

## ASCIT Board of Directors Announces New Student Life and Experience Conference (SLEC) Alongside 2025 Student Faculty Conference (SFC)

**Jonathan Booker**  
News

The Associated Students of the California Institute of Technology (ASCIT) Board of Directors (BoD) has announced that, for the first time, both the Student Faculty Conference (SFC) and the newly established Student Life and Experience Conference (SLEC) will take place in April 2025. These two conferences, scheduled back-to-back on April 10 and April 11, 2025, in Ramo Auditorium, aim to engage students, faculty, and administrative staff in critical discussions about improving both the academic and non-academic aspects of the Caltech student experience.

### Student Faculty Conference (SFC)

The Student Faculty Conference (SFC), a longstanding tradition at Caltech, will continue its role in fostering academic dialogue between students and faculty. Organized by the ASCIT Vice President of Academic Affairs and Chair of the Academics and Research Committee (ARC), Jeb Brysacz (CS '25, Page), the SFC will focus on issues related to Caltech's curriculum, course structures, and academic policies. Through this conference, students will have the opportunity to present their ideas and collaborate with faculty to shape the future of academic programs at Caltech. This collaborative platform has been essential in maintaining Caltech's academic rigor while ensuring alignment with student needs.

### Student Life and Experience Conference (SLEC)

In response to growing concerns over non-academic aspects of student life, as highlighted in the 2022 Caltech Co-Curricular Group (C3) Final Report, the ASCIT BoD passed a resolution in July 2024 establishing the Student Life and Experience Conference (SLEC). The Board of Directors has appointed ASCIT Treasurer and Senior Class Co-President Jon-

athan Booker (Ph/CS '25, Ricketts) as the chair of the SLEC, which will focus on enhancing student well-being, athletics, diversity, mental health services, and other key aspects of campus life.

The C3 Report revealed significant gaps in student support services, noting that many students felt under-supported in areas such as mental health resources and transitioning to industry careers. Additionally, the report identified disparities in experiences among women and trans-spectrum students, underscoring the need for a more inclusive and supportive environment. The SLEC is designed to address these issues head-on by fostering collaboration between students, faculty, and administrative staff.

### Conference Structure and Committees

Both the SFC and SLEC will feature the same committee structure. This conference structure will feature two special topic committees and multiple standing committees. The standing committees within the SFC will still be dedicated to each academic option; meanwhile, the standing committees will be dedicated to ongoing aspects within the student experience. These standing committees include topics such as the First-Year Experience Committee, which aims to enhance the transition for incoming students; the Housing & Residential Life Committee, which will assess and reform housing policies; and the Health & Wellness Committee, which will evaluate the mental and physical health services available on campus. Other standing committees include the Clubs Committee, the Events Committee, and the Diversity & Inclusion Committee, each focusing on improving key areas of student life and engagement. Both SFC and SLEC will feature 2 special topic committees each. The special topic committees within the SFC are chosen to be broad and all-encompassing, but are limited to topics pertaining exclusively to academics. This year, the SFC

special topics are "Prerequisites" and "The Honor Code". The special topics committees within the SLEC are also chosen to be broad and all-encompassing, but will focus on topics within the student experience that cannot normally be covered by the SFC special topics such as topics that are not academic. This year, the SLEC special topics are "Extracurriculars" and "Campus Relations". For more information on this year's special topics, please visit the SFC and SLEC websites included below.

### Data-Driven Recommendations

Both the SFC and SLEC will rely heavily on data to inform their recommendations. Each committee will conduct surveys, focus groups, and interviews with members of the Caltech community. These surveys, developed in collaboration with the Institutional Research Office and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), will be distributed early in 2025. The results will be used to draft comprehensive reports and presentations, which will be shared during the conferences. The final reports will be publicly released to ensure transparency and accountability in the implementation of recommendations.

### Conference Schedule and Key Dates

The preparation process for both conferences has been underway since April 2024. Each conference organizer has been meeting with relevant administrators throughout this past summer. Currently, co-Chairs for all SFC and SLEC committees are being finalized and the joint SFC and SLEC committee application form will be sent out to undergraduates on October 7th, 2024 and will be open for at least the next week. A joint Board of Directors and Interhouse Committee (IHC) will confirm all SLEC committee appointments while the ARC will confirm all SFC committee appointments. Towards the end of October, there will be a

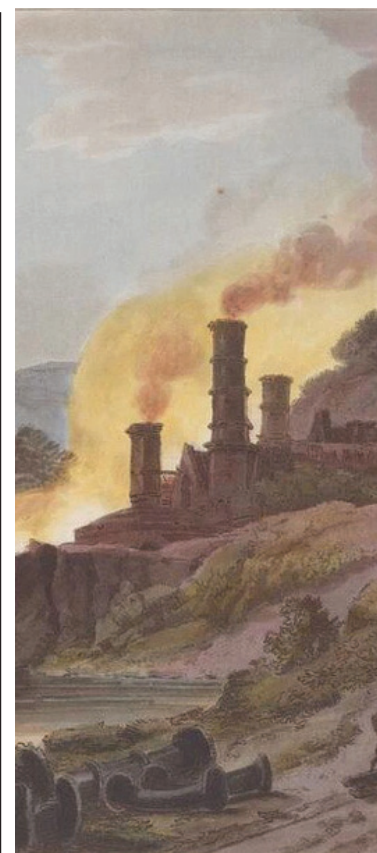
training and a workshop where all committee co-chairs will be required to participate. Discussions to present both conferences to the faculty board are currently in progress. The purpose of the training and workshop will be to prepare all committee co-chairs to lead each committee so that it is not only productive, but to also produce recommendations that are feasible to implement. During the workshop, committee co-chairs will plan out the course that each committee will follow leading up to the conference. Before each conference committees will be required to write a final report and make a presentation to be given at either the SFC or SLEC. As mentioned before, the SFC, which will take place on April 10, 2025, will focus on academic issues, while the SLEC, scheduled for April 11, 2025, will address mostly non-academic concerns. Both conferences will include presentations from each committee, followed by Q&A sessions and community discussions.

The SLEC will close with a community dinner on the Olive Walk, providing an opportunity to celebrate the collaborative efforts made toward improving the holistic student experience at Caltech.

### Get Involved

ASCIT encourages all members of the Caltech community to participate in these important initiatives. Whether you're interested in serving on a committee or contributing your feedback through surveys, your input will help shape the future of student life and academics at Caltech.

For more information or to get involved, visit the SFC website: [sfc.caltech.edu](https://sfc.caltech.edu) or the SLEC website: [slec.caltech.edu](https://slec.caltech.edu). Additionally, feel free to reach out to Jeb Brysacz at [jbrysacz@caltech.edu](mailto:jbrysacz@caltech.edu), Jonathan Booker at [jbooker@caltech.edu](mailto:jbooker@caltech.edu), or Sophie Elam, ASCIT President, at [selam@caltech.edu](mailto:selam@caltech.edu) as well. We are looking forward to working with everyone throughout this next year!



Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg, *Iron Works of Coalbrook Dale in The Romantic and Picturesque Scenery of England and Wales*, 1805. Source: The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens.

## New Exhibition at The Huntington Examines the Environment Through a Historical Lens

**Emily Yu**  
The Outside World

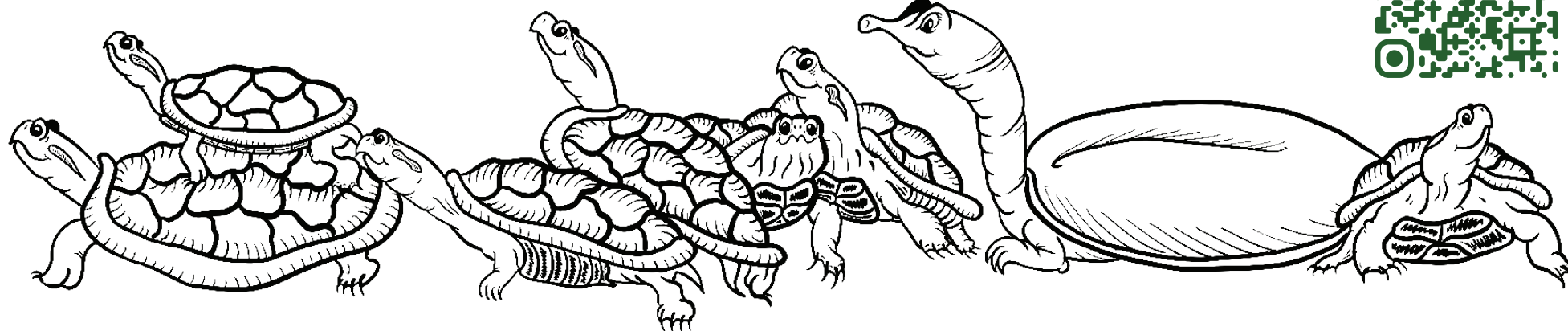
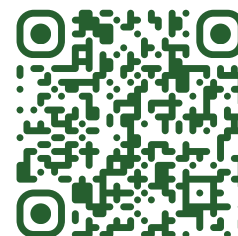
"Storm Cloud: Picturing the Origins of Our Climate Crisis," an exhibition at The Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens, opened on September 14. It explores how the environment was documented during a period of rapid industrialization and globalization.

The name of the exhibition references a series of lectures from 1884 called "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" by John Ruskin, a writer and art critic. In these lectures, Ruskin was apprehensive about the effects of industrial pollution on the sky.

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**Humans of Caltech**

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**Rotation Schedule**

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*Mental Health at Caltech*

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### Huntington Exhibit

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“Storm Cloud” consists of works from the 19th century that show an emerging awareness about the environment, concurrent with the development of Earth sciences and an expansion of human knowledge. These works include the first edition of the International Meteorological Committee’s Atlas international des nuages (International Cloud Atlas). Published in 1896 to encourage the global adoption of a standardized terminology for clouds, the atlas is still in print and was most recently updated in 2017. Another work is Luke Howard’s The Climate of London (1833). Howard collected data, such as water levels and thermometer readings, from London for over a decade and was the first to document the urban heat island effect. The exhibition also features paintings that depict landscapes altered by pollution and deforestation, such as Philippe Jacques de Loutherbourg’s Iron Works of Coalbrook Dale (1805) and Frederic Edwin Church’s Vale of St. Thomas, Jamaica (1867).

