

# The California Tech

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## THE STUDENT THE DEANS ARE TRYING TO LEAVE HOMELESS

RILEY BROOKER | OP-ED

**Editor's Note:** This story represents the personal experience of a single student attempting to get accommodations from the deans. We do not wish to discourage any student from seeking support for their disability.

For the last 7 years, I have been struggling with a number of disabilities and health issues - both physical and mental. Some, many students here may be familiar with - ADHD, anxiety, and depression; others not so much; such as fibromyalgia. Additionally, I've been having frequent, recurrent seizures since the start of April 2022. This has been happening for around a year, but only frequently since this time. These seizures are not of the serious kind in that I don't lose consciousness and require immediate emergency care - but are still extremely disruptive, causing me to jerk uncontrollably multiple times per hour, as well as zone out and not even realize any time has passed at all. This can make it extremely difficult to properly concentrate in class, as well as take notes and even sit through an entire 1-hour lecture. Additionally, the amount of medical appointments I have needed to attend for testing, as well as the joint pain and fatigue caused by my fibromyal-

gia and my seizures has caused me to be unable to attend a lot of classes - which becomes an issue when I am taking classes that have mandatory attendance or no-collaboration sets. Additionally, the fatigue caused by my conditions and the amount of time I have to spend caring for myself makes it difficult to do some problem sets in a timely manner. As a result, I have found it extremely difficult to take my classes this term and am underloading as a result.

When I first met with a Dean to discuss my issues on Monday, May 9, I was immediately encouraged to take medical leave instead of having any helpful suggestions offered. Upon hearing about my disabilities, their response was to tell me that I'm "not fit to be a student" and heavily suggested that I take medical leave, without any real alternatives offered. When I brought up my concerns about housing in Pasadena (which they told me Caltech wouldn't assist with), their response was that the Deans' Office would pay for my flights back home to the UK. In response to this, I brought up that my family situation would make returning home unsafe and I would have a lack of available healthcare for my conditions, the response I received was that if that was the case, then I shouldn't return from



Students on medical leave usually cannot live in on-campus housing.

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

STUDENT LIFE .....	2-7
PEOPLE .....	6-7
HUMOR .....	8
RECIPE .....	8
LETTER FROM THE EDITOR ....	8

| Continued on Page 2 |

## FUTURE OF STUDENT WAITING PROGRAM UNCERTAIN

CHASE BLANCHETTE | CAMPUS

As Caltech undergraduates near the end of their third term on campus since the start of the global COVID-19 pandemic, one notable aspect of the student experience has not returned to normal: waited dinners.

Paid student waiters, once a major fixture of student life in the Houses, are conspicuously absent from House dining halls. Before the pandemic, student waiters (in every House but Avery) would arrive before dinner to set the tables with silverware, plates, and napkins. Once House members arrived at the start of dinner, waiters would bring communal platters of food from open kitchens to the dining hall tables. Students used communal utensils to serve themselves from those platters; in many Houses, student waiters would provide additional food or drinks on request, and students could go into open kitchen on their own as well. Now, all students wait in line in open kitchen to be served by Caltech Dining Services (CDS) staff.

Waiters are central to dinner traditions, such as the tradition of pouring a pitcher of water over those who break dinner rules, called "dumping" or "floating." "Dinners are really, really important to Blacker Hovse culture. [...] Waiters enforce dinner rules through dumping and come up with the themes and events to keep dinners interesting day to day and week to week," said Blacker head-waiter Alex Hong ('23).



Dabney's waiters used to produce any drink a dinner guest could imagine from the resources in the South Hovses' kitchen.

Drink: "Rainbow" made by Tomás Wexler

Before the pandemic, "[Venerable House] waiters facilitated dinner traditions (e.g., throwing bread), and enforced dinner rules (under threat of floating)," said Venerable head-waiter Bruno Freeman ('23). Now, he adds, "the role of Venerable waiters has vastly diminished. House waiters now only facilitate a subset of our dinner traditions."

In Fleming, the change has been even more drastic. "Dinner used to be important to house culture and it was a time to see people from all over the house," said Fleming Head Waiter Will Cook. "Now, dinners almost never happen."

| Continued on Page 7 |

## SUITE LIFE IN BRAUN: HAVING COVID-19 AS A CALTECH UNDERGRAD

ANKITA NANDI | STUDENT LIFE

At the time that I'm writing this, I'm sitting in a Braun suite double, sniffling and occasionally coughing. By the time of print, hopefully I would be mostly recovered and more than ready to leave isolation housing. Like many members of Page House, specifically those who went on our beach trip, I was exposed to and eventually got COVID-19. After having symptoms for two days but still testing negative, I tested positive on my third day of symptoms. Since I'm unfortunately not from the area, I was promptly moved into Braun. Upon my notification of moving into Braun, I was sent an "isolation packing list" by the COVID-19 Management Team (CMT). Once moved in, they gave students sheets and a cold symptom recovery kit. Other than that, we were pretty much on our own. We were told a move in time and were met at the door by a member of the CMT who led us to our room, gave us our sheets, and left.

For those who have not stepped foot in Braun before, it was previously graduate housing, singles that have now been converted into doubles. Although some individuals, specifically if they came in earlier, have singles, the majority of the students currently in isolation have random roommates. In each room there are two desks, bunk beds, a dresser, a closet, a fridge, and a microwave. If



Braun Lounge, accessible only between 9 PM and 6 AM

not in a suite, there's also a sink in the room with showers in the hall. If in a suite, then there's a separate bathroom that four individuals share in a common space to two separate rooms.

Food comes three times a day, gallon jugs of Niagara water are available in the hallway, and isolating students are expected to stay in their rooms from 6 AM to 9 PM. After 9 pm, students can go to the lounge downstairs, the only common space in the building, provided they wear masks and are at least three feet apart. My first night in Braun, we were able to play games in the lounge with the limited selection of board games available. Other students were working at the table in the lounge, and overall it was as relaxed as it could be given that we all have COVID.

| Continued on Page 6 |

## THE STUDENT THE DEANS ARE TRYING TO LEAVE HOMELESS

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I met with the CASS office a few days later, with a Dean sitting in on the meeting. We agreed that I should meet with my professors to discuss my status in the classes, but that 'I' grades didn't seem like a realistic option - though it wasn't clear why. The suggestions I was offered during this meeting was to further underload (I was already on 27 units) by dropping another class, or to take the medical leave. The final conclusion was that I was going to make a decision after meeting with one of my professors. This meeting was not productive and I was told that I would fail the class no matter what (due to having to miss classes for medical reasons). I wasn't taken seriously when I brought up accessibility concerns about the class.

