Deadline for DARPA Vehicle Project Nears

By CHRISTINE CHANG

With months of hard work behind them and a few more months of frenzied effort to come, the DARPA challenge team nears the March deadline with a long list of tasks to accomplish and an optimistic outlook.

“They’re really started to crank it up as far as getting work done, especially after the term,” said Ben Brantley, who served as a technical advisor during the first term.

The planning group, which writes the software, especially experienced new pressures after the team has made progress on all four kinds in the past few months. The LADAR bumper, which will be used to receive and send data to software which will detect obstacles and turn the wheels of the Tahoe, works, though fine tuning is necessary.

In addition, the stereovision hardware to steer the car away from obstacles functions, though it also is not completed. These simply must be altered to work.

Even though DARPA approved it use last May, they decided to repeal their former decision since the software was not commercially available to other teams.

Useful in performing stereovision algorithms, the planning group, headed by Mechanical Engineering graduate student Lars Creeman, faces the challenge of designing their own software to replace Perceptor and create three-dimensional maps from data input.

In response to this obstacle, the planning group obtained commercial software for geometric analysis and are working to integrate some of the features to imitate what Perceptor would have done.

Out of the four types of sensors which will be used on the vehicle, the team has made progress on all four kinds in the past few months. The LADAR bumper, which will be used to receive and send data to software which will detect obstacles and turn the wheels of the Tahoe, works, though fine tuning is necessary.

In addition, the stereovision hardware to steer the car away from obstacles functions, though it also is not completed. These simply must be altered to work.

President Election Approaches; BoC Chair Candidates Drop Out

By KEVIN BARTZ

All eyes towards today’s election, the three ASCIT presidential nominees–Vice President Galen Loram ‘05, Upperclass Director Large Andrea Vasconcellos ‘05 and puntd Libin Zhang ‘05– squared off in a debate last Friday on everything from ASCIT’s budget shortfall to plans for renovating student housing and relocating computer labs.

The two candidates thought to be front-runners, Loram and Vasconcellos, drew on their experience in student government in offering what many saw as an extension on the present Board of Directors’ progress, while Zhang, a self-proclaimed outsider who polled second in last year’s presidential race, laid out an array of less conventional solutions.

Loram, who handily won last year’s vice presidential race with a message of responsibility, focused his platform this year on streamlining ASCIT’s club funding and on better coordinating the BoD’s efforts with those of the Graduate Student Committee and other campus organizations.

Vasconcellos, who based her USDAL run last year on simply “improving ASCIT relations with all publication editors and fostering a friendly, working relationship,” again kept her message short and sweet. She promised to rectify “something lacking in student input” and emphasized her demonstrated enthusiasm, two years of BoD service to her name, for making believers of those “who don’t see the value of ASCIT.”

In contrast, Zhang emphasized his status as an outsider, comparing his run to that of President Tom Fletcher ’04, whose campaign of “transparency” was seen in some circles as radical. At the heart of Zhang’s ideology is “minimalism and devolution. Minimalism means I will do as little as possible and devolution means I will shift as much responsibility as possible to other student organizations.”

The question most prominent at the debate was the widely anticipated renovation of student housing. “A big issue looming on the horizon is what to do with the student houses,” explained Fletcher. “The swing house idea turned out to be a pipe dream and the current plan is to use grad housing in the Continued on Page 7, Column 1

Volunteer Group Travels to Local Schools to Read Children’s Books

By JENNY JOFINOVA and ARTHI SIRIVANAS

Once a month, a small group of Caltech students joins hundreds of volunteers from around the LA area to participate in a volunteer program called Reading to Kids. Reading to Kids pairs volunteers with local elementary schools, where children from first to fifth grade are broken up into groups of three to five to listen to stories and then discuss them. Each month has a different theme, such as Women’s History or Folk Tales and the books are chosen to reflect this theme.

