

Did the Pandemic Kill Caltech Culture?

page 3

The Turtle:

A New Mascot for an Innovative Community

page 5

A Nightmare That Never Ends: My Title IX Experience

page 7

The California Tech

VOL. CXXVII No. 12

PASADENA, CALIFORNIA

FRIDAY, APRIL 12, 2024

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 exceedingly difficult workforce action” that laid off around 530 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 sharp decline from the \$822 million provided last year. Despite the \$949 million requested by the White House in the President’s FY 2024 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 see your brothers and sisters go off like that.”

For Jefferson, the allure of JPL was defined not only by its “one-of-a-kind” work opportunities but the unique emotional bond shared between its employees, whom Jefferson described wholeheartedly as “family.”

“Even if we’re not paid as much as other companies, the work and security—or seeming security—of the job was worth it. ... I can feel a slight change in atmosphere now that the job security isn’t as certain as people thought before.”

The flurry of support JPLers provided for one another following the layoffs, in what Jefferson termed a “LinkedIn frenzy,” testified to his portrait of the Lab as a place of familial kinship. “We’re still going to try to be a family. Help our former family members, though they’re still family members to us.”

Indeed, these feelings of family were expressed prominently throughout the interviews. “There was always that sense that whether you’re a designer, or an admin, or a janitor, or the PI, we’re always moving together, in the direction of the stars,” said a former member of the JPL Communications team whose

job was cut. “Leadership like that is so valuable, it’s extraordinary.”

These workplace qualities of unity and empathy only exacerbated the emotional impact of the layoffs. “If you were to ask people six months ago, in the event of layoffs at JPL, if they would handle it in a way that regarded people’s emotions, people would say for sure,” commented Jamie Luskin, a graduate student in experimental physics who divides her time between the Caltech and JPL campuses. “I think people just felt a little betrayed by the abruptness and lack of regard, the HR-reading-off-a-script-type thing.”

Luskin drew comparisons to how layoffs are often conducted at tech companies (e.g. the prototypical Zoom call with mass firings), remarking how “a lot of people like us decided 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.”

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 consequently extended to April 19. For those who may be discouraged, Tomás Wexler, a JPL student intern and senior in Mechanical Engineering, encourages the same positive sentiment held by the JPLers: “Don’t give up! One of the reasons I applied [to Caltech] was because of JPL ... It took a couple years, but things eventually worked out. You always have future opportunities.”



In Brief...

Caltech Undergraduates Miserably Fail the Shopping Cart Test



Blurry photo courtesy of Colin Gray

In an utterly unsurprising 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, damp and covered with footprints of line cutters. —MICHAEL GUTIERREZ, THE CALIFORNIA TECH

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



Imagine having a beaver as a mascot. Completely ridiculous.

Last week, in collaboration with Caltech’s Prank Fund and Senior Director of Student Activities Tom Mannion, the Tech flew a team of highly trained journalists and delivery people to Cambridge, MA to pull off Caltech’s first (successful) prank on our rival Institute of Technology in several years. The Admissions Office can finally start telling prospective students about our vibrant prank culture again, and not be lying!

For real though, we had a ton of fun working with the editors of MIT’s *The Tech* to orchestrate this two-campus April Fools’ extravaganza. Now it’s up to you, dear reader, to continue the prank war! ;-) PDFs of both prank newspapers, as well as more info on the Caltech Prank Fund, are available at tech.caltech.edu.

—MICHAEL GUTIERREZ, THE CALIFORNIA TECH

SAT/ACT Scores Will Be Required Again Starting With Class of 2029

Caltech has reinstated its requirement for prospective students to submit SAT or ACT test scores as part of their 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 would enroll in fall 2025 are required to report test scores as part of their application.

This decision, which follows a recommendation from a faculty Advisory Committee on Undergraduate Admissions Policy, reflects the judgment that standardized testing provides admissions officers and faculty reviewers useful information about academic preparedness as part of a holistic consideration of all prospective students. In reinstating the standardized testing requirement, Caltech reaffirms its commitment as a community of scientists and engineers to using all relevant data in its decision-making processes.

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 exams. But test scores have not been visible to the admissions office until after final admissions decisions have been made. In the coming admissions cycle, test scores will be used as an additional data point in the context of a student's unique circumstances and experiences. The faculty Advisory Committee noted that, "We think it is critical that our admissions office and the faculty who are reviewing applicants have available to them all the information that could shape their understanding of a prospective student's readiness for our rigorous academic programs."

The Institute is dedicated to attracting and educating the most talented and promising students in the world – students with deep interests in science, engineering, and mathematics who have the ability, energy, and resilience to flourish in the face of academic challenges, and who bring a diversity of experiences and viewpoints to our community. "We are proud of the students we've enrolled over the last several years and confident in the steps we've taken to enhance our ability to identify students who will succeed at – and beyond – Caltech," says Provost David Tirrell.

The Institute paused its SAT and ACT test requirement in 2020 when it implemented a moratorium in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which reduced access to standardized exams for students worldwide. The moratorium was extended in 2021, and then again in 2022. The Institute's decision ends the moratorium, which originally was set to expire in 2025.

ORIGINALLY PUBLISHED ON CALTECH.EDU/ABOUT/NEWS

Financial Aid Lawsuit Against Caltech and Other Top Universities Continues

A federal court has preliminarily approved settlements in a class action lawsuit against several US colleges. The lawsuit alleges that the colleges worked together in an anti-trust manner in order to bring down the amount of financial aid awarded. The settlements were preliminarily approved March 29, 2024 and will have a final approval hearing July 19, 2024.