I then requested another meeting with a Dean to get answers to some more questions I had, but due to the bad nature of our past meetings and the inconsistency of the answers I had received, I requested that this meeting be recorded. I also attached a list of topics to discuss at the meeting. The request for an on-the-record meeting was denied, and the Dean asked to include a CASS representative in the meeting. I responded by declining the request to have them at the meeting, since I already had a check-in meeting scheduled with them for the next day and I didn't believe it would be of benefit to have them present. I also suggested a compromise; to meet in-person in a public space, outside Red Door. Originally, the Dean's response was to try to answer my questions by email instead of at a meeting, but the answers provided were generic and not helpful, so I once again pushed for this meeting, and they agreed to meet with me at the arranged date and time.

I then met with my advisor and discussed the entire situation with them. I was advised to start looking at housing options over the summer and to get further clarification on working over the summer and taking medical leave.

I was also advised to settle on taking medical leave as an option and putting my classes on hold to take care of my health instead, as it looked like I had no other options due to the Deans having already made their decision. My idea for having as many details of my meetings on record was also approved.

In the meantime, I was seeing a representative at the Counseling Center for separate mental health issues that were also affecting my academics. I brought up medical leave to him and he agreed that it was a good option. He explained the process for taking leave and returning from leave to me and seemed genuinely helpful. However, the process he explained to me was different to the one given to me by the Deans, where they implied that they had sole control over my

return, whereas the Counseling Center representative seemed to suggest that they would usually follow his recommendation.

I had the follow-up meeting with a CASS representative, where we discussed the issues with the meeting with my professor. I was informed that there's not much that can be done about it since they are a full professor and therefore it's difficult to get them to change their policies, even if they make the class inaccessible to those with chronic illnesses. I then mentioned that I was planning to take medical leave, and the representative seemed to be under the impression that the process had little involvement from the Deans and appeared confused when I told him what I had been told by the Deans. The representative was also concerned about a recent trip I had to the ER due to my health issues (I don't remember much about that night, but it was my second time at the ER in a period of about 4 weeks), and wanted to call my parents to inform them of my health issues. I explained to them that this would be harmful due to my family situation, but they still insisted that I should allow them to do so because they felt as though it would be helpful. I refused to give my consent for this, which is required under FERPA due to me being over 18.

On Monday, May 23, I met with a Dean outside of Red Door. Due to the stress that the entire process had been causing me, I brought a friend to the meeting for emotional support. However, despite my declining the request to have the CASS representative present, the Dean also brought the representative along to the meeting. This made me immediately glad that I brought a friend along to the meeting, as I would have felt intimidated throughout the meeting with two staff members (one of which I had explicitly not consented to being there). We clarified that my employment in a professor's lab (not under SURF) would be approved as long as it wasn't under the classification of a student employee. I brought up that I had asked HR whether I could work as a student employee in the past and that the response that I received was that it was up to the Deans' Of-

fice, to which the response was that the Deans would consult with each other and get back to me.

We then discussed housing and healthcare over the summer. I once again brought up the fact that I had nowhere to go if I was forced to leave campus, and how housing insecurity was making my mental health a lot worse. I had been looking for places close to campus, but everything was too expensive and people living off-campus over the summer had already found roommates. With the alternative being that I am left homeless, I requested that I be allowed to live in Caltech housing over the summer. Although the terms of the leave

usually prevent this, the Deans have the power to make an exception, through the following part of the leave policy:

*A student on medical leave may not attend classes, live in Institute housing, participate in Institute programs, use Institute facilities, work on campus, or use student services such as Wellness Services, Center for Diversity and Inclusion or the Hixon Writing Center during the leave, unless approved in writing by the Dean or designee.*

Despite showing the Deans this policy, they persistently denied that they had the power to make an exception as per the policy and denied that the policy said this. They claimed that there cannot be non-Caltech students living in Caltech housing, but neglected to respond to my question regarding allowing visiting students to live on

campus over the summer. I made a point that, if I were willing to pay for it and the room wouldn't be occupied anyway, then I don't see the issue with allowing me to stay - I have been here for the whole academic year already, so I am clearly not a security risk. While I understand that there is no precedent for allowing a student on leave to stay in Caltech housing, I brought up that my situation seems like an exceptional circumstance where logic and compassion should take hold instead of past decisions. I once again brought up the fact that the alternative was me being homeless, and received an unsympathetic response from the Deans but a promise that they would consult with the Office of the General Counsel (Caltech's legal advisor) regarding the matter.

My request to continue my use of Student Wellness Services was also denied. I brought up the fact that it seems counterintuitive to force me to take a leave to focus on my health, and yet deny me access to my primary care provider, causing me to lose access to routine appointments as well as referrals and emergency therapy if needed. Despite this, I accepted that I would have to find a new provider as this shouldn't be too difficult with support which was already being provided by the Health Center.

Additionally, I requested that I be either told or sent the relevant Caltech Policy that supports the Deans' position, as well as the local, state, and federal legislation that does the same. I informed the Deans and CASS that I would like to know and have my rights as a disabled student clearly presented to me, but their response was to decline to give these to me and interpreted this as me being adversarial and combative, which wasn't the case.

Finally, I discussed my eventual return from leave, as I wanted to know what supporting measures would be in place upon my return from leave. My health issues are all

chronic and not temporary, and while treatment can make them better, they can flare up at any time without warning despite effective treatment, and I was worried that nothing would be different and I would be in the same situation if this ever happened again. The main response that I was provided with was that the purpose of my medical leave is to seek treatment and return once I have found something effective. I reiterated that my issues were chronic and wouldn't just go away, but this didn't seem to be understood by either the Deans or CASS. I was also told that classes can't have their policies altered as an accommodation, meaning that there is effectively nothing that can be done to allow me to miss classes due

to a flare-up of my disability - this becomes a significant issue when the class policy is mandatory attendance, in-class problems/quizzes,

**It seems counterintuitive to force me to take a leave to focus on my health, and yet deny me access to my primary care provider.**

or no collaboration on sets. This policy would effectively exclude me from a lot of classes and impact my ability to achieve good grades on certain classes - especially humanities classes which are usually mandatory attendance. There is no guarantee that I will be able to attend classes on a regular basis due to my disabilities, and the lack of accommodations to help me through this seems to be a direct violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which states that: "No otherwise qualified individual with a disability in the United States...shall, solely by reason of her or his disability, be excluded from the participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under

any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance...". Clearly, this lack of accommodations will exclude me from fully participating in my classes and deny me

the benefits of a normal Caltech education due to my disabilities preventing me from doing so.

**Medical leave would leave me homeless during finals week.**

It was also indicated that my medical leave was being pushed as an ADA accommodation. I brought up the fact that this doesn't make sense at all, given that taking leave would leave me homeless during finals week, compared to declining the leave and allowing myself to become academically ineligible for the first time, which has the same impacts but gives me an extra week of housing. I made it clear that the medical leave actually seems like the worse option right now, and it therefore makes no sense to frame it as an accommodation. I did not receive a true response to this concern. It very much seemed like the Deans and CASS were not able to understand that section 36.202 part (a) of Title III of the ADA makes them obligated to give me support with getting through my classes instead of just forcing me out.

