Next time you feel yourself getting down as that aggressive yellow, paternalistic emergency banner pops-up, remember what that silly little California Tech article taught you. Try seeking Holden's joy, practise Noah's patience, or just change your weather goal-post and grab your umbrella. Cool, refreshing rain is in vogue here in LA - this is what you came for.



dunit" part. And gaslight it did. With their signature theatrical flourishes laced with double-entendre (at least!), Moon and Birdboot began littering the narrative with red herrings. ("It's Magnus a mile off!" "What's Magnus a mile off?" "If we knew that, we wouldn't be here.") Chekhov's Gun be damned—or so it seemed at first.

I won't attempt much analysis beyond this point because, even after having watched it all three nights, I don't have many coherent thoughts about the second half of the play. At some points it seemed that the actors had given up acting altogether. I suspect this is a common experience among the audience; again, wood chipper. But for me at least, the perpetual state of being confused, of just knowing there's a bigger structure of

truth out there, of craning my neck in hopes of catching another clue or perspective, and all the while laughing aloud at the absurdity of it all - that's what keeps me coming back for more. And that goes for EXPLICIT, Hound, theater, and life in general.

In summary, *The Real Inspector Hound* is a play that concerns itself with the nature of identity. Tom Stoppard has given us... the human condition. And in their first production since 2021, EXPLICIT has taken it and created a real situation, in an evening that will most surely make the angels weep. I truly find the performance to be A SUMMIT IN THE RANGE OF CONTEMPORARY THEATRE. Yes, I believe we are entitled to ask: WHERE IS GOD?

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 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.

An exception to this is Editorials, which are written by Tech staff and represent official opinions of the Tech.

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.

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.

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.

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.

That being said, we realize that some sources are unwilling to reveal their identities publicly when it could jeopardize their safety or livelihood.

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.

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.

Honor Code Applies

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

The California Tech

#7

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 #6 - February 6, 2024

Congrats, you found it!!!

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

george washington hayduke / g3 BBE / 2024-02-06

cconn / g5 pma / 20240215 / that white cup has been there for my whole phd

Editor's Note: We want to hear your perspective!

We strive to represent every voice in the Caltech Community with fairness, accuracy, and impartiality in our news reporting.

Send submissions or contact the Tech editorial team at

tech@caltech.edu

Submissions are due at 12 p.m. on the Saturday before each biweekly Tuesday publication.



That's Amore!

Enric Adillon and Madeline Hicks