The universities named in the suit are Brown University, California Institute of Technology, University of Chicago, Columbia University, Cornell University, Dartmouth College, Duke University, Emory University, Georgetown University, Johns Hopkins University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Northwestern University, University of Notre Dame, University of Pennsylvania, William Marsh Rice University, Vanderbilt University, and Yale University. Out of these 17 universities, 10 (excluding Caltech) have settled the case, deciding to pay into the settlement fund and deny the allegations instead of continuing to fight the case and accrue legal fees.

The start of the class period varies per university, for Caltech it is between fall term 2019 and February 28, 2024. This means that anyone who receives financial aid from Caltech between fall term 2019 and February 28, 2024, is part of the settlement class and will receive a payout if they file a valid claim form.

The current total of the settlement fund is \$284 million, and the settlement class is around 200,000. If half of the claimants submit timely claims, the average claimant will receive 2,000 dollars.

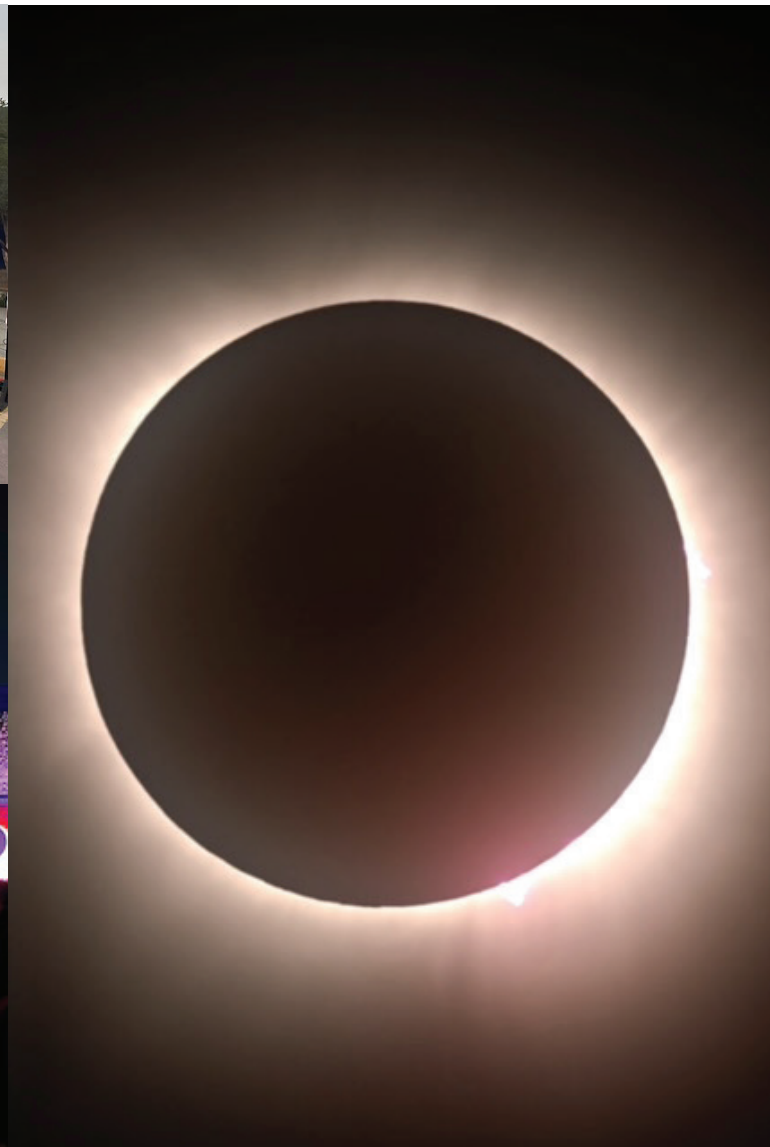
Members of the settlement class do not currently need to do anything as claim forms are not available at this time, however the deadline to object or exclude yourself from the settlements, and thus retain your personal right to sue, is May 13.

—LILIA ARRIZABALAGA, THE CALIFORNIA TECH

| University | Class Period Start | Settlement Amount | Settlement Date |
|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| UChicago | 2003 Fall Term | \$13.5 million | August 7, 2023 |
| Emory | 2004 Fall Term | \$18.5 million | January 22, 2024 |
| Yale | 2003 Fall Term | \$18.5 million | January 22, 2024 |
| Brown | 2004 Fall Term | \$19.5 million | January 22, 2024 |
| Columbia | 2003 Fall Term | \$24 million | January 22, 2024 |
| Duke | 2003 Fall Term | \$24 million | January 22, 2024 |
| Dartmouth | 2004 Fall Term | \$33.75 million | February 22, 2024 |
| Rice | 2003 Fall Term | \$33.75 million | February 22, 2024 |
| Northwestern | 2003 Fall Term | \$43.5 million | February 22, 2024 |
| Vanderbilt | 2003 Fall Term | \$55 million | February 22, 2024 |
| Cornell | 2003 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| Georgetown | 2003 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| MIT | 2003 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| Notre Dame | 2003 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| Penn | 2003 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| Caltech | 2019 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |
| Johns Hopkins | 2021 Fall Term | N/A | N/A |

Data Source: www.financialaidantitrustsettlement.com

Caltech Astronomy Outreach visits Piedras Negras, Mexico for April 8 Solar Eclipse



Our event went really well overall with a couple thousand attendees over the weekend's events. We hosted lectures and solar telescopes and a star party for the community of Piedras Negras, Mexico. Just across the Texas border and on the path of totality. We partnered with the institute of technology of Piedras Negras.

PHOTOS AND BRIEF COURTESY OF CAMERON HUMMELS

Did the Pandemic Kill Caltech Culture?