Towards the end of the meeting, the CASS representative once again insisted on calling my parents. Despite the fact that I had already told

**With the alternative being that I am left homeless,**

I requested to live in Caltech housing over the summer.

This request was and continues to be denied.

both them and the Deans separately about how bad my family situation is, I reiterated my situation and how this will make things worse. However, they didn't seem sympathetic and once again it was insisted that they had an obligation to call. I persistently declined to consent to allowing the call, but I very much felt like I was being pressured into agreeing despite the CASS representative's knowledge of my family situation.

I followed up from the meeting with an email detailing everything that was discussed, and once again requesting my rights in writing. I also explicitly gave the Deans the opportunity to add or dispute parts of my notes detailing our discussion. Their response on Wednesday didn't add or dispute anything that I had said, but did give a follow up on a few things that were discussed. They indicated that they had met with a Student Affairs Administration representative, but failed to indicate that they had met with the Office of the General Counsel as promised. The first point addressed was that they would approve work on-campus if the classification wasn't as a student employee, and that I should ask the professor to email the Deans with some information about my position. Regarding housing, not much information

**Dean Weyman would approve work on-campus if the classification wasn't as a student employee.**

**HR didn't allow me to be hired as anything other than a student employee.**

was given, but the expiration date of the housing contract was cited as a reason why I couldn't stay in housing over summer - completely failing to acknowledge the fact that I could be given a copy of the summer housing contract to sign, just as any SURF student could.

Additionally, I was told that the process for returning from leave

would involve meeting with both the Deans to discuss course scheduling, and with CASS to discuss accommodations (with the specific example suggested being an overload). This frustrated me because I had specifically brought up dissatisfaction with the prominence of underloading as the primary method of dealing with problems (sometimes even being given unsolicited) rather than finding alternative solutions. Additionally, this further confused me, as it is not consistent with what the Deans told me the first time, or what I had been told by the Counseling Center. Finally, they reiterated the fact that accommodations wouldn't involve alterations to class policies, even if required. I found this to be inadequate, and I had already expressed why I felt so during the meeting. My request for a copy of policies, legislation, and my rights was once again ignored.

I met with the professor I was due to do summer research with and told him about the situation, but he didn't understand what the Deans actually wanted from him and also indicated that HR didn't give him an option to hire me as anything other than a student employee, so I emailed the Deans to explain the situation and CC'd him in to try to get them in contact. A Dean replied to me,

CC'ing in the other Dean but removing the professor, saying that we discussed that this was an issue at our meeting. This response was vague - but we did not discuss an issue with HR being able to have me as anything other than a student employee during our meeting.

In desperation, I reached out to the Housing Office to seek support and

possibly a summer housing contract. After speaking with a representative at the Housing Office on Thursday, May 26, I was told that they would speak to a higher-up at the Housing Office and get back to me the next day. However, despite this promise, they failed to follow up with me. I only received an answer after emailing the higher-up at the Housing Office directly on Tuesday, May 31, and was informed late in the day that one of the Deans had made the decision to deny my request. I am not sure why that Dean was considered able to make this decision, since I had not been dealing with them throughout this process - but even if the housing office were not aware of this, that Dean themselves should have declined to make such a decision. This declination suggests that they either were unempathetic enough as to leave me homeless while knowing my situation, or weren't aware of my situation but took it upon themselves to rule anyway. Either way, this is extremely concerning to me, and I have been informed

that my housing for the next academic year could be affected by this decision too, due to housing not having enough beds for everyone on campus - despite me having a CASS accommodation for certain living conditions.

Every time I have spoken to one of the Deans, I have received push-back and inconsistent responses to the same questions. Additionally, I have received ableist comments and have felt bullied and intimidated. I indicated to the Deans on multiple occasions that this is causing me a lot more stress and anxiety, and is not good for my health, but this behavior has continued. Additionally, I have stated my situation many times, and yet the Deans' Office seems perfectly happy and content to leave me

**I have received ableist comments from the Deans and have felt bullied and intimidated.**

homeless with no way to support myself whatsoever. This is something I have brought up to them directly and they have on no occasion denied this. Taking medical leave was not my preferred option, and I believe that, had I been told I could receive 'T' grades when I first requested them, I could have completed the term - but instead these were immediately pushed off the table and I was pressured and felt forced into taking a leave. Additionally, Caltech policies appear to be manipulated and ignored at will by the Deans' Office whenever it suits them. The action taken by the Deans in making these moves, as well as persistently declining to inform me of my rights, has been negligent, harmful, and there's a case to be made that it could even be illegal under Title IX and the ADA as this could be perceived as disability-based discrimination. It has been made extremely clear that Caltech does not care for the welfare of its disabled students. Immediate changes in Caltech's administration are needed; this was made obvious by the recent report released by the Caltech Co-Curricular Group, and yet those changes are currently nowhere to be seen.

It has seemed clear to me from the outset that the Deans do not want me to return from leave because of my disabilities, which is discriminatory and unacceptable.

**All I'm asking for is a place to live and support for my disabilities; in other words, basic needs that I think my school should provide me.** My situation exemplifies not only the Deans' Office and this school's unwillingness to accommodate students with disabilities, but also a general lack of respect that they seem to have for undergraduate students.

Accommodations vary and are tailored to individual students. In terms of housing, they may range from a stand-alone single in the residences, to the ability to have an emotional support animal, to an internal bathroom. In the classroom, accommodations may include extra time on assignments or exams, notetaking support, or assistive technology.

CASS strives to meet the requirement that disability accommodations in higher education be reasonable. Such accommodations may not lower or substantially modify essential program requirements, fundamentally alter the nature of the Caltech service, program, or activity, or give rise to an undue financial or administrative burden. For example, students must attend class if class attendance is one of the fundamental expectations of a course. Faculty set the fundamental expectations for each course. CASS can support reasonable accommodations within those parameters, which may include occasional short extensions on assignments and occasional absences in cases of severe exacerbations or emergencies related to a student's disability.

Regardless of disability status, all students must meet the basic standards of academic progress as out-

lined in the Catalog. If a student is unable to manage a full schedule of classes due to a chronic condition, CASS and the Deans' Office can approve an accommodation for ongoing underloads at the beginning of the term; this allows many students to progress through Caltech at a more personalized pace. A medical leave is another option, and potentially an important one, as it allows someone to withdraw rather than becoming academically ineligible.

For the most part, students who are on leave generally spend time away from the campus. We are therefore unable to provide campus housing, but the emergency fund can sometimes help with transportation home. Students on leave can opt to retain their student health insurance. Anyone who needs assistance connecting with healthcare providers while on leave can connect with the SWS referral coordinator for support in finding access to community providers local to wherever the student will be living.

We appreciate the attention to this important topic. We welcome the opportunity to continue this conversation and to answer questions about the services and support that our offices provide. We encourage Caltech community members to connect with us directly.