The volunteers meet in the morning to read the books and discuss the main ideas with their partner. They then meet their group of kids and read the book to them, helping them with art projects.

The Reading to Kids program was started about five years ago by two volunteers who did a reading project at a local elementary school, then decided to make it a monthly project. They eventually turned it into their own non-profit organization. Now, about two hundred volunteers show up each month to work with six hundred kids from four schools.

Said Ali Husain, a Caltech grad student who is on the Board of Directors and has been involved with the program almost since its inception remarked, “I feel it should be about 900 kids per month, so we still have some work to do.”

Most of the funding for Reading to Kids comes from grant applications and from companies that have community outreach programs. The rest of the money comes from the annual fund drive and from donations. As the funding chairperson, Husain commented that part of his job is constantly writing grant applications and looking at how the funding Continued on Page 8, Column 1

A new group of volunteers from around the LA area to participate in a volunteer program called Reading to Kids. The candidates for ASCIT President, Galen Loram, Andrea Vasconcellos, and Libin Zhang, discuss one of the questions during Friday’s debate on the Olive Walk.

The candidates for ASCIT President, Galen Loram, Andrea Vasconcellos, and Libin Zhang, discuss one of the questions during Friday’s debate on the Olive Walk.

The DARPA truck, shown here in the Santa Anita parking lot where tests are conducted, can now move on its own.
ASCIT Presidential Candidate Statements

**Andrea Vasconcellos**

Individuals who are outsiders (John McCain, Abraham Lincoln, Tom Fletcher) tend to be considered good presidential candidates. They are not captured by vested interests and can bring new ideas to an organization. Their idealism and bravery, to challenge the incumbency, outweighs their lack of experience. I will bring a different, diverse perspective to our student government.

The other candidates have been on the BoD for one or two years. Why have they not already attempted to implement any of their new proposals (raise ASCIT dues, whatever)?

- Fiscal responsibility - I will try to exercise some fiscal restraint with your dollars. This year's BoD took $3000 out of the ASCIT Budget, mostly the Social involvement money. The Student Faculty Committees. This was done two years ago and was only one of the most successful means of student input.

- Initiative - I believe that the event that is perpetually mentioned is "a group of people combined to act as one body." We can have a common interest and a common purpose.

- Less Commentary - I'm tired of hearing about the ASCIT dues crisis every few years, the ASCIT dues should be tied to the rate of inflation. Dues would increase annually by around 2%, or currently 70 cents a term. Moreover, reduced Publications costs (see Tom above) would mean more funds available for clubs and campus activities without drastically raising dues.

- Less Commentary - I'm tired of writing for the Tech. Weekly Tech reports on ASCIT activities will be called the ASCIT Minutes. The President will publish personal opinions only as often as the other ASCIT officials.


It seems that ever since I've gotten here (and, from what I hear, even before then) Caltech students have been moving from one tumultuous event to another. Whether the issue du jour is local government or ASCIT, we are a student government. The other AS CIT officials.

- Thanks for reading and don't forget to vote!

- Communication is central to this goal and I am passionate about turning the individual parts of our student government into a united purpose- that of meeting needs and not egos. Knowing what those needs are comes through increased participation and actively reaching out to all students.

- I want to bring back ASCIT BoD dinners at the various houses once a term and hold a meeting afterwards to encourage each house's representation and participation. This was done two years ago and was one of the most successful means of student input.

ASCIT: I care. There appears to be a fragmenting of students among various interest groups, committees and task projects, while we need to focus our efforts into servicing the entire student body.

ASCIT: I need your vote. With my two years of ASCIT experience, I continue to be passionate about Caltech and enthusiastic about ASCIT. I have worked to build a good rapport with staff and administrators and I know the governing body.

Libin Zhang

Libin Zhang

**Galen Loram**

It seems like there’s been quite a bit of debate about the role of ASCIT in the student government. ASCIT has been challenged to be more responsive to the needs of students, and this year we have seen some changes in the way ASCIT operates. I believe that ASCIT has a unique role to play in the student government, and I am committed to bringing about positive change.

