

CGPU Misleads in Compensation Gains of Proposed Tentative Agreement

John Chapman
Opinion

My name is John Chapman, and I am a G5 chemistry graduate student. I have gathered union petition signatures, organized vote parties for union authorization, sent mass emails in support of the union, and spoken in person to most grad students and postdocs in Schlinger, Church, and Crellin for Caltech Grad Researchers and Postdocs United (CGPU). I'm about as pro-union as they come. But right now, CGPU is at best misleading and at worst outright lying about compensation gains in the recent tentative agreement (TA).

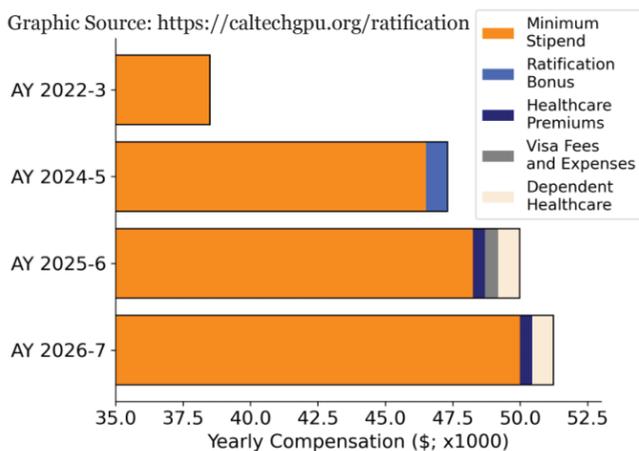
First, the facts. In 2021-22, graduate students received a stipend of \$38,500. On Dec 14, 2022, following intense unionization efforts at the UC and other schools, the grad student stipend increased to \$41,000 for the remainder of the '22-'23 academic year with an additional raise to \$45,000 to begin in the '23-'24 academic year. Currently, all graduate students at Caltech make at least \$45,000. The current TA (1/21/25) proposes a graduate student worker (GSW) minimum of \$48,244 to begin on Sep 1, 2025.

However, if you were to look at CGPU literature promoting the passage of the TA, you would believe that the bargaining team began their negotiations at \$38,000 (the '21-'22 stipend), which is not true. For example, on a flyer circulated this week by CGPU, the "Wages and Compensation" article states "Before the CGPU campaign Launched GSW minimum: \$38,500. ... After launch, increase in 2024-25 pay: GSW Minimum: \$46,500" (an apparent 20% raise). Unfortunately, much of this statement isn't true. The first campus-wide CGPU email was sent on 12/19/22 (five days after the '23-'24 raises) to announce a kick-off event for the CGPU unionization effort on Jan 20, 2023. While there were certainly pro-unionization undercurrents in late '22—an off-campus unionization event

occurred on 12/9/22—classifying compensation gains that occurred before the union sent any student body-wide emails or officially began their campaign as CGPU wins is questionable.

Furthermore, in the 1/21/25 campus-wide CGPU email announcing that the bargaining team reached a full tentative agreement with Caltech, CGPU included the following bar graph outlining the history of GSW compensation. Notably missing from this graphic is the '23-'24 pay—\$45,000. Omission of this data point again misleads GSWs into concluding that the union won a 20% pay raise, rather than the modest 3.75% raise actually in the TA (which just beats 3.4% inflation for 2024). This graphic has also been modified to truncate the x-axis, and now begins at \$35k rather than \$0. This tried-and-true method of misleading data visualization inflates the 3.7% to appear much larger than the small change it actually represents. Why was so much effort made to alter this graphic and mislead GSWs?

Finally, when you include approximately \$800 expected in union dues, the TA compensation package again seems like not as good of a deal as CGPU would like us to believe. While the proposed TA has other gains, like those for dependents and international students, so why is CGPU attempting to mislead GSWs into believing that we are receiving a much larger raise than we actually are? Is a raise that just keeps pace with inflation the best that the bargaining team could achieve? How would the compensation package shift if we were to strike (as we already authorized in a vote)? For an organization that claims to be transparent, shifting timelines, omitting key data points, and altering graphs to enlarge the appearance of proposed raises is particularly disappointing. I think that a better deal is still out there.



Graduate Student Workers
In top 5 of compensation articles among peer institutions

CGPU Bargaining Team Statement in Support of our Groundbreaking Tentative Agreement

CGPU-UAW Bargaining Team
Opinion

Nearly a year since voting to form our union, the elected CGPU bargaining team is proud to unanimously endorse a YES vote on a full Tentative Agreement (TA) to ratify Caltech Postdoc (PD) and Graduate Student Workers' (GSWs) first-ever union contract. This historic agreement demonstrates the power GSWs and PDs have built and exercised through mass engagement in our contract campaign. It also reflects a shared desire between GSWs and PDs and the Caltech Administration to reach an agreement in the wake of devastating wildfires and in the face of the threat posed by the Trump administration. Should we ratify this Tentative Agreement, Postdocs and GSWs would have the **strongest protections in academia against the upcoming Trump administration.**

When Trump was in office last, Title IX was significantly weakened, visa renewal processes became increasingly complex, and the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) systematically rolled back workers' rights to form unions and engage in collective bargaining. Already in the first week in office, Trump has attacked DEI initiatives and transgender rights, raising concerns about the future of discrimination protections. In contrast, this agreement secures enforceable protections against discrimination, harassment, and abuse, with a grievance process independent of Title IX and, if necessary, third party mediation within 90 days—with interim measures guaranteed for survivors to continue research safely. It

also enshrines robust provisions for international workers, including two-year minimum initial appointments for PDs, up to 7 days paid time off for visa renewal, and clear rehiring protections for workers who fall out of visa status—all of which are industry-leading. **Our unprecedented article on freedom of speech protects our right to engage in mass, collective action to enforce and even improve our contract.** If SpaceX, Amazon, Trader Joe's, Starbucks, and the USC administration win their cases against the NLRB, deeming it unconstitutional, this contract is the best defense we will have.

Together, we won a cumulative raise of 25% (\$9,744) for GSWs and 13% (\$8,243) for PDs between Fall 2022, when the unionization campaign launched amidst the historic strike in the UC system, and Fall 2025. Going forward, this Agreement guarantees wage increases to at least \$48,244 in Fall 2025 and \$50,000 in Fall 2026 for GSWs and \$72,723 in Fall 2025 and \$75,268 in Fall 2026 for PDs, and a 2% wage increase for PDs already paid above the minimum. It will also provide an \$800 ratification bonus for all GSWs and PDs by May 15, significantly reduced healthcare premiums for GSWs (saving \$442/year for individuals and \$794/year per dependent at the current rates), \$500 in visa renewal reimbursement for international workers, and the creation of an entirely new hardship fund with at least \$125,000 to support postdoc parents financially.