## LETTER TO THE EDITORS

SHAYNA CHABNER MCKINNEY | UNDERGRADUATE DEANS' OFFICE AND CASS

We take seriously our responsibility to support all students. Staff work closely with students who seek disability accommodations through Caltech's Accessibility Support Services, the Deans' Offices, or other units within Student Affairs. We respect the opinions and perspectives of all students with whom we work and appreciate that everyone's experience is personal to them and distinct.

Upholding the trust and confidence of our students in this work is a priority and as a result, we safeguard students' privacy and will not speak directly as to any individual student's situation. At the same time, we do have a fundamentally different perspective on our interactions and the services provided by Caltech. We are confident in our process and remain committed to working with each student to meet their educational objectives in a manner that is consistent with the rights and responsibilities set forth in our policies and state and federal law.

We encourage any interested readers to review the Caltech Accessibility Services for Students website,

cass.caltech.edu. You will find information there about the processes for registering and receiving accommodations, the rights and responsibilities of both students and the Institute, and directions about the grievance process. Every registered student has the right to a personalized, interactive process that balances their medical needs with essential program requirements.

When a student registers with CASS, the accessibility services specialist for students discusses their medical documentation and assesses their need for various accommodations – these may include both residential and academic accommodations. Faculty and/or housing are notified of the required accommodations, and adjustments can be requested and approved as needed. CASS works very closely with the undergraduate and graduate deans, as well as the staff in Student Wellness Services, outside healthcare providers, and the Office of Residential Experience.

Roughly 200 students – nearly 10 percent of the student population – are currently registered with CASS.

## DITCH DAY 2022 PHOTO GALLERY

On Ditch Day, undergrads ditch class to take part in day-long events called "stacks", each led by groups of seniors. Stacks are often the culmination of months to years of planning by seniors, and what goes on during these events can vary greatly. When exactly ditch day will occur is always a mystery, but luckily for you, I've got some insider information now that I'm a senior...

### GO TO BED, FROSH! DITCH DAY IS TOMORROW!

- Kenny Thai

### Dabney



### Page



### Avery



### Blacker



### Fleming



### Lloyd



### Ricketts



### Venerable



## ASCIT FORMAL: BIGGER AND BETTER THAN EVER

ADITEE PRABHUTENDOLKAR | EVENTS

ASCIT Formal was held on Friday April 14th at the California Science Center from 7PM to 11PM. We interviewed ASCIT's Social Director for the event (now ASCIT President) Kavya Rajagopalan about planning the event.

**Q: This year's ASCIT Formal had almost twice the capacity (feel free to correct me here). How did that influence the planning process?**

A: For planning purposes, it was a bit more challenging to find a venue that would occupy the number of students we were anticipating. Additionally, other details such as catering, beverages, and transportation, and ticket sales also became factors which required quite a bit of organization. In general, the scope of the event being so much larger than in previous years influenced quite several decisions we made since it meant looking into the specs of the event a bit more than we may have had to previously.

In general, ASCIT Formal has always been a fairly in demand event. In previous years, the demand has been so high that most students are unable to purchase a ticket to the event. Since my goal as social director was to organize events that all students could enjoy, it only made sense to try and ensure that most students who wanted to attend the event would be able to. We noticed that despite opening the tickets up to nearly 450/500 students, we still had additional demand - which is why we worked on also creating alternative tickets for additional students who wanted to attend the dance.

**Q: How did you choose a venue?**

A: I had spent quite a bit of time finding different unique venues that might be appropriate for the dance, and work with the capacity constraints we wanted (ie. we wanted a larger dance). After

finding a few such venues, we put a vote to the undergraduate students, and proceeded to book the venue on that basis.

**Q: What was the most challenging part of pulling the event together?**

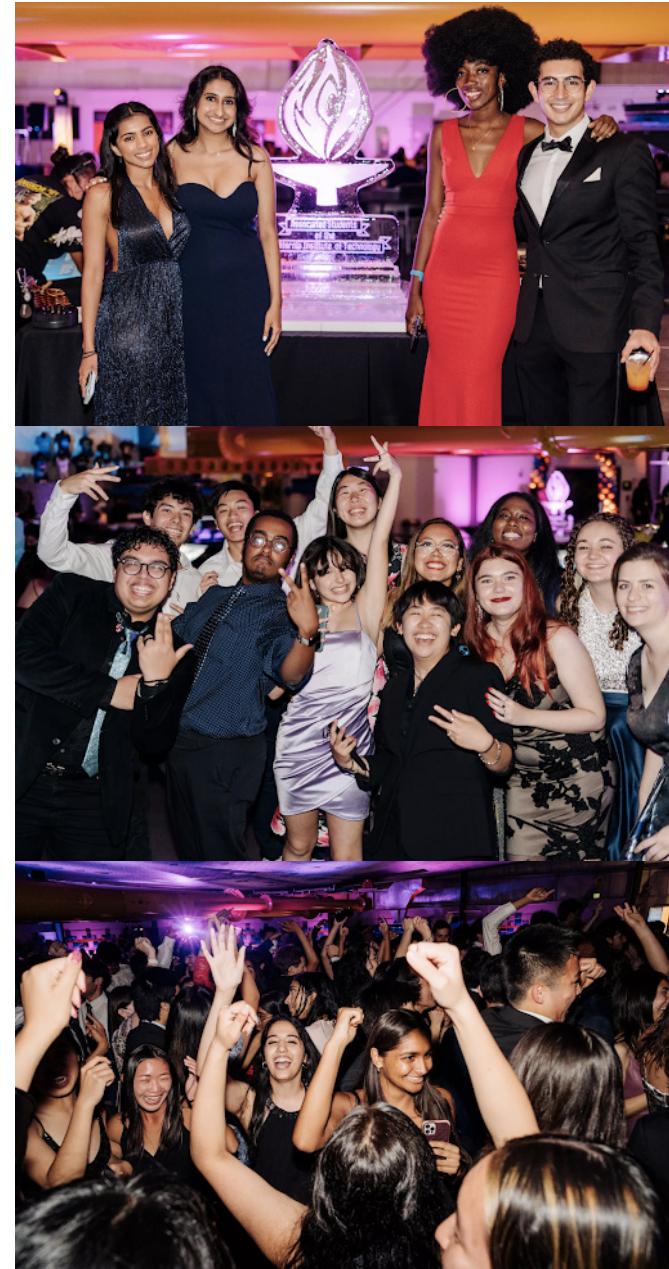
A: In general, ASCIT events are entirely student run. To organize an event from booking the venue, to putting down deposits, organizing catering, music, decorations, beverages, photography, and transportation became a job that was organized by solely a handful of students. It is a very rewarding experience but learning to organize an event of such a large scope with so many details are a task which can be sometimes challenging to ensure goes smoothly.

