

## New Undergraduate Dean Appointed

Jonathan Booker / Campus

"I can say that when I was first asked about it, it obviously seemed like a challenging role, but I genuinely believe that I can stand up to the challenge," chimed Dr. Jennifer Jahner, newly appointed Dean of Undergraduate Students. Despite being in the early days of her tenure, Jahner already shows a promising vision for Caltech's undergraduate program, and an understanding of the need for continual growth and adaptation in this new environment.

In an interview with the Tech, Jahner described her goal for a robust and comprehensive support system for Caltech students. "My priorities will be student welfare and academic progress, from their initial ar-



The newly named Dean, Professor of English Dr. Jennifer Jahner, poses in her office. Credit: Lance Hayshida/Caltech

rival on campus to well after they graduate," she assured.

Jahner, who is Caltech's first-ever female Undergraduate Dean, continued to emphasize her commitment to open communication and maintaining a strong relationship with the student body. approachability, willingness to understand, and address their needs and concerns directly.

The dynamics within the Deans' Office are yet to be completely established, as Jahner's position is still in its nascent stage. Things are further complicated since she plans to take an academic and administrative leave during the 2023-24 academic year to complete her Fletcher Jones Distinguished Fellowship in British History and Culture at The Huntington Library. However, her collaborative approach and readiness to adapt suggest her eagerness to forge a cohesive and efficient team in the Dean's office in the time until then.

Jahner steps into her role at a critical time, as Caltech faces an unprecedented surge in undergraduate admissions. The record-breaking 272 undergraduates admitted to the class of 2027 have resulted in a significant resource shortage. While Jahner acknowledges the urgency of the situation, she remains cautious about revealing immediate plans for dealing with it, demonstrating her focus on informed decision-making and strategic planning.

"I would be speaking out of turn right now," Jahner responded to further questions on the topic. "It is a priority for the Student Affairs [department], but this is only my third day on the job, so I do not have enough information to give you a definite answer."

When asked about the Office's plans for the future of CASS (Caltech Accessibility Services for Students), she displayed the same careful consideration, underlining her commitment to due diligence before making any hasty pronouncements or plans. It is evident that Jahner prioritizes open and frank dialogue regarding student affairs and prioritizes solutions based on data and consultation.

Looking forward, Jahner is eager to incorporate student input into her work. This summer will provide an opportunity for her to connect directly with the student body, allowing them to voice their concerns and ideas for the future of Caltech. This approach not only reinforces Jahner's dedication to student engagement but also sets the stage for an inclusive and responsive Deanship.

Jennifer Jahner's commitment to her role, her eagerness to understand and address the unique challenges of the Caltech community, and her open approach to student communication promise a bright future for the undergraduate students of the Institute.

## Ditch Day Was Indeed Tomorrow!

Chi Cap / Culture

"Go to bed, frosh, Ditch Day is tomorrow!" is one of the most iconic catchphrases of Caltech. In fact, the moment the seniors sent the quirky message about dinner being absolutely delectable on Thursday, I heard it ringing in my ears. But nothing could compare to the excitement of Thursday's announcements, Thursday night with the early curfew, and at last — Ditch Day.

It is worth savoring Ditch Day from its very beginning to its end. In Dabney, frosh were warned from noon: "The seniors think dinner will be tasty today." However, with the many fakes fresh in our memory, could this be a prank? And yet the day went on with a buzzing sense of anticipation. Dinner was indeed Tasty™ — it coincided with the first day of the student grilling program by

CDS — and before you know it, it's announcement time.

In Dabney, the seniors were quick to assert control. From our dining hall's audio system, dramatic music plays. Thunderstorms struck the ceiling of an all-shining afternoon. Seniors and the ghosts of previous time donned their best costumes and began their trek to a summit. Splits second after, another universe opened up: now we were parts of an Intergalactic Star Fleet, trying to solve the mystery of an ill-timed murder. Soon after, we jumped into the wormhole of space and came out anew: as a crop of rising-heroes trying to save the world. And of course, at the end of each and every journey:

"GO TO BED, FROSH, 'CAUSE DITCH DAY IS TOMORROW!"

This year, the curfew is at 10:30PM. Fifteen minutes prior, for Dabney, the seniors summoned frosh to the lounge for a bedtime story before the night closed in and campus became senior-only. As a frosh (literally), I remember myself still grinding out the last of my set before the fun began (a rookie mistake), and no doubt generations of frosh will keep doing so despite the senior's best advice. This year, though, I turned in early. For a night I felt like a kid the day before a field trip again: rumbling with excitement and chit-chats, the night growing heavy as if holding onto all the secrets and mischief the seniors were up too...

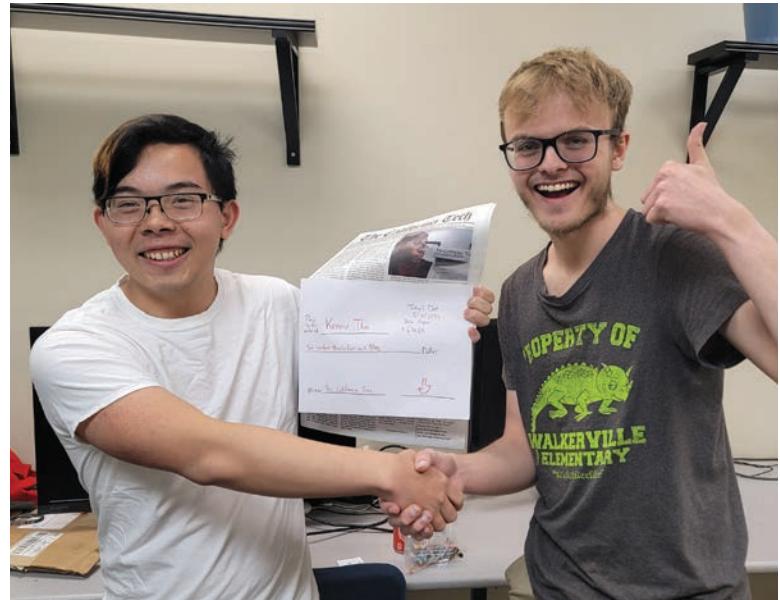
And before you know it — "WAKE UP FROSH, IT'S DITCH DAY!" — it's time for the pots and pans.

Each house has its own stacks with varying amount of seniors working on each stack. Some stacks involve adventure, some mystery, and some puzzle solving. Frosh line up to join stacks and soon, the fun begins.

From here the adventures diverge, be it Among Us themed, making your own lightsabers in the basement of Spaulding, waddling in the Gene Pool, or resolving the mysteries among the historical documents of the Caltech Archives. For a day you are an adventurer, a space voyager, a warrior. As I (not really) ran from the ninth floor of Caltech Hall to the Keck to disable explosives that will bring Caltech to its ground, I saw universes run parallel and crossed mine.



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Former Tech Editor-in-Chief Kenny Thai gets paid after waiting nearly 3 years.

## I Got Paid!

Parting thoughts from the previous Tech Editor

Kenny Thai / Opinion

Well, it may have taken 1171 days, but the Tech has finally given me my long-awaited compensation. I've been around as one of the Tech's editors for over three years at this point, but I can comfortably say that this paper is in the best state it's been since I've started working on it. The paper's biweekly publication schedule doesn't require the editing team to not sleep the night before publication (*Editor's note: \**), revenue from advertising is finally returning, and the pay rates have increased for the first time in decades! It's certainly a massive improvement over the year and a half that we spent keeping the paper on life support through digital distribution.