Alongside artwork, texts, and photographs, “Storm Cloud” features everyday items from the 19th and 20th centuries. Among these items are two top hats—one made with beaver fur and one made with silk plush—which illustrate a significant ecological shift. For centuries, beavers were hunted for their pelts, nearly leading to their extinction. However, the introduction of silk plush hats in the early 19th century quickly decreased the demand for fur hats, allowing beaver populations to start recovering.

“Artifacts—including rocks, pocket watches, top hats, and textiles—reassert the link between objects of everyday life and the histories of their extraction and production. The exhibition connects fossils and fossil fuels, cotton plantations and the Luddite rebellion,” Karla Nielsen, co-curator of the exhibition and senior curator of literary collections at The Huntington, said in a press release. “By moving from England in the late 18th century to the Western United States in the early 20th, the exhibition covers the coal-powered Steam Age and the emergence of our current petroleum-based economy.”

To establish links between concerns in the 19th century and the current climate crisis, the exhibition showcases a handful of contemporary works, including plant cyanotypes from Leah Sobsey and a video projection of the sky from Los Angeles artist Rebecca Méndez. Certain objects also indicate the atmospheric CO2 levels in parts per million alongside the years they were created, demonstrating the rise in CO2 levels throughout the past couple of centuries. “By exploring the historical origins of our climate crisis, we aim to provide a perspective on the present and galvanize a desire to seek solutions,” Nielsen said. Located in the MaryLou and George Boone Gallery, “Storm Cloud” runs through January 6.

## This week in Tech history... SEPTEMBER 24, 2004 Freshmen Trek to Resort on Lake Arrowhead for Orientation Talks

By ROYAL REINECKE

Approximately 235 new undergraduates arrived on campus this past week in time to be hauled away to the mountains for the annual tradition of Frosh Camp. After being enthused by various professors and administrators during Convocation about what Harry Gray passionately described as our “passion” for math and science here at Caltech, the prefrush scuttled off to catch their buses. They headed to camp toting duffel bags and suitcases, as well as a little nervousness and a lot of anticipation.

When comparing this year’s crop of prefrush to last year’s, sophomore upperclass counselor Yuliya Kuznetsova noted that she saw “more nerdy math t-shirts!” In addition to being more vocal about their interest in math, the prefrush seemed more social on the whole according to Yuliya.

For the first time in Caltech history, the frosh did not need to lug around sleeping bags or pillows. Unlike last year when the prefrush stayed at the woody rugged facilities of Astrocamp, this year the new students were whisked away to the particularly posh Lake Arrowhead Resort.

Not only did frosh find beds to sleep on, but they also discovered that rooms were also equipped with televisions and hair dryers (all devices secondary to a typical Caltech student’s lifestyle). Even the soaps and lotions at the hotel came with tantalizing titles like “relaxing sea fennel” and “detoxifying kelp.”

Like many other UCC’s who attended frosh camp in previous years, Yuliya definitively commented that this year’s new locale “really beats Astrocamp!” despite lamenting the lack of telescopes and opportunities to participate in outdoorsy activity. Joey Mouss-

aooui, a prefrush from Morocco, exclaimed that outside was “so cold, too cold!” –a feeling shared by a number of prefrush.

On top of receiving the usual five plus meals and snacks served at frosh camp, this year’s food proved exceedingly tasty, hopefully helping to give the prefrush a little bit of the babying (and home-cookin’, mmm) they most likely were receiving prior to leaving their homes just a few days before. When asked her favorite part of frosh camp, transfer student Ekua Anane-Fenin of Ghana just pointed at the food with satisfaction.

At the same time, various talks introduced the prefrush to a number of the topics—from academics to rotation—which they will soon face at Caltech. Upperclass

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## Elite Engineers Wanted

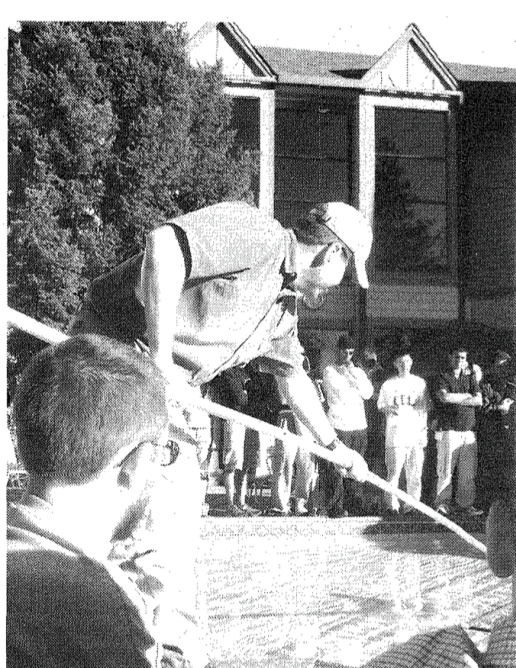
Space Exploration Technologies (SpaceX) is looking for superlative engineering talent to revolutionize human and robotic space exploration.

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- Avionics & guidance
- Fairing
- Launch operations

The company was founded in June 2002 and now, only two years later, we have a rocket on

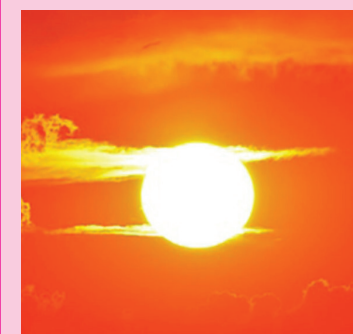


Besides being a great cabana boy, the talented Tom Mannion will take on the position of Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs for Campus Life.

### Songs To Survive a Heatwave To (Spotify)



### Songs To Survive a Heatwave To (Apple Music)



# Songs to Survive a Heatwave To

Sophie Elam Culture

The academic year is here, and with it, a playlist to remind you why you can be glad summer is over! As many of you may be aware (some of you probably much more than you’d like to be), numerous parts of the world experienced intense heat waves over the past few months. Just a few weeks ago in LA, temps soared into triple digits for days. The playlist for this edition of The Tech compiles songs to take you back to those toasty days so you can either (A) relive the joy and lack of responsibility of the summer or (B) remember how suffocatingly hot the summer is and be grateful that it’s over. In either case, hopefully you enjoy the following songs:

1. Indian Summer (HOAX)
2. F\*\*k June (Half Young)
3. July (HUNNY)
4. Heatwaves (Glass Animals)
5. Heatstroke (Khalid)
6. Texas Sun (Khruangbin & Leon Bridges)
7. Hot (Cigarettes After Sex)
8. I Burned LA Down (Noah Cyrus)

9. Smoke & Fire (Sabrina Carpenter)
10. HOT TO GO (Chappell Roan)
11. Burnin’ Up (Jonas Brothers)
12. So Hot That it Hurts (VOILA)
13. Sweatshirts in the Summer (DOUBLECAMP)
14. Melt (Quinn XCII)
15. Broken Summer (DJ Snake ft. Max Frost)
16. Bonus Song: Fire (Official UEFA EURO 2024 Song)

Hot takes from the weatherman:

Disclaimer: I’m particularly opinionated about the songs on this Volume of “Songs to do Something To”, starting with Indian Summer by the band HOAX. I’m still trying to figure out how common this is, but in Southern Oregon (where I’m from), we are very well acquainted with the phrase “Indian Summer”; the lingering effects of summer weather that reaches into September and October to extend the warm, dry season. Personally, I love a good Indian Summer (you get to see all the leaves change colors without the bite of the cold!), although some of the hottest days of the year pop up

during these autumn heatwaves (like those we saw in Pasadena at the beginning of the month). Thus, it only seemed fitting that this indie-pop banger lead off the playlist for us.

Next, I want to take a second to acknowledge Heatwaves and explain myself. Was it overplayed? Yes. But is it still a phenomenal song with vibes that perfectly convey a sunsick mirage fever dream? Absolutely. Case in point.

On the other hand, Heatstroke might be one of my favorite songs of the summer. In some ways, it reminds me of Feels Like Summer by Childish Gambino (as featured on the Volume 3 Playlist) seeing that they both have heavy R&B elements that are a vehicle for social commentaries on climate change. But what I find particularly compelling about this song is actually the album it’s off of. This summer, Khalid released his fifth album, Sincere. Personally, I was a huge fan of his first three albums, but was less than thrilled by Scenic Drive and some of his more recent singles, so I didn’t have high hopes for his newest release. However, I admit I was completely wrong. Sincere shares similarities with American Teen and Free Spirit that have been missing in Khalid’s

more recent music, while adding the depth that comes with the maturity of being seven years older.

Lastly, let’s talk about the stretch of songs featuring our Disney Stars and girl bosses. Noah Cyrus (Miley’s little sister) always impresses me with her unique and eclectic music. From dance to folk, she’s pursued a variety of genres with I Burned LA Down being a phenomenal singer/songwriter ballad that I was thrilled to include on “Songs to Survive a Heatwave To”. In my mind, she’s a complete girlboss, which leads me to HOT TO GO and Smoke & Fire, songs penned by other girl bosses absolutely dominating the music industry at the moment. To begin with, I felt like it would be sacrilegious of me not to include Chappell Roan (particularly a song with the word “hot” in the title) on a playlist meant to evoke summer nostalgia, seeing that she basically took over the world over the course of the season. The only person who could possibly challenge her dominance as the pop princess of the year would be none other than Sabrina Carpenter. So I threw on Smoke & Fire, a song from her early career, which is honestly still a banger if you ask me. With all of this Disney child-star energy, I also felt obligated

to include Burnin’ Up, so for all my Jonas Bros fans out there, this one’s for you.

Bonus: While the Olympics were the summertime entertainment for many of us during the later half of the break, it’s worth remembering that the UEFA cup made for an exciting June and July. I Love how UEFA literally produces songs for their tournaments, and since this one also had an extremely apt title, Fire made the playlist as the 12th man to complete the roster.

With that, welcome back to campus! Hopefully everyone had amazing summers despite any apocalyptic or unpleasant weather conditions, and this playlist gets you through your first few weeks back on campus.

Cheers,  
Your local pyromaniac

## Club Spotlight: Caltech Rugby Club

William Feasey Sport

I’ve always said that playing rugby in America is like being a humanities student at Caltech (we’d know, our interim club Treasurer is an Economist). Caltech has always been a bastion of sporting prowess out on the west coast but times-are-a-changin’. Kevin Gilmartin, VP and Faculty Dean of Students, recently slid into our Outlook DMs to announce a pivot “away from sporting extracurriculars [in] the application process.” Concerned that our sporting heritage might fall to the wayside, a diverse group of Caltech students has set about to avert this crisis and provide a new outlet for those seeking twinned excellence in both body and mind.