**Q: What was your favorite part of the event?**

A: I really enjoyed seeing people dance and have a good time. It is incredibly rewarding to have people tell you that they enjoy an event you worked very hard on, and that all the details you spent a lot of time thinking through were appreciated by people. The pandemic has put a strain on the amount and scale of events that we can put on, so it was nice to see that as a student government we were able to throw an event that a lot of students were able to enjoy.

**Q: Is there anything you would have done differently?**

A: I think the transportation had a few issues near the end of the event due to traffic, and this became a challenge we quickly had to find a solution for. I am glad we were able to devise a strategy to help transport students back to campus safely. However, in the future I might try to organize alternative transportation measures because it was a point of concern for not only myself but for a few students.



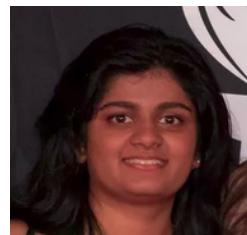
Photos by Peter K.

# WHO DO I YELL AT NOW? ASCIT ELECTION RESULTS AND APPOINTMENTS

## ASCIT Board of Directors

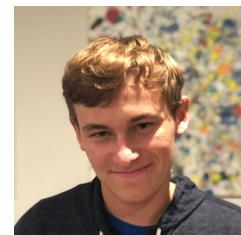


President

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RajagopalanDirector of  
OperationsShwetha  
Kunnam

ARC Chair

Gabi Twombly

Director of  
Social Activities

Matticus Brown



Treasurer

Rachel Ding



IHC Chair

Katherine Chang



Secretary

Jonathan Booker

## Other Appointed Positions

IHC Food Chair (Foodcomm chair): Snigdha Saha

Stewardship Chair (Stewcomm chair): Chase Blanchette

IHC Athletic Manager (IHC AthMan): Andrew Pasco

Review Committee Chair (Revcomm chair): Kaushal Shyamsundar

Campus-Wide Orange Watch Coordinator: Sophie Elam

Advocacy Committee Chair (Adcomm Chair): Abigail Jiang

## 2022 INTERHOUSE PARTIES PHOTO GALLERY

### Lloyd



The second group of interhouse parties was Dabney, Avery, and Venerable, often collectively known as "DAVe". Although the parties were initially scheduled to be on the night of April 23rd, the parties were collectively delayed less than 51 hours from Dabney's party's starting time, after successful security inspections had ensured that each of the parties were ready to run.

A bit under two weeks later on the afternoon of May 4th, the party was confirmed to have been rescheduled to the night of May 7th with no indoor component, giving students three days to adjust their plans to accommodate for the new restrictions and prepare the parties once again.

### Avery



Blacker had "Cyber2os" as their theme.

### Page

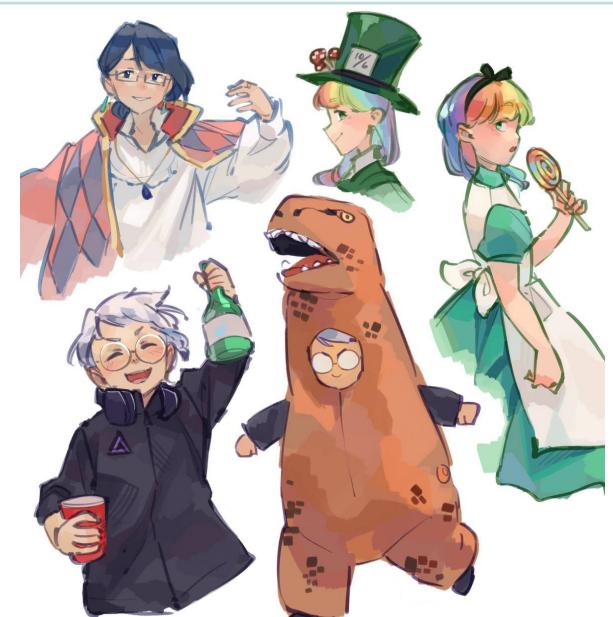


Interhouse parties were initially scheduled to be spread out as usual, with 2 during first term, 3 during second term, and 3 during third term. However, all parties were delayed to third term by administration.

As there are not enough weeks during third term to allocate one to each of the eight interhouse parties along with other campuswide events, parties were forcibly grouped together, with multiple occurring on the same night and each party being capped at 100 participants at any given time.

The first of these groups was Lloyd and Page, with each party running from 10 PM to 2AM on the night of April 16th. Lloyd had "The Lorax" as their theme, while Page had "Area 51" as their theme. Cold pizza was also placed in the SAC courtyard as an "alternative event".

### Dabney



Art by Jen Hu depicting characters representing the three Houses enjoying their respective parties.

Dabney (top right) had "Alice in the Chocolate Factory" as their theme, running from 8:00-11:59 PM.

Avery (bottom left) "Jurassic Park" as their theme, running from 9 PM to 1 AM.

Venerable (top left) had "Studio Ghibli" as their theme, running from 10 PM to 2 AM.

### Venerable



### Blacker



The third and final group of interhouse parties was Blacker and Fleming. The parties were initially scheduled to be on the night of May 7th, but after the interhouses run by Dabney, Avery, and Venerable were delayed, it seemed unlikely that the parties would happen at this time. As mentioned previously, it was only on May 4th that it was confirmed that only Dabney, Avery, and Venerable would be holding their interhouse parties on May 7th. The next available date was May 14th, but on May 11th, the Interhouse Committee was informed that the parties would not be occurring that weekend due to insufficient security numbers.

It wasn't until 6:30 PM on May 19th that it was confirmed that Blacker and Fleming would be holding their parties on the night of May 21st from 10 PM to 2 AM, but as *intrahouse* parties, limiting attendance to only members of their respective houses.

Ricketts was forbidden from holding an interhouse party this year.

## PROFILE: PROFESSOR BRIAN JACOBSON

SELINA ZHOU | PEOPLE

Nested between the Sherman Fairchild Library and the Dabney Hall of the Humanities, Dabney courtyard is a quiet little garden fenced off by concrete walls. Many Caltech students would spend their years on campus without once stepping inside this courtyard.

At the end of winter term earlier this year, after 10 weeks of classes on zoom, Professor Brian Jacobson invited his students in VC175: The Art of Science to join him in person at the Dabney courtyard, and to fill out a course feedback survey. After the students stumbled to figure out where this courtyard is located, Professor Jacobson was called at the last minute by the Children's Center at Caltech to pick up his son. His absence from this first in-person meetup with his student was replaced by a box of donuts. Luckily, due to the pandemics, students were already quite used to never meeting their professor in person.

Brian R. Jacobson is a Professor of Visual Culture at Caltech, as well as the director of the Caltech-Huntington Program in Visual Culture. He joined Caltech in 2020, pretty much right when the pandemic started. Until this spring, he had yet to teach a full class in person.

"Covid and teaching virtually had definitely been challenging," said Jacobson, "especially since my ambition for the Visual Culture Program is to connect with the scientists and engineers here."