Of course, the Tech won't be able to stay as active as it currently is without some support! Over the three years I've been helping to run the paper, our biggest (and often only) obstacle in our publication schedule has been getting enough articles for us to fill an issue. There were often issues where the Editor-in-Chief would have to write two or even three major articles on their own because no one else was willing to contribute, and this was during periods of major changes in undergraduate life. Entire years

have gone by when student sentiment has gone almost completely unrecorded in one of the student body's most effective channels of communication to the greater Caltech community. My hope is that this will never have to happen again, but without the continued support of writers like you (yes, you!) it's entirely possible that the paper backslides into being a publication that people forget even exists as its publication schedule grinds to a halt. I know from too much personal experience that this cycle is incredibly hard to avoid once it begins. The best way for you to help us stay out of it is by submitting articles so that the editors don't have to scramble to find more at the last minute every two weeks.

We currently have a paper that people can expect and look forward to, and that gives students and administrators an honest look into each others' perspectives. I hope that this paper will continue to bring light to issues that too often go unacknowledged or pushed off, and that Caltech as a whole can work to address its shortcomings as a result. Thanks again for the support that's been shown for the paper over the past four years; I've been proud to be a part of it.

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## Why Caltech's Mandatory Meal Plans Need to Change

*Joe Kim / Opinion*

"The meal plan should not be required in our housing contract. It is a financial burden—eating out and buying groceries would be cheaper." — A Freshman Skurve

A Caltech student's bursar bill is riddled with large numbers. \$19,493 for one term's tuition. \$795 for "Student Fees". \$60 dollars for parking per month. \$3,605 for one term's housing. And last but not least, \$2,597 for the "Anytime plan".

That is \$7,791 per year. And next year, it will be \$8,259—a whole 6 percent increase.

93 percent of Caltech undergrads (as of 2022) lived on campus. Of those roughly 900 students, all were automatically placed on the "Anytime plan". Rightly so, many students have been discontent with the meal plan and its mandatory nature. Consequently, we've reached out to multiple students who have attempted to opt out of the meal plans and Caltech administrators on this issue.

One student said, "I am financially responsible for paying a portion of my education and it's not feasible for me to pay for the meal plan and still have to pay for groceries outside of that to accommodate

my dietary restrictions."

Upon meeting with the CDS administrators, they were pointed toward their special meals program and they said that it appeared that opting out was "not an option".

Another student said that they'd met with Caltech Accessibility Services for Students (CASS) staff, who promised them that they'd be opted out of the dining plan. They later found out that they were charged for the meal plan, nevertheless, as the decision wasn't in the purview of CASS and they didn't fit the requirements to be exempt from the mandate.

When we reached out with questions, Jaime Reyes, the Director of Dining Services explained their reasoning behind the "Anytime plan" is "to make sure we had food available for you guys." In the food desert that is Pasadena, the plan enables Caltech facilities to be open at most times of the day (e.g., Red Door is open from 7 am to 2 am). They also pointed to the fact that having an unlimited pre-paid plan helps prevent food-insecure individuals from going unfed.

While these are valid points,

we inquired about whether the lack of flexibility and diversity in the plan could be detrimental to students. Mr. Reyes explained that "the FLEX plan was added to give people flexibility" and it has been priced at 90% of the "Anytime plan".

Maria Katsas, the Executive Director of Student Auxiliary Services (SAS), said, "if there are students with certain needs—whether it's dietary, restrictions, religious, or whatever it is—we are able to buy them and make them separate meals". On exemptions, they clarified that on the rare occasion "[students] have really serious dietary restrictions, we work with the CASS office and the deans" to process exemptions; in her 19 years at Caltech, she recalled only "a couple of times" the exemption has been provided.

Under a contemporary understanding of consent, a mandatory plan undermines students' agency and is simply unethical. In a system in which most students have little choice but to live in Caltech housing, a mandatory plan robs the students of their ability to choose where they will eat, what they will eat, and how

much they'll spend on it. The illusion of choice provided by a \$7,434-a-year "FLEX plan" does not have tangible benefits to students either. In fact, discounting the dollar yogurts and bagels in open kitchen, the "FLEX plan" prices house dinners at about \$38 per dinner. It surely would be cheaper for any students to be on no plan than the "FLEX plan"—that is unless they ate about thirty Greek yogurts a day from open kitchen.

This problem is not unique to Caltech. In 2018, AB 1961 was introduced in California to prohibit mandatory meal plans and make meal plan pricing more transparent in response to protests from CSU students, but the revised legislation ultimately omitted the clause prohibiting meal plan mandates. Nevertheless, we can investigate how peer institutions dealt with their meal plan headaches.

In UCs, there is a culture of students living in apartments, avoiding the meal plan altogether. Had Caltech not discontinued non-market non-dormitory houses, this could be a solution for those with dietary restrictions or even the lay-upperclassmen who are tired of having turkey-bacon-avocado

sandwiches every day. Currently, the complications in procuring off-campus housing and the exorbitant LA-county prices leave off-campus living off-limits to many.

The solution may actually be much more straightforward. Our peer institutions such as MIT and CalArts have significantly more affordable base meal plans at \$2,150 and \$2,028 respectively. A base meal plan to cover just the non-negotiables (i.e., house dinners and open kitchen) would enable students to have incredible flexibility in dining with little cost. In an institute defined by its honor code where students are trusted to work with rockets, million-dollar lasers, and Class-A drugs, it seems reasonable to trust them to not take advantage of Caltech's meal plans and to feed themselves as they see fit.

The administrators we've talked to shared the same optimistic sentiments. Good-faith collaboration augurs well for the future of Caltech. Hopefully, with your support from the greater Caltech community, we can have a better meal plan and a better Caltech in the near future.

## Two Years, Two Bikes

*Adele Basturk / Campus*

In my almost two years as an undergraduate at this school, I have had two bikes stolen from me on campus. After a lockless overnight stay outside of the Red Door third term frosh year, my beloved green Schwinn, that transported me to and from school for over 4 years, had disappeared from my life. Ok, lesson learned. I was immediately on the market for a new bike.

Two weeks later I had acquired a retro blue Schwinn hybrid. During my 2022 Copenhagen summer, my affinity for cycling only grew. Upon my return to the states for my s'more fall term, I was fortunate to have inherited a Specialized Crossroads retro road bike from a departing neighbor back home.

Now this bike I loved more than any bike I had had before. As a good student, I purchased a hefty U-lock and registered the bike with Caltech security. During the 8 months I rode this bike to and from Einstein's every morning, around campus, and across the greater Pasadena area, this love only grew.

After I got rear-ended two days before the new year, leaving me without my car for 3 months, it was this bike that I rode to and from San Gabriel Valley airport to maintain my piloting skills. Never was this bike left without a lock, and never was it left outside of the Lloyd courtyard for an overnight stay. With this, I felt reasonably secure in the idea that I was going to keep this bike for a long time.

Which is why I was undoubtedly cast into a foul mood when four weeks ago today, I walked out into the Lloyd courtyard to find that my bike, had again, vanished. Two years, two bikes, and one sad Lloydie.

It is not unknown to bike owners on campus that bike theft runs rampant. Chase Blachette (EE '23, Venerable) reports that his bike was stolen outside of Moore after just 20 minutes locked and unattended.

Alexander Koutsoukos (GPS '24, Venerable) had his unlocked bike stolen outside of Arms late April this year, after staying inside the building for longer than anticipated. Koutsoukos further claims that several professors he knows have also had their bikes stolen.

Sascha Goldsmith (ME 25', Blacker) had her electric scooter stolen outside of Gates-Thomas while she was attending an evening office hours session. According to Goldsmith, fellow mole Adam Křivka (CS 24', Blacker) also had his bike stolen.

Ethan Lin (Ch 26', Dabney) left his bike locked at the racks between SFL and Dabney Gardens over one weekend last term. When he returned, all he found was his lock, which had been cut. "The bike was around 500-600 dollars," he told the Tech. "I had it for around 8 years and was really into mountain biking so it was my most precious possession in terms of personal significance."