Enter Caltech Rugby Club - actively recruiting anyone who can put ‘Caltech Athletics South Field’ into Google Maps at 6:30pm on Wednesdays. Whatever your experience with the egg-shaped game, whether an undergraduate, Professor or everything in between, get yourself down pitchside, run-off some academic steam, and in the meantime read-on while I convince you all that it will be worth your while!

And so what is this rugby I speak of, beyond the ‘relatively violent’ game once alluded to by Taylor Swift? Allow me to cast your mind back to 1845. While one rather large Texas was being admitted to an ever-enlarging United States of America, one rather small school called Rugby, in the slightly larger town of Rugby, on the marginally larger Island of Britain, stood on the cusp of history. A revolution was occurring across the playing fields of England. Fed up with simply being confined to the 2D plane, innova-

tive football players (emphasis on the foot) were beginning to pick up the spherical ball in their hands. It was at that small school, only a few miles down the road from my hometown, that a group of students laid the foundations for the hal-lowed laws of rugby-football. Since then, the sport has grown in both complexity and popularity, yet the core axiom still remains: *thou shall not pass the ball forward*. While you the player is permitted to do just about anything else in open play, one must contend with a series of exotic and immensely intimate group jenga exercises, as soon as a player is tackled or the ball is dropped. *Rucks, mauls, scrums and lineouts* are the less glamorous side to our game but the ability to thrive in the ‘dark arts’ of these grappling contests will earn you the richest respect from your teammates.

Now how this maelstrom fits into the form of a competitive game depends on which version of rugby you happen to be playing. The direct descendant of our quaint 1845 game is known today as Rugby Union, a 15-a-side, 80-minute game, equipped with all the contact trimmings. Rugby League is Union’s little brother, with two less players, and is mandatory viewing for anyone with a Mancunian accent from the north of England. Moving to the wider Rugby family, some may try to pull up a chair for Australian Rules Football to this mostly harmonious Christmas lunch, but for a game remarkably akin to Quidditch played by Kangaroos, I think we can discount it for now. Rugby 7s is the hip and modern iteration of the game, with 7 players per team and two, electric 7-minute halves. The purist might dismiss Rugby 7s as pandering to a genera-

tion cursed with attention-span deficits. And yet, riding off the back of the glorious Parisian Summer Olympics, Rugby 7s has become a brilliant window into our sport. We see this no less than here in the United States, where Women’s Team USA captain, Ilona Maher, has become an internet sensation, boasting an Olympic Bronze Medal and the title of most followed rugby IG account, all in a single summer. Anything more?

All three codes of rugby - Union, League and 7s - simply ask you to score more points than the opposition team, either through means of touching the ball down at the end of the pitch - earning a try - or to kick the ball over the twinned upright posts - a *penalty kick, conversion or drop goal*, depending on context. The astute amongst you might notice similarities with another egg-shaped ball game that shall not be named. The illegitimate child of our beautiful 1845 game has achieved supreme popularity out here but in my lowly opinion, to play rugby is a more arresting experience. While some sports favour specialisms and narrow skill sets, rugby asks the intricacies of both offence and defence to each player. There’s no hiding behind the helmet or the safety of your cannon fodder up front. Physical mismatches are sought and exploited. Just ask 170lb Chrysander Botha starring down a rampaging 265lb Tendai ‘The Beast’ Mtawarira, ready for a full-frontal tackle, with nothing but the pride of a nation as his shield. As my former coach, Danny Rawlins, once wisely mused, ‘rugby is a game of piano pushers and piano players’, but at the end of the day they’re all still dancing to the same keys.

Here at Caltech it’s time to



face the music. Existential threats seem to be the tunes of our age: dust-bowl pitches to inability to water the grass; ever-skyrocketing Sapporo pitcher prices at Aikan Sushi restaurant; Pasadena-based hydrogen fuel-cell solutions struggling to get off the ground because ‘Gas is just too goddamn cheap’. At Caltech Rugby Club, we make it our mission to tackle these issues, and many others, head on. We have a rich Alumni network, quick to advise on the PhD-to-hedge-fund-pipeline, 101 ways to injure your hamstrings, and even fence-scaling enterprises. They reminisce on the Halcyn days of Caltech rugby, and while the torch must pass, they remain our North star (and LinkedIn connects).

Caltech Rugby Club remains in its infancy, but as a new season dawns, now is the time to dive into a sport you’ve learned so much about over the last five minutes or so. For now, we are running weekly touch rugby sessions, every Wednesday at 6:30pm down on the Caltech Sports field. So even if you’ve decided to leave your contact days behind you, Caltech Rugby is still a great place to keep learning your trade and probably the only place on the planet where you can be guaranteed to play rugby without a chance

encounter with the rain. And yet Caltech Rugby is so much more than just a disproportionately large number of French students tossing a ball around - we work hard to plan an active social calendar, with group expeditions to play other LA-based teams, watch international fixtures and do our part to support local business here in Pasadena.

To conclude where we started, Dr. Kevin Gilmartin - ironically enough a Professor of 19th century English literature - leads our university ever further from our sporting destiny. And yet, any seasoned Techer will tell you that it is often what you do off the field of research that can best facilitate your performance on it. 6:30 Wednesdays, be there or be square oval-shaped.



## From an Upperclassman to the New Prefrush: How to Treat Your Elders

By TONY FALK

So, as far as I know, this issue of the Tech is read mostly by the prefrushes (you’re not frosh till the cannon fires, and don’t you forget it) as opposed to the rest of the year when it’s read mostly by no one, so I’ll devote a column to giving you guys some advice.

Since your first week involves attempting to get used to classes and checking out everything for rotation, you need to learn time management. The trick is to never sleep, and don’t do anything but 10 minutes of quick problem set faking, and spend all your time

might ask me, but I would ignore you, because you should be saying, “Sir, how do I greet an upperclassman, sir?” And yes, everyone that isn’t a prefrush falls into my category of upperclassmen.

Once you’ve mastered approaching and greeting upperclassmen, you should be careful not to offend them. Don’t ask questions we don’t want to answer (for example, if you are a guy, don’t ask an upperclassman guy “Why don’t you be my girlfriend?” If you are a girl, you can ask the

guy any questions you want about the houses and meeting. Many are so desperate for female attention that you can get them to balance a treat on their nose and flip it into their mouth.) Another way to make sure you don’t make a bad impression with the upperclassmen is by agreeing with them no matter what they say. In addition, always remember that as a prefrush, you have no rights. Here is a pair of conversational tips to introduce yourself.

Good:

## The California Tech

### REPORTERS & COLUMNISTS WANTED

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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

Prefrush should most definitely follow the advice of columnist Tony Falk, shown here playing a trash can drum.

# Guiding the world's students through Caltech with Laura Flower Kim



Photo by Caltech Magazine.

## Necef Kavrut Humans of Caltech

When Laura Flower Kim, now Associate Director at International Student Programs at Caltech, took over the office on the second floor of the Center for Student Services sixteen years ago, most of it was occupied by one giant red file-cabinet filled to the brim with immigration paperwork for international undergraduate and graduate students. Her first action was to get rid of it, and soon all its contents were online, leaving behind an empty office. But after years of helping hundreds of international students navigate life at Caltech, there's hardly an empty spot to be found.



Back part of Laura's Office. How many world maps can you see? Photo by Necef.

Laura was born in Huntington, West Virginia. She had a nursing school educated stay-at-home mom and a half-Materials Engineer, half-businessman father. When she was in kindergarten, they moved to New Jersey, where Laura attended middle and high school up till her junior year. They then moved back to Huntington. After graduating, she attended Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania. Though her major was sociology, she also participated in a semester abroad language program in Spain the spring of her junior year. She traveled to France, Germany, Portugal and more while improving her Spanish. This "exposure to other languages and people" made her realize the value of intercultural exchange. After college, she spent half a year in Mexico visiting a friend's home and volunteering, and then re-

turned to Marshall University at Huntington, where she obtained a Masters in Education for teaching Spanish. Her real objective was to become a study abroad adviser, but at that time there were no official positions for those sorts of programs as they were typically handled by foreign language faculties.



Laura's Masters Degree. Photo by Necef.

Immediately after completing her Masters, Laura jumped into a PhD in Higher Education Studies at Vanderbilt University. Her focus was on the "brain drain" phenomenon, which refers to the consequences of highly trained professionals migrating in large numbers to other geographies. Five years into her thesis research, 9/11 threw the US immigration system into chaos, driving her research to an impasse. As she already had working relationships with the international office at Vanderbilt, she was able to pivot into a job as an International Student Advisor. Early on into the job, Laura found herself thrust onto a stage to lead International Student Orientation in front of hundreds of international freshmen. Standing there, she remembered the many boring classes and presentations she had suffered throughout her life. "I just thought, 'I don't want to be boring,'" she recalls as she describes the moment her extroverted and fun personality crystallized. After another four years at Vanderbilt, she moved to Pasadena to work at ArtCenter College of Design. She handled immigration procedures of international students there while also helping them find a community. Laura describes ArtCenter as an art version of Caltech in terms of intensity and competition. She believes it prepared her well to handle the transition international students face as they start a difficult program so far away from home. Since Laura was already at Pasadena, she also reached out to Caltech's International Office to introduce herself and network. Four years later she came to Caltech and joined ISP. Outside of work, Laura enjoys watching movies and going to theater with her older daughter, who participates in high-school theater. Even with two teenage daughters and hundreds of Caltech students to do paperwork and counseling for, Laura still does the occasional art project for her own enjoyment.



Laura sitting in the front part of her Office. Photo by Necef.



Some rocks painted by Laura.

According to their website, in addition to immigration-related advising, ISP also strives to "provide opportunities for international students to establish a sense of community at Caltech." Laura wholly embraces both of these distinct duties. Consequently, in addition to a computer and a desk often filled with paperwork, her office features comfy furniture for long talks with students, flags and numerous cultural decorations, paper tissues for crying, a picture of one of her two daughters and at least eight teddy bears of varying sizes, the largest being life-sized. "You are on the other side of the world, away from everyone you know. Who do you go to for hugs?" Laura asks me, an international student from Turkey, in order to illustrate the importance of ISP's community building efforts. She adds that the teddy bears in her office can be borrowed for this very purpose.