Among the undergraduate students he taught, Alvin On (CS '22) spoke positively of Professor Jacobson as "a down-to-earth prof who encourages students to have their own opinions and to express them." Although classes taught on zoom usually have the downside of lacking interactions between students, Jacobson made sure to always dedicate some class time for students to share their own thoughts on lecture topics with each other.

Of universities across the country, it is not surprising that Caltech's Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Department is probably the place you'd find a Visual Culture professor with an undergraduate degree in computer science and work experience at IBM.

Caltech's visual culture program, funded by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, is relatively new, but Caltech has taught art history classes to students for a long time.

"There had always been student interest in these (art) class-

es, and we wanted students to have more opportunities to develop visual literacy skills, such as how to read or work with visual evidence in the same way that they work with written text," explained English professor Dehn Gilmore, who was the director of the program when it was first launched in 2019.

Visual culture as a course of study is new to almost everyone, not simply STEM students. What exactly is "Visual Culture"? As explained by Anne Sullivan, Anne Rothenberg Postdoctoral Instructor in Visual Culture, we live in a visually saturated environment where our lives are surrounded by visualization and visual data. VC is essentially studying how people use and respond to different visual practices, whether through artistic paintings or scientific figures beyond direct imaging capacities. VC is also about acknowledging and understanding that these practices are constantly changing, reflecting society's interest and culture bias at various time periods.

The Mellon grant enabled Caltech to create more undergraduate course offerings in visual culture, to recruit artists in residence, institute a visual culture minor, and develop public programming including inviting guest speakers to campus. When Caltech started looking for a senior scholar to run the program, it also led to the hiring of Jacobson. According to Gilmore, Jacobson stood out to the hiring committee among several hundreds of applications for having an interdisciplinary background that is also engaged in science. They were looking for someone at the intersection of art and science, so he seemed like a good fit, she said.

Jacobson recently agreed to an interview in the Dabney courtyard. This time, his presence was not replaced by donuts.

Dressed in a casual blazer and red plaid shirt, he sat down and took off his red-tinted frame glasses, placing them next to his red glasses case, red iPhone, and a paper cup from Red Door Cafe. Jacobson spoke of his own undergraduate days as a computer science major at Appalachian State University, where most of his friends in the honors dorm were not pursuing STEM majors, but English and anthropology. Social times were spent talking about books and discussing philosophy.

"By the end of junior year, I knew I didn't want to become a computer scientist," Jacobson, 42, sporting unruly brown curly hair and exuding a youthful manner, recalled as he played with a twig he found on the table, "I didn't want to work at IBM."

While a CS internship today is not that uncommon especially among Caltech students, this was the year 2002. Facebook didn't even exist yet.

Born and raised in Greensboro, North Carolina, and the first from his family to finish college, Jacobson was given very little guidance about what career he should pursue. His middle school had a computer lab, where students would take classes on making computer art in MS Paint, and teachers could see that Jacobson was very good with computers. Their encouragement led him to study CS at Appalachian State University.

"That put me on track to something I didn't mean to be," Jacobson mused. Perhaps as far back as middle school, he was already more drawn to the art side of MS paint rather than its technical computer aspects.

During his senior year, Jacobson worked on an honors thesis with sociologists about politics online, examining the increasing political polarization of online platforms such as chat rooms and blogs. This experience led him away from CS. After graduating, he decided to apply for a master's program that focused on the intersection of politics and media, which brought him to the Comparative Media Studies program at MIT. While there, he grew interested in the topic of media and architecture.

"I realized that my mode of thought might have an application in nontechnical places as well," he recalled, then said jokingly, "but in retrospect, what was I thinking?"

By 2011, Jacobson had obtained a PhD in Visual Studies from the University of Southern California. His dissertation, Studios Before the Systems: Architecture, Technology, and Early Cinema was the winner of the 2013 Society for Cinema and Media Studies Dissertation Award, and was later turned into a book. As a humanist with a very non-traditional background in CS, his research focused on answering the question of how does one study cinema not simply by looking at movies, but by looking at technology and infrastructures in the film industry.

As part of his dissertation research, in 2010 Jacobson went to the NYC Department of Buildings, Bronx Borough Office in search of old building permits. While other visitors at the office were trying to obtain permits to build new buildings, Jacobson recalled that he sat in a corner on a plastic chair taking photos of old permits with an old digital camera. He also remembered being chased down the street by a security guard for taking those photos, which, he guessed in retrospect, must have looked suspicious.



Prior to joining Caltech, Jacobson held faculty positions at Oklahoma State University (where he taught Screen Studies), the University of St. Andrews (where he taught Cinema Studies), and the University of Toronto (as a Professor of Cinema Studies and History). Having a diverse background and experience, Jacobson said he decided to apply for the position at Caltech because of the school's intense focus on research. While the pandemic made teaching and research more challenging than usual, Jacobson is currently working on a book titled *Art in an Age of Oil*, which tackles the question of what kind of culture does a new energy regime create.

"There is something about visuals that connect the scientists and the humanists. And I think artists have something important to contribute to the sciences," said Jacobson. He particularly identifies with a quote from Hungarian artist Gyorgy Kepes (founder of the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT), who said "artists are living seismographs."

Jacobson is convinced that "this is something you can really do at Caltech as well. A lot of things we are worried about here are problems that scientific solutions alone will not solve. For instance, there are historical perspectives we (HSS people) can bring to the table. But it would only work if you bring different people together."

Despite technically having a STEM background like most students and faculty members at Caltech, Jacobson knew himself well enough that although he was strongly encouraged to go down the CS path, he chose a different direction. But instead of rejecting CS completely, he found a new way to use it; and with the help of the Mellon grant, he found a new place to do it.

## SUITE LIFE IN BRAUN: HAVING COVID-19 AS A CALTECH UNDERGRAD

ANKITA NANDI | STUDENT LIFE

| From Page 1 |

All students are in for a minimum of five days starting from when they had symptoms or tested positive, whichever came first. Every day we have to fill out a survey reporting our symptoms and if we don't have a fever on the fifth day, we're given rapid antigen tests every two days after.

Otherwise, students "time out" on a quarantine time of 10 days.

Having COVID sucks. Having COVID while in isolation housing, with no choice of food except for dietary restrictions, and the complete lack of access to the outdoors sucks. I believe that housing and dining services are doing the best they can

given the circumstances. But that still doesn't make it any better for us in here. Over the long weekend, as Vice President Gilmartin's email noted, there have a record number of undergraduate cases, most of which are likely from Page House. The campus is on even higher alert than before about COVID, with students partic-

ipating in Commencement now having to wear masks, and Page is under a self-quarantine. There's not really much else to be done except for, don't get COVID.

For those who are healthy and reading this, stay that way. If you're reading this in the walls of Braun, hopefully we're all let out soon.

