JPL Community Remains Strong in Wake of February Layoffs

Damian Wilson
News

On February 7, due to uncertainty in their fiscal allocation for fiscal year (FY) 2024, the JPL Administration "took an exceptionally difficult workforce action that laid off around 350 employees and 40 contractors, as described in President Thomas Rosenbaum's letter to the Caltech community. This was done following direction from NASA to anticipate only $300 million of funding for the Mars Sample Return (MSR) mission, a slice declined from the $336 million provided last year. Despite the $94.99 million requested by the White House in the President's FY 2023 Budget Request, the House and Senate appropriations committees felt "alarmed" that the mission's "expected launch schedule continues to slip" despite steady funding, according to a Senate Report from July 2023. In March, they settled on allocating to MSR the predicted amount of $300 million. To better understand how the JPL work environment was affected, the Tech interviewed several JPLers spanning a diverse spectrum of departments and experience.

"We lost some key legends," reflected Albert "Joey" Jefferson, a flight systems engineer on the Soil Moisture Active Passive (SMAP) and Near-Earth Object Wide-field Infrared Survey Explorer (NEOWISE) projects. "It's really hard to imagine having a beaver as a mascot. Completely ridiculous." —MICHAEL GUTIERREZ, THE CALIFORNIA TECH

The layoffs are not without consequences on the Caltech campus. In a January update, the Student-Faculty Programs Office explained that the situation at JPL "will impact the number of summer internships," with a "limited number" of announcement opportunities available for the SURF@JPL program. Its final deadline was consequentially extended to April 19. For those who may be discouraged, Tomás Wexler, a student in experimental physics who did the Fleming Cannon, damp and covered with footprints of line cutters.

"Even if we're not paid as much as others (e.g., the prototypical Zoom call with mass firings), remarking how "a lot of people didn't decide to work at JPL because we didn't want to associate with the ruthlessness that's all over the tech world." She also spoke of the community response, commending JPLers for their empathy and care. "What impresses me about the community is that there was an instant mobilization to help the people who got laid-off networked with recruiters. ... Because of the solidarity and mutual support that comes with the people who work at JPL, they did feel very supported by each other—emotionally and professionally."

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"We're so back." —Micheal Gutierrez, The California Tech

In Brief...

Caltech Undergraduates Miserably Fail the Shopping Cart Test

"Imagine having a beaver as a mascot. Completely ridiculous." —Micheal Gutierrez, The California Tech

The California Tech's MIT Prank: We're So Back.

In an utterly surprising display of apathy, Caltech students left the Olive Walk littered with displaced chairs and tables in the wake of ASCIT Formal ticket sales on Monday evening. A copy of the Honor Code Handbook was found discarded next to the Fleming Cannon, dam and covered with footprints of line cutters. —Micheal Gutierrez, The California Tech
Caltech has suspended its requirement for prospective students to take standardized tests as part of its application for admission to undergraduate study. The test requirement takes effect immediately, which means that all students who apply to Caltech beginning in fall 2024 and thereafter are required to report test scores as part of their application.

The committee found that, even with a testing moratorium in place, an increasing number of applicants have been completing standardized tests each year, with more than 95 percent of the most recently enrolled class having taken standardized tests. The exam scores are used in admissions decision-making processes.

The start of the period varies per university, for Caltech it is between fall 2019 and February 28, 2024. This means that anyone who receives financial aid from the university in the 2023-2024 academic year will have until February 28, 2024, to provide the required information.

The Institute paused its SAT and ACT test requirement in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which have caused significant losses in testing ability. Significant cultural losses seem to be proceeding on at least a fractional level even without standardized tests. Failing, for alumni, is the Faculty and Seminars Day in which alumni are able to reconnect and catch up on the Institute yearly and at one time has been transformed into two annual events (a multi-dimensioned event still called Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend). At this year’s Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend in the fall for alumni but also those attending a former format of the Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend still not maintained for decades because of course of alumni administration it was the best way that many alumni administration administrator administrator administrators found to ensure that the dual goals of alumni connection and alumni uplifts were achieved in one weekend. It was our immemorial theme for alumni to see how they shared Caltech with and to be inspired by the Caltech of today. It reflected a core of the culture that was crafted and maintained year after year by all alumni (because it was a wise choice) and not the former Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend format.