International students first meet ISP through the non-personal e-mail address of [isp@caltech.edu](mailto:isp@caltech.edu), with which they communicate for the most banal yet stressful task of visa application. These emails are mostly informative, communicating to students the required tasks, relevant websites and recent regulations that may affect their visa situation. Yet even through this most dry medium, the welcoming character of Laura and her colleagues at ISP sometimes shines through. Otieno "Otis" Robert, a Caltech freshman from Kenya, remembers these initial communications as some of the most helpful and warm emails he has received. On the other hand, Chi Hoang, an international student from Vietnam, notes that these communications can feel frustrating especially when there are bureaucratic troubles within the visa process, even if ISP wasn't to blame.

One interplay between Laura's two-fold role on campus is that even the international students most disinterested in ISP must eventually visit her, as immigration paperwork is inescapable. The drudgery of filling out forms, which is a routine Laura appreciates, is contrasted by Laura's warm manner. "Students come to talk about paperwork and immigration, but soon enough we are talking about life at Caltech, beaches of Croatia or places to visit in Europe," she notes. Such routine paperwork visits are often enough for Laura to kindle a bond with the student. In this manner, paperwork becomes an unlikely tinder for campfire conversations.

Laura describes the international student orientation as "the heart of what we [ISP] do." Every year, she works to make this first experience of Caltech entertaining, fun and infor-



A World Map with pins for each home-country of current Caltech students, currently hanging in the corridor outside Laura's office. Photo by Necef.

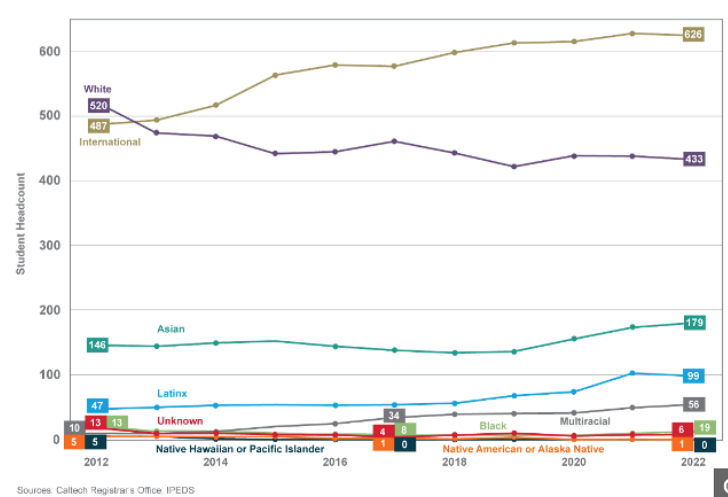
current students through ISP? "I have never had someone [an alumni] say no," she says. Laura says an upcoming challenge ISP faces is "work." More precisely, an increase in its amount. International student numbers have increased dramatically in recent years. In addition to a steady increase to the number of international degree students at Caltech, ISP has also welcomed a growing number of international non-degree students through SURF, exchange programs and visiting student programs. Yet ISP still has only two full-time workers and one part time worker. Consequently, Laura and her coworkers spend more time dealing with paperwork, which takes time away from the other aforementioned endeavors. As the specter of the red file cabinet threatens to return to her friendly office, Laura hopes ISP can grow to match the needs of the growing international student body of Caltech.



Another glimpse of the corridor outside Laura's office. Photo by Necef.

Laura acknowledges that the office's ability to learn and deal with student troubles is limited, and the global situations affecting them are often way beyond their control. Undeterred, Laura heads ISP as an apolitical but ever-present safe space. She brings an "options first" approach to aiding students. By illustrating the possible paths ahead, she works to ensure students don't lose hope and can continue their lives on the driving seat. To this end, she has expanded the Alumni relations ISP has, as she views international alumni as an invaluable source of advice for students grappling with issues similar to those of their predecessors. How willing are alumni to help

Caltech Graduate Student Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity, 2012-2022



Source: Caltech Registrar's Office SPEDS <https://inclusive.caltech.edu/about/demographic-data#trends-in-enrollment-1>

# Edan Lepucki: A Perspective on Writing, Motherhood, and Teaching at Caltech



## Leo Jenkins Humans of Caltech

Edan Lepucki is the rare member of the Caltech community who is better known off-campus than on. Off-campus, she is a New York Times bestselling author who has published five books and counting. On-campus, she teaches Fiction Writing to a small group of passionate but frequently inexperienced students. This raises the question – why did a successful fiction author decide to teach at Caltech? By interviewing Lepucki and her closest friends and colleagues, I learned that her passion for fiction writing extends well beyond her own work and that teaching at Caltech is just the latest way that she has found to interact with people who have a passion for creative writing.

Sitting outside of Red Door waiting for her arrival, I thought back to my first impression of Lepucki during our fiction writing class this past fall. I remember she gave off "mom's fun friend" vibes with her outgoing personality and occasionally dated pop culture references (Later, during the interview, I told her about my characterization. She laughed and said she used to just be the fun friend).

Lepucki arrived wearing a white and pink blouse, blue jeans, and gold earrings. She has short blonde hair, freckles, and gleaming blue eyes. She is physically emotive when she talks, gesturing with her hands if she is excited about the subject.

Born in Santa Monica, California, Lepucki always wanted to be a novelist – or, if that didn't work out, a pop star. While majoring in English and Creative Writing at Oberlin, she spent her time in the library studying, working, and hanging out with her friends, who also aspired to be writers. "We enjoyed producing work and sharing it with people," said Doug Diesenhaus, who has

known her since college. Even then, he remembers Lepucki being "imaginative about stories and characters" and having a deep understanding of "what is going on in a character's emotional experience."

After graduating from Oberlin in 2002, Lepucki went on to receive a MFA in Fiction in 2006 from the renowned University of Iowa Writers' Workshop, known for its prominent alumni including Raymond Carver and Ann Patchett. After college, she moved back to Los Angeles. Despite her credentials, Lepucki was unable to find consistent work as a writer. To supplement, she decided she would start her own business and co-founded Writing Workshops Los Angeles in 2006, self-described as "a private writing school for the brave, enthusiastic, and talented."

It was at Writing Workshops LA where Lepucki first helped people write novels – the only catch was that she had never written novels herself. Through helping other people with their novel writing, she developed her own skills as a novelist. Having only ever written short stories, Lepucki used her experience as a tutor to give her the confidence to start writing longer pieces of fiction.

Lepucki's first published novel, "California", a story about a couple living in post-apocalyptic California, reached the New York Times bestseller list in 2014, aided by a remarkable celebrity endorsement from Stephen Colbert. During a negotiation between Amazon and Colbert's publisher, Hachette Book Group, Colbert accused Amazon of playing dirty by "preventing pre-orders and delaying shipments" of Hachette's books. To combat this, Colbert struck back by encouraging his almost two million nightly viewers to buy Edan Lepucki's new book by the same publisher. Her book was selected by Sherman Alexie, whose works – including "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" – were also published by Hachette. Colbert gave Alexie books by debut Hachette authors and asked him to find one to promote on "The Colbert Report". Alexie chose "California", he said, after he could not put it down, later calling it a "page turner" in an interview with the New York Times.

Colbert's audience listened to Alexie's recommendation, propelling "California" to debut at third place on the New York Times bestseller list. To celebrate this success, Edan Lepucki was invited onto the set of "The Colbert Report" for an interview. Her agent since

2010, Erin Hosier, called this level of exposure the "1% of the 1%". It is nearly impossible, she said, to get a first time author on television.

While some may have quit while they were ahead, that thought did not cross her mind. "The idea that someone would want to write just a single book seems crazy to me," exclaimed Lepucki. So she committed herself to the life of a full time author, closing Writer Workshops LA and focusing on her follow-up novel. As of this article, she has written and published three novels, two non-fiction books, and a plethora of other essays and short pieces of fiction.

At the same time "California" was hitting the shelves, Lepucki and her husband Patrick Brown – whom she met while they worked at Book Soup Bookstore in West Hollywood – started their family. From this point on, writing and motherhood were permanently intertwined for Lepucki. The logistics of being a parent and a writer are challenging – writing requires long periods of uninterrupted focus, something that's hard to find when taking care of young children. Moreover, as part of her job as a novelist, Lepucki goes on short writing retreats and book tours, leaving her husband temporarily in charge of their three pre-teen children.



Comedy Central: The Colbert Report

While parenting and writing can be a balancing act, Lepucki believes that "on an existential level, they are very complimentary." Beneath the menial day-to-day tasks, parenting is a chance to have an up close view of someone interacting with the world for the first time. Through this process, Lepucki says, you have "so much to learn about your character and their character." With parenting often on the forefront of her mind when she goes to write, motherhood (and being mothered) is one of the themes that spans across her fiction and non-fiction writing. Parenting, Lepucki says, is "more complicated than we are

often willing to face" and she wants to explore those complications through her writing.

The relationship between motherhood and writing goes both ways for Lepucki. "I'm a better mother when I'm writing well," she acknowledged. Through writing fiction, she is able to focus her creative energy and give it an output. Fiction writing allows her to be herself, which, in turn, allows her to be a better mother. While she insists that she doesn't think of writing as a form of therapy, Lepucki says she "uses writing to process an experience." Thus it is not surprising that her books iterate on the themes of motherhood and living in California.

In 2020, Lepucki was told about a teaching job opportunity at Caltech by Chris Daley – a friend of hers who works at Caltech as a Library Communication Coordinator. Despite thinking she bombed the interview, Lepucki received the job and took over the Fiction Writing class in the winter term of 2021 – over Zoom. She designed the course around the craft elements she found most useful during her writing career. She also drew inspiration from her first creative writing teacher at Oberlin, Dan Chaon, and assigned contemporary readings to give students an understanding of what modern day writers are thinking about.

Lepucki's involvement in the writing community goes beyond her official teaching. "She's very generous with advice," says her agent, Erin Hosier. For example, Lepucki once took the time to read and review Hosier's mother's writing. Moreover, she has a substack newsletter meant to act as an accountability group for other fiction writers. Named after a line from Goodfellas, "Fuck You, Write Your Pages" is a newsletter where every subscriber needs to respond with what they wrote last week and what they will write next week. Lepucki leads the charge by including her own progress report and adding excerpts from authors about the writing process. "It's very comforting to know that you are in the trenches with all these people," said Lepucki.