Richard Gruner (BS 1975)
Former Co-Editor-in-Chief, *The California Tech*

Cultures reflect how persons in communities interact to form special bonds and experiences. Caltech has always had a distinctive culture, much of it lodged in its undergraduate experience and carried forward by its alumni. The distinctive features of this culture go far to make Caltech special and to distinguish Caltech from other top science institutions like MIT. Yet, there are strong signs that much of the best of Caltech's culture has not survived the pandemic.

Significant cultural losses seem to be proceeding on at least two fronts – alumni and undergraduate. First, for alumni, the formerly robust experience of the Alumni Weekend and Seminar Day in which alumni of all years could interact and catch up on the Institute yearly and at one time has been transformed into two anemic events (a much-diminished event still called Seminar Day and a separate Alumni Weekend in the fall where few alumni but those attending major class reunions attend). The former format of the Seminar Day/Alumni Day Weekend was not maintained for decades because of happenstance but because it was the best way that numerous Alumni Association administrators found to ensure that the dual goals of alumni connection and alumni updates were achieved in one weekend. It was our homecoming – a chance for alums to see persons from all of the classes they shared Caltech with and to be inspired by the Caltech of today. It reflected a core part of the alumni culture that was crafted and maintained year after year by the Alumni Office (because it was a wise choice) and enjoyed by numerous alumni in attendance.

While the pandemic understandably interrupted events in this time-tested format, the assumption of many alumni was that the former Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend format would return with the return of live campus events. But, now that live events are back, it is clear that Caltech administrators have little interest in returning to the old model. Concerns raised about the cost and difficulty of administering a combined Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend seem misplaced; is it possible that the Caltech of 2024 cannot do what Caltech did successfully in 2019 and in many prior years (and was organized to do again in 2020 before the Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend for that year was cancelled due to the pandemic)? Efforts by alumni organizing recent class reunions to advocate a return to the old model have been rebuffed by the administration (even to the point of refusing a meeting on this topic with one organizing committee of which I am a member). Thus, perhaps because current administrators do not remember it, the Caltech cultural strength of the Seminar Day/Alumni Weekend is being squandered. Administrative fiat has prevailed over cultural distinctiveness and Caltech's culture is diminished for it.

The second front apparently suffering cultural diminishment involves undergraduates. At a recent event involving Caltech Gnomes – alums and other individuals who were campus leaders in their day – I was able to speak with several current campus leaders in the senior graduating class who were joining the Gnomes. They told remarkably similar stories of experiences with campus administrators in which the common theme was diminishment of student house and student life experiences without regard for any sense of loss when long-standing traditions were denied. The current seniors with whom I spoke have had a particularly difficult Caltech experience – two years of online classes and two years of live experiences. Given that they would have only two years of relatively normal life experiences at the campus, it would have been appropriate for the administration to expend extra care and resources to ensure that these two years were filled with more than usual traditional activities as a means to compensate for the students' lost two years of live experiences. Instead, the stories I heard were of several traditional activities attempted to be undertaken but either then banned by the administration or opposed via overblown charges asserted for claimed damages.

This seems like a world in which petty bean counters have been put in charge of the Caltech student experience. It is unrecognizable to an alum like me who cherishes stunts and potentially messy conduct in the student houses as part of a Caltech experience that not only allowed individuals under intense academic pressures to blow off steam but also to bond with fellow students in the same boat. The essence of the student house experience is joint enterprise, no matter how messy – exemplified for me by the organized effort in my era not only to break into one senior's room on ditch day but to turn it into a pig sty in preparation for his return (a transformation which was facilitated by clever research on one undergraduate's part that determined one could rent a pig for a day in LA; the pig was held in reserve all day waiting for its starring role and almost did not get its gig until underclassmen and women broke into the relevant room at the last minute and quickly arranged the preassembled room "decorations"). This is Caltech culture; has it gone away in favor of administrators with narrow cost-containment goals?

What is to be done? I have several suggestions:

1. Persons at the top levels of the administration need to get more information on the developing cultural losses and disaffection in both the undergraduate and alumni segments of the community. This information will need to come from independent fact finders outside the staffs of the Alumni Association and Office of Student Experience who, as with all members of bureaucracies, have reasons not to gather and report the information that paints their efforts unfavorably. Find a fact-finder that is trusted and talk to the present ASCIT officers and house presidents (to gain undergraduate perspective) and to the alumni teams that have been organizing recent alumni reunions (to gain alumni perspective).

2. Members of the Caltech Trustees need the same type of independently generated information to complete their oversight of the Caltech student experience and how it has recovered (or has not recovered) since the pandemic. Fact-finding initiated from this perspective would ensure that both the fact-gathering and resulting findings receive attention from the administration.

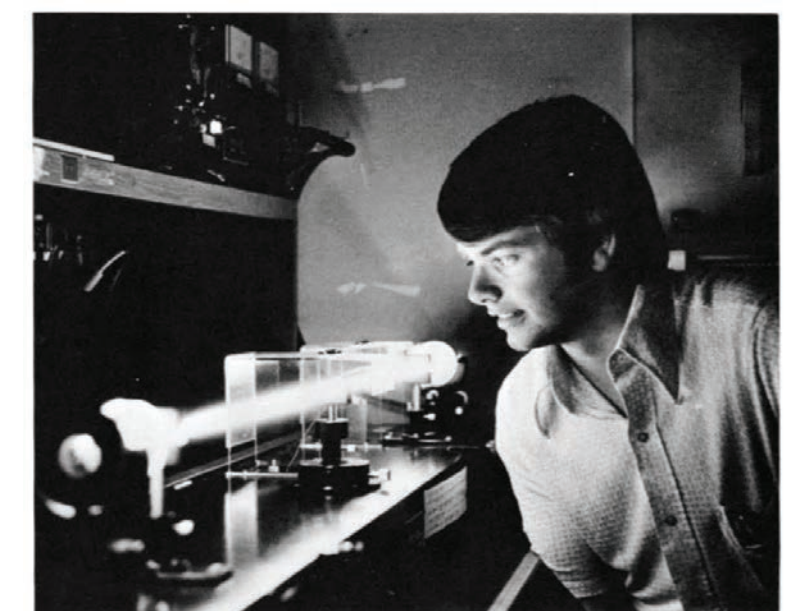
3. The faculty needs to give stronger attention to the student experience. Formerly, a Master of Student Housing (a tenured faculty member) played a key role in shaping the student house experience. This post is apparently gone and it is unclear how the faculty exerts input into crafting the house experience. If the faculty wishes to lead in shaping the academic environment of Caltech, it needs to lead in shaping the house environment where students not only engage in social interactions but actually learn to think and work together (presumably key educational goals in their Caltech experience).