In all cases, the bike or scooter was registered with Caltech Security. Despite this seeming safeguard and hope for reunion that registering one's bike with Caltech Security offers, it remains unclear what action can be taken by security when a theft has occurred.

"I contacted campus security immediately and they consoled me, but they said there are no security cameras in that location," Lin lamented. "I filed a report with the Pasadena Police Department too, but I didn't really expect anything, and nothing came of it." Goldsmith described a similar experience.

The most frightening recurring theme of stolen bike vignettes is that of bike thieves entering undergraduate dorm courtyards. Blanchette claims to have witnessed an adult male waiting to follow individuals into the Venerable courtyard. The door closes slowly enough that a student who unlocked it could be already inside the building before it fully shuts, making it possible for a piggy-

backer to sneak in unnoticed. According to Blanchette, he encountered the suspect at night a month and a half ago inside the Venerable courtyard, where the individual was browsing the available bikes.

It is clear that bike and scooter theft on the Caltech campus is an issue that affects undergraduate to faculty bike owners. Given that an overwhelming majority of undergraduate students live on campus, the issue of bike theft from within student dormitories raises the concern of the ease with which an individual from the general public can enter the premises.

A thief cut clean through the bike lock that once secured Lin's bike.



## Interview with a Bike Thief

*Joe Kim / Satire*

**Joe:** Thank you for joining us today, Doris. Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

**Doris:** Of course. I'm an 87-year-old grandma from a couple of blocks north of here.

**Joe:** A Pasadena local! And you recently made headlines for stealing a bike from Caltech's Lloyd courtyard. Can you walk us through that?

**Doris:** Well, Joe, it wasn't much of a challenge, to be honest. The gate was slower than a turtle in molasses, and the fence was lower than my grandson's IQ. And don't even get me started on that lock. My shaky hands could pick it in a second!

**Joe:** It sounds like Caltech could use some better security measures.

**Doris:** Oh, I wouldn't say that. The administrators are doing a fine job. After all, they have the code of honor. It's up to the students to be responsible for their property.

**Joe:** So, you don't feel bad about taking someone else's property?

**Doris:** Well, I suppose it's not right to take things that don't belong to you. But for gosh sakes, those students probably don't even need those bikes. The campus is so small, they could practically hop from one end to the other.

**Joe:** What advice would you give to the students to keep their bikes safe?

**Doris:** Get a better lock, for starters. And maybe keep the bikes in a more secure location. But let's be real, Joe. I could have stolen those bikes blindfolded. It's up to the students to be smart about their property.

**Joe:** And what are your plans for the bike now?

**Doris:** Well, I'll be giving it to my grandson. He's been having a rough time walking the two miles to school. But don't worry, I'll make sure he knows how to keep it locked up tight!

**Joe:** Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with us, Doris. Do you have any final words for our readers?

**Doris:** Of course, dearie. I just want to say that despite my little adventure at Caltech, I have the utmost respect for the students there. They are some of the brightest young minds in the world, and I have no doubt they will continue to achieve great things. My grandson is in middle school right now, but I hope he can be a part of that community one day.

# The Admin Corner

## Dear Undergraduates,

*Lesley Nye*

Dear Undergraduates,

As we barrel towards the end of another academic year and prepare to say "au revoir" to our soon-to-be-graduates, I hope we can all take a moment to appreciate the time that we have been able to spend together and reflect upon what we have overcome in the past few years, both as individuals and as a community.

The last three years were unprecedented in US higher education, and in the history of the world. We were forced to alter the ways we work, study, teach, interact, play, and socialize. Caltech, like our institutional counterparts, had to move rapidly and flexibly within a constantly shifting landscape—something that is especially challenging to an institution so grounded in tradition and

history. The faculty reassessed management of their labs and learned how to engage in hybrid and virtual instruction; staff were required to respond creatively and immediately to extraordinary demands; and the students had to...well, give up their hopes and dreams of a typical college experience. And meanwhile, we all worried about the well-being and safety of our loved ones and one another.

We were also separated from this community we call home. Despite the hours and hours of Zoom meetings and calls, Team conversations, Discord threads, ridiculously imaginative efforts to bring people together (without actually bringing them together), and other attempts to normalize interactions and pursue the educational and research missions of the Institute, it was a singularly

isolating and painful year and a half. Returning to campus alleviated some of this, but the ongoing pandemic continued to make things difficult to regain any sense of normalcy.

But you all know this all too well.

I just want to take this opportunity to thank you. To thank you for your resilience, your strength, your flexibility, and your perseverance. For your intellectual brilliance, your generous hearts, and your desire to make this world a better place. For your contributions to the continued success of your peers, your mentors, and your faculty. And for allowing us all to take this wild ride with you. Here's hoping no generation will ever again have to manage such a complex and Covid-y undergraduate experience. And to the graduates out there, best wishes and have fun!



Dr. Lesley Nye, Interim Dean of Undergraduate Students

## Update on Bernoulli the Beaver!

*Lilia Arrizabalaga / Culture*

Caltech's mascot finally has a democratically elected name: Bernoulli, or Berni for short. This name was unveiled in a short ceremony on Sunday, May 21st.

Betsy Mitchell, Head of Athletics, gave a short speech on the importance of school spirit before bringing our mascot out. With a very dramatic flair, she ripped the tape obscuring the name off its jersey, revealing "Bernoulli".

This name was chosen by a poll sent out to undergrads, grads, and faculty. Over 700 ballots total were cast, and Bernoulli won the majority of votes in every voting group.

After the name was revealed, in midwestern Ohio fashion, Mitchell and the captains of the various sports teams each presented the bronze statue with gifts. These included sticks and assorted sports memorabilia such as track batons and volleyballs.

After the ceremony there was a summer kick off barbecue. Many students attended and discussed the beaver statue and its new name. The general sentiment among the undergrads seemed to be pro-Bernoulli but there were some students that

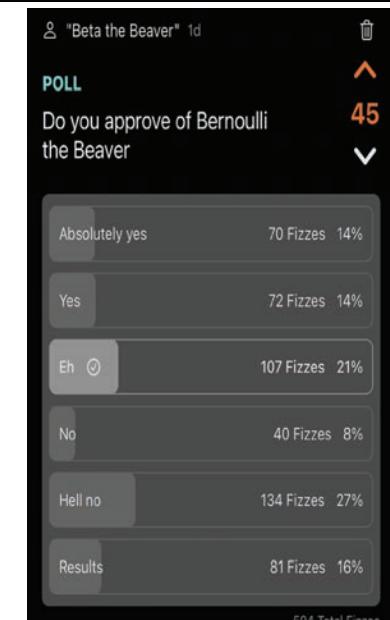
questioned the need for the beaver statue.

Other attendees, however, saw the opportunity to worship the statue and took it. They prostrated themselves on the ground before the statue to a rousing chorus of "YES YES YES" by Betsy Mitchell.

To gauge the distribution of sentiment, the Tech ran a 24-hour approval poll for Bernoulli on @thecaliforniatech's

Instagram story as well as on Fizz. A total of 574 votes were received, although they cannot be guaranteed to be unique or genuine. The results are pictured; make of them what you will.

Overall, the event seemed to be a success, and the new name has certainly sparked discussions about school spirit. We will just have to wait and see if this continues.



## AMAZON SKYmall

KENNY THAI | COLUMNIST

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 my hand picked selections!