Being a novelist is not easy; there is lots of rejection and instability. Lepucki was released by her first agent and relies on her husband's job for health insurance. At these moments of uncertainty, her go-to joke is that she should "go down Nursing Avenue," referring to the idea that she could go to nursing school and have a stable job. But writing is essential to her life and identity (and she admits she wouldn't make a good nurse anyways). Lepucki is what her agent calls a "lifer" because writing fiction is all she wants to do. She concurs, saying "I'm going to write fiction until I die, and it's going to be set in California."

ucki while gesturing outwards with her hands.

Learning how to do critiques – both as a reviewer and a writer – is a focus of Lepucki's Fiction Writing course. Lepucki says that analyzing other people's writing is a great way to improve your own craft. To highlight this point, she says that in a group critique, "it's not the writer who is learning the most."

Through critiquing students' work, Lepucki has learned to "diagnose a problem really quickly." After all, grading is the process of turning the feeling of "this feels wrong" into specific feedback. This skill, honed by critiquing student work, has helped her dissect the failures in her own first drafts. And when she needs an outside perspective on her writing, Lepucki turns to – among others including her husband and fellow novelist Kate Millikin – her former Oberlin English professor, Mike Reynolds, who, once upon a time, graded her college work. Lepucki is always looking to learn, and thinks that reading student writing has made her become a better reader.

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

COULD WE HAVE PUT SOME CONTENT HERE? WELL YEAH PROBABLY. UNFORTUNATELY THE TECH IS LACKING IN GRAPHIC DESIGNERS

THIS COULD BE YOUR JOB!!! WE PAY!!! CONTACT TECH@CALTECH.EDU TO LEARN HOW TO CONTRIBUTE TODAY!!!!

PICTURE A SAD CAT HERE

# Rotation Schedule

Date		Avery	Blacker	Dabney	Fleming	Lloyd	Page	Ricketts	Venerable
Wed 9/25	Dinner A	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	6:00PM	6:15PM
Thu 9/26	Dinner B	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	6:00PM	6:15PM
Fri 9/27	Dinner C	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	6:30PM	6:00PM	6:15PM
Sat 9/28	Lunch D	12:45PM	12:15PM	12:15PM	1:00PM	1:15PM	1:00PM	12:45PM	12:45PM
^	Dinner E	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	6:00PM
Sun 9/29	Lunch F	12:45PM	12:15PM	12:15PM	1:00PM	1:15PM	1:00PM	12:45PM	12:45PM
^	Dinner G	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	6:15PM	6:00PM	5:45PM
Mon 9/30	Dinner H	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:15PM	5:45PM	6:00PM	6:00PM
Tue 10/1	Free Dinner	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:15PM	5:45PM	6:00PM	6:00PM
Wed 10/2	Free Dinner	6:15PM	5:30PM	5:45PM	6:15PM	6:15PM	5:45PM	6:00PM	6:00PM

Date	Wed 9/25	Thur 9/26	Fri 9/27	Sat 9/28	Sun 9/29	Mon 9/30	Tue 10/1	Wed 10/2
Lunch	--	--	--	House D	House F	--	--	--
Dinner	House A	House B	House C	House E	House G	House H	Free	Free
Dessert	Free	Free	--	--	--	Free	Free	Rankings Due

Date	Time	House	Event
Wed 9/25	9:00pm-10:00pm	Lloyd	Lloyd Hot Ones
^	9:45pm-10:45pm	Dabney	Dabney Boat Tours
Thu 9/26	10:30pm-12:00am	Page	Chill at Page
^	9:45pm-10:45pm	Dabney	Dabney Boat Tours
Fri 9/27	8:00pm-12:00am	Ricketts	Ricketts Open Mic Night
Sat 9/28	3:00pm-5:00pm	Blacker	Blacker Olympics
^	10:00pm-12:00am	Fleming	Fleming Dirty Dodgeball
^	12:00am-2:00am	Lloyd	Lloyd Capture the Flag
Sun 9/29	3:00pm-5:00pm	Bechtel	Welcome to Bechtel
^	8:00pm-10:00pm	Venerable	Venerable Greens
^	10:00pm-12:00am	Avery	Avery Tea and Karaoke
Mon 9/30	8:30pm-10:00pm	Fleming	Fleming Fleptathlon
^	9:45pm-10:45pm	Dabney	Dabney Boat Tours
Tue 10/1	9:30pm-10:30pm	Page	Page Trivia
^	9:45pm-10:45pm	Dabney	Dabney Boat Tours



We love our House Presidents  
-The Editors of the California Tech

FCC Group Name	Wed 9/25 Dinner	Thu 9/26 Dinner	Fri 9/27 Dinner	Sat 9/28 Lunch	Sat 9/28 Dinner	Sun 9/29 Lunch	Sun 9/29 Dinner	Mon 9/30 Dinner
Hydrogen	Blacker	Venerable	Lloyd	Dabney	Avery	Fleming	Page	Ricketts
Helium	Dabney	Venerable	Blacker	Lloyd	Avery	Ricketts	Page	Fleming
Lithium	Dabney	Lloyd	Blacker	Venerable	Ricketts	Page	Avery	Fleming
Beryllium	Blacker	Dabney	Venerable	Lloyd	Fleming	Ricketts	Avery	Page
Boron	Blacker	Dabney	Lloyd	Venerable	Ricketts	Avery	Fleming	Page
Carbon	Venerable	Dabney	Lloyd	Blacker	Ricketts	Fleming	Avery	Page
Nitrogen	Lloyd	Blacker	Venerable	Dabney	Fleming	Page	Ricketts	Avery
Oxygen	Venerable	Blacker	Dabney	Lloyd	Page	Ricketts	Fleming	Avery
Fluorine	Ricketts	Avery	Venerable	Dabney	Page	Fleming	Lloyd	Blacker
Neon	Dabney	Lloyd	Blacker	Venerable	Fleming	Avery	Page	Ricketts
Sodium	Venerable	Lloyd	Dabney	Blacker	Avery	Page	Fleming	Ricketts
Magnesium	Ricketts	Venerable	Page	Blacker	Dabney	Avery	Lloyd	Fleming
Aluminum	Avery	Fleming	Ricketts	Page	Blacker	Venerable	Dabney	Lloyd
Silicon	Page	Fleming	Avery	Ricketts	Blacker	Lloyd	Dabney	Venerable
Phosphorus	Page	Ricketts	Avery	Fleming	Lloyd	Dabney	Blacker	Venerable
Chromium	Avery	Page	Fleming	Ricketts	Venerable	Lloyd	Blacker	Dabney
Chlorine	Avery	Page	Ricketts	Fleming	Lloyd	Blacker	Venerable	Dabney
Argon	Fleming	Page	Ricketts	Avery	Lloyd	Venerable	Blacker	Dabney
Potassium	Lloyd	Avery	Fleming	Page	Venerable	Dabney	Ricketts	Blacker
Calcium	Fleming	Avery	Page	Ricketts	Dabney	Lloyd	Venerable	Blacker
Iron	Ricketts	Blacker	Fleming	Page	Dabney	Venerable	Lloyd	Avery
Titanium	Page	Ricketts	Avery	Fleming	Venerable	Blacker	Dabney	Lloyd
Cobalt	Fleming	Ricketts	Page	Avery	Blacker	Dabney	Venerable	Lloyd

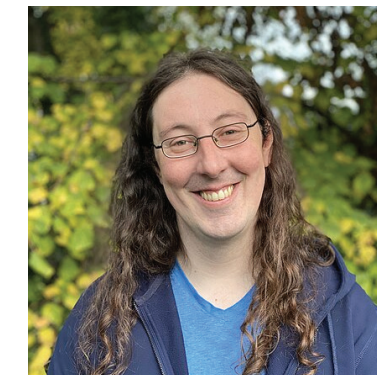
# Hey Frosh! Here are some people you need to know:



Name: Jeff Mendez (Ch '99, Fleming)  
Purpose: Ch 3 lab instructor  
Special Talent: Glove removal  
Tip: Do not trust him to operate ovens



Name: Vikram Ravi  
Purpose: Ph 1a prof  
Claim to Fame: Handwritten pi symbols look like the letter n  
Trait: Australian



Name: David Conlon  
Purpose: Ma 1a prof  
Habitat: 3rd floor Linde  
Fun Fact: Is not Nets Katz



Name: Theodor Agapie  
Purpose: Ch 1a prof  
Claim To Fame: 2x IChO Silver Medal  
Tip: Ask him about chicken feet



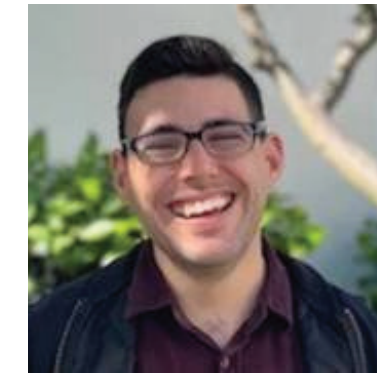
Name: Adam Blank  
Purpose: CS 1 prof  
Pronouns: they/them  
Habitat: Board game nights  
Claim to Fame: Cute dog



Name: Tom Mannon, Sr. Director of Campus Activities, Cooking Class prof  
Purpose: Runs the fun parts of Caltech  
Habitat: Office next to Lloyd entrance  
Special Event: Free food every Wednesday night, and by request!



Name: Felicia Hunt, Assistant VP for Student Experience  
Habitat: Yellow house at Hill/Del Mar  
Tip: Visit the Yellow house for free snacks



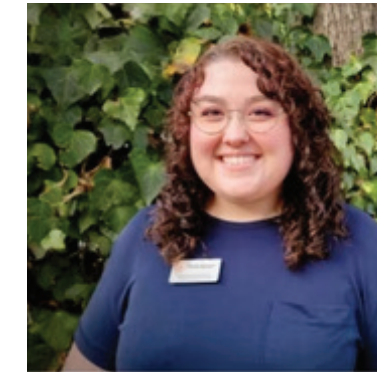
Name: Sean Cutting, Accessibility Services  
Habitat: CASS Office, 2nd floor of CSS  
Purpose: Arbitrator of Accommodations



Name: Claire Ralph, CALE Director  
Habitat: 3rd floor of CSS  
Purpose: Career Advising  
Tip: Visit CALE for summer internships! There's more to summer than SURFs!