# FUTURE OF STUDENT WAITING PROGRAM UNCERTAIN

CHASE BLANCHETTE | CAMPUS

| From Page 1 |

Beyond their role in House culture, paid waiters also helped keep House dining halls clean, wiping down the tables before and after dinners, and sweeping the floor afterwards. Without the incentive of payment, waiters in many Houses no longer perform these tasks that once made dining halls a cleaner and more usable space. Because dinners are no longer served family-style and students cannot serve themselves, students have also faced longer wait times in open kitchens when grabbing food. While the lines are primarily a problem at peak times, students returning from athletic practices, office hours, or classes may be unable to beat the dinner rush.

The effect of these changes has been significant. Both Freeman and Hong noted lower House dinner attendance relative to pre-pandemic levels. "As someone who cannot stand in lines very long, the dinner lines are one reason I no longer attend house dinners," said Moya Ly ('22, Venerable). Moreover, Ly added, "[the lines] are also counterproductive with respect to COVID risk since the kitchens are packed with members of multiple houses for ex-

tended periods of time."

CDS has indicated an intent to return to waited dinners in the future. "We realize waited dinners are an important tradition for the Houses," said Jaime Reyes, head of Dining Services. "This summer we're going to look at ways that we could reintroduce them safely and effectively next academic year. Unfortunately we were not able to bring [waited dinners] back this academic year, because they proved to be too challenging with ever-changing Covid restrictions in place."

At Caltech, all active employees and students are required to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, including a booster shot – this excludes those with a valid exemption on file. As it stands, the CDC's current guidance to colleges and universities website notes that there is no evidence to suggest that COVID-19 is spread by handling or eating food. At CDS-catered events, food is self-serve with shared utensils; in the South House open kitchens, soup is served with communal spoons as well.

The current COVID-19 guidelines at USC allow for self-service food (such as buffets) indoors, for those with proof of vaccination or a neg-

ative test. According to the COVID policy portals for UCLA and the Claremont Colleges, they continue to operate their indoor buffet dining options as well.

If the student waiter program resumes in the future, it will have to contend with a shortage of trained student waiters. In the past, Caltech's student waiters were ServSafe trained in order to be allowed to handle food for other students. ServSafe is a California state certification given to waitstaff in restaurants. ServSafe trained staff have returned to work in area restaurants, but it has been over two years since the last Caltech students received ServSafe training.

"Out of the waiters we have signed up, only 6 or 7 are ServSafe trained. 2 or 3 are either graduating or graduating in the fall," said Hong of Blacker's waiting program. In Venerable, only four ServSafe trained waiters will be returning in the fall and winter. Because most of those waiters were fresh in spring 2020, they have at most one or two terms' experience in the waiting program.

In other Houses, the situation is even more dire. "One waiter (me) is ServSafe trained, and I am graduating," said Cook of Fleming's waiting

program. "We have no other waiters on the staff, so I have been running everything. Honestly, I do not know if any of the dinner traditions will continue next year."

Student dining at Caltech has evolved significantly over the past year, and the waiting system is just one facet of that change. "I would personally like to thank all the students who have been very supportive and understanding of the current situations we in Dining services have been dealing with," said Reyes of student response to these changes. "[CDS staff] are very happy to continue to provide great food and services."

Against the threat of losing the tradition of waited dinners, students are continuing to advocate for their return. "Throughout this process we've been talking to Jaime Reyes from CDS and Felicia [referring to Felicia Hunt, Assistant VP for Student Affairs and Residential Experience] to try and get things back to the way they were, but the conversations are difficult and circular," said Hong. In the meantime, the clock keeps ticking. This coming fall, three of the four classes on campus will never have experienced a dinner waited by paid student waiters.

## SITTING WITH STEVEN METZMAKER, NORTH HOUSE RLC

ANKITA NANDI | PEOPLE

For majority of the 2021-22 academic year, the North Houses did not have a formal Residential Life Coordinator (RLC). Steven Metzmaker was recently rehired to fill this role, returning to his position of two years ago. Originally from Minnesota, Metzmaker received his Bachelor of Arts in Sociology at Loyola University in Chicago in 2014. Following his graduation, he worked at Columbia Housing for two years and the John Felice Rome Center in Rome. He went to graduate school at Texas A&M University to receive a Masters in Student Affairs Administration in 2018, including a study abroad term in Qatar. Metzmaker's first stint at Caltech started in July 2018, before leaving in April 2020 to work at home in Minnesota and starting again at Caltech on May 24, 2022.

### Q: Why did you choose to come back?

A: I've worked at a lot of universities and we all know that Caltech is unique. To be a part of it is a really good feeling and I want to be able to support the students that are here and help them graduate. I think having those range of experiences at other universities, applying that to here, while also understanding that the institute itself is steeped in tradition and culture and how I can help guide students to improve that and support that as well, that is one of my main motivators. We also have a lot of great staff, and in that sense having good colleagues is important to me.

### Q: What's your life outside of Caltech?

A: My partner's name is Karlee, she's working at the Children's Hospital as an RN, at the Cath Lab. Overall, I like hiking in the mountains, I'm a big trail runner. I participate a lot in clubs that take place both in the city of Pasadena and also outside of Pasadena. When I was here previously, I trained for a triathlon and did a triathlon in Malibu. I've also ran marathons, I like to be active. Another thing is all the restaurants that are here, I try to give as many of those a try as I can. A fun thing I like to do on the side is try to attend movie screenings, it's cool you can request tickets and stand in line prior to a movie screening. Sometimes it's premieres or insider sneak peak and you give feedback on the movie prior to release.

Outside the job but still at Caltech, I'm really curious about everything that goes on here. I try to seek out, once or twice a week, some event or talk or lecture and try to see what's happening that way. I want to build a way to have students show an RLC what they're working or give a more background knowledge to what's going on in their labs that they spend a significant amount of time on.

### Q: What do you envision as your role, and what are your goals for the remainder of the term?

A: I want to try to support [the students] to get through this term. I want to make sure that students know who I am and that



I'm here, and also that there are other RLCs as well. Whether or not that I'm new, we're here to support you. I want to have more of an informal event where people can pick up food, come say hi, find ways to have smaller informal things for the remainder of the term that benefit the students, keeping COVID in mind.

I look to understand the culture of the houses and what events are planned. I'd love to come up with a series that students could attend that are sponsored by ORE and the RLC but still with ideas and implementation from the students. [Students] put a lot on their plates and part of my full-time role is programming, so I would like to collaborate to come up with a series of events that students would find beneficial but also wouldn't have to plan themselves. Also long-term, just continue to provide tools and resources to the houses so that students can feel included and also so that we're moving in the right direction overall because you need a safe and comfortable place to live. I think the other piece is just trying to take a look at the North Houses that I oversee and try to boost the programming that already occurs.