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

<https://forms.gle/JwZrRQntjTTmnCRv9>



Among Us  
Bed Set  
\$69.99



Fake Money  
\$16.99



Balloon Dog  
Sculpture  
\$29.99



Minions  
Chess Set  
\$39.00

NO

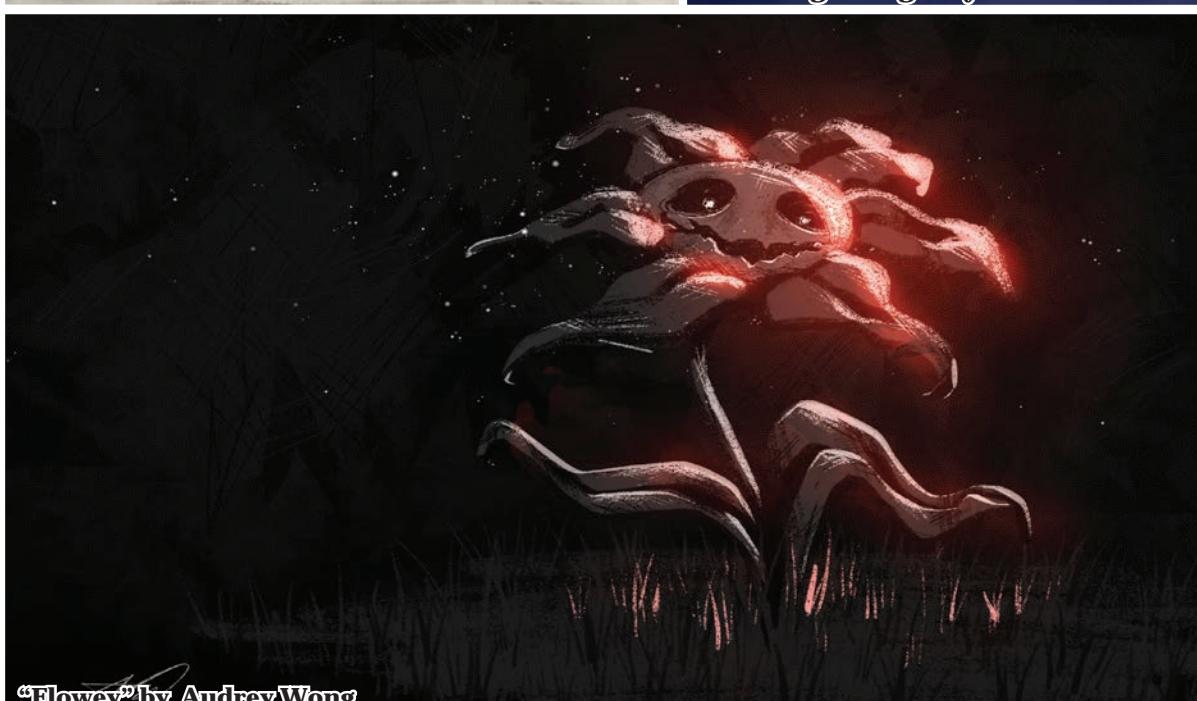
NO  
Free



"Travel Sketch" by Emma Isella



"New Beginnings" by Sarah Bass



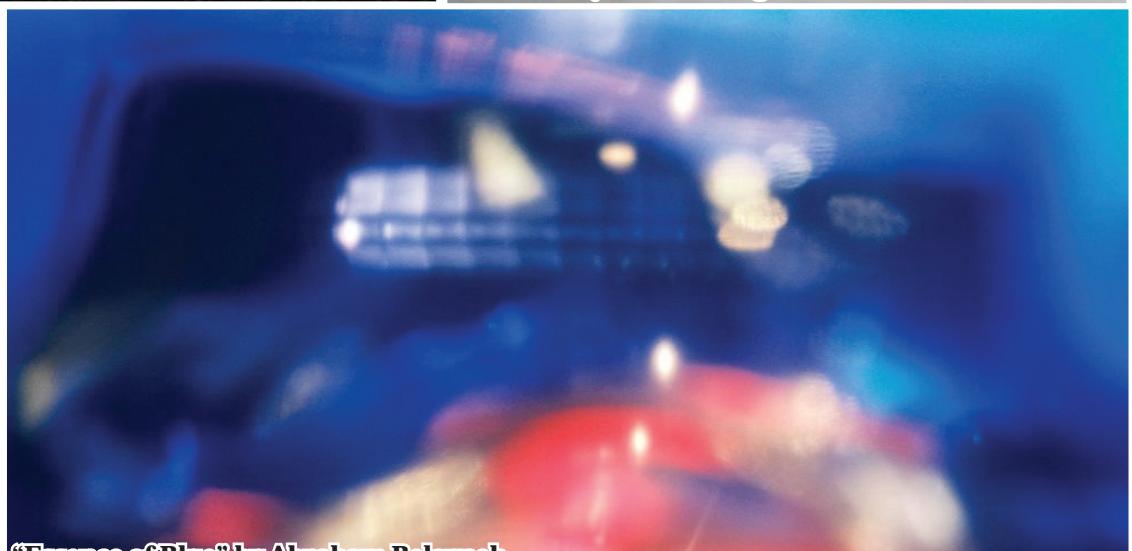
"Flower" by Audrey Wong



"Wilder" by Alicia Zhang



"Travel Sketch" by Emma Isella



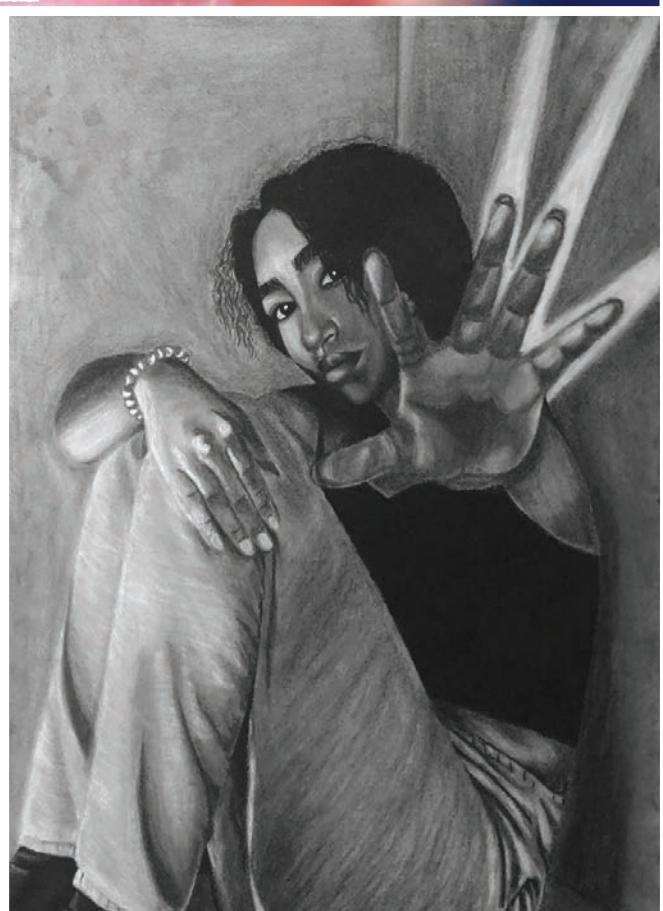
"Essence of Blue" by Abraham Belayneh



"Night Shift" by Abraham Belayneh



"Worked to the Bone" by Domani Sharkey



"Fallen Angel" by Domani Sharkey

# Spring Interhou/vse Spotlight

Alicia Zhang / Culture

## Lloyd Interhouse

Let's-a go! Lloydikart took off full-throttle for their first full interhouse since COVID on April 8 from 10pm-2am. Calling upon their talented Lloydies, students danced through four different DJ shifts. We heard from one of the DJs themselves, Sagan Russ (Lloyd/Avery '25, BioE), "The Lloyd DJs all put a lot of effort into curating a variety of songs to get the crowd hyped. Our set even included some Mario-themed remixes to incorporate the theme into the music," she had mixed together Mario Kart sound effects with songs like "Gas Pedal" and "Bitch Better Have My Money".