Collective bargaining is about identifying compromises that

both the researchers and the Institute are willing to make to reach a mutually acceptable agreement. As the bargaining team, we know that the financial gains made in this Agreement are not enough to meet the needs of all GSWs and PDs, particularly for parents relying on single incomes. However, we believe that this first contract forms a strong foundation on which future negotiations can build.

Beyond the contract, our union provides the means for GSWs and PDs to come together to support each other and push for positive change with a united voice. As the movement to unionize research institutions in and beyond academia continues to grow, each campus's improvements benefit us all in our shared goal of an equitable and sustainable workplace. In two years, when PDs and GSWs begin our next contract fight, we will have the advantage of the strength of our first contract and the progress made by other academic unions to meet the needs of the most vulnerable in our community further. We look forward to PDs and GSWs continuing the collective effort to improve the lives and experiences of those of us here and build a Caltech for everyone.

A full summary of the Tentative Agreement (and the complete text of the Agreement) detailing the wins above and additional provisions can be found at caltechgpu.org/ratification. **GSWs and PDs can vote online in the ratification vote on Tuesday Jan 28 and Wednesday January 29.**

Betsy Mitchell to Step Down as Director of Athletics

Emily Yu
Sports/Athletics

After 14 years as Caltech's Director of Athletics, Physical Education and Recreation, Betsy Mitchell announced earlier this month that she will be stepping down in the spring. Regarding this decision, she stated that it is "just time for a change" in an email to the *Tech*.

Mitchell is the former world (1986-1991) and American (1986-2002) record holder in 200-meter backstroke. During her time at the University of Texas at Austin, she was a 7-time individual NCAA champion in swimming and the NCAA record holder in the 100- and 200-yard backstroke. She also competed as part of the United States Olympic swimming team in 1984 and 1988, earning gold and silver medals.

Prior to working at Caltech, Mitchell served as the head coach of swim and dive at Dartmouth College and as the director of athletics at schools in Ohio and Allegheny College.

Since joining Caltech in April of 2011, Mitchell has led the development and improvement of the athletic program and department. This includes rebranding the department, advancing the Physical Education requirement, and establishing an Athletic Hall of Honor to recognize alumni. Additionally, she supervised \$5 million in annual operating expenses and created and implemented a \$20 million facility improvement plan from new revenue sources.

In terms of performance, the athletics department has improved from a .000 to a .379 winning percentage.

According to an announcement on the Caltech Athletics website, a notable accomplishment off the field includes "producing incredible scholar athletes who graduate at a higher 4 year rate than the regular student body."

The timeline for transition has not been finalized yet, as planning for it is ongoing this term. Post-Caltech, Mitchell intends to focus on her second book, resume her consulting practice, and explore new opportunities as they arise. Reflecting on her time here, Mitchell stated, "it has been an honor and pleasure to work directly on behalf of our students and support our amazing educators" and if she had to choose just one highlight of her time here, "it would be creating positive school pride in support of our amazing scholar athletes."

Rare 17th-Century Portrait Comes to Pasadena

Emily Yu
Culture

As one of the world's most powerful empires was crumbling, its line of succession was also in dire straits. After losing his first wife and only son to smallpox, Philip IV of Spain faced an urgent need for a male heir. So, to consolidate the dynastic power of his family, Philip IV married his 14-year-old niece, Mariana of Austria, who had originally been betrothed to his late son. Following their marriage, a portrait of Spain's new queen consort was commissioned.

Last month, the Norton Simon Museum in Old Pasadena received this portrait: Diego Velázquez's *Queen Mariana of Austria* (1652–53). On special loan from the Museo del Prado, the famed Spanish national art museum in Madrid, this painting is being displayed on the West Coast for the first time. Its last appearance in the United States was over 30 years ago at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.

Velázquez is regarded as one of the most renowned painters from 17th-century Spain and one of the world's greatest artists. The completion of *Queen Mariana of Austria* marked the beginning of the final stage

of his career, during which his paintings focused more on women and children, such as in his best-known masterpiece *Las Meninas* (1656). There are just over 100 signed works from Velázquez's career, making them extremely rare. Only a handful are housed in America's finest art museums.

Queen Mariana of Austria is one of the artist's most accomplished works. "The beauty of the details and her expression and the humanness that you feel when you're standing in front of a life-size person and she's got this monumental dress on, you feel that," Associate Curator Maggie Bell told Forbes. "Velázquez's ability to create volume is really something you feel in person that doesn't translate on screen and I'm excited to give that experience to our visitors."

Mariana played an important role in Spain's history as regent for her son, Charles II, following the death of her husband. During her regency, she exercised substantial political authority in a period marked by internal strife and waning international influence. She played a key role in managing Spain's military and diplomatic challenges.

Velázquez's portrait depicts the young, 18-year-old queen in an extensive dress over a *guardainfante*. During Mariana's

reign, the rigid wide-hipped undergarment, criticized for its association with concealing pregnancies, gained popularity and became a quintessential part of Spanish court fashion.

The painting is the centerpiece of a larger exhibition, *Mariana: Velázquez's Portrait of a Queen from the Museo Nacional del Prado*, organized by Bell and Chief Curator Emily Talbot.

"We were delighted when our colleagues at the Museo del Prado suggested *Queen Mariana of Austria* as the first loan from the Spanish national collection to the Norton Simon Museum. We have great paintings by 17th-century Spanish artists in our collection, but there are no works by Velázquez at the Norton Simon Museum or at any institution on the West Coast," Talbot told ArtNet News. "Our display contextualizes Velázquez's extraordinary career by presenting him in the company of artists that he knew and admired, while highlighting the role that Mariana herself played in her own visual representation."

The exhibition also includes paintings by other influential Baroque artists, such as Guido Reni, Peter Paul Rubens, and Nicolas Poussin. Philip IV's family, the Habsburgs, placed great importance on art, commissioning and collecting



Photo: Elon Schoenholz/Norton Simon Museum

works from distinguished European artists. Their collections and patronage asserted wealth and influence while also reinforcing political and religious ties. By displaying *Queen Mariana of Austria* alongside the works of other preeminent artists of the time, the exhibition emulates the art that was accessible to the 17th-century Habsburg court.

An adjacent gallery displays paintings by Jusepe de Ribera,

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, and Francisco de Zurbarán—other notable Spanish painters of Velázquez's time—providing viewers with an enhanced experience of Spanish art from the 1600s.

Mariana: Velázquez's Portrait of a Queen from the Museo Nacional del Prado will be on view through March 24, 2025.

What Games Will Be on the Switch 2?

Clare Wu
The Outside World

In the midst of procrastinating yet another set, I am seized by my obsession with the godforsaken company Nintendo. Ever since the official announcement of the Nintendo Switch 2 (yes that is actually its name), I have not known a day of peace. I seem to be physically incapable of lasting 24 hours without thinking about this new console. With a supposed price of around \$400-449, it is important to see if it will match up to the high price point.