First, let’s look at the current state of ASCIT. ASCIT is comprised of a group of people who are elected by the student body. They are not captured by vested interests and can bring new ideas to the table. I believe that the event that is perpetually mentioned is “a group of people combined to act as one body.” We can have a common interest and a common purpose.

Second, let’s talk about the future of ASCIT. ASCIT has had a few challenges in recent years, including the reduction of funding and the need to increase its visibility on campus. I believe that ASCIT can be successful in the future if it focuses on three key areas. First, ASCIT needs to be more transparent in its decision-making. Second, ASCIT needs to be more inclusive in its representation of student voices. Third, ASCIT needs to be more proactive in its efforts to support student initiatives.

Finally, I believe that ASCIT has a unique role to play in the student government. ASCIT is the only student government body that is directly elected by the student body. This gives ASCIT a direct line of communication to the student body, and it allows ASCIT to be more responsive to student needs.

Galen Loram

Vote Online at donut.caltech.edu

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Tearsheets

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Words Matter Brings Famed Writers to Tech

BY TAMMY MA

Why worry about writing at Caltech? According to the chair of the Writing Program, Professor Galen Thorne, the ability to communicate is key to success at Caltech. A good deal of writing at Caltech is student-generated, and the Writing Program helps students by incorporating writing into the curriculum. Thorne notes that while the Writing Program is not a formal course, it is an opportunity for students to improve their writing skills. Thorne believes that writing is an important skill for all students, regardless of their major. He encourages students to take advantage of the resources available to them, such as the Writing Program and the Writing Center. He also encourages students to practice writing regularly, as this will help them become better writers.

CUE Committee Meeting Report

SCHEDULING, MENU COURSE ORGANIZATION MAIN FOCUSES

By KATHRYN HSU

The Council on Undergraduate Education convened on January 26th to discuss its plans for the upcoming term. The council first dealt with a minor issue concerning course scheduling. The council also discussed the possibility of scheduling courses in 3-credit hour blocks, which might be more appealing to some students. The council discussed the possibility of scheduling courses in 3-credit hour blocks, which might be more appealing to some students. The council discussed the possibility of scheduling courses in 3-credit hour blocks, which might be more appealing to some students.

ASCIT Minutes: BoD Juggles Full Slate of Activities, Elections Surveys

January 14th, 2004, 12:01 PM, Olive Walk

Present: Joanna Cohen, Tom Fletcher, Kathryn Hsu, Galen Loram, Jeremy Pitts, Anna Sczaniecka, Andrea Vasconcellos, & Corinna Zygourakis.

Guests: Abse Fefterman

1. Call to Order

2. Sign-ups for BoD election and BoC Chair have been posted. They will be held on Tuesday, January 20th.

3. Surveys regarding the honor code and computer lab usage are currently in the works.

4. A large number of DVD's are not returned to the Coffeehouse on time, so the BoD is planning on finding a way to improve this. The number of DVD's increased exponentially from week to week. Students will be given an advanced warning before these fees are enacted.

5. The Core Curriculum Steering Committee has lunch with Marco Marchos, on Thursday, January 15th.

6. With colleagues, Association wants to encourage interaction between students and alumni, so they are planning on having a meeting and a luncheon for sophomores after this term to celebrate the end of the core.

7. The ASCIT survey will be coming out, so the Writing Program will keep an eye on the results.

8. The ASCIT survey will be coming out, so the Writing Program will keep an eye on the results.

9. The ASCIT survey will be coming out, so the Writing Program will keep an eye on the results.

10. The ASCIT survey will be coming out, so the Writing Program will keep an eye on the results.

11. Another idea that the BoD is currently working on is an under-graduate research program. This program would likely involve a campus-wide competition, with a cash prize and include a monetary prize.