"Also, shoutout to all of the Lloyd frosh who put countless hours into building this party. They spent many sleepless nights working on it and it shows, as they did a phenomenal job!"

The L-shaped platform featured gorgeous art straight from the video game surrounding the famous pole, a well-known staple at all Lloyd Interhouses. In a never before seen collaboration, Lloyd banded together with CDS to set up their DJ booth, using the giant boombox that was set up at the previous CDS Midnight Madness to light up the night.

As always, the amount of effort students put into this one night event shines through in

the food spread. Stars of the show included Adele Basturk's (Lloyd '25, Physics) homemade four-tiered, four-flavor cake, as well as fried mushrooms, much to the dismay of the numerous Toads that showed up that night.

Great job Lloyd House!

## BDR

After many theme iterations and a false start during first term, the very first BDR (Blacker, Dabney, Ricketts) party finally happened after five years of hiatus!

On April 29 at 10 pm, people poured in from all corners of the campus to explore the caves and crystals set in Ricketts dining hall and lounge.

Huge congrats to the party organizers, Lily Coffin (Ricketts '24, MechE) and Cristian Ponce (Blacker '25, BioE) for gathering decorators and getting this party going, especially after settling on a date that got canceled due to conflict with ASCIT's Winter Formal, which then also got canceled by administrators.

Unfortunately (or fortunately), Fleming House was not the theme. Although the three houses had settled on Fleming (the theme), it was struck down by the events committee made up of a group of administrators headed by Erica Crawford and Felicia Hunt. It was undetermined whether or not Fleming House itself was okay with the theme, but BDR decided to go

with the second crowd-favorite, a Minecraft-inspired Crystals and Caverns party theme. Decorations featured Ponce's favorite: a dropped ceiling (a popular South House technique) to resemble an enclosed cave and numerous spray-painted stalactites and blinking blue LEDs along the black tarp. UV-painted fossils crawled along the black paper-covered walls in the dining hall with strobing lights emanating from the DJ booth that hid a bubble machine under a waterfall.

Dabney took care of the food and wiped the plate with creativity as they served crystal rock candy, gem-colored meringue, and rock candy.

Ponce stated how nice it was to get to know the other Houses' social teams and put on something for the whole school. Perhaps this is a sign we should have more co-house events?

Highlight of the party was Ricketts' very own professional DJ, Ramzi Saber (Ricketts '25, Astrophysics), taking the crowd through numerous EDM songs and crowd-favorites like "Mr. Brightside".

Cheers to a continued tradition!

## Blacker Interhouse

Driven by our hard-working frosh, moles could be seen running around with drills and frosted cookies up until the very last minute on Saturday, May

13. Bringing back the theme of Mad Max: Fury Road, moles decided on what was supposed to be Blacker's COVID Interhouse, canceled due to COVID. There were a few bumps along the way in constructing the platform, but Blacker pulled through and partied through the night with only four noise complaints (all coming from the same house). The platform welcomed students with a grand staircase up to a surveying platform that surrounded the lower dance floor. Led by work frosh Steven Lei and Alexis Herfurth, an extremely dedicated but overworked team of moles constructed the enormous platform overlooked by the DJ booth.

Featuring a very impressive, grand spread food assembled by lead Food Frosh Mars, students feasted on car-shaped waffles, pudding, Mother's Milk cookies, and artfully frosted cupcakes.

Art Frosh Anya Mischel directed her largest project to date, an impressive 16 by 24 foot canvas mural of numerous modified war rig cars driving through a desert, spanning the entire back wall of Blacker Lounge as is tradition (temporarily covering the famous Stephen Hawking-acclaimed explosion mural).

With music ranging from Pitbull to My Chemical Romance, Blacker Interhouse ended the

night with its traditional "Closing Time" with everyone linked together in a circle on the dance floor.

## Vapegate: Fleming Interhouse

Caltech geared up for its very last Interhouse held in Fleming under paper lanterns and soaring lights in a bioluminescent fish party (BFP) on May 20.

The party started off slowly but quickly picked up the pace. Soon, mosh pits were springing up on the packed dance floor. Ground blacklights lit up the dance which was surrounded by speakers, allowing students to be surrounded by the music. A backdrop of beautiful murals of sharks and sea stars provided ocean ambience behind the surrounding platforms.

General consensus of the music? "They had EDM, rap, Spanish music, and your basic b\*\*\*h party music".

A few hours in, mysterious clouds of smoke arose from the crowd with increasing frequency, which only became a problem when the music kept getting shut down in order to announce that if there was any more vaping, Fleming Interhouse would get shut down. After a couple starts and stops, one last puff was all it took to blow the house down. The party finally ended up getting shut down 10 minutes before 2 am.



Blacker Interhouse: Mad Max mural



Lloydikart



BDR: Crystals and Caverns

**Magic Eye**  
Find the hidden image!



*A novel advice column about alive, ahaha, and everything in between! Brought to you by the one and only California Tech.*

Dear Quail,  
I am very academically stressed. How would you recommend that I can overcome this?

Thanks,  
Seymour Butts

Hi Seymour Butts,  
Oh, academic stress? Don't you worry, my friend, I've got just the solution for you! It's time to unleash the power of the "Juice of Success" and turn those academic woes into triumphs!

First things first, let's concoct the "Concentration Elixir." Take a splash of fresh orange juice, a dash of cranberry juice, and a sprinkle of extra pulp. Mix it all up and let the flavors dance together. This zesty elixir will keep you focused and attentive, making those study sessions a breeze. Sip it slowly and let the fruity goodness ignite your brainpower!

Now, let's whip up the "Stress-Relief Smoothie." Blend together a ripe banana, a handful of strawberries, a dollop of yogurt, and a generous splash of mango juice. As the ingredients blend, visualize your

stress melting away, replaced by a tropical oasis of calm. Take a sip, feel the smoothie work its magic, and bid farewell to stress like a distant memory.

But wait, we're not done yet! It's time for the grand finale—the "Confidence Booster." Mix some blueberry juice, a twist of lime, and a sprinkle of sparkling water. This fizzy concoction will uplift your spirits and empower you to tackle any academic challenge with newfound confidence. Take a sip, hold your head high, and let your worries fizz away like bubbles in the air!

Remember, my dear friend, the power of juice is not just in its delicious taste but also in the positive energy it brings. So, when academic stress tries to rain on your parade, grab a glass of "Juice of Success," and let its silly yet delightful powers guide you towards triumph!

Cheers to good grades, laughter, and a juicier, stress-free academic journey!

Best wishes,  
Quail

Dear Quail,  
I am in quite a predicament. I just pooped my pants in class, how do I get out of this predicament?

Signed,  
Anita Bath

Dear Anita Bath,  
Oh my, that's quite a pickle you've landed yourself in! But fret not, my friend, for I shall summon the mystical powers of the "Juice of Serenity" to guide you through this sticky situation!

Step one: Inhale deeply and maintain your composure. We mustn't let panic take the reins. Instead, let us embrace the whimsical side of life and face

this challenge head-on.

Step two: It's time for a clever diversion! The juice comes to the rescue! Swiftly spill some fruity punch or grape nectar on your desk, creating an innocent-looking mishap. While all eyes are captivated by the spill, you can discreetly attend to your predicament.

Step three: With utmost poise, make your way to the restroom. Move gracefully, avoiding any unnecessary attention. The Juice of Serenity shall be your guiding star, leading you through this delicate journey unscathed.

Step four: Upon reaching the restroom, assess the damage and cleanse yourself as best you can. Utilize water, soap, and absorbent paper towels to restore your freshness and erase any traces of the incident. Take your time, dear friend, and focus on revitalizing your dignity with a sprinkle of cleanliness.