Name: Lee Coleman  
Purpose: Student Wellness/Counseling  
Pros: Very friendly and easy to talk to  
Cons: Mandated reporter (all these people are)  
Tip: Ask him about meditation!



Name: Emily Sanger, Bechtel RLC  
Purpose: Queen of the Bechtelites  
Special Event: 🍷erhouse feat. Mechanical Bull  
What does RLC stand for?: Residential Life Coordinator



Name: Luciano Lemus, North RLC  
Purpose: Inflatables & bouncy house wrangler  
Best Known For: Golden doodle puppy



Name: Steve Metzmaker, Avery RLC  
Purpose: Husky owner  
Vice: E-sports  
Special Event: Occasional OSE-funded free tickets to off-campus activities!



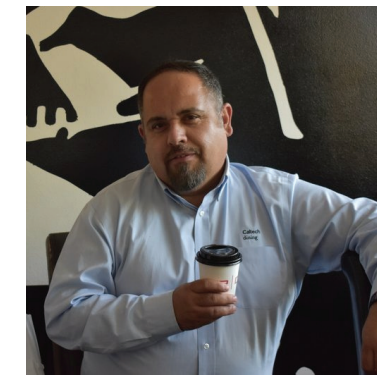
Name: Mahlet Tesfaye, South RLC  
Habitat: The belly of the beast (Ricketts)  
Trait: Her hall is lit  
Quote: "We're thriving"  
Pet Peeves: Empty bottles, hacksaws



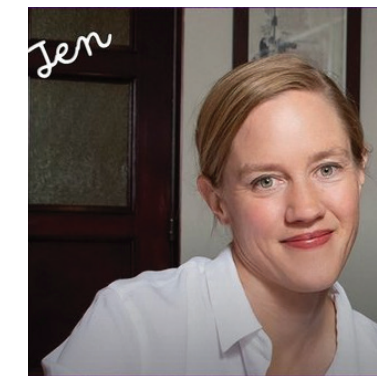
Name: Joe Bennethum  
Purpose: Runs Housing  
Habitat: The only office which kept its doors locked after the pandemic  
Trait: Beanie  
Weaknesses: Interior design



Name: Nathan Rudibaugh  
Purpose: Answers all your questions about financial aid and beyond  
Habitat: 2nd floor Admissions House; finaid@caltech.edu  
Trait: Iconic hairdo



Name: Jaime Reyes, Dining Services  
Purpose: Feeds us  
Habitat: Somehow present in all kitchens and dining spaces simultaneously  
Special Event: Midnight Madness @ Browne during exam weeks!



Name: Jennifer Jahner, UG Dean  
Claim To Fame: Exceptional Literature Hum Classes  
Tip: Ask her about homoerotic medieval werewolves



Name: Lesley Nye, Sr. Associate Dean  
Special Talent: Liability elimination  
Tip: Ask her about being the Dean at an inferior school (Harvard)



Name: Alice Edel, Mail Services  
Prized Possession: Shopping cart  
Background: Witnessed the rise and fall of faxing in the printer industry  
Quote: "PACKAGE TO PICK UP ASAP"



Name: Beth Larranaga, Deans' Office Manager  
Habitat: Deans' Office, 2nd floor CSS  
Special Talent: Instant email replies  
Tip: Ask her about her art, growing up in Pasadena, or for free stickers!



Name: Kristin Weyman, Assoc. Dean  
Purpose: Delegating her 1,000,001 responsibilities to a staff they only recently realized they needed  
Special Event: Once-a-term Deans' n' Donuts outside the CSS building



Name: Kevin Gilmartin, VP Student Affairs  
Purpose: The last line of defense for community standards  
Trait: Ask him about old british literature



Name: Tom Rosenbaum, President  
Purpose: Runs the place  
Habitat: Alumni Fundraisers, Parsons -Gates, 415 S. Hill Ave.  
Special Talent: Writing emails in flowery prose



Name: Betsy Mitchell, Athletics Dir.  
Purpose: D3 athletics at a D1 price  
Trait: Built-in megaphone  
Special Talent: Winning medals at the Olympics

# Mental Health at Caltech

Thanhthanh Nguyen  
Column

The first time I felt an overwhelming sense of hopelessness and loneliness at Caltech, I had yet to hear the Fleming cannon fire even once.

Stuck in a tiny Braun room on an otherwise nondescript July day, I sat there recalling the events of the previous days. It was the summer before my freshman year, barely a few weeks into the FSRI program, and I had another Title IX investigation meeting to join later that day — a new yet now-regular occurrence thanks to one man's selfish, callous actions. And exactly what support do I have for going through all this? An after-hours Student Wellness Services (SWS) Counseling hotline that told me to "meditate." I had hung up in disbelief. "Just meditate" is now a running joke in my friend group whenever someone talks about the hopelessness they feel, inflicted by Caltech itself.

The moment fall term began, I, a frosh still on pass-fail, called SWS Counseling proper to set up some counseling sessions. At the very first session, they told me, "We only can provide short-term care of 8 sessions per issue. You have to find a provider in the community for long-term care." "Short-term." "Community provider." So you're telling me, an institution boasting a several-billion dollar endowment (according to the 2021 Endowment Report from the Caltech Investment Office), cannot provide more

than approximately 8 counseling sessions for a school with under 1000 undergraduates and under 1,500 graduate students for each "issue" someone comes to them for? Every session I attended with SWS Counseling, I was keenly made aware of how I can't keep going for long. How am I supposed to untangle years' worth of issues in 8 sessions? Issues that would prevent me from doing my best here at Caltech? The answer is: I can't. SWS Counseling isn't designed for providing long-term, continuous support, something I and many others had to learn the hard way.

**Editor's Note: Caltech now offers students 12 free counseling sessions per year through TimelyCare, an online healthcare provider. Find details at wellness.caltech.edu or google "Caltech TimelyCare". SWS also has full-time staff who can help narrow down a shortlist of community providers that can help with your needs, accept your insurance, etc.**

As I continued through my frosh year, I began to dislike Caltech more and more. I saw what it did to the people I cared the most here. As I write this, the memories come rushing back. Me trying to convince a friend to please get off the floor, we can do this, we can pass this class, I can help you, please get up. Me pleading a friend that we love her, please stay safe, please be okay. Me bringing food to a friend who hadn't left their room in days, hiding under the covers as if to hide from

Caltech itself. Me, sobbing to my father on a random bench that I made a mistake choosing Caltech—that Caltech made a mistake choosing me.

But, Caltech is quick to say that our mental health rates are the same as our peer institutions. That's what the statistics boast! We are just as depressed as anywhere else! It's not that worrying, everyone!

Have you ever lied? I'm sure the people who responded on these surveys lied. I'm sure some people refuse to fill out these surveys. I'm sure, sure as the fact that I know people at this school who were sent to the psychiatric ward and became even more traumatized, that this school is held together by 20-year-olds trying to make it through and not leaving their friends behind, no matter what. The Caltech undergraduate community is permeated with this sentiment, and it's sobering and upsetting. It simply is not sustainable!

Finally, after one major incident that was my breaking point, I could not take it anymore. This school, in its current state, just isn't the right place to deal with both academic and personal issues, due to its culture and the mistrust directed towards those at Caltech responsible for mental health care. And, this school is so small, you know? So many people know each other, and so many people worry about each other. I can see it in my friends' eyes. How they worry about me. How they made sure I came to House Dinner and ate. How it's their time to drag me out of

my bed, to drag me out of my miserable blanket nest on the floor, to get me up and going when all I wanted to do was go somewhere far, far away from Caltech. And I realized that I couldn't do this to them. I can't take my friends down with me. I can't personally perpetuate this cycle of suffering towards myself and my friends.

So I asked SWS to connect me to some community providers so I could get the help I needed. They sent me a list of people to contact, but I had to do the rest on my own. It was thanks to the kindness of my friends, who volunteered to call the offices for me, and my mentor, who let me cry on the floor of their office and checked in on me and genuinely cared, that I managed to connect to a psychologist eventually. I also managed to connect with a therapist who helped me navigate what I brought into Caltech and continued to carry, along with the many other things I picked up along the way. This was when I realized that I didn't dislike Caltech that much—I dislike the environment it perpetuates because its students are constantly stressed, sad, and suffering.

It led me to ask: why can't we trust the resources that are supposed to be here for us? We want to use SWS Counseling. We want it to be a good resource to rely on. But we are afraid of what it means for Caltech to recognize us as humans who are vulnerable. We may be "academic weapons," as the kids say nowadays, but even weapons need mainte-

nance. There is a distrust between Caltech's students and the administration that works towards supporting its students, and I believe that if we are able to bridge that gap and create trust, more and more students can reach their full potential here.

It wasn't Caltech as a school, organization, or entity that helped me. It was its individual people who helped me get what I needed, which was on the outside and almost out of reach. It was the Peer Advocates, it was House Leadership, it was the students—people just like me—who made me myself again. These are my people. I don't think that has to be the only way, and I don't want it to stay that way. More than through surveys, more than through forms, I want Caltech students to feel like the school as a whole is here to support them, and I want to do my best for the rest of my time here to achieve this.

To facilitate this, I will be starting a monthly column featuring mental health at Caltech, where I invite students to send me their experiences at Caltech via email (email me at thanhthanh@caltech.edu). I also plan to share anecdotes from the mental health professionals here on campus to learn their current and future support avenues for Caltech students, and hopefully, we all will gain a better understanding together of how to sustain and enhance our mental health during our time at Caltech.



Tom Mannion  
reigning champion  
bbq specialist

Gus's Barbecue has been in South Pasadena since 1946. The menu offers a broad choice of classic southern favorites. Parking is available adjacent to the restaurant as well as on nearby streets.

Gus's does get pretty crowded, so a reservation is recommended. We arrived a little before our reservation time and were seated immediately. I do need to state up front that barbecue is one of my specialties, so excuse me if I am a little picky and overly technical.

Barbecue refers to a way that meats are cooked — low indirect heat with various levels of smoke, dry rubs, wet rubs, mopping, etc. Grilling is what happens on a grill — burgers, steaks, hot dogs, etc, over direct heat. Classic sides like grits, biscuits and greens are essential parts of meals featuring barbecue.