One of the most important factors to the success of console is the games that are available on it even at launch. To see how important this is, one needs only look to SEGA. Known for Sonic the Hedgehog and not much else, a rushed release with few native launch games and a disconnect between its Japanese and American divisions led to the SEGA Saturn launching to disappointing numbers. Some toy stores even refused to stock the console. SEGA's next console, the Dreamcast, would be its last as the SEGA Saturn's failure would see Sony's PlayStation's success.

Now, of course, there's more to this story, and times are different from 1995. We now live in the age of online shopping and the standards for console prices have been blurred. Additionally, Nintendo would never release a console without a couple of its flagship franchises backing it up. Regardless of the price, I feel certain that upon release the Switch 2 will be sold out quickly and then resold by scummy scalpers for twice the price. The internet will simultaneously love and hate it. These are simply an inevitable part of

the modern game console market.

What is not certain is the games that will come with the Switch 2, though there are some guarantees. I have compiled my list and ordered based off a combination of my confidence and how close to the launch date of the Switch 2 they will release.

Thus, to no one's surprise, the top spot goes to *Mario Kart 9/10*. *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* (emphasis on "Deluxe," because *Mario Kart 8* is actually a different game) is practically synonymous with the Switch. It's one of the games that you can get bundled with the Switch and is so popular that it even has a mobile version. Therefore, it's basically a given that Nintendo would create another successor to one of its longest-running game franchises. My confidence for this called shot is also boosted by the fact that they literally showed a *Mario Kart* clip in the trailer. We know that this clip most likely does not show *Mario Kart 8 Deluxe* (which will be abbreviated to MK8DX) footage because it features 24 starting places for players to race and a Donkey Kong design that more closely matches *The Super Mario Bros. Movie* than MK8DX's current design. A new *Mario Kart* game on console release ensures that there is at least one game featuring Nintendo's most iconic mascot to bundle with upon release. I estimate that buying the bundle will save you about \$10 more than if you buy the console and the game separately. I believe the only thing not set in stone about *Mario Kart 9/10*'s release is if it'll be *Mario Kart 9* or *10*. While it may not seem like a big deal, the Japanese are superstitious about 9

and 10 is a much prettier number. This may seem like a stupid reason, but remember that Apple, an American company, went straight from an iPhone 8 to iPhone X (10). I would not be surprised if Nintendo also skipped 9.

My next guess is a *Legend of Zelda* game of some kind. It has been 8 years since *Breath of the Wild* released alongside the Switch and it is still held in high acclaim. Its graphics demonstrated the potential of the Switch along with innovative puzzle and open world mechanics. Its effect is still seen in almost all modern open world games. Some prevalent examples of games that take heavy influence from *Breath of the Wild* are *Genshin Impact* and *Infinity Nikki*. Thus another blockbuster game would be just the thing to prove the Switch 2's capabilities and get its name out there, especially since it might have trouble distinguishing itself from the Switch. However, it is important to note that the sequel to *Breath of the Wild* released only 2 years ago, 6 years after *Breath of the Wild* released. Good games take time and I think it is unrealistic for a game on the same level of *Breath of the Wild* to be made in 2 years for a completely new console. What this means is that there will most likely be a *Legend of Zelda* game but it might be a smaller game like *Tears of Wisdom* or a remake. Most likely it'll be a remake with extremely good graphics. Personally, I would like to see *Twilight Princess* return.

I think we would also need to see a more serious and adult fan-focused franchise because at the end of the day, the Switch 2 can really only be purchased by adults. This is because adults have money. For

a more adult option in a similar open-world vein, there is *Xenoblade Chronicles*. Known mainly for having characters in *Super Smash Bros.*, *Xenoblade Chronicles* is a lesser-known franchise that still maintains a relatively dedicated fanbase. While you might hate Pyrrha/Mythra in *Smash*, *Xenoblade Chronicles* fans will hate them because they come from *Xenoblade Chronicles 2*. I hope that this entry will not be a remake but an entirely new game starring Shulk and his cool sword.

There are a couple other games that I am expecting to come with the Switch 2, but they are not necessarily launch games in my mind. Among them are new entries in the *Pokémon*, *Splatoon*, and *Smash Bros.* franchises.

The Pokémon company has long faced backlash for decreasing quality in games with high-pressure crunch times being to blame. For a while the series was on a breakneck pace of at least one game a year, and it seemed like the company would work itself into the ground, becoming a husk of what it once was. However, hope has returned as the last Pokémon game, *Pokémon Scarlet and Violet*, was released in 2022. More than year after it was released, *Pokémon Legends: Z-A* was announced. This increased amount of time between games combined with the *Pokémon Legends* title seems to promise a good product. Expectations are high as the last *Pokémon Legends* game was extremely well received despite departing from the regular Pokémon formula. It seems sure to release in 2025, so it'll most likely be within a couple months of the Switch 2.

Nintendo then needs some way to market their Online ser-

vice and what better game to do so with than *Splatoon*? This kid-friendly first-person-shooter (FPS) sees a variety of weapons combined with squid mechanics to explode in bursts of colorful fun. While it can be argued that the new *Mario Kart* game will encourage Nintendo Online subscriptions, I would say that the *Splatoon* fanbase has a larger Nintendo Online usage as the core gameplay/attraction of *Splatoon* and *Turf Wars* relies on the service. On the other hand, *Mario Kart* also has an active online community, though it seems to be bought more for local co-op than online co-op. Additionally, if the rumors of the Joy-Cons having mouse capabilities, there is no better game type suited for mouse controls than an FPS. If Nintendo insists on "Joy-Con mouse," it will try to make it a feature in one of its famous franchises. *Splatoon 4* will likely come later than *Pokémon* as it hasn't been announced.

Finally, we have *Smash Bros.* The explanation for this is simple. Every Nintendo console has had a *Smash Bros.* game. There's no way they don't make another. Estimated release date: no idea.

Whatever Nintendo releases, it'll certainly be popular. However, the focus should not be entirely on Nintendo games.

One of the most admirable things about the Nintendo Switch is the wide variety of indie games that are available on the platform. No other console has the same level of presence in the indie game industry as the Nintendo Switch. Now with big box company games becoming more and more disappointing, indie games become more and more beloved.

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The Case for More Card Readers: How Bechtel's Single Entrance Costs Students 1,454 Hours Yearly

Daniel Wareham
The Inside World

1. The problem

\$130,000. That is my estimate of waste at Bechtel.

Most visitors to Caltech's newest residence were probably surprised when they first found out that the 212-room building has just one entrance, an issue which, as a resident of Bechtel myself, has been more inconvenient than I originally anticipated. There are various doors around Bechtel, as shown by the circles in the below floor plan. However, only the southern main gate indicated in green has a card reader, while every other door indicated in red has no card reader and can thus only be used as exits. Therefore, due to their inability to use these doors as entrances, Bechtelites often spend a minute more than necessary to journey back to their room.