Step five: Should the need arise, subtly tie a jacket or sweater around your waist, adding an extra layer of camouflage. This stylish maneuver not only conceals any lingering signs but also exudes an air of nonchalant sophistication. You shall become the trendsetter of the classroom, inspiring others with your ingenious fashion choice!

Remember, mishaps befall even the best of us, but it is our response that truly defines us. Embrace the power of the Juice of Serenity, maintain a positive outlook, and let laughter be your shield. Life is an unpredictable journey, and your ability to face its challenges with grace and humor shall earn you admiration.

Wishing you a fresh start and a future adorned with pants free from blemishes! Stay juicy,

my friend!

Yours sincerely,  
Quail  
Dear Quail,  
I have been very naughty this year. How do I get off of the naughty list?

Signed,  
Ivana Tinkle

Dear Ivana Tinkle,  
Ho ho ho! So it seems you've had your fair share of mischievous moments this year, eh? Fret not, my cunning comrade, for I possess the perfect elixir to sweeten Santa's heart and restore his gift-giving spirit. Behold, the enchanted "Juice of Redemption"!

Step one: Extract the essence of remorseful raspberries! Take a moment to reflect upon your mischievous deeds and genuinely feel remorse for your naughtiness. Santa takes delight in witnessing personal growth and has a sincere desire to make amends.

Step two: Infuse a splash of helpful honeydew juice! Demonstrate to Santa your willingness to lend a helping hand and radiate kindness. Engage in random acts of benevolence, bringing joy to others and brightening their days. Santa cherishes those who go above and beyond to spread positivity.

Step three: Pour forth a bountiful measure of benevolent grape juice! Embrace the true spirit of giving by dedicating your time, talents, or resources to those in need. Whether through volunteer work or sharing your blessings, Santa shall be overjoyed by your generosity.

Step four: Sprinkle the elixir with sincere sincerity juice! Pen a heartfelt letter to Santa, expressing genuine remorse,

lessons learned, and a steadfast commitment to finding a place on the nice list next year. Santa holds a special fondness for sincerity and admires those who take the time to introspect and communicate their feelings.

Step five: Finally, adorn the potion with a touch of patient pomegranate juice! Santa, the bearer of gifts, has an extensive itinerary to fulfill. Exercise patience and trust that he will acknowledge your efforts in due time. Just as the fruit ripens to perfection, good things come to those who wait.

Armed with the mighty "Juice of Redemption," you possess the power to overturn your mischievous deeds and secure a spot on Santa's nice list. However, always remember that the essence of the holiday season lies in love, kindness, and spreading joy to others.

So, be good, be kind, and embody the spirit of giving. Who knows? Perhaps Santa will reward you with a present that will make you leap with jubilation, just like the effervescence of a sparkling glass of juice!

May your mischief be merry and your redemption joyous!

Warm regards,  
Quail

To submit questions for next week's "Question the Quail", fill out the google form:

<https://bit.ly/41rEQ1N>



## IHC Meeting Minutes - May 14, 2023

Present: Sophie Elam, Emma Isella, Tomas Wexler, Andrew Pasco, Leo Williams, Parul Singh, Rik Bose, Emily Choe  
Floor: non-IHC members present

Call to order: 8:05 pm

SE: Does anyone know meetings/weekends they won't be here for?

TW: The first weekend of June  
AnP: Same  
RB: Tentatively us too

[redacted]

SE: Couple updates, so we will meet with Vanessa this Friday, and this is an important meeting because it's dates for like meeting over the summer

TW: Like interhouse dates?

SE: No like Zoom meeting dates over July. The June 2nd meeting is now June 1st and will be with Vanessa and Hima. June 9th will be inter-house dates. This Friday is meeting dates. They'll all be noon and lunch provided. Do we want to have IHC meeting on June 4th? The day everyone is coming back from beach trips. If the answer is no that's totally fine.

RB: I don't know personally when I'll be back, if I go

PS: We could do it Monday or something?

SE: Ok, gotcha.

RB: We're not having another VPSA meeting until the end of

the year?

SE: Yeah, not until next academic year. Cool, thanks for logisticsing that with me. Another question, this came up on the meeting on Friday. IHC merch has been a thing in the past.

EC: We got it last year for rotation.

RB: Yeah every president had an IHC shirt in their house color.

SE: And someone said something about anything but a t-shirt?

EI: That was me

SE: So how do people feel about crewnecks?

-> agreement

SE: So like the IHC logo on the front, and then the house color?

-> agreement

SE: I'll send out a Google form for sizes and everything. The other thing I wanted to ask about was I have some COVID updates. I met with Joe B., Mark, and Maria. They will send us hand sanitizer and wipes that they've been using and think are effective, and ORE will fund it. So the health center is giving us prices and we send it to ORE. The signs they will check with the Office of General Counsel, since they don't want it to be a HIPAA violation. They also don't want to scare the custodial staff.

Apparently, dining is still doing cold kits, so when they drop off the food, they get cold kits. But we're working on getting cold kits to Health Ads, so people can get stuff on the weekends. Food should always

be dropped in dining halls. And then optional testing is Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays until 11 am. And also testing is private, like you find out your result but Caltech doesn't. You have to report that to Caltech, so I guess if you didn't want them to know you could not report a positive test. And the last thing is to tell people in your houses to get boosters. But that's it for COVID, I'm meeting with Deans on Tuesday to talk about FCC and orientation, anything else I could ask?

TW: I talked to Mahlet today and she said she was going to put a box of COVID tests in the lounges. I assume Steven will do the same for North Houses and Emily for Avery.

EC: Do they know what's happening for the summer?

SE: They didn't say anything about testing, I think they want people to use surveillance testing. I'm meeting with the advocate coordinators and they're sending me their rosters so I can figure out who's staying on campus over the summer so I can make a roster.

[redacted]

SE: Did Blacker get shut down for noise?

TW: No

SE: I was like a mile and a half from campus and I could hear it at like 10:30pm, but when I got back I couldn't even hear it from Fleming

AnP: I'm worried for next weekend. I'm thinking we get a ton of foam and soundproof

the stage. Drop a big net on top.

LW: To catch the sound?

SE: I found a phone number to call the Ath and ask how they manage noise complaints [redacted]

PS: Pasco what's your theme?

AnP: Big Fish Party, so you can

dress as anything [redacted]

Meeting adjourned: 8:56 pm

Respectfully submitted,  
Emma Isella  
IHC Secretary

## WRITERS & COLUMNISTS WANTED!

CAMPUS | OPINION | HUMOR | ART | PHOTOGRAPHY

COMICS | CULTURE | SPORTS | POLITICS

### POSITIONS ARE OPEN FOR ALL SECTIONS

If we print your material, we will pay you up to the amounts listed below (at our discretion). Email submissions to [tech@caltech.edu](mailto:tech@caltech.edu) or join our Discord server using the following link

<b>Wages</b>
Columnists: \$20 per 500 words, minimum \$15
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Art/Photos: \$5
Comics: \$7



[discord.gg/Zaah8749s2](https://discord.gg/Zaah8749s2)



oh god how did i  
get here i am not  
good at computer

are you good at computer?  
join the tech!

## Ditch Day

from page 1

Some were absorbed in their tasks. Some were chilling and floating on log-shaped floaties. Most were laughing, cackling with their friends. And just like that, the adventures go on.

But eventually the story must conclude. The heroes met their nemesis; the space voyagers solved the murder mystery; the adventurers arrived at the summit. I ended my hero journey drenched in water, slightly shivering in the afternoon chill and a heart simultaneously light and heavy: I had fun; The adventure is over; I'm glad to spend a good day out with my friend; The seniors are leaving soon; I love this place; I will miss this moment so much, ten, twenty, thirty years from now.

And then the cannon fires. Seniors turn ghosts. Juniors fill in their shoes. Smores grow into juniors.