One of our starters was the cast iron skillet cornbread. Most definitely the right presentation and cooking instrument. If you are in the South (and we in California are considered Yankees despite our southern latitude) cornbread is somewhat of a sacred side dish made with self-rising cornmeal

# Man vs. Mannion: Competitive Restaurant Reviewing

Gus's Barbecue, South Pasadena

Who do you think reviewed it better? Let us know at tech@caltech.edu!

mix, eggs, buttermilk and vegetable oil (or bacon fat). There is no sugar in the southern version. This cornbread was most definitely not inspired by the South. Presented in a small cast iron skillet, the cornbread had promise. Unfortunately, the skillet did it no favors. There was no crunch to the crust, rather the texture was mushy and somewhat greasy. The deep shiny surface certainly gave clues to that greasiness. The flavor was reminiscent more of a sweet dessert cake than a skillet of cornbread.

The shredded onion strings were enjoyable. High temperature frying really releases the sugar-chain content, adding a nice sweet caramel note enhanced by the crunchy coating of what I believe was corn meal, the flour and seasoning.

The hot wings with fiery wing sauce were pretty much by the book. The cook was perfect and the ranch dressing was a nice accompaniment. The balance of the capsaicin to sugar could have been more balanced, but that is really dependent on the individual eater's preferences.

Grits. Like nothing I have ever had and is something I would not order again. A very dense porridge more akin to a congee with kernels of corn thrown in. Texture comes into play again as this version has a mouthfeel unlike any grits I have eaten. I was hoping for a taste of high quality corn grits and instead, ate something too overwhelmed with additional ingredients and textures. It felt like someone who doesn't like grits kept changing and adding things until they liked it.

Greens. I would order these, and, in fact, even make them a meal by themselves. A great balance of bitter greens with a hint of acid (vinegar) and very nice seasonings. Well done!

I ordered the trio of barbecue. This consisted of pulled pork, St. Louis ribs, and brisket. Pulled pork was very good with just the right amount of

smoke. The Carolina (mustard based) sauce paired well with this, as would a Carolina vinegar sauce (cider vinegar, chili flakes, sugar). St. Louis ribs were a bit dry. The ribs were cooked and fell off the bone but could have used some mopping or some moisture like apple juice in the smoker. The brisket was downright mystifying. The taste was fine and it was an enjoyable meat but the smoke was intriguing. Smoke naturally absorbs into fat and as the meat cooks the rub on the fat and the smoke combine to make a nice smoky crust. This brisket did not have a crust and the fat did not taste of smoke yet the meat was smoky. The connective tissue was hydrolyzed, and thus the meat itself was tender — and the meat was smoky. The only way I could achieve this smoky meat and not smoky fat would be something like a sous vide cooking with fat drippings from a smoker in the bag as the meat slowly cooked. If this style is used you would then rub the out surface with barbecue rub and place in a smoker to get the desired crust and texture.

Normally you would start by placing the meat in the smoker until the desired smoke level was achieved (a few hours) then wrap the meat in foil and continue cooking until tender (several more hours). So, to sum up, pulled pork was good, ribs were ok but dry, brisket tasted good, but defied a lot of what I know about the barbecue process. Try all the meats with their assortment of sauces to find which match your taste and flavor preferences.

My beverage choice, in addition to water, was lemonade. Was very good lemonade, but paired with the spiciness to follow it was too sweet.

Gus's offers a nice environment, robust menu and good food. You just have to remember that you are not in the south and that some of the dishes feel more like California cuisine meets the south.

James "Trey" Scott III  
submitted review with  
wrong restaurant name



TL;DR: Gus's is a fantastic BBQ restaurant not far from campus.

Upon arrival, I noticed that the place was lively and a bit noisy, with tables feeling somewhat cramped. However, the service was impressively fast, with waiters frequently checking in on us. There's free parking available in the back, but it's worth noting that the restaurant tends to get very crowded, so making a reservation is definitely recommended.

Appetizers:  
Cast Iron Cornbread: This dish was sweet and incredibly moist—not dry at all. It paired wonderfully with the jalapeño jelly, adding a delightful kick to each bite.

Gus' Hot Wings: While these wings weren't extremely spicy or particularly memorable, they were still decent. They complemented the ranch dressing and Kansas City BBQ sauce nicely, making them enjoyable nonetheless.

Shredded Onion Strings: These fine fried onions were crispy, crunchy, and packed with flavor. They paired well with ranch.

Main Courses:  
St. Louis Spare Ribs: These ribs were a standout, super tender and practically falling off the bone. They were the highlight of the meal.

Carolina Style Pulled Pork: This dish was also very tender and moist, with a savory flavor that paired best with the Memphis BBQ sauce. I personally enjoy mixing in a bit of coleslaw and vinegar sauce for added flavor and texture.

Texas Prime Beef Brisket: Unfortunately, this brisket was a bit too dry and not as tender as I had hoped, making it less enjoyable compared to the other meats.

BBQ Baked Beans: Rich in flavor, these beans tasted great but were a bit drier than what I typically expect from baked beans.

Coleslaw: On the sweeter side, this coleslaw was quite bland and might not appeal to those who prefer a more vinegary version.

Sweet Tea: This was definitely not what I was expecting. It wasn't very sweet and had a somewhat bland flavor, lacking the richness I usually enjoy in sweet tea.

Overall:  
The service was amazing, and I experienced some of the best BBQ I've had near campus. My favorites were undoubtedly the ribs that fell right off the bone and the cornbread, which tasted amazing with the jalapeño jelly. The portions were incredibly generous—I ate so much that it started to hurt! All the in-house sauces were delicious and paired well with each meat dish. I would definitely recommend Gus's to anyone who loves BBQ and doesn't mind a busy atmosphere.

# Reflections on the end of summer

Bodacious Fellow  
De-summer-er  
Humor

Many people question what the end of summer may mean. The end of an era of relaxation? The dawn of a new stick season? Or the letter 'r'?

The end of the summer can mean different things for different people.

For some, it's the end of time with family. After flying across the globe to meet the people you love, this might be the time you say goodbye. And the time when you have more than 12 hours to yourself in a flying metal tin can. Although, if you haven't got a window seat, the entertainment really has gotten better lately (definitely not personal experience). I've seen people play 2048 for hours on end on the flight and I think we've peaked.

On the other hand, this could be the time you realize that maybe some separation isn't such a bad thing. Again, not personal experience, but maybe you and the people you thought you knew have grown sideways. And in most dimensions, that means you've grown apart. It is a tragedy of life that the people you grow up with are the ones you make life plans with for the future — that you'll have houses next to each other, with secret tunnels connecting them so you can meet anytime — but

once you're all grown up in the future, you're lucky if they are even a part of your life.

Summers are as bittersweet as the mojitos that fill them — they're refreshing at first, but once you leave them be for a while, all you're left with is a watered down lemon rind. Fall, on the other hand, is a pumpkin spice latte — it's creamy at first and only seems to get spicier at the end.

Of course, fall brings with it its own set of turbulences. Gone are the summer breezes that lull you with their warmth, replaced by that perfectly uncomfortable weather that's too chilly in the shade and too sticky in the sun. That false sense of comfort and relaxation? Replaced by hand-wringing hair-greying body-caffeinating stress of the new term. It might not be that bad for most people, but there's no denying that fall is not summer, by a long mile — 3 months to be exact (comparable in c=1 God-given units).

There's a place for summer and that is between spring and fall. But metaphorically, it's between the rebirth and the death — I'll let you think of what that could mean in your life. Regardless of how you spent your summer, there was something in your life born before it — whether that was a research opportunity, a job, a plane ticket, or hope — and at the end of the summer, there was something that died (hopefully,

metaphorically). But what that leaves us with is a period that's full of memories. I tried to find a statistic about this, but all I got from Google Gemini was 45% of Americans call fall their favorite season and Christmas is a special and symbolic season. So maybe summer doesn't mean all that much to you. But it could. One thing I've realized is that too much of life feels like it's been spent in an amorphous blur, and anything you can do to carve out a semblance of a shape makes your life just that much more meaningful — at least from a distance.

All this to say: the summer might be coming to an end, but try to find something that lives on, something to carry forward. Find something that makes you feel the summer, makes you remember it, makes you know it as a part of your life. That way you'll be one less person who goes, "Summer? I hardly know her!" — because now, you actually do.

# Financial Aid Price-Fixing Lawsuit Continues, Many Caltech Students Now Eligible to File Claim

An ongoing class action lawsuit against 17 universities has gone into the claims stage. The lawsuit alleges that the universities engaged in a price fixing scheme and collaborated in an anti-trust manner to bring down the price of financial aid. While 10 of the named universities have settled, Caltech and 6 others are still in litigation. However students who received need-based financial aid from Caltech between fall term 2019 and February 28, 2024 can still apply for compensation.

It is estimated that if half of the 200,000 class members submit timely claims each will receive 2,000 dollars. Claims must be filed before December 17th to be honored. For more information, see the Tech's previous article in the April 12th, 2024 issue.

—UNAI ARRIZABALAGA, THE CALIFORNIA TECH



To file a claim scan the QR code or go to: <https://financialaidantitrustsettlement.com/>

# In Pasadena, A New Way of Flipping Burgers

Theodore Havel  
Food

Embedded in the story of food is the story of people: in modern society, the people who grow and harvest it, the people who distribute it, the people who cook it, and if we are at a restaurant, the people who serve it. Eventually, it reaches us. Cooking and eating together are essential parts of our days and lives. However, at one restaurant in Pasadena, food is the story of... a robot.

CaliExpress by Flippy is a partnership between Miso Robotics, the Cali Group, and PopID. Miso Robotics was founded in 2016 by a trio of Caltech alumni [David Zito (BS '97, Dabney), Ryan Sinnet (BS '07, Page), Rob Anderson (BS '16, Page/Fleming)] who have been working on Flippy (a robotic chef) and its predecessors for over five years.

I went to CaliExpress for the first time on a hot day this past August, and invited my uncle and my parents to come along. Located at the corner of Green and Madison in the Playhouse

Village in Pasadena, the restaurant is housed in a traditional brick building with high ceilings and large windows that let in natural light. On one wall is a refrigerator housing drinks, and opposite that are three digital ordering screens. These screens are equipped with face-recognition cameras; if you have a PopID account you can pay with your face, and if you sign up to PopID with PopPay, you can get up to \$10 credit. The open floor plan makes it easy for the server robot's deliveries (we chose a booth near one of the big windows), as there are only two tables in the center of the room.