Meeting adjourned at 12:46 p.m.

January 21st, 2004, 12:05 PM, Olive Walk

Present: Joanna Cohen, Tom Fletcher, Kathryn Hsu, Galen Loram, Jeremy Pitts, Anna Sczaniecka, Andrea Vasconcellos, & Corinna Zygourakis.

Guests: Kelly Lin, & Bryan Witt

1. Call to Order

2. Updates for ASCIT president and BoC Chair have been posted. They will be held on Tuesday, January 25th.


Present: Joanna Cohen, Tom Fletcher, Kathryn Hsu, Galen Loram, Jeremy Pitts, Anna Sczaniecka, Andrea Vasconcellos, & Corinna Zygourakis.

Guests: Kelly Lin, & Bryan Witt

1. Call to Order

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7. Another idea that the BoD is currently working on is an under-graduate research program. This program would likely involve a campus-wide competition, with a cash prize and include a monetary prize.

Meeting adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anna Sczaniecka
ASCIT Secretary
George W. Bush smiles out at the crowd during his State of the Union Address.
Movies at the Bottom of the Barrel
Critics Harrison Stein
Stewards the Worst of 2003

By HARRISON STEIN

2003 was a bizarre year for movies. Of the 40 or so movies I saw in 2003, I enjoyed about 30 of them, as the worst of the year was entertaining in its own way. At the same time, I only loved one movie as translated films, which was #1 on last week’s Top 10 list. Nonetheless, like any other year, 2003 had its share of bombs led by the gruesome toswome of From Justin to Kelly and Gigli (the voters on the Internet Movie Database currently rate those films as the 22nd and 23rd-worst movies of all time ever). I was fortunate enough to avoid both of these train wrecks, but I did spend my time through five films that were almost as bad as the Cubs’ collapse in Game 6 of the World Series.”

The Hulk

Also, the most tense action scenes, like the Hulk’s fight with mutant dogs, are at least interesting on that they evoke more laughter than an insufferable film. In addition, the conclusion to a poorly captivating plot is completely indecipherable as it’s really unclear what actually happens to the losers expected characters. Spider-man and Bat-man both have a little elbowroom to make a possible to make a comic book into something believable. The Hulk shows it’s comic’s typically good idea of confusing, unsatisfactory conclusion.

Making a parallel between Neo and Jesus is pretty offensive and the final scene is completely overacted. The action scenes that defined the original and saved The Matrix Revolutions look very plain in Revolutions, partially because of little action the movie actually takes in the Matrix. The massive fight between the sentinels and human dogs at way too long. As the human’s inefficient machinery is designed almost perfectly as the movie. Plus, can a movie that starts the exchange, “You can’t die,” “Yes, I can.” “No, you can’t.” “YES, CAN” possibly be taken seriously? How can anyone end a wildly successful trilogy like this? What a debacle!

1. Dreamcatcher

As disastrous as the third leg of the Matrix trilogy is, it cannot be used as an example of what a marvel. This film is a completely unoriginal and by far, the most deviant movie to be released this year or any other. When I watched the second film, I never thought any of the film’s scenes would be as bad as the movies. The characters, dialogue, robotic performances, pedestrian action scenes and a confusing, unsatisfactory conclusion.

During orientation week, we were lucky enough to watch a movie on a particularly large screen outside the very Lecture Auditorium on a beautiful autumn night. Unfortunately, we were treated to one of the most forgettable and unwatchable films of the year. While I was smart enough to avoid the first Charlie’s Angels, I愚蠢ly decided to watch this film and watching this schlock. No one has ever confused Cameron Diaz, Drew Barrymore, Lucy Liu or Demi Moore with good actresses, yet in the few minutes they can’t begin to make this film entertaining. The story is understood and dense but the action scenes, the supposed meat and potatoes of this pathetic film can’t save it. Character building is totally flaky. Joey from Friends provides some genuine comedic relief, but by that time, the film is so far lost that it can’t be salvaged. Someone really needs to put this series to sleep.