4. The Development Office needs to be aware of the increasing disaffection of alums at the same time that the Development Office is seeking donations from the same parties. On the day of the Gnome event mentioned above, I ironically received a mailing encouraging me to provide for Caltech in my will, and then at the event heard of a Gnome (a campus leader from my era) who did not attend the event because he refuses to come to campus events given his anger about the evolution of alumni activities and other affairs at Caltech. Clearly, persons with this level of anger are not likely to be future donors.

5. Finally, the parties who should be most concerned about the decay in Caltech culture are the Admissions Office staff responsible for promoting Caltech and recruiting future classes of elite science students among high school grads with many colleges to choose from. The special cultural features of Caltech – the pranks, the informality, the small community



of undergraduates pursuing special traditions – are what set aside Caltech from MIT and other science-oriented schools that many of our targeted high school students can choose from. Word about the decay in Caltech culture will get around, in which case Caltech will look much like every other bureaucratically dominated educational institution. Recruiting an exceptional incoming class will be that much more difficult. In the past, Caltech has been better than this and we, as Caltech graduates, were better for it. Has the Caltech culture that benefitted us simply died with the pandemic?



Richard Gruner
Applied Physics and History
Fresno, California

THE BIG T, 1975

The California Tech

REPORTERS & COLUMNISTS WANTED

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

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

tech.caltech.edu/submit

[tech.caltech.edu/discord](https://discord.com/invite/tech)

tech@caltech.edu





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 communicating thoughts and feelings in a healthy and effective manner? join the tech!



Moreover, on average, each college student generates around 640 pounds of waste every year, with moving in and out contributing most significantly to waste production. Especially when moving out, a large portion of students tend to throw away items that they aren't taking with them in the future – such as clothes, furniture, e-waste, and books – instead of donating or recycling them, which is extremely wasteful. Tufts 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 230 tons of waste.

It's not that hard to help make a difference – all it takes is about 10 seconds of effort every time you use a recyclable item. Next time you get a plastic cup from Red Door, just take a moment to rinse it out and throw it into a recycle bin instead of the regular trash bin. Or better yet, get your own mug! The Bring Your Own Mug program is very much active at Red Door, and it can save hundreds of cups' worth of waste over a year, and all it takes is you spending 5 minutes washing your mug every day. It's really not that hard.

There's more options that you can look out for! Techers for Sustainability has Goodwill-inspired stuff swaps if you don't want to take the 10-minute drive to Goodwill, Pasadena. This way you can reduce clothing, books, and other waste you might have and exchange 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 of 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 overused as it sounds, 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 or your nearest Caltech Y reps. Happy Earthing!

This space unintentionally left blank!

The Turtle: An Icon of Caltech

Let's Embrace An Innovative New Mascot for an Innovative Community

Dear members of the Caltech community,

We, the Caltech Turtle Club, write to you with a vision for change, a vision that will not only redefine our identity but also unite us in a symbol that truly embodies the spirit of Caltech. We are here to advocate for a bold and innovative shift – a shift from a beta beaver mascot to the terrific turtle!

Why, you may ask, should we consider such a radical transformation?

Uniqueness: It's time for Caltech to distinguish itself with a mascot that sets us apart. MIT may also boast the beaver, but we are Caltech – a beacon of originality and ingenuity. By embracing the turtle, we not only carve out our own identity but also symbolize our commitment to forging our own path in the world of academia and beyond.

Shared Characteristics: Turtles symbolize longevity, wisdom, and adaptability – traits that resonate deeply with Caltech's values of long-term commitment to investigate scientific questions and engineering challenges.

Practicality: While beavers may be elusive on our campus, turtles are not. The Caltech Turtle Pond and the 100+ turtle inhabitants stand as a testament to our affinity for these remarkable creatures. What better way to honor their presence than by adopting the turtle as our official mascot?

Student Engagement: Picture it – the turtle, proudly adorning our banner and merchandise. Imagine the cheers echoing across our campus as we rally behind our new symbol – a quirky, yet endearing addition to the Caltech experience.

In conclusion, my fellow members of the Caltech community, let us embrace change, let us embrace innovation, and let us embrace the turtle as our new mascot!

Thank you for your consideration.

Turtle on!