The end of ditch day comes with its own lamenting and reflection. Some part of you seems fundamentally changed, perhaps for the better. You are older now, wiser now. Despite the exhaustion from the days activity, late night after ditch day the houses are still filled with a buzzing excitement.

In that way, Ditch Day is a time-marker. It is a more apparent signal than anything else that the year has come to a close. All the fakes built up to this. All the spoilers and whispers and predictions built up to this. It is the high point of the story. I came out of it a year older and yet still feels so untethered, still so small under the shadow of the seniors. It's almost like I was a baby bird under the upperclassmen's wings, and one by one they flew away to new adventures. A year

has passed and I stand taller, weather stronger winds that come with being a year older and before I know it – there are now baby birds under my wings.

But Ditch Day is about reunion and about the people, too. I didn't realize how much I missed having the (old) ghosts around until I saw them split seconds before Thursday dinner. The quiet moments earlier in the day cements the fact: I spent time laughing, having fun, adventuring around with these people. The seniors will leave, and I will miss them. Yet nonetheless we are reassured that ghosts linger. They are invited to Dress Dinners, to alumni events. In the Dabney group chats, they are always around. Ditch Day is just the most prominent of these reunions: an ocean that all rivers eventually come back to; a shared unique history and experience of being a Caltech student, built from years of camaraderie and culminating in this final task of stacking.

Indeed, the seniors put in monumental efforts to this event. Dabney seniors Kelsie Taylor and Moss Gardner put up a stack themed after Celeste (2018 video game). Activities were planned out with locations simulating the game's key locations, with each hour of the day dedicated to a chapter of the game. Scribbled on their whiteboard: Mirror Temple ("Fear" in a box – infinite storeroom) activities with mirrors and lasers. While Kelsie took care of the theme and plot, Moss ironed out the details: "I experimented at the TechHub with 3D printing strawberries for the frosh to find throughout the day. After a couple weeks of testing, I went into mass production."

The My Hero Academia stack



has been a budding plan for years: "Norman [Chung] had been thinking about doing a MHA stack since frosh year. I joined him either near the end of junior year or this year." Justin Toyota shared, "I once heard someone say that Ditch Day really comes together in the last couple of weeks and that was definitely true for us. We figured out the outline of the stack early in the year. But I only really started writing the puzzles in May, and I was working on them until the night before."

In Venerable, An Tran and his friends prepared a Star War-themed stack. "[The froshes] have to hack a terminal. They essentially had to solve a series of puzzles of which I designed." Indeed, they were the lightsaber-making groups I saw in Spalding. "I designed lateral puzzles that required a change in perspective or novel way of thinking to solve. The final plan of the puzzle ended up being 10 independent puzzles that when solved, its solution is fed into the main puzzle which is the hacking of the terminal. People seemed to enjoy it, so I'm happy."

There were hiccups along the way, visible only to the critical eyes of the seniors, that the froshes are oblivious to. "By the afternoon, everything felt like a disaster. But towards the end of the day, it felt like things weren't going the way we expected but that it was ok." Moss shared. For their sixth activity, froshes went through a yarn-and-command-hook laser

maze and then through a mirror. Some decorations broke right before the activity. Justin and Norman also had their own hiccups: "There was a puzzle we had involving circuits, but it was only finalized the night before, so we didn't playtest it. (we forgot one connection)." But as always, it all worked out in the end!

For the seniors, Ditch Day marked the closing of a journey. "In some ways, my work on Ditch Day felt like my final gift to the frosh." Kelsie shared, "My way of saying goodbye to a place that has seen some of my lowest lows but had some good as well that I often lost track of." Justin feels a sense of calm with this finale, "For some reason, I felt stressed all week, but not today. Today I was filled with the calm of inevitability."

This insurmountable mountain cannot be crossed without the ghosts' tremendous help. Amrita Rhoads (CO 2020) baked fresh strawberry pies for the frosh, and acted as other Celeste characters along with Jackie, Cayla, and Izzy. Kevin Marx (CO 2022) played the villain and also designed the circuit boards. Some works are more visible than others – Noah Ortiz (CO 2022) headed the laborious strawberry gluing, helped cleaning up and carried decors across campus. "We are very much indebted to Noah as well as the other alums and seniors who helped so much week-of and before," Moss shared.

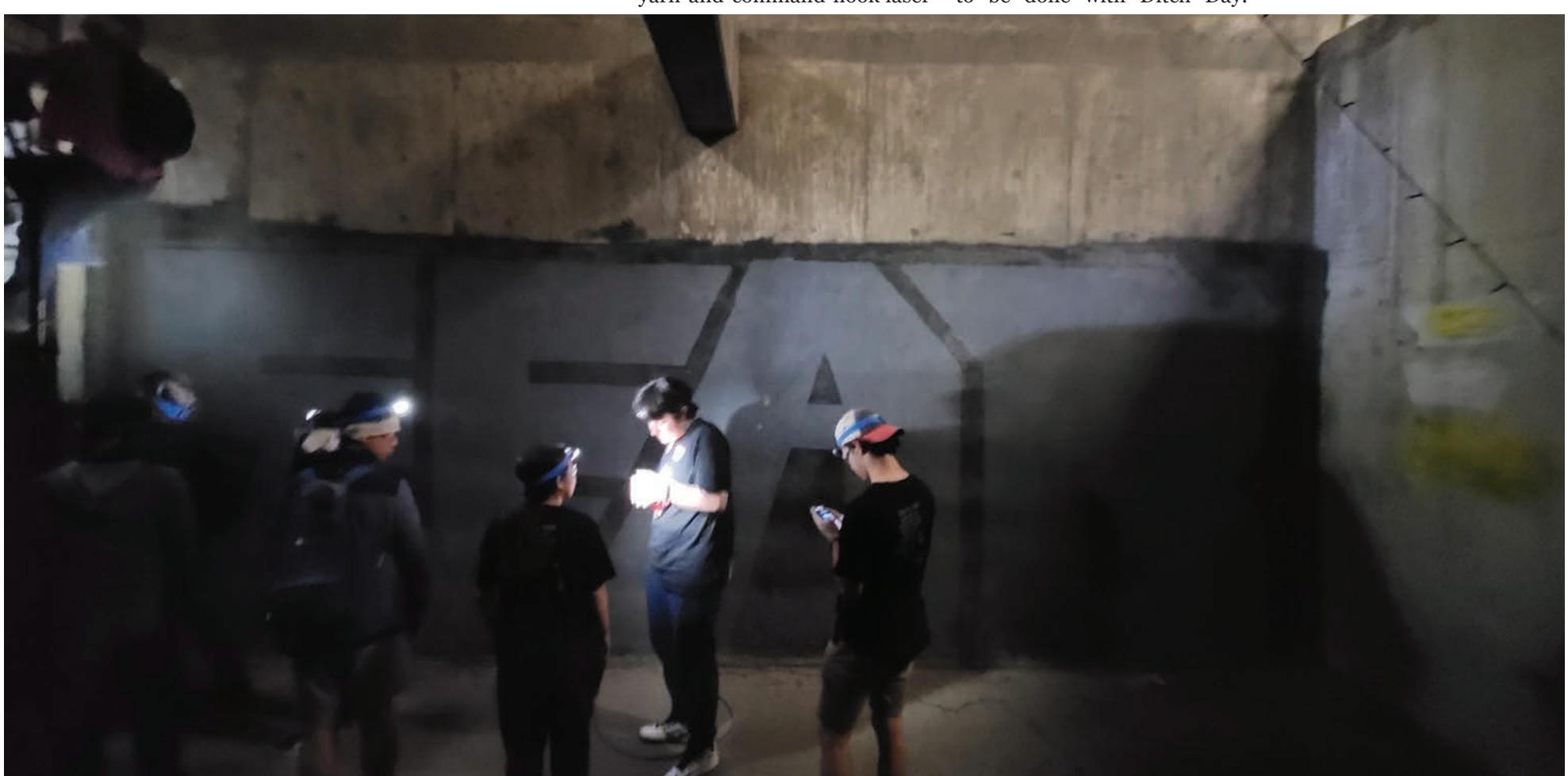
"It's such a strange feeling to be done with Ditch Day.