2. The Matrix Revolutions

While I appreciate the legendary original as much as the general public, I enjoyed the philosophical arguments of the first two Matrix films. The Wachowski Brothers have a fantastic job of juggling a complex plot while maximizing action and minimizing Keanu Reeves’ lines. Regrettably, they make a major misstep with an atrocity of a final chapter development in view of the fast action scenes, the final scene is completely unsatisfactory. Who meet for their annual camping trip in the snowy woods. Suddenly, a number of bizarre things happen and the suspense reaches an apex. Then, for no reason, Dreamcatcher introduces slimy, obtuse aliens that resemble a certain forbidden body part and the film turns into an alien vehicle a blockbuster. The story is so incoherent and outrageous that a character actually shoots down a Helicopter 100 feet above him with a handgun. Morgan Freeman is a go-for-broke army colonel who left his arm in a glacier and is one of the single worst acting jobs by a respected actor. Writer and director Lawrence Kasdan has made two films and will make good films again, but the unimpressed me. Dreamcatcher won’t always be on his resume. All Dreamcatcher catches is your eight dollars.

The Matrix Revolutions, which ASCII treated us to, was but a making of a disaster.

The Matrix Revolutions

3. Charlie’s Angels: Full Throttle

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Although other comic-book-turned-movies such as Batman and Superman have turned out well, The Hulk was a huge flop.
WAYS MATTER WRITING SYMPOSIUM DRAWS CROWD
Continued from Page 3, Column 2

Losing the reader's attention?
Lord Robert Winston, a guest from the Imperial University in Britain, and third and final panelist, is also one of the foremost experts on fertility. He credentials include being on the team that produced the first test tube baby in 1978, a pioneer in the methods of genetic diagnosis, and author of over 300 scientific articles. Lord Winston has also served as a scientific advisor to the World Health Organization, and has taught at Harvard, John Hopkins and UCLA. He is world reknowned for his ability to communicate science to the public through film and media, and is best known for Infinite Universe-Human Body, a television series that showcased the body's inner workings.

Winston shared with the audience that his reason for getting involved in communication and intelligence programs was because he believed that people understood science and were interested in the benefits science could bring. As important as communication is, he argued, the answer isn't the entire answer. Evidence shows that the more people understand, the more people mistrust scientists.

Winston spoke about the problem of ownership: Scientists are all employed by society, not masters of society. Science is paid for by grants, government funding, and scientists need the support of society. Commented Winston, "If we forget that, we run a dangerous course indeed." He goes on to argue that if in Britain people decide genetically modified crops are not to continue, it is not just a matter of science to override that argument. Further, we need to consider the ethics of what we are doing. How we gain and use the knowledge that we gain is incredibly important to society. Again and again scientists have shown a lack of understanding of ethics and the sensitivity of science to the public, and it is time for us to take responsibility for our actions and the knowledge that we acquire.

Winston wrapped up his talk by assuring the audience that communication is to be more than just lecturing or writing about science to people. It is also about the need to listen to their responses and react to them. The symposium was concluded with questions from members of the audience.

MATLAB Programmer Wanted, Part-Time 10-20 hrs/wk. Salary negotiable depending on experience. Program will be responsible for working with Bio + Automation team to help design and optimize pattern recognition/image analysis software used for automation of genetic screens of innate behavior in fruit flies. Please contact lebesky@its.caltech.edu.

Heavy guy seeks partners for non-competitive/non- scoring racquetball at the Caltech gym. Any night after 6pm. I just want to hit the ball around. The gym provides all equipment. Interested? E-mail bradil@alumni.caltech.edu if you’d like to play.