My goal in this article is to add up all of these seemingly negligible wastes, summing over all students, over many years. I will then propose and justify ways of valuing (in cold hard dollars) these massive collections of tiny time intervals, ultimately to illustrate the scale of the benefit which just one small change can make.

2. The Time

Having found a document detailing the precise number of students living in each region of Bechtel, I approached this problem by considering each possible combination of approach direction and region. This is because, in the best case, a student returning from the south to his room in region A wastes no time by going through the main entrance; in the worst case, a student returning from the north to her room in region B must walk around the outside of Bechtel rather than simply entering through the northern door, adding roughly 2 minutes

to her journey. I therefore estimated the added time for each of the 28 combinations of direction and region, taking into account the positions of stairs in estimating the times for levels 2 and 3.

Additionally, students don't return to Bechtel from each direction equally: the south, for example, being the direction of the main campus, is more likely to be approached from than the north. I therefore also estimated the weekly rates with which students would return from each direction and factored those rates into my calculations. With just the above assumptions, I arrived at the following values:

Average Number of entrances (per student per day)	4.3
Average wasted time (per entrance)	25 seconds
Wasted time (per student per week)	12.47 minutes
Academic weeks per year	33
Wasted time (per student per year)	6.86 hours
Number of students	212
Total wasted time (per year)	1454 hours

1454 hours per year. Just consider that. What would you do if you could get that many extra hours? How much would you value that?

3. The Money

How valuable is a Caltech student's time? That's hard to say, especially given the peculiar

situation I am currently considering. Most people would intuitively feel that 60 separate one-minute chunks have a different value to a single uninterrupted hour; as Ec 11 students might say, the marginal value of time is not constant. On one hand, working on a problem set for 60 minutes probably gives more than 60 times the benefit of working on it for 1 minute. On the other hand, there are situations where a single minute can have a large effect: consider the fact that there is only a 5-minute gap between class periods, making each gap especially valuable. A single minute might be the difference between whether or not a forgetful EE student has time, between back-to-back lectures in the Moore Sub-basement, to go back to his Bechtel room to get his homework (the one that Prof. Glen George as usual insists be done on paper). In this case, a single minute can be what decides whether the hours spent on the homework pay off. Given the examples on either side, therefore, on average, whether the time was wasted as big chunks or small intervals has no crucial impact on the total value of that time.

What about the argument that the time wasted from walking wouldn't have been productive anyway? The value of leisure and work is equal to an ideal logical student (because the student is already operating at the margin of the trade-off between work and leisure). Even if someone assigns a value of 0 to the inherent value of leisure, it is still a fact that, after a certain amount of work, leisure allows them to be more productive in future work. Even someone who only cares about pure productivity would value leisure.

So, values should be assigned to this situation in a utilitarian manner, even if doing so seems intuitively ridiculous. Since I saw no reasonable way

	Hourly rate	Total wasted value (per year) per student per year	per student per year	Over 5 years
Federal minimum wage	\$7.25	\$10,543	\$50	\$52,715
Pasadena minimum wage	\$17.50	\$25,449	\$120	\$127,243
maximum Caltech UG pay	\$38	\$55,260	\$261	\$276,298

Table 1: Possible valuations of the 1454 wasted hours per year

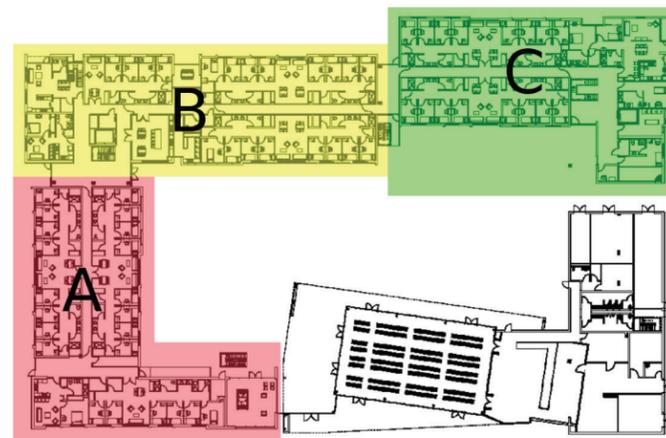
of personally estimating the average worth of a Caltech student's time, I chose to calculate a range of possible total values using a range of possible hourly rates (Table 1).

Five years is a confident estimate of the lifespan of a card reader. Therefore, taking the middle of the above range, \$130,000 is a reasonable estimate for the waste that a set of five card readers installed on the five exit-only doors can prevent. Sure, any individual estimate I made could be criticized. Maybe students enter 3 times a day on average, not 4; maybe

journeys from the north are far rarer than I guessed. What is almost certainly accurate, though, is the order of magnitude of my estimation—that the value wasted over 5 years is somewhere between \$50,000 and \$500,000.

I can hardly imagine that card readers (installation costs and all) require tens of thousands of dollars apiece. So, I hope that Caltech can consider my calculations, invest in five card readers, and solve this problem for present and future Bechtelites.

Level 1



Floor Plan of Level 1 of Bechtel Residence

Switch 2

continued from page 2

Thus, there could be nothing more inspiring than Nintendo, a major company, even further encouraging the many indie games hosted on the Switch with an indie game being available on release. What could be even more exciting than the most anticipated indie game for years?

In 2017, not so coincidentally the same year the Switch launched, Team Cherry created the bestselling game Hollow Knight. Initially planned to release close to the Switch's launch, it came early the next year. Then in 2 years, it sold more than 2.8 million copies. So when they announced a DLC, people were understandably excited.

However, in 2019 it was announced that the DLC would actually be expanded into a full sequel. Support for the new game, named Silksong, grew as time went on. But, around 2023, the developers went silent, presumably to focus on development and ignore the pressure of their fans. Now, 6 years later, one of the developers, William Pellen, has changed his profile picture to that of a chocolate cake. Desperate for any news, fans reverse image-searched this picture of cake and found it belonged to a Bon Appetit recipe posted on April 2nd, 2024. April 2nd also happens to be the date of the next Nintendo Direct, teased at the end of the Switch 2 announcement. Maybe Team Cherry will actually succeed on releasing close to

the new console's release similar to how they hoped to release close to the launch of the Switch. While it might be my own delusion talking, I hope that *Hollow Knight: Silksong* will be available on release of the Switch 2.

In conclusion, I believe there will be plenty of games to look forward to on the Nintendo Switch 2. Nothing set in stone, and yet I feel confident that 2025 will have a pretty nice roster of games. I suppose it is truly a testament to Nintendo's

reputation. I leave you with one final note. Don't rush to buy the console at launch, it'll still be here in a couple years where it'll have even more games that you don't have to speculate about.