Our event went very well overall with a couple thousand attendees over the weekend’s events. We hosted lectures and solar eclipses and a staff party for the employees. We partnered with the Institute of Technology in Pedras Negras. Later in the year, we will have our annual town meeting.
In the past few weeks, you’ve probably seen an extremely large influx of news about the solar eclipse, including what to do and what not to do. But something that’s probably not made its way to you on your communications channel is a phenomenon closer to home, called “Earth Day” – so I’m here to tell you a bit about it, and what to do and what not to do.

Earth Day is celebrated every year on 22nd April, in support of environmental protection. This year, the theme for Earth Day is “Planet vs. Plastics.” It’s no secret that we at Caltech love data. So here are the numbers for LA:

• LA County creates around $28 million tons of solid waste every year
• About 20% of all trash is a single-use plastic item
• Less than 10% of all single-use plastic is recycled.

With the rate of consumption, the lifetime of a single-use plastic bag has been reduced to 15 minutes after purchase. It takes anywhere between 20-500 years for a single-use plastic item to decompose.

Even if you’ve heard these numbers before, it doesn’t detract from the fact that the state of waste processing around is atrocious. And you might think that we as college students might not be as guilty of creating waste, but that’s where you’re wrong.

Universities and schools in California generate about 50-143 tons of waste each year. Almost half of this waste is paper, cardboard, and food. That is to say, almost half of it is RECYCLABLE or COMPOSTABLE material, which is unnecessarily making its way towards landfills because people don’t take the time to segregate their waste.

Moreover, on average, each college student generates around 450 pounds of waste every year, with moving in and out contributing most significantly. Single-use plastics continually wound around and moving out, a large portion of students tend to throw away items that they won’t take with them in the future – such as books, furniture, e-waste, and toys, instead of donating or recycling them, which is extremely wasteful. Tulane University found a spike in solid waste during the months of May and June, which constitute move-out season, with students discarding an average of around 252 tons of waste.

It’s not that hard to help make a difference – all it takes is about 30 seconds of effort every time you use a recyclable item. Next time you buy a coffee, refuse to use a single-use straw and bring your own. If you see someone doing this, praise them. If you see someone doing this, change it for something you didn’t have before! There’s also the Caltech Marketplace, where you can sell used items to a safe and known community. If recycling and reducing waste isn’t enough for an incentive for you to post your items on the Marketplace, it also allows you to make money off of your waste, so it quite literally optimizes everything you need.

These are just some of the things you can do in the weeks leading up to Earth Day, and even in the future! As we are students, every step truly does count. So make a difference! Do something for our planet! And if you need ideas/have comments/or want to discuss anything, feel free to reach out to sustainablyable@gmail.com for our planet! And if you need ideas/have comments/or want to discuss anything, feel free to reach out to sustainablyable@gmail.com for our planet!
You would never walk into the story unperturbed Why the bedroom?

So protect yourself. Rite Aid pharmacists can now prescribe birth control — you could get your prescription the same day. At Rite Aid, it’s more than just birth control, it’s pharmacists who get you. Just make an appointment — we’re right in your neighborhood.

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Interview John Clauser – Caltech Alum, 2022 Nobel Prize winner, and

A Nightmare That Never Ends: My Title IX Experience

Snigdha Saha

ASCT Social Director

Op-Ed

In less than 10 weeks, I am going
to receive my diploma, marking

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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.

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The California Tech

Journalistic Principles

The News-Opinion divide
All articles shall be clearly and explicitly labeled as either News or Opinion/Editorial.

News articles report on topics that have been thoroughly researched by Tech staff writers, and should be impartial to any one point of view. In a News article, the writer shall not insert their own personal feelings on the matter; the purpose is to let the facts speak for themselves. The Tech assumes full responsibility for all content published as News. In contrast, Opinion articles (including Letters to the Editor) may be written and submitted by anyone on any topic, while the Tech will edit all published Opinions to ensure no wording is 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. All second-hand information or hearsay shall stand on its own.

Quotes and Attribution of Information
Quotes 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. Experts opinions are certainly given more weight, as are witness opinions. But whenever possible, the Tech shall report facts, at least corroborate the opinions. A reporter’s observations, opinions, and hearsay shall stand on its own.

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 we were asking. We shall never ask a source speak with us 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 these 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 to Letters to the Editor and Opinion submissions to the Tech. If the author requests that their identities publicly when it could jeopardize their safety or livelihood, the author 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.ourown.com. 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.

Friday, April 12, 2024