The robot BurgerBot cooks all burgers with wagyu beef ground fresh for each order. The patties are then assembled with toppings by a person who places them on a delivery robot and sends it to your table. The fried items are all handled by Flippy (including french fries, waffle fries, onion rings, and chicken tenders). The only drawback to this system is that the burgers are all cooked to the same specification. One can not request a burger to be medium

rare; they are all well done.

Good fast-food fries are hard to come by. Some are limp and soggy; others are crispy and burnt. Flippy's fries, however, are neither of these extremes. We had four orders of fries between us (including one order of sweet potato waffle fries), and every one of them was cooked to perfection. I had the chicken tenders, which were amazing. My parents and my uncle all had burgers. There are two salads on the menu, and both were out of stock on the day of our visit. Unfortunately, there are no veggie burgers. If these were available, it would make for a more inclusive dining experience. The wait time for the food is longer than a fast-food restaurant, but still shorter than a traditional restaurant; it took close to 10 minutes to get our food.

What distinguishes this restaurant from others may not be for everyone. People bring a place to life, and a human workforce is something CaliExpress distinctly lacks. However, there is a market for this, as several other parties were there enjoying lunch when we were.

Time will tell if this approach to dining will last, but it certainly makes for a unique experience right now.



ACROSS

- 1 Old-fashioned describer of soccer match chorales
- 7 Omani, e.g.
- 11 Former SNL writer Tina
- 14 Participant of a Renaissance fair, perhaps
- 15 Eastern European inhabitant
- 16 Toyota model
- 17 Top left on most keyboards
- 18 "So this is where we wait for pool tools?"
- 20 Nicht westen (De.)
- 21 Common end for a hike
- 22 Jurassic kings
- 23 Mimick
- 24 Enthusiastic introduction from Mario
- 27 Ancient esoteric Hindu texts
- 30 Function on many cars to clear the windshield
- 34 "Where my \_\_\_ at?"
- 35 "Who gave you those magic ruby slippers?"
- 38 Mid-Atlantic state school, familiarly
- 40 Fad
- 41 Three time grand slam winner Arthur

Say That Again?

Enric Adillon and Madeline Hicks

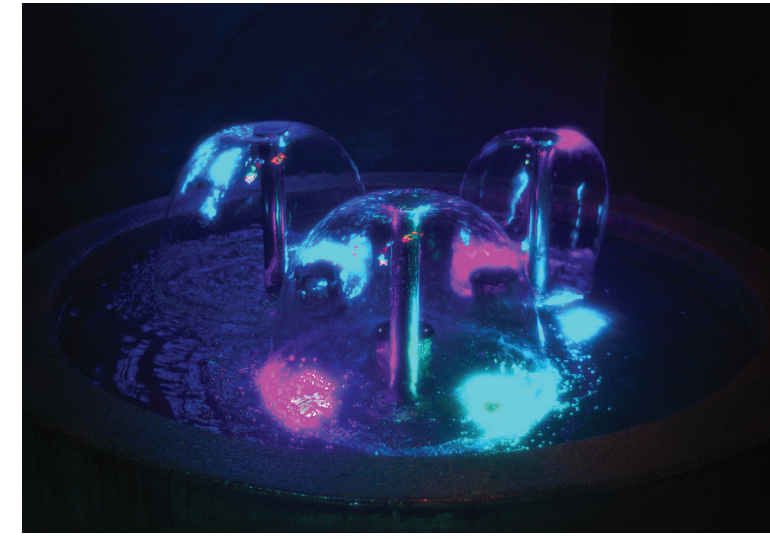
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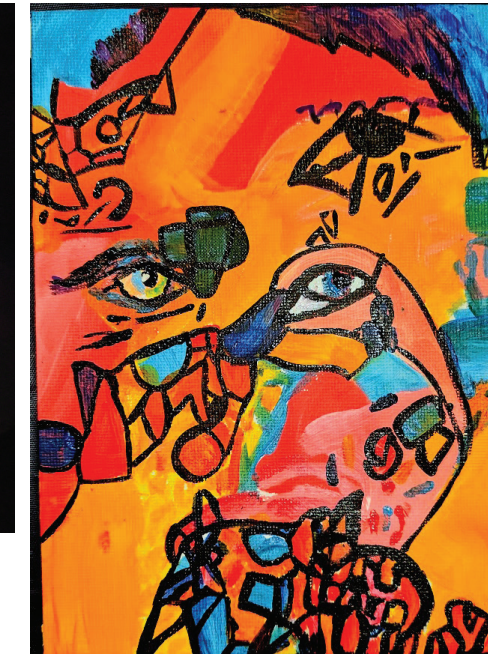
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- 38 Mid-Atlantic state school, familiarly
- 40 Fad
- 41 Three time grand slam winner Arthur
- 42 "What's that underage kid doing digging for coal?"
- 44 Clarifying word, in text lingo
- 45 Resource for chip manufacturing?
- 46 Blurs out
- 49 Approximate time for a morning meeting
- 52 Communal
- 53 Eye protector
- 56 Article for Vegas or Palmas
- 57 Components of a tropical theme bar
- 60 "My hero isn't up to much these days"
- 63 "It's \_\_\_\_\_ to shine!"
- 64 Noted Chairman
- 65 Pineapple plantation on Oahu, HI
- 66 Note on a gift
- 67 German car maker: abbr
- 68 Hit track from MGMT
- 69 Features of many Manhattan buildings
- 31 "Seems to be operational"
- 32 Emmy-winning "The Office" writer and producer Michael
- 33 "Dot the i's and cross \_\_\_"
- 36 James Bond creator Fleming
- 37 Poles' neighbors
- 39 Detest
- 43 Suggestion with an ETA
- 47 2014 Rae Sremmond hit
- 48 Poker pair with the same symbols
- 50 Millennial-speak for "that was hilarious"
- 51 Department at a business
- 53 An arm or a leg
- 54 Father of Cain and Abel
- 55 Yellow or orange diamond street sign
- 58 Circular definition of the self
- 59 Understands
- 61 "Not sure", over iMessage
- 62 Online journal article ID
- 63 Chem. unit

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# Art and Photography Spotlight



"Mechanoluminescence" by Lucas Ancieta



"Saturation" by Sophie Gershaft



"Pectoral Freedoms" by Lark Mendoza



"Skies Ablaze" by Sylvia Wang

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[tech.caltech.edu/hello](https://tech.caltech.edu/hello)

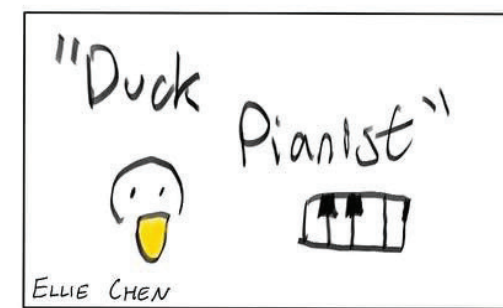
Do you have thoughts™ about...

- Caltech Accessibility Services (CASS) Experiences with Caltech's Title IX Office
- Paying for laundry/ WASHConnect App
- The Turtle Mascot
- Anything else?

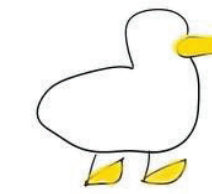
Tell us your opinions about things going on at Caltech with this new survey form on our website! You can submit any time, multiple times, about anything.

**LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!!**

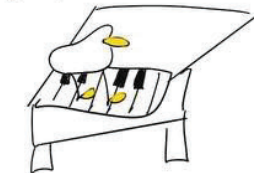
## Duck Pianist - Ellie Chen



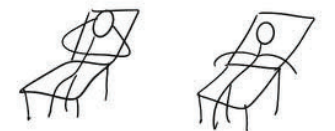
This duck had a dream.



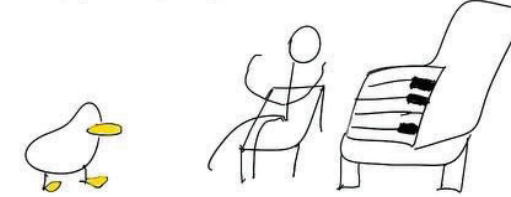
This duck dreamt of becoming a pianist



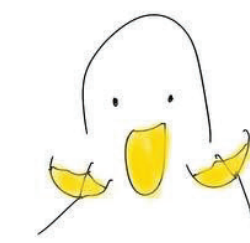
and dazzling audiences with brilliant music.



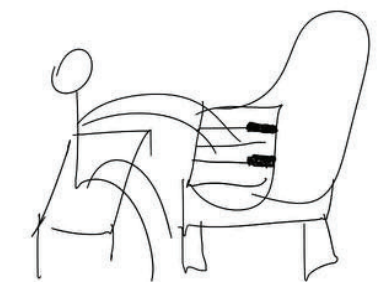
"Are you kidding me? That's ridiculous!"



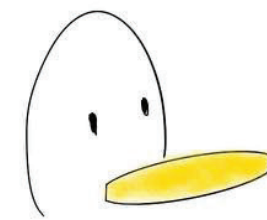
"Your webbed appendages won't allow you to play more than two notes at once."



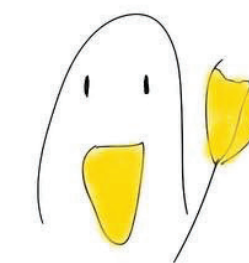
"Good luck playing anything more than elementary!"



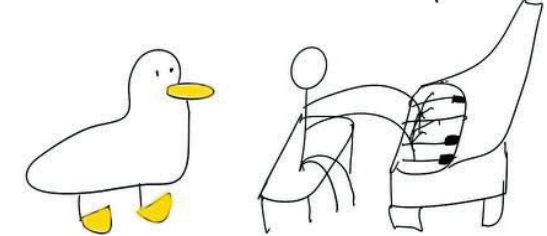
"I may have blunt, webbed appendages so unlike your nimble, distinct fingers."



"But I have already considered this. I will simply jump around fast enough on the keyboard to appear that I am playing many different notes at once."



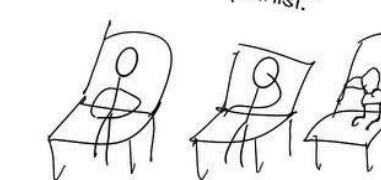
"That's stupid."



A FEW YEARS LATER



"Beautiful."



"What a wonderful pianist."



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The California Tech

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**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](http://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.

*The California Tech* #13

# 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](http://caltech.edu/map/campus).*

*The QR code will be hidden somewhere within the pictured area.*



The California Tech

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

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