PILED HIGHER AND DEEPER
by Jorge Cham
www.phdcomics.com

SYMPOSIUM DRAWS CROWD
Continued from Page 3, Column 5

Scholarship Announcements
The Financial Aid Office has applications and information on the following as well as additional undergraduate scholarships. All qualified students are encouraged to apply. Our office is located in the Academic Center for Student Services M/C 110-87. Please see our website for more information: www.fnaid.caltech.edu/news.html.

National Academy for Nuclear Training is offering scholarships of $2,500 each to eligible sophomores, juniors, and seniors majoring in nuclear engineering, power generation health physics, electrical or mechanical engineering, or chemical engineering with nuclear or power option. Scholars who maintain eligibility may receive renewed funding for up to three years. All materials must be received no later than March 3, 2004. Applications are available on their website: http://www.naei.org/scholarships

Edudroid is offering their “DoubleTake” Sweepstakes. Win two $2,500 scholarships - one for you and one for your school. Applications are available in the Financial Aid Office, or on Edudroid website: https://www.edudroid.com/doubletake

The American Physical Society Scholarship for Minority Undergraduate Physics Majors is available to encourage minority students to major in physics and graduate with physics degrees. The scholarship consists of $2,000 for new recipients, and $3,000 for renewal recipients. The hosting department receives $500 and $700, respectively. Students must also be a U.S. citizen or permanent legal residents of low-income background. Applications are available in the Financial Aid Office, or on the website http://www.aps.org/educ/com/index.html

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March 26, 2004
Candidates Share Opinions

Continued from Page 1, Column 5

By JENNY IOFINOVA

With the addition of two new trips and the Caltech Alternative Spring Break Program is revving up to this Year’s service trips to San Francisco, Owens Valley, Utah and Mexico.

The goal of the program is threefold: to interact with local culture, to most importantly, to support other organizations and bond with other Tisches and, of course, to make a difference in the community.

In addition to last year’s trips to Tecolote, Mexico; the Navajo Nation, Utah; and San Francisco, the Y is adding two more trips: one trip to Ensenada, Mexico and another temporarily focused trip to Owens Valley, where the City of LA got much of its water. The new trips have been created in an attempt to reduce the overall group size to about 10-15 students per group, while keeping the overall number of participants the same or slightly larger.

Caltech Y Student Activities and Community Service coordinator Greg Fletcher feels that the small group size is crucial to maintain a good atmosphere and unity within the groups. In addition to keeping the group size small, the coordinators will continue to focus on keeping the groups together. For instance, the coordinators require that all participants not make alternate travel arrangements for coming up to their destination, or for returning to Tech, which has been an issue with the San Francisco trip last year.

Another change this year is the increase in number of students coordinators. In the previous years, coordinators have been faculty/staff members and/or graduate students. This year, each trip has at least one undergraduate student coordinator, who will not only go on the trip, but also are actively involved with the trip’s planning.

THE TRIPS:

Tecolote and Ensenada, Mexico (Sun-Wed): Both South-of-the-border trips will focus on helping out in small projects around their locations, such as cleaning up streets, painting houses, and working with the San Fran AIDS foundation and demonstrating science projects to primary school kids from disadvantaged backgrounds at a faith based organization.

San Francisco, California (Sun-Thurs): this trip focused on HIV/AIDS and the homeless in the city. In addition to giving a moving experience for the students, this trip’s experience at the SF AIDS foundation and demonstrating science projects to primary school kids from disadvantaged backgrounds at a faith based organization.

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Candidates Assist in Organization Of Y’s Alternate Spring Break Opportunities

By JENNY IOFINOVA

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Candidates Assist in Organization Of Y’s Alternate Spring Break Opportunities

By JENNY IOFINOVA

With the addition of two new trips and the Caltech Alternative Spring Break Program is revving up to this Year’s service trips to San Francisco, Owens Valley, Utah and Mexico. The goal of the program is threefold: to interact with local culture, to most importantly, to support other organizations and bond with other Tisches and, of course, to make a difference in the community. In addition to last year’s trips to Tecolote, Mexico; the Navajo Nation, Utah; and San Francisco, the Y is adding two more trips: one trip to Ensenada, Mexico and another temporarily focused trip to Owens Valley, where the City of LA got much of its water. The new trips have been created in an attempt to reduce the overall group size to about 10-15 students per group, while keeping the overall number of participants the same or slightly larger.