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From Wicked to Wickedly Fun: Caltech's Off-Campus Adventures

Camilla Fezzi
Culture

If you've recently heard students humming show tunes, hyping up hockey games, or debating the best rides at Knott's Berry Farm, you've probably stumbled upon the buzz surrounding Caltech's Off-Campus Programming Series. What started as a pilot program to foster student engagement is now a fully-fledged initiative under the Office of Student and Family Engagement (SFE).

I recently had the chance to chat with Steven Metzmaker, Assistant Director of Residential & Student Experience, who has been orchestrating these off-campus escapades. From musicals to sports games, Steven and his team are redefining what taking a break from problem sets and lab work means. Here's how they're making magic happen (and yes, it includes a trip to *Wicked*).

How do you get the money for all this? Are these events funded by donations?

Great question! As it turns out, the funding doesn't just fall from the sky (or magically appear like a Broadway spotlight). Steven shared that the SFE team wrote a grant to secure the financing of these events after conducting a needs assessment based on student input, the C3 report, and anecdotal evidence.

"We wanted to make sure the programs address real student needs," Steven explained. "By listening to what students want, we've been able to create events that are meaningful, fun, and engaging."

Which activities do you think are the most valuable for students?

Without hesitation, Steven emphasized that "any" off-campus activity holds immense value for students. "We



work hard to cater to a variety of interests and explore an array of attractions," he said.

For the 2023–2024 academic year, students enjoyed outings like the **Hadestown** musical, LAFC soccer games, and even a trip to Knott's Berry Farm. As for 2024–2025, the lineup was and will be just as exciting:

- Pasadena Art Night
- LA Rams football game
- LA Kings hockey game
- Knott's Berry Farm (with ASCIT!)
- Wicked Musical

Whether it's cheering on the local team or diving into the arts, these experiences give students a chance to bond, recharge, and explore the world outside of campus.

Have you thought about inviting Caltech faculty or staff to join these trips?

The answer is a big YES! Steven shared that he's already invited folks from Caltech's Student Affairs and is eager to involve more faculty and staff in future outings.

"I would hope to have trips led by a faculty member or staff member who has a unique background related to the destination," Steven said. "This would give students a chance to

connect with the Caltech community in a new way."

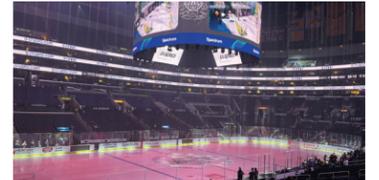
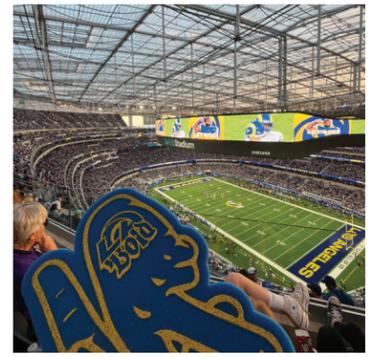
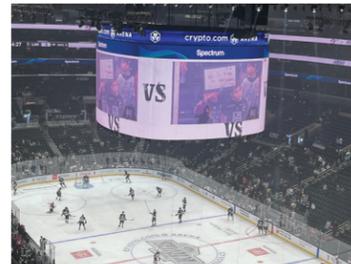
The idea of having a professor lead a trip to, say, the Getty Center or the Huntington Library sounds like the perfect way to combine education with exploration. And as for famous people? Well, who knows? Maybe Steven has a few surprises up his sleeve. Although I have asked him way too many times to take us to see a game of the Lakers and LeBron, but there is no way!

What about grants for clubs? How can they connect with the SFE?

Steven was excited to highlight the new grants available for student clubs, which are detailed on the SFE website's Extra Funding page.

From the Huang "Fun Fund" to the Moore-Hufstедler Fund and the George W. Housner Student Discovery Fund, there are plenty of opportunities for clubs to secure funding for creative and meaningful activities.

"These grants could definitely tie into the Off-Campus Programming Series," Steven noted. "For example, a club could apply for funding to organize a retreat or competition, and we could collaborate to make it



part of the broader student experience."

A Personal Note: Why These Trips Matter

When I asked Steven what drives him to organize these events, it was clear that he's passionate about creating opportunities for students to unwind and connect.

"It's amazing to see students step away from their intense schedules and just have fun," Steven said. "Whether it's a musical, a hockey game, or a trip to Knott's Berry Farm, these moments remind us that there's more to the Caltech experience than labs and lectures."

What Students Are Saying

Of course, it wouldn't be a proper article without hearing from the students themselves. Here are just a few testimonials from those who've participated in the Off-Campus Programming Series:

- "Hadestown was so incredible—with all the build-up and light work, and the unavoidability of the tragedy, I left the theater in a daze. That's the catharsis of Greek theater for you." – Albert

Y. Huang

- "I loved this event! I'm so glad Caltech sponsored a completely free trip for us because I never would have seen this musical otherwise, and it has changed my brain chemistry a little." – Ling-Yi Wu

- "LA is such a hub of art and culture. Unfortunately, as an international student without a car, it can be hard to get all the way down to LA. I loved the opportunity to check out this phenomenal musical!" – Tanmay Gupta

From *Wicked* to wickedly fun soccer matches, the Off-Campus Programming Series is proving to be a game-changer for Caltech students. Thanks to Steven and the SFE team, students now have more opportunities than ever to explore, connect, and recharge. So, what's next? Only time will tell—but if the past is any indication, the future of Caltech's off-campus programming is bright (and maybe even Broadway-level dazzling).

Stay tuned, and don't forget to sign up for the next adventure!

Suggest books for SPECTRE!

SPECTRE, the underground sci-fi and fantasy library, is planning to purchase new books. Suggest some books in this form!



Do you like keeping up with sports?
Do you live for the game winner,
the epic comeback, or the roar of
the crowd? Do you love my only
sunshine LeBron James?

If you said yes to any of
these questions...

