McAfee Says Free Econ Textbook Use Disappointing: Few Adaptations, Revisions

By Natalya Kostandova

Three years since the completion of its original version, Dr. Preston McAfee’s Introduction to Economic Analysis continues to undergo a variety of changes. Unlike its usual counterparts, McAfee’s brainchild is an open-source textbook that is updated constantly and is constantly being faced to face some major modifications. In addition to working on a complete revision of the book, as well as introducing an additional author, McAfee recently granted Flat World Knowledge, a start-up publishing company that is due to start its operation in 2009, the rights to his book. Flat World Knowledge will edit and peer-review the book, while providing it free online and at a low cost in print, as well as allowing instructors to adopt and edit the book for their own use.

McAfee, who joined Caltech’s faculty in 2004, became intrigued with an idea of creating a free textbook when he was asked to teach Ec 11 and found that none of the standard economics books available for use were appropriate. In fact, McAfee found them “widely inappropriate, and some actually stupid.” Taking into consideration the over $100 prices for these books, McAfee decided to embark on a mission to create a book that would not only be available free, but would also serve as a bridge between a lighter introduction to economics and a more developed, advanced textbook that takes into consideration the mathematics of economics as well as a wider variety of topics.

Encouraged by the positive reaction from administration and by the environment of the institute, with Caltech, according to McAfee, “full of people who act differently,” McAfee went on to create a book that not only includes a myriad of topics on introductory and intermediate subjects, but also some topics that have rarely been addressed before, like multi-tasking development. McAfee’s book has been downloaded about 15,000 times in full length, with one thousand physical copies having been purchased so far. Although Introduction to Economic Analysis has been used as a primary course textbook in Harvard, Claremont McKenna, Verona University, West Chester University, Simon Fraser, as well as by Prof. Simon Wilke, who taught Ec 11 at Caltech in previous years, McAfee is disappointed that his book did not become a huge collaborative project he intended it to be. Although the textbook has been used extensively in particular by individual engineers, there have been few adaptations and full-scale revisions by other users.

To McAfee, existence of appropriate and affordable, or in this case, free, textbooks is important. “Our business is creation and dissemination of knowledge,” McAfee said about Caltech. “We’ve been doing well with creation, but we’ve really fallen down on the dissemination part.” With McAfee heavily opposed to the high prices charged by publishers for textbooks developed by other people, writing Introduction to Economic Analysis became a way to provide students with material without going through the publishers and expensive materials.

Although McAfee does not profit from his textbook, he is not bothered by such lack of profit from his creation. He said, “If I want to make money, I consult.” McAfee is the J. Stanley Johnson Professor of Business, Economics, and Management, and is currently on leave to Yahoo!

By Natalya Kostandova

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Alumni Gift Allows Students to Travel for Personal Growth, Not Academics

By Marissa Cevallos

More students will be able to travel to foreign countries on Caltech’s tab after a recent alumni gift.

The San Pietro Travel Fund grew to $350,000 after Craig San Pietro ’69 augmented the prize last week. Founded in 2006, the prize allot $12,000 each summer for a handful of students to visit any country.

Last summer, three pairs of students traveled to China, Ireland, and Uruguay. The recent gift should allow another prize for 2009, according to Fellowships Director Lauren Stolper.

The restrictions on the travel prize are few—it must be non-academic, it may last anywhere from two weeks to three months, and current sophomores, juniors, and seniors may apply. There are no GPA requirements, and as pointed out in the application, students may visit countries with travel warnings.

René Davis ’08 and Nick Goeden ’08 spent two weeks in Ireland this June on $4,796, from playing music in bars in Galway to discovering—through pub banter—the tense relations between the religiously divided north and south of Ireland.

The most trying time for the pair was a sleepless, homeless night in Cork waiting for a morning train. After missing the last night train out to Galway, they hopped from pub to pub to try to find anywhere that was open 24-hour. Davis said she “caught a glimpse of what it must be like to be homeless” as night watchmen shoed them away from the bus stops they ducked under to keep out