Caltech Turtle Club



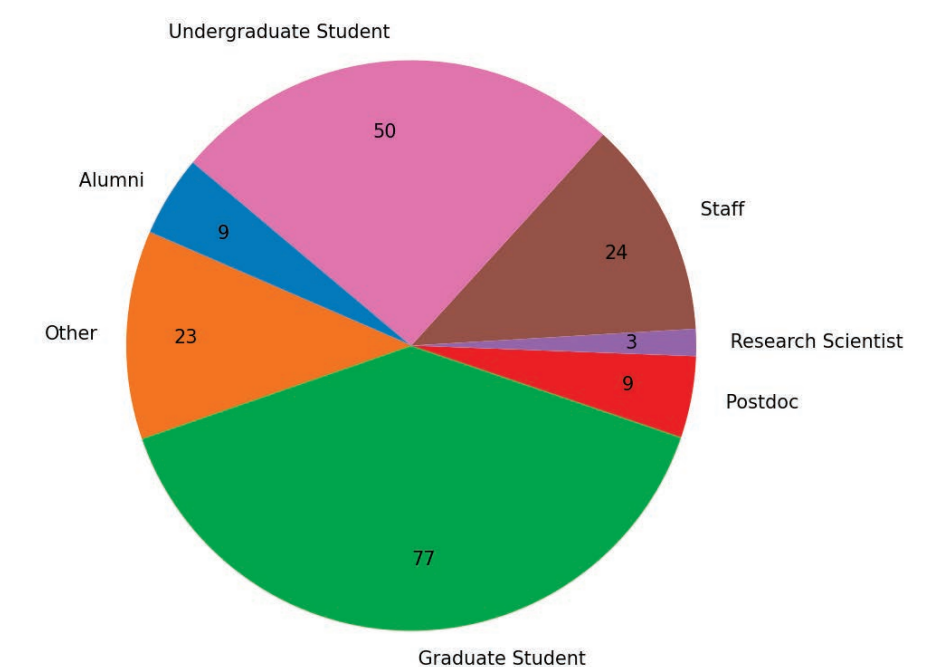
Sign the petition here!



or at tech.caltech.edu/turtle

Total signatures so far:
(as of 10 April 2024)

195



Big Fan of Decarbonization

A venerable new column about saving the earth by your friendly neighborhood sustain-able enthusiast

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 communication channels 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".

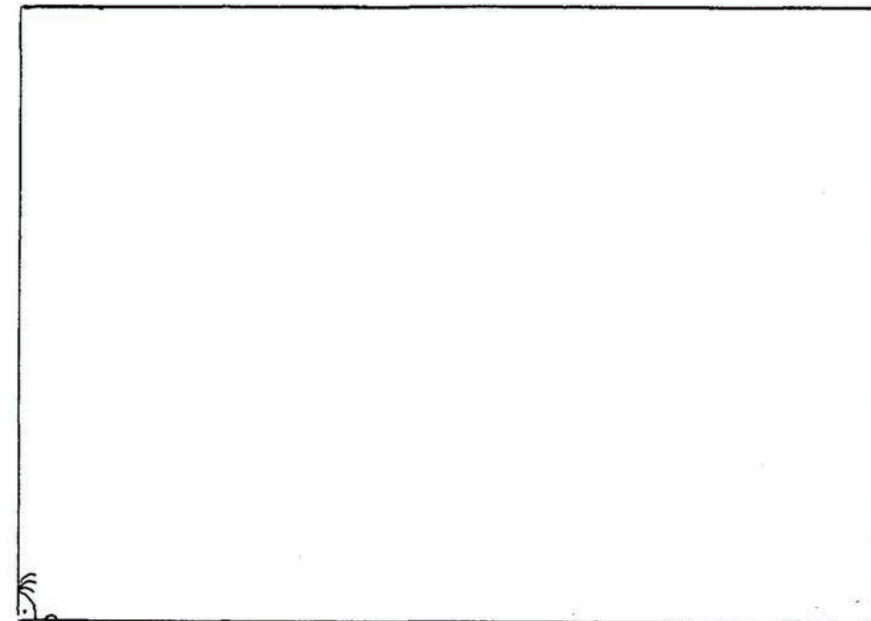
It's no secret that we at Caltech love data. So here are the numbers for LA:

- 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-used 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 bag 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 562,442 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.

This week in Tech history... January 11, 1974



ANNOUNCING the first *n*th annual "Name the Photo Contest" sponsored by the editor(s) of *The California Tech*. There are two ways to win: a) tell us what the picture is, b) tell us why we didn't have a picture for this slot. First prize is an original drawing of the late, lamented Tech Trio by Dick O'Malley. Second prize is two original drawings. Photo by Atomic Aardvark.



\$17.23

Last Issue's Winner

Guutz won the DIY Dentistry Kit!



Amazon Skymall

Welcome back to Amazon Skymall! In this column, we hold a raffle where we [not] randomly select one of our lucky readers and give them the item of their choice from these hand picked selections!

Enter this week's raffle by using the QR code or the link below:



\$16.99

NO
NO Free



\$17.99



\$8.95

\$4.95

TV Review: The Regime



HBO.com

Emily Yu
Culture

All bark, no bite.

Following the success of "Succession," writer Will Tracy and HBO team up again for this six-episode limited series. "The Regime" centers around Chancellor Elena Vernham. A former physician, she is seven years into her fascistic reign of an unnamed Central European country known for cobalt and sugar beets. Her advisors, an ensemble of interchangeable yes-men, are devoid of dissent. Her father, a former chancellor, died the previous year from a lung condition. Paranoid that she will succumb to the same condition, Vernham takes extensive measures to ensure her safety. They include demanding that no one breathes in her direction and having a "personal water diviner" who walks in front of her at all times to measure the humidity.

In comes Corporal Herbert Zubak, the latest humidity monitor who is a soldier with rage issues and incapacitating guilt. After thwarting an assassination attempt on the Chancellor and openly criticizing her judgment regarding their nation's reliance on America, Vernham becomes completely under the soldier's sway. The show spans the following year in which Vernham and Zubak develop a romantic relationship while they run the country into the ground.

"The Regime" offers an examination, albeit a shallow one, of insulated autocrats and authoritarianism. Vernham expresses a desire for reunification with a bordering nation and annexes land—a timely allusion. She imprisons Edward Keplinger, a Tony Blair-inspired left-wing opposition leader, who she uses as a scapegoat. Under Zubak's outsized, reminiscent-of-Raspoutine influence, she implements worryingly isolationist policies that jeopardize foreign relations. Additionally, Zubak's protectionism and nationalism, and his calls to redistribute land, harken back to many revolutions that have ended in authoritarian states.