## *The California Tech*

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## A NOTE FROM THE ADVOCACY COMMITTEE CHAIR REGARDING RILEY

It is so incredibly frustrating to watch how this student's situation is being dealt with by the Institute, especially when there are supposed to be systems to protect students with these extenuating circumstances. I

think it's also crucial to emphasize that this is not an isolated incident. By no means is this the first instance of systemic ableism perpetuated here at Caltech. Various aspects of the pandemic this year have (re)ampli-

fied the multiple ways that students with disabilities are left behind and actively harmed by a lack of accessible coursework, health resources, and other support structures. Imagine how many student perspectives

have not been voiced because they're no longer at Caltech for these exact reasons.

- Abigail Jiang

## RECIPE: TOM MANNION'S CAPRESE CAKE

### Ingredients

- 9 oz. dark chocolate (semi-sweet)
- 9 oz. finely ground almonds
- 9 oz. sugar
- 9 oz. butter
- 6 eggs

### Directions

1. Preheat the oven to 350° F.
2. Melt the chocolate in the double

- boiler and let it cool until just warm.
3. Lightly whip the softened butter and gently stir in the chocolate.
4. In a separate bowl, whip the egg yolks with 7 oz. of the sugar and add them to the butter/chocolate mixture, delicately folding them in with the spatula. Fold in the finely ground almonds.

5. Whip the egg whites until stiff with the remaining sugar and delicately fold into the chocolate mixture, taking care to stir slowly always in the same direction and from the bottom to the top.
6. Pour the mixture into a buttered and floured mold (2 inches deep) and bake in the oven for 40-45 minutes at 350° F.



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ADITEE PRABHUTENDOLKAR

Hi everyone,

Thank you so much for picking up The Tech and reading this right now. It feels good to—finally—publish an issue of The Tech. We put a lot of effort into this one, and I hope you enjoy it. Since this issue is the last of the school year, I wanted it to be a look back on the school year, focusing on the spring term. There are some great memories to be shared, like the largest ever ASCIT formal and the first Interhouses since before the pandemic.

To be candid, I'm saddened by the current state of The Tech. Even though there are stories and a lot of interest in contributing, we're hard-pressed for a full writing staff and a consistent publishing schedule. It's

been over three months since our payroll spreadsheet was submitted to administration, and we are still not getting paid. In one of the meetings we've had with administration regarding our finances, we were told by Business Operations Officer Ryan O'Connor that Caltech's bureaucracy is set up to pay for million dollar microscopes and not twenty dollar article payments. Regardless, I'm fed up after years of not being paid my promised rate, and I'm sure many of you would be too.

I believe the purpose of The Tech is to give students a voice and draw attention to both the good and bad of the community. The Tech has been criticized many times over, and none of that criticism has fallen on deaf ears. But when no articles are coming



You know how to use InDesign?  
Help me with our layouts!  
- Kenny

in, there's only so much we can do as a small handful of students that also have to balance our time between academics and writing for the Tech.

Kenny wrote a brilliantly honest piece in our last issue, saying what you can do to help The Tech. And I'd like to reiterate some of that here:

- Take En 89! Richard Kipling is an amazing professor with decades of experience in journalism. The class counts as one of your four additional humanities requirements, and it's

a great way to both learn about the field and contribute articles to The Tech.

- Submit freelance articles!
- Contact us if you want to help in other ways, like editing articles for style or making the paper's layout.

Please consider doing one, if not more, of the above. It would mean so much to me and all of us at The Tech. We're really trying our best to revive this publication, and I hope our situation will get better soon.

## Days Kenny Thai has been owed money for work on the Tech: 825

## FINALS TIPS

TANMAY GUPTA | HUMOR

- Start your 4-hour finals 2 hours before the deadline. This will make your brain work twice as fast, guaranteeing maximum efficiency.

- Instead of waking up to the ride to take your finals, start your n-hour finals exactly n hours before 7am, so that you finish your finals to the ride. Feel free to do a victory dance as the ride plays.
- Don't take Ws. Don't take Ls. Take Es.
- Write up your math finals in Microsoft Word. Write your code for CS finals in Google Docs.
- Take your finals in the middle of Ricketts courtyard. Blocking out the music will be great motivation to focus.
- Break into Caltech Hall to ascend to new levels of intelligence.
- For your Ge finals, dig yourself into a hole and self-isolate to connect with nature. Playing rock music is also advisable.
- Don't take your finals, take the Lloyd gong.

## AN INTERVIEW WITH SLOOTH

KAYTON TRUONG | HUMOR

**Q: Tell us a little bit about yourself. Where are you from? Which house are you in?**

:sloth: :two: :round\_pushpin:  
:black\_heart:

Kayton's Translation: My name is Slooth and I am a sloth. I just turned two years old! My hometown is nearby; I'm from Baldwin Park. I am a social member of Blacker Hovse!

**Q: Congratulations on turning 2! How does it feel?**

:tada: :sunglasses:

KT: It was a momentous occasion. I feel very awesome!

**Q: Your Instagram is incredible (everyone follow @slooth.gdb), from the photos to the captions to the moxie in each and every post. Do you have any tips for the aspiring Instagram influencers out there?**

:blush: :zipper\_mouth: :bangbang:  
:sunny: :herb: :camera\_with\_flash:

KT: Thanks, but I'll never tell. Just kidding; make sure to find a great place outdoors and smile at the camera!

**Q: Why do you sit on your friends' heads on their birthdays?**

:innocent: :chair: :partying\_face:

KT: It's my way of loving them and celebrating with them!

**Q: You seem to enjoy board games a lot. What's your favorite board game and why?**

:petri\_dish: :microbe: :globe\_with\_meridians: :airplane: :microscope:  
:hospital: :left\_right\_arrow: :scroll:  
:classical\_building: :dove: :skull:  
:mag: :zipper\_mouth: :exclamation:  
:jigsaw:

KT: I like Pandemic & Secret Hitler. I like playing games where I have to think and work with others to win! Also, I just really like the sound of Chancellor Slooth. I'd be amazing at helping enact liberal policies.

**Q: What's your favorite place on campus?**

:turtleturtle:

KT: Turtle pond, of course.

**Q: You and Bernard make a very cute couple. How have the two of you been doing?**

:smiling\_face\_with\_3\_hearts: :kissing\_heart:

KT: We love each other very much. I hope to cuddle with him again soon. If you're reading this, Bernard, accept this kiss!

**Q: You've been in person at Caltech for an entire year now! What is your favorite memory so far?**

:two: :blueberries: :gift: :fire:

KT: It must be my second birthday party. My dad threw me a wonderful party complete with a blueberry bundt cake, a small present, and fiery friends!



**Q: What are you looking forward to the most this summer?**

:microscope:

KT: Research must be done, and it requires my big brain to help!

**Q: If you could dye your fur, what color would you choose?**

:blue\_circle:

KT: Blue.

**Q: If you could make a class and teach it at Caltech, what would it be?**

:open\_mouth: :rock: :fire: :dash:  
:ocean: :tea: :scroll: :sparkles:

KT: Wonderful question! I'll call it "Mastery of the Four Elements". I did learn from Iroh, after all, and he's the best there is.