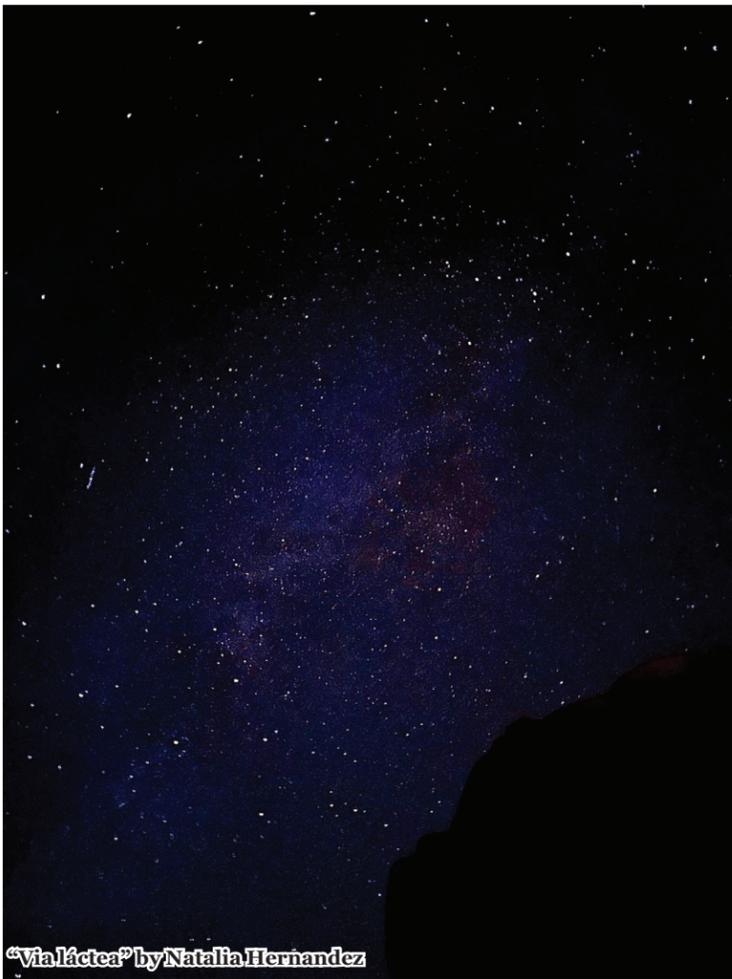
The Tech

needs YOU!!!

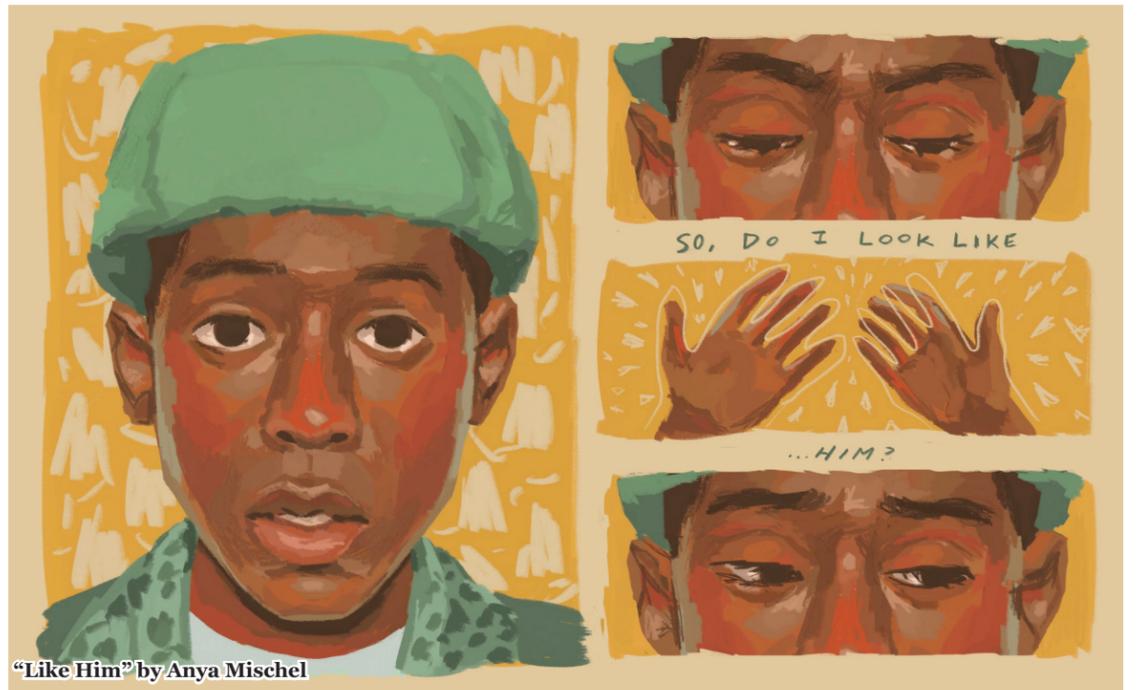
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“Via Láctea” by Natalia Hernandez



“Like Him” by Anya Mischel



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“Ponderings” by Abraham Belayneh

art + photos
spotlight



“Focus” by Alanna Yelland



“Revelations” by Juan Luchsinger

The science of thought: philosophical insights into scientific practice

Aristotle: The Philosopher of Reason, Reality, and the Tangible World

Camilla Fezzi
Column

And here we are at the last pillar of ancient philosophy, which, in some way, can also be defined as the father of the modern one. After our Platonic dive into the world of ideas, metaphysical realms, and abstract thought, it's time to plant our feet firmly on the ground. If Plato was the dreamer with his head above the clouds, Aristotle is the realist with his hands in the soil. He's the philosopher of practicality; the one who took the abstract musings of his teacher, Plato, and said, "Alright, but how does it really work?" A man of observation, experimentation, and logic. If Plato was the architect of the ideal world, Aristotle was the engineer of reality—the one who built the bridge between raw perception and reasoned understanding. And this cannot be more like the reality we live in every day here at Caltech, the concreteness of things, reason,

rational and non-metaphysical analysis. Most of the time we ask ourselves why we must take exams in humanities or take courses in the sector, the answer lies in Aristotle who considered knowledge as something 360°, capable of shaping you completely.

So, let's step out of the hyperuranion (thank goodness!) and delve into Aristotle's world. A world that's not just theoretical but also practical, observable, and—dare I say it—approachable.

Aristotle and Plato: A Philosophical "It's Complicated"

Imagine this: Plato and Aristotle are sitting in a café in Athens (bear with me). Plato is passionately gesturing about his world of ideas, the abstract realm where concepts like justice, beauty, and goodness exist in their purest forms. Aristotle listens, nods politely, and then interrupts, "But Plato, my dear teacher, how do these ideas connect to the world we live in?"

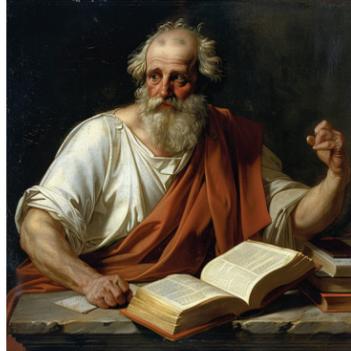


Figure 1: Aristotle and the research of *εὐδαιμονία*

Where's the evidence?"

This is the core of their philosophical divergence. Plato believed in two worlds: the *intelligible* and the *sensible*. Aristotle, however, saw no need for a separate world of ideas. For him, the "idea" of a tree didn't exist in some abstract hyperuranion—it existed *in the tree itself*. Form and matter were inseparable; the essence of a thing wasn't floating in some metaphysical realm but was

embedded in the thing itself. Where Plato was metaphysical, Aristotle was physical. Where Plato sought universals, Aristotle sought particulars. Where Plato gazed upwards, Aristotle looked around.