The show also takes aim at the role of global superpowers in smaller countries. A Hillary Clinton-esque US senator, Judith Holt, visits Vernham in an attempt to hash out a deal for access to the Central European country's cobalt mines. Holt is met with the response, "We let you dig our earth for a pittance. We provided refueling and air-space support for your wars in the Middle East. We handed you hundreds of dossiers on supposed Russian cyberterrorists working in our country. We swore off China and her Belt and Road. We let your CIA run its black sites here, right

here, on our sovereign soil. You shoveled your shit on our doorstep for years and told us we were happy to eat it." Beyond this critical summary, American foreign policy is not meaningfully explored any further.

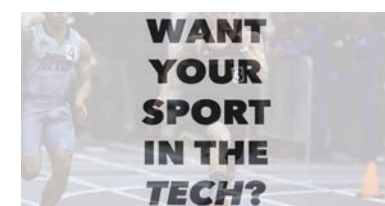
Several more political references are infused throughout the series. The plethora of them results in a minimal observation of each one without much insight. Consequently, "The Regime" fails to take advantage of its potential to provide substantial, relevant political commentary.

Instead, the show is much more perceptive as a satire of power, namely how it is acquired and held onto, and the psychological aspects of an autocrat. Vernham has a need for her father's approval that stems from childhood, evident in her one-sided conversations with his glass-encased corpse. In one instance, her father visits her in a dream and calls her "a vapid, feckless political whore with no principles. A comic figure bereft of vision, easily ruled. All tits and no spine." The morning after, she decides to annex the (fictional) Faban Corridor. These deep-seated "daddy issues" affect all facets of Vernham's character, from her vanity to insecurities, shaping her decisions as chancellor.

Power also pervades the unconventional love story that unfolds between Vernham and Zubak. The evolution of their relationship is a political, psychosexual, toxic struggle for dominance, wrought with much manipulation and strife. While a compellingly twisted romance, the show does not have much to say regarding the current political landscape.

"The Regime" is entertainingly absurd and bizarre, but hollow.

Want to draw graphics that engage, provoke, and speak to the MIT community? The Tech is looking for editorial cartoonists.



WANTED
sports-writ-er(s)
/ 'spɔ:rts,rɪdɜ:z/
noun
noun: sports writers
journalists who write about sports.
No prior experience needed. Just an interest in sports. And probably writing.



You would never walk into the shower Unprepared.

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 a pharmacist who gets you.

Just make an appointment — we're right in your neighborhood:

Rite Aid
1038 East Colorado Boulevard
Pasadena, CA 91106

Make an appointment today
RiteAid.com/birth-control



Only available in California, Maryland, New Hampshire, and Oregon for ages 18+. Prescriptions available only for hormonal birth control contraception and eligibility will be determined through a consultation with and at the discretion of a licensed, on-duty pharmacist. The price for this consultation will be \$20 and will be due prior to receiving the service. Not all patients will be eligible based on certain health related factors. The posted price is the one-time, annual consultation fee and includes additional consultations during a period of one year from the date of the initial consultation. The posted price may reflect a discount that is conditioned upon full payment due at the time of the consultant. Choosing to use your insurance, if coverage is applicable, may alter your financial responsibility. Medicaid, Medicare and other government program beneficiaries are not eligible. Consultation with a pharmacist does not replace any recommended or routine visits with your primary care physician or like provider. Service is not available in all states. See your Rite Aid pharmacist for more details.



The Tech needs Writers!

Need ideas on what to write? Here are some of our open assignments we need writers for:

- Marks and Braun only have 4 laundry machines. Why? How has this impacted students?
- What's the deal with the new laundry app? Do students like it? Why was this specific app chosen? Where are students supposed to get coins to use if they need them?
- What kind of economic environment are our seniors graduating into?
- What is the recycling like on campus? How sustainable are we?
- CaliExpress AI restaurant opened recently in Pasadena, founded by a Caltech alum. Restaurant review? How did it come into being?
- Caltech is moving back to in-house security (instead of Allied). How will this impact the community?
- Commencement Speaker is Founder of NVIDIA. How did we pull that? How are commencement speakers picked in general?
- Does anyone edit Wikipedia at Caltech?
- Caltech is being sued for misrepresenting a paid online "cyber bootcamp" that claims to be run by Caltech but is not taught by Caltech people. How is the lawsuit doing? How does this reflect on Caltech as a whole? (ELVA LOPEZ VS. CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY ET AL)
- Interview John Clauser – Caltech Alum, 2022 Nobel Prize winner, and co-signer of the World Climate Declaration of Clintel with its central message "there is no climate emergency".

More info on all of this, and more, at tech.caltech.edu/write

A Nightmare That Never Ends: My Title IX Experience

Snigdha Saha
ASCIT Social Director
Op-Ed

In less than 10 weeks, I am going to walk across a stage and receive my diploma, marking an end to four years of Caltech. Many of us are leaving with mixed feelings — we have plenty of good memories through random fun enjoyed with our friends, but also a good amount of burnout from the classic Caltech rigor, as well as the sadness of having done our first year online. However, on top of that, I am also leaving with the trauma of having to deal with a Title IX case that has dragged on for nearly two years of my time here.

In the early hours of October 1, 2022, I texted Hima Vatti, then-Title IX Coordinator, emergency. I was in the midst of a verbal altercation with my ex-boyfriend, and I needed assistance. I texted three people (alongside Hima), desperate to get some help, though I had no intention of filing a Title IX complaint. Hima and I had been in contact since I had broken off the relationship on August 1, 2022. Having expressed my strong desire to not pursue any Title IX actions against my ex, I trusted her enough to be able to help me out.