Caltech Y Student Activities and Community Service coordinator Greg Fletcher feels that the small group size is crucial to maintain a good atmosphere and unity within the groups. In addition to keeping the group size small, the coordinators will continue to focus on keeping the groups together. For instance, the coordinators require that all participants not make alternate travel arrangements for coming up to their destination, or for returning to Tech, which has been an issue with the San Francisco trip last year.

Another change this year is the increase in number of students coordinators. In the previous years, coordinators have been faculty/staff members and/or graduate students. This year, each trip has at least one undergraduate student coordinator, who will not only go on the trip, but also are actively involved with the trip’s planning.

THE TRIPS:

Tecolote and Ensenada, Mexico (Sun-Wed): Both South-of-the-border trips will focus on helping out in small projects around their locations, such as cleaning up streets, painting houses, and working with the San Fran AIDS foundation and demonstrating science projects to primary school kids from disadvantaged backgrounds at a faith based organization.

San Francisco, California (Sun-Thurs): this trip focused on HIV/AIDS and the homeless in the city. In addition to giving a moving experience for the students, this trip’s experience at the SF AIDS foundation and demonstrating science projects to primary school kids from disadvantaged backgrounds at a faith based organization.
Magnolia Elementary Visited by Volunteers

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structure of other non-profit organizations works.
He also commented on the possibility of getting a certificate on a board to get a higher profile for the program. However, he mentioned that he has reservations about the idea, since having a certificate on board might distort the program’s focus.
At Caltech, the program is coordinated by the Caltech Y, which organizes a trip once a month throughout the year and the organizer of the trips is Caltech graduate student Dan Feldman. He has been involved with Reading to Kids for about a year and has organized the trip to Magnolia Elementary School most of those times.
Typically only about four or five Caltech students go each month, which Feldman believes is largely due to the fact that they leave before 9 AM each time.
The volunteers who go, however, get free food.
The volunteers find the experience to be generally very rewarding, both in working with the children and in meeting other volunteers.

Northrop-Grumman Provides Scanner Pod

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reliably. Utilized to plan out the terrain in front of the car, the LA-DAR scanner has not yet been tested, but will be this weekend.

The Mars rover Opportunity sits in the Meridiani Planum after its successful landing on Saturday evening. Governor Schwarzenegger and former Vice President Gore were on hand to congratulate the jubilant JPL staff.

Opportunity Landing Successful; Progress in Diagnosing Hurt Spirit

By GUY WEBSTER

NASA’s second Mars Exploration Rover successfully sent signals to Earth during its bouncy landing and after it came to rest on one of the three side petals of its four-sided lander.

Mission engineers at NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., received the first signal from Opportunity on the ground at 9:05 p.m. Pacific Standard Time Saturday via the NASA Deep Space Network, which was listening with antennas in California and Australia.

“Our on Mars, everybody!” JPL’s Rob Manning, manager for development of the landing system, announced to the cheering flight team.

NASA Administrator Sean O’Keefe said at a subsequent press briefing, “This was a tremendous testament to how NASA, when really focused on an objective, can put every ounce of effort, energy, emotion and talent to an important task. This is the best in the world, no doubt about it.”

Opportunity landed in a region called Meridiani Planum, halfway around the planet from the Gusev Crater site where its twin rover, Spirit, landed three weeks ago.

Earlier today, mission managers reported progress in understanding and dealing with communications and computer problems on Spirit.

“In the last 48 hours, we’ve been on a roller coaster,” said Dr. Ed Weiler, NASA associate administrator for space science.

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