The Foundations of Aristotle's Philosophy

Aristotle (Stagira, 384 BC – Euboea, 322 BC) was a polymath in the truest sense of the word. Philosophy, biology, physics, ethics, politics, logic, poetics—he didn't dabble in these fields; he *defined* them. He believed that real knowledge was a mix of different realities, and the true instructor should be aware of all of them. If Plato was the father of metaphysics, Aristotle was the father of everything else.

His philosophy is grounded in **empiricism**—the belief that knowledge comes from sensory experience. Unlike Plato, who distrusted the senses and prioritized intellectual intuition, Aristotle argued that the senses are our starting point for un-

derstanding the world. You observe, you analyze, you reason, and you conclude. It's a system that feels remarkably familiar to those of us in the scientific world.

Aristotle's Four Causes

One of Aristotle's most influential contributions is his doctrine of the **four causes**. He attempts to answer the fundamental question: *Why do things exist the way they do?*

Let's take an example—a statue of Plato (because irony is fun).

- 1. The Material Cause:** What is it made of? Marble, in this case.
- 2. The Formal Cause:** What is its form or essence? The shape of Plato that the sculptor has carved.
- 3. The Efficient Cause:** Who or what made it? The sculptor.
- 4. The Final Cause:** What is its purpose? To honor Plato, or perhaps just to decorate a fancy Athenian temple.

continued on page 7

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Aristotle

continued from page 6
nian courtyard.

Aristotle's genius lies in the **Final Cause**, or what he calls *telos*, *τελος* (from Greek, end). Everything, according to Aristotle, has a purpose, an end goal. For Aristotle, understanding something's purpose is key to understanding its very nature. It's a beautifully holistic way of thinking—one that ties together material, form, and action into a unified explanation.

Hylomorphism: Matter and Form

If Aristotle's philosophy had a tagline, it would be "Form and matter are one." (Not as catchy as Nike's "Just do it," but still profound.)

For Aristotle, every physical object is a combination of **matter** (what it's made of) and **form** (what makes it what it is). Take a chair, for instance. Its matter might be wood, but its form is what makes it a chair—its shape, its function, its essence. Without form, it's just a pile of wood. Without matter, it's...well, nothing.

This idea of **hylomorphism** (from the Greek *ηυλε* = matter, and *μορφη* = form) is Aristotle's way of bridging the gap between Plato's dualism (the

separation of the intelligible and sensible worlds) and the observable reality we live in. Form and matter aren't separate—they're intertwined.

Aristotle's Ethics: The Search for the Good Life

If Plato's ethics were about finding the ultimate, abstract "Good," Aristotle's ethics were about living the best possible life *here and now*. His approach is practical, and rooted in the realities of human existence. At the heart of his ethics is the concept of **eudaimonia**, (from ancient Greek *ευ*: well/good and *δαιμων*, soul (the inner conscience) often translated as "happiness" but better understood as "flourishing" or "living well." For Aristotle, the goal of human life is to achieve eudaimonia—a state of being where we fulfill our potential and live in harmony with our nature.

How do we achieve this? Through **virtue (virtus in Latin)**. But not just any virtue—Aristotle's ethics are all about the **Golden Mean**, the idea that virtue lies between two extremes. For example:

- Courage is the mean between recklessness and cowardice.
- Generosity is the mean between wastefulness and stinginess.
- Wit is the mean between

buffoonery and boorishness.

Aristotle's ethics aren't about rigid rules; they're about balance, context, and practical wisdom (*phronesis-φρονεσις*). They're the ethics of a person navigating the complexities of real life, not an abstract utopia.

Aristotle's Political Philosophy: Community as the Key to Flourishing

For Aristotle, humans are by nature **political animals** (*ζoon πολιτικον*). We thrive in communities. Why? Because it's in the context of a community—a *polis* (*πολις*), or city-state—that we can achieve eudaimonia. Aristotle's vision of politics isn't about power or control; it's about creating the conditions for human flourishing. A good political system supports virtue and helps its citizens live good lives. It's a vision that feels idealistic yet grounded, ambitious yet practical.

Aristotle and Science: The Father of Observation

If Aristotle were alive today, he'd probably be running a lab at Caltech. His approach to science was systematic, methodical, and deeply empirical. He didn't just theorize—he observed, dissected, and cataloged. He studied everything

from the anatomy of animals to the orbits of stars. Granted, not all of his conclusions were correct (sorry, Aristotle, but spontaneous generation is not a thing), but his methods laid the groundwork for scientific inquiry. He was the first to argue that understanding the natural world requires observation, classification, and reasoning—a methodology that still underpins modern science.

Aristotle's Legacy: The Philosopher of the Tangible

While Plato's influence shaped the metaphysical and abstract, Aristotle's legacy is deeply rooted in the tangible. He's the philosopher of the practical, the observable, the real. His ideas resonate with scientists, engineers, ethicists, and anyone who values reason and evidence.

If Plato is the dreamy theorist who inspires us to imagine what could be, Aristotle is the pragmatic thinker who helps us understand what is. Together, they form the yin and yang of Western philosophy—two sides of the same coin, each incomplete without the other.

So, as we navigate the complexities of science, research, and life, let's remember Aristotle's lesson: Look around, observe, question, and seek

purpose. Because in the end, the pursuit of knowledge isn't just about understanding the world—it's about making it better. And with that, I leave you to ponder Aristotle's wisdom. Perhaps, like him, we can find beauty and meaning not in some distant ideal but in the richness of the world around us.

And as Aristotle himself might say, *We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit.*

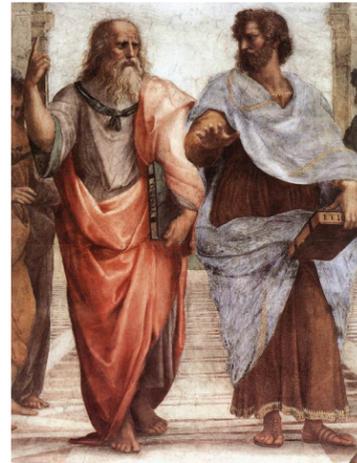


Figure 2: The hand toward the earth, indicating the materialism and rationalism of his philosophy

The Bubble

Camilla Fezzi
The Inside World

I've been thinking about this article for a while now, but I can't seem to find the right moment to write it. For me, writing means putting my thoughts down on paper—sometimes thoughts I struggle to acknowledge or understand, or that I try to avoid altogether. As my fingers race across the keyboard, the sound of a train echoes a few hundred meters away, and a cold breeze seeps through the window next to my bed. I'm in one of those classic American motels in the middle of nowhere. I've been competing in Thermal for a few months now, a truly remarkable place in the equestrian world. Yet, despite my passion for the sport and what I do, there's a subtle sadness within me—loneliness, and fear. There goes the train again! I mean, how do people build houses next to a railway? And especially, why isn't it mentioned on the website? I'm trying to catch up on a decade's worth of sleep (and I'm only 19!).