Hima responded at 9:50am, saying that Felicia Hunt (Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs) sent a Residential Life Coordinator to check on me. They did, though I was asleep at the time. I woke up to an additional series of aggressive messages from my ex-boyfriend. Following the advice of a Ricketts Title IX advocate, I sent these messages to Hima. She and I got on a Zoom call, and after detailing the events of the night, she initiated an instant mutual no-contact order. Additionally, Hima told me she would pursue an emergency removal of him from campus. While I did not want for this to happen initially, she said that there was enough risk and danger posed which made this action necessary.

At this point, the case was assigned to Ofelia Vasquez-Perez, the former Title IX Deputy Coordinator, now Interim Title IX Coordinator. I did not want to escalate the issue further. The no-contact order was sufficient for me. Since Title IX was involved, I had to take action, or the school would do it for me.

I was presented with the options of Remedy-based Resolution, Administrative Resolution, and Investigation. I instantly chose the Remedy-based Resolution (RBR), whereby there would be no investigation, no action, simply a mutual non-disciplinary agreement.

However, Ofelia later told me that I could not take this option. She informed me that the issue was too grave to pursue RBR. I tried my luck at the Administrative Resolution, whereby the respondent would have to accept responsibility.

As expected, my ex declined, and my only option was the very thing I did not want - an investigation. I could not withdraw my complaint, as the institute would have filed it for me and continued the process without my involvement. I did not want to risk having my story being misrepresented. There were several parts of the story that only I could provide the appropriate context for. So, I continued with the investigation.

Based on the 2023 precursors, "Complaints will be investigated and resolved within a reasonably prompt time frame after the complaint is made, generally 120 calendar days". I thought I was only signing away 4 months of my life to Title IX onslaught and reliving all of my trauma.

In reality, I had to endure fourteen months of miscommunication, misunderstandings, sub-cases, a million interviews, and so on. The Notice of Investigation went out on November 14, 2022, and the final investigative report was released on October 4, 2023. The hearing occurred on November 16, 2023, and the Hearing Decision was released on January 23, 2024.

First, I was assigned an investigator from an external law firm titled Grand River Solutions, Jenn Corey Meehan. She conducted six interviews with me, with one in January, two in March, and three in May of 2023. She only interviewed my witnesses in April and May. Sometime during this timeframe, Valerie Newcomb took over my case from Ofelia. In June, Valerie informed me that Meehan was no longer on the case due to an unforeseen absence (after having led all the interviews) and was replaced by Kellie J. Moan. The draft investigative report was released in July, and it was finalized in October. My interactions with both investigators from Grand River, particularly Meehan, were incredibly negative. Every interview felt like a badgering of my experience, with little to no sympathy for the experience I was detailing.

Meanwhile, my ex filed a counter complaint against me through the Title IX office in January 2023. I was only informed of this in February 2023. Another investigator, Ashley Vigil, also from Grand River, was assigned to this case. She began conducting interviews with my two witnesses and with me, but I did not hear from her about this case after a certain amount of time. Then, in November 2023, Valerie informed me that Ashley had experienced a medical crisis and was to be replaced by Kara Hughes. In my first call with Kara, she informed me that the entire investigation for the case against me was being redone from the beginning - an investigation that was already 11 months underway.

Then, amidst all of this, I had a negative interaction with my ex in July 2023 while I was in New York. I felt that he violated our no contact order and told my friend who, already being frustrated with the Title IX process between my case and another case, wrote an email to Valerie demanding action. It seems the Title IX department responds well to anger and frustration, as I immediately received correspondence.

I was told that this would be a short case, no longer than a few weeks. Yet, once again it took much longer than expected, lasting over two months. I only received closure on this small case towards the end of September 2023, where they deemed him guilty of violating the no contact order.

Finally, right after the hearing for my original case, at Avery Interhouse, I received word from my friends that my ex had been seen on campus. I was so confused - how could he be back? Was this allowed? I frantically checked my emails and my texts to see if I had received any information, but I found nothing. Some individuals checked with him, and apparently he had been approved to return to campus with no restrictions. I immediately texted both Hima and Valerie, who got on a call with me the next morning. Valerie claims she sent me an email on this matter, which Hima forwarded to me, but it never appeared in my inbox. The email outlined the evaluation that allowed him to be back and requested a meeting with me to discuss the topic, but Valerie never followed up with me. So, I found out he was back by visually seeing him and from frantic texts from my friends. This made me feel extremely unsafe on campus.

The hearing decision, which would contain the outcome of my original case and appropriate sanctions, was stated on policy to be released by late December 2023. I would understand a small delay given the holiday season and that the hearing officer's (Lexi Zuidema from an investigative law firm titled Van Derymyden Makus) decision had to be approved by the Title IX office. However, weeks went by and I had no decision. In every followup I sent, Valerie Newcomb outlined a new reason for why the decision was delayed - someone was out of office, more offices needed to approve, etc.

Finally, I received notice of the hearing decision on January 23, 2024. The wording of the decision was quite insensitive and traumatizing, and I felt

that my story had not been represented well due to how long the investigative process was - naturally, I did not perfectly remember every relevant detail from over a year ago.

Soon after the decision was released, I received an offer from Valerie Newcomb, emailing my ex and I an option for mediation. Mediation would suspend both of our cases, and we would come to an agreement where sanctions may be imposed, but there would be no further investigation. This option was never available to me when the cases began, but it is mentioned in the 2023 procedures. While I truly wanted to appeal the decision and keep fighting for justice, I realized Caltech's Title IX office was not an appropriate medium to find this justice in a fair and efficient manner, and perhaps my ex did too. Both of us agreed to mediation within a week. Ironically, this type of a resolution is exactly what I wanted back in October 2022.