Something I've been stressing about for a year is finally over. The last major obstacle before graduation. It's freeing." Justin pondered, hours after the cannon fires, "The entire thing seemed insurmountable. But now I'm on the other side."

What next after this? "There are so many things I told myself I could do once this was behind me." Justin shared, "I'll definitely get to sleep." The work is strenuous, and the first step for Moss is to take a break: "After everything, I felt accomplished but entirely exhausted. When everyone was socializing with pie and dinner, I fell asleep on the floor."

By the time I am writing this, the rest of campus has re-entered the normal grind, problem sets and deadlines quickly in chase. We have exited the Ditch Day Utopia back into the real world. The ending has sinked in. The fun is now stowed neatly under the frosh's beds as they labor away on their desk. We came out of Ditch Day a year older (except for the frosh – y'all have to wait for the next cannon, sorry-not-sorry) another chapter sealed in. It's worth sitting down again to savor this aftetaste of Ditch Day: to appreciate the seniors' hard work, the froshes' great fun, the ghosts' long-awaited return, the memories happily-formed. Another year has passed, the summer will soon break through the clouds, and meanwhile...

Go to bed frosh, Ditch Day is Tomorrow!



## Caltech Alpine Club Visits Red Rock Canyon

Michael Gutierrez / Student Life

Just 30 minutes out from Las Vegas, under a brilliant blue sky, a ragtag group of Caltechers crawled out of their tents, took a deep breath of fresh, natural air, and realized they felt more alive than ever. It really is amazing how much your mood lifts when you leave campus for a day!

This was Red Rock Canyon, Nevada, the site of the Caltech Alpine Club's latest organized outing. For everyone in attendance, it was a much-needed change of pace. The previous night, we had all left our respective, disparate parts of academia — a quiet library, a geology laboratory, or a desk at JPL — slightly-more-than-slightly frayed out from a long week on The Grind™, but energized enough that the 5-hour drive through Friday night rush-hour traffic on the 210 felt like a breeze.

Alpine Club trips are open to the entire extended Caltech community, and it's always a lively and diverse bunch. This time we had a medley of grad students and post-docs from several departments; JPL planetary scientists; a staff member or two; and, of course, the undergrads (one from Harvey Mudd!). Some are international, some have lived in California their whole lives; some were newbies to outdoor rock climbing, some had been doing it for 5+ years; some had an entire bike route pre-planned, and some came only with their gear and a guidebook. (Or, in my case, just the gear! And even that was rented for the weekend from the Caltech Y.)



The main attraction at Red Rock Canyon is the rock climbing. Top rope, lead climbing, and bouldering all hit way different when you're on real rocks with no pre-marked routes, with the sun shining down on you and sometimes birds trying to dive-bomb you because you're near their nest?? The hike to get to the climbs is amazing and scenic, too. Plus, all the rock faces with good climbs have such... interesting names, like "Panty Wall" and "Viagra Tower" (we got lost and ended up at the Hamlet instead, but it was still a great spot).

There were a lot of great bouldering routes, too; just outside the park borders, there's an expansive field of huge, well, boulders. Some of them have petroglyph drawings from the land's original inhabitants! Those boulders are just for looking at.

There's something about the feeling of finally pulling yourself on top of a massive rock and being like, "Yeah, I climbed that" which just can't be replicated in a climbing gym. Just

don't forget your sunscreen and crash pads, safety first!

At the end of a long day of frolicking in nature, free of responsibilities back in the real world — actually, scratch that, THIS is the real world; whatever's back in L.A. is definitely the fake world — we returned back to the group campsite and prepared a delicious dinner of chicken and veggie tacos + minute rice. Those meals, shared around a campfire while telling stories of our day's adventures, are some of the tastiest I've ever had. Camping truly is the best spice!

Nick Abel, community member and 1/3 of the Alpine Club's Trip Planning Consortium, shared his motivation for organizing these outings, of which there are several each term.

"I want to make these premier outdoor destinations: Yosemite, Sequoia-Kings Canyon, Mammoth, Lake Tahoe, Bishop, Red Rock Canyon, accessible to the population of students that might not have the means or knowledge to visit by themselves," he told me. "It shouldn't matter that you don't



have a car, or that you just moved here and haven't made the connections, or learned about the confusing reservation system. You should have as much a chance to experience all these awesome places as someone who has been in Pasadena, or California, or the US, their whole life. I want people to remember these trips as a highlight of their time at Caltech."

If you'd like to get involved with the Alpine Club or learn more about upcoming events, you can join the mailing list by emailing [alpineclub@caltech.edu](mailto:alpineclub@caltech.edu). Also make sure to join the Alpine Club Slack (scan QR code below) for discussions about trip plans and spontaneous outings!

*Photo credit: Michael Gutierrez, Joaquin Gomez*



## Outsider's Insider: Caltech from the Perspective of an Exchange Student

Lulu Kwan / Student Life

Studying abroad at Caltech has been an experience, to say the least. Before coming, I had heard that students do not leave campus at all during term time, and I was confident that that would not be me. It was. Well nearly. This was especially true during my first term when I took arguably the most difficult class with the highest workload I had ever seen. I think that shocked me into an 'I'm going to struggle with keeping up with the workload here for a whole year' mindset; however, I am pleased to say that I have not had a class with a similar workload since. It's been really refreshing to be in classes where everyone is so passionate about their subject and to have the opportunity to speak with people at different stages of life, whether it is undergraduates, undergrads who have previously studied at other universities, graduate students, or professors.

I had never talked to grad-

uate students at my home university, University College London (UCL), let alone taken classes with them. Taking many classes where I was the only undergraduate definitely took some getting used to. This was a drastic change from my previous university education, with more than 250 other undergraduates in my year, where we would all take exactly the same modules (classes) in the same subject (chemistry). The flexibility of selecting and tailoring courses at Caltech is something I much prefer about college life here; I think there's something really nice in being able to choose your particular topics of interest and to specialize quickly, rather than to take every class in your subject. It fosters a rather unique learning environment where everyone has slightly different pieces of knowledge which helps to create a very collaborative environment.

The small class sizes are

something I will cherish about my time here. It has been so wonderful to get to know professors directly during lectures, which is largely uncommon in the UK, and to be able to work on active research at the forefront of science. I have the privilege of working within Brian Stoltz's lab with a graduate student, Kevin Gonzalez (who have both been and are wonderful mentors!). The opportunity to carry out research during term time and to be able to extend this into the summer is something not offered at such an early stage at UCL. It has given me invaluable insight into the joys and pitfalls of working in research and has helped me enormously with not only growing in practical lab skills but with my future aspirations.

Some other things that took me a while to get used to was always seeing people I know whenever I walk around campus. I've quite enjoyed it, as at

home, our universities are so big that there is a very small chance of ever seeing someone you know on the street. Over one year, I had only ever unintentionally bumped into people three times. However,

recognising people is unfortunately not my strong suit (sorry if you've been the recipient of that!), especially if it's someone I briefly met at an interhouse...

Interhouse and the house system are such intriguing concepts. I can see similarities between the houses and Oxbridge colleges; except here,

I think it's easier to find people who have similar interests. The excitement around campus during the build-up to the interhouses is exhilarating, and upon going to the parties, I am always blown away by the intricate designs that seem to have been put together in an unhuman amount of time. Before coming, I thought maybe I would experience frat and sorority parties seen in movies,

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