Still, it's often in these places that inspiration strikes me (though I'd say it's not just a bit dreary, but also somewhat dangerous... but don't tell my mother!). And then there's my budget... I spend everything on my horses while I'm starving... I really should reassess my priorities, but now isn't the time—at least not yet!

During my time at Caltech, I've noticed that I often use the term "BUBBLE," as in phrases like "I'm in my bubble of things to do," "Caltech Bubble," or "problem sets bubble." Essentially, it's a closed, limiting space, even though deep down, I know it's not. It's strange; when I attended university events like going to see the Rams or the Kings, it felt like I

was stepping out of this bubble and truly realizing where I was. Yes, I'm in Los Angeles, but it's as if I'm not, or at least I don't feel like I am. I'm in what I call the Bubble, which I don't mind, but it's almost addictive.

(Pause for reflection as I gaze at a '70s chair in front of me... which I doubt has seen the light of day since it was made.)

My last experience, going to see *Wicked* with some friends, really moved me... in a positive way. I got off the bus abruptly, lost in my books, and a gust of wind chilled my cheeks. Around me, many people were bustling, and a guy next to me exclaimed, "Oh, the Walk of Fame." I looked down at my Nikes and realized, oh yes! We're in Hollywood! Wow, I had completely forgotten. The thoughts I've always tried to push away became more vivid. I've always written and worked to feel less lonely, but as I faced the immense theater, I thought, there was a world outside the bubble. Yet, I'm also aware that I don't belong to it. This realization has caused me pain, but it's true. At Caltech, I've found my community—people who understand me, for better or worse, in all my struggles and obsessions. When I go out, I still feel that pain I've suffered for years, the emptiness, the feeling of being a fish out of water and completely misunderstood. For years, no one ever spoke to me; sometimes, classmates would turn away as I passed. I was always there in the corner, studying and creating my own "school," with my subjects and passions.

I touch upon this same topic with other freshmen as we sit on Long Beach, and yes, thankfully, the fire is dying down as we enjoy a morning under the Californian sun. But am I still the same person? Yes, but I'm among "my" people. That's the difference—people who love science, but not only that; they



aim to create a better future for the planet. Even if they're asocial, they become social with each other. We're nerds, but in a beautiful, eclectic way, each with our own personality. This is what Caltech has taught me during these months: that I'm not wrong; I just needed to find the sea in which to swim and the planet on which to live. We're all in this microcosm that connects us to the world.

The bubble, then, is a way of life, but it doesn't limit opportunities. We spin like tops between labs, building machines, studying, calculating formulas, often shutting ourselves away in our worries, shouting to the world, "You don't know what I carry inside!" and we continue day by day. This piece is an invitation to reflect, as I am doing from this motel in the desert, on what shape our bubble might take.

When I'm inside it, I believe

there are no other possible lives. When I'm outside (like now), I feel a sense of nostalgia. Yet, when the curtain opened at the theater and my exhausted eyes focused on the dancers, the singers, and the lights, a tear fell—because for an international student, the odds are extremely low. I've been crushed, silenced, and muted too many times to speak anymore. That evening, however, like on other days, I was surrounded by people who appreciate my quirks, and who are genuine, and in the bubble, I found a sort of dimension. This doesn't mean I'm relaxed; on the contrary, I'm super stressed because I have a million things to do. But what would Camilla be without endless tasks?! In short, I'm hyperactive!

The bubble is, therefore, a dimension—a bit like Alice's Wonderland—but what helps us grow even more is recognizing

the ideal world and using that to find inspiration or the strength to keep fighting.

Now I'm off to bed because tomorrow the competition starts early! I'm stepping out of the bubble to chase that adrenaline I'm fundamentally addicted to... (P.S. Someone take me to Six Flags; I need roller coasters!!!) And then I'll return, even if only briefly because I've missed it and I have thousands of things to do...in the bubble, but for the world.

I'll conclude with a line from a song I recently listened to, which encapsulates profound meaning:

"I dedicate to you the noise of these meaningless words, a picture without its color that has flown away elsewhere. I dedicate to you the silence since you don't understand the words."

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.

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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. 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

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Tech Editor's Corner

Michael Gutierrez
Editorial

Hey friends, this is my third-to-last Tech issue as Editor-in-Chief! Good thing, too, because the senioritis is starting to kick in hard. That being said, I promise I'll actually have the CalGuesser QR code placed by the time these papers are delivered... sorry for accidentally gaslighting anyone who looked for last issue's CalGuesser on the morning of the 14th!

I don't know if anyone will read this block of text buried on the bottom of the back page so I'm going to be a bit more loose-lipped, and just reflect on how things are going.

First off, we have more enthusiasm and engagement than ever! People are writing and editing and running production and making the paper happen, and those people are not me! This is the first issue where I've barely had to do any editing or layout myself. Huge thanks to the team — y'all are awesome :)

That said, in terms of being a proper news outlet, some more work is needed. There are always things going on, even in this small campus, that really deserve to be brought into an objective light. The fires. The new US president and its impacts on Caltech. The defunding of undergraduate student life traditions. The sud-

The California Tech #19 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 **maybe win a fabulous prize???**

“On campus” is defined as the convex hull of the buildings shown on caltech.edu/map/campus.

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

CalGuesser #18 – January 14, 2025

Congrats, you found it!
Leave your name/pseudonym, year/department, and date found :)

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Andrew O, Lloy/Ven '28 3:22 1/14

Kkan'93 1:23 1/15 for some reason, missed it yesterday

Sarah Timur, '26 Dabney/Ricketts, 1/20

John c, 'who knows 1/21/25

LAST ISSUE'S
WINNERS!

den disappearance of Dr. Kim, the new (old now) Director of Wellness Services that we just published a story about a few issues ago. The denial of tenure to two beloved History professors. The ongoing collapse of the Honor Code.

These are all topics I've been really wanting to publish articles on. But I'm not a full-time investigative reporter, and unfortunately we just don't have enough staff to cover them. And it doesn't help that the Tech's advisor of 14 years and the professor of Caltech's only journalism class, Richard Kipling, has not been invited back to teach this year. The HSS Department cited budgetary issues as the reason for canceling Kipling's class, En 89 (Journalism and Storytelling). But the department has made it clear in the past that they do not consider journalism (or at least the Tech's journalism) to be “real writing,” refusing to count the class as writing intensive even though the assignments total much more than 4,000 words. So I am unfortunately not surprised that it was deprioritized.

The Tech
wants to hear from you!

LET YOUR VOICE BE HEARD!

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.

But life goes on! The news never rests, and I'm so proud to say I'm confident that the Tech is equipped to keep up with it and continue our strong tradition of student journalism, for years to come.

Until next time... stay frosty, Caltech!
<3 — guutz

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