We were assigned a mediation officer on February 26, 2024, over a month after the hearing decision. She asked me for my availability and I immediately responded. She never met with us. On April 3, Valerie reached out and realized that the mediation officer had done absolutely nothing, and on April 4, I was assigned a new mediation officer.

I am set to graduate in just over two months. I do not know what the mediation will entail or what the point of it will be. I am coming out of this entire process (which has not truly ended) extremely disillusioned with Title IX, and hopeless for a future where justice will be served for incidents like the one I went through. I will never recommend the Title IX Office to anyone - rather than helping me find justice, it has only added to my trauma. I hope students know better than to trust that their complaints will find justice at this institution.

IHC ANNOUNCEMENT: New Roompicks Procedures

Evan Portnoi
IHC Chair

The new system for room picks has officially been implemented, and all of the information is available online, along with a full schedule. The important changes are as follows. The lottery for summer housing is happening first. This is the same process as previous years.

Afterwards, we will begin the fall housing lottery. The first big change is that after releasing the school-wide lottery numbers, the houses will go first. This is before unaffiliated residences choose their rooms. Another change is that the houses are now able to send six people to Marks and Braun. You may pick into a Marks/Braun room like you can any other room in

your house. There is no guarantee that houses will get three rooms next to each other, but you are guaranteed a spot in Marks/Braun when that lottery happens later.

Once the houses are finished, people who did not get a room in their houses will go into the Bechtel lottery. Here, preference will be given to unaffiliated students. Suites with a higher percentage of unaffiliated students will get a room first. Finally, Marks and Braun will choose. Now, the lottery is done completely randomly, regardless of affiliation status.

To be fully transparent, we understand that this is still a very imperfect process. The issues began with the over-enrollment due to extremely high yield, so housing is no longer guaranteed. Our goal is to pick

rooms earlier so students who need off-campus housing can start looking for it earlier. We also hope that adding Marks/Braun rooms for the houses will lead to less saturation of the pool of unaffiliated students. That being said, there is nothing that will fix the fact that we no longer have guaranteed housing, and these are not huge changes. Realistically, this year is more of a test of some new protocols that will hopefully make things run more smoothly once enrollment is down. So I apologize to those who will not get their desired housing. This year will be difficult, but we think we can make this better for the future if you bear with us.

Sincerely,
Evan Portnoi
ASCIT Vice President of
Non-Academic Affairs



2024 Summer Housing
Application – DUE TODAY,
April 12 at 12pm!



fall lottery info
(housing.caltech.edu)

The California Tech Journalistic Principles

The News-Opinion divide

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

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

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

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

Fair Reporting

All facts of major significance and relevance to an article shall be sought out and included.

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

Quotes and Attribution of Information

Facts and quotes that were not collected directly by Tech reporters shall be attributed. Articles shall clearly differentiate between what a reporter saw and heard first-hand vs. what a reporter obtained from other sources.

Sources' opinions are just that — opinions. Expert opinions are certainly given more weight, as are witness opinions. But whenever possible, the Tech shall report facts, or at least corroborate the opinions. A reporter's observations at a scene are considered facts for the purposes of a story.

Sources

All sources shall be treated with respect and integrity. When speaking with sources, we shall identify ourselves as Tech reporters and clarify why we would like to hold an interview. Sources for the Tech will never be surprised to see their name published.

In published content, we shall put our sources' quotes into context, and — as appropriate — clarify what question was being answered.

We always ask that a source speak with us on the record for the sake of journalistic integrity. We want our audience to receive information that is credible and useful to them. Named sources are more trustworthy than unnamed sources because, by definition, unnamed sources will not publicly stand by their statements.

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

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

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

Corrections Policy

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

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

Honor Code Applies

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

What to do with *The Tech* after you've finished reading it



Photo courtesy of Audrey Chyung

After you and all your buddies have finished reading this week's edition of *The Tech*, consider engaging in some recreational engineering and build a tower!



The California Tech

EDITORS-IN-CHIEF

Michael Gutierrez
Lilia Arrizabalaga

MANAGING EDITORS

Maxwell Montemayor
Victoria Davis

PRODUCTION MANAGER

Alanna Yelland

STAFF WRITERS

Damian Wilson

Big Fan of Decarbonization

MASTHEAD ART

Miles Stone

BUSINESS MANAGER

Jonathan Booker

ADVISOR

Richard Kipling

The California Tech aims to publish biweekly except during vacation and examination periods by the Associated Students of the California Institute of Technology, Inc. The opinions expressed herein are strictly those of the authors and advertisers. Letters and submissions are welcome; email submissions to tech@caltech.edu, or submit them on our Discord server (<https://discord.gg/Zaah8749s2>). The editors reserve the right to edit and abridge all submissions for any reason. All written work remains property of its author. The advertising deadline is 12 PM on Friday; all advertising should be submitted electronically or as camera ready art, but *The Tech* can also do simple typesetting and arrangement. All advertising inquiries should be directed to the business manager at tech@caltech.edu.

The California Tech

#9

CalGuesser

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



"On campus" is defined by the bounds of the map on caltech.edu/map/campus.

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

Last issue's winners!

CalGuesser #8 - March 12, 2024

Congrats, you found it!!!

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

Tanmay Gupta (Ph '24), found Mar 12

Vani Dutta (MS '27), found Mar 12

Lilia (Ay'25), Mar 12

anon darb has a skissue

Kai (Ph '25), Mar 12 (no longer anon, but still skill-issued)

Nassim (ph '24) mar 12

Joy Shi CS'24, Mar 12

AJ Torres!!!! (ME'25) Mar 13

Rat Mar 14

Perla Tapia found March 15

Catalina Curren found March 15

Vicki Sierra found March 15

Toby Brian CHE 24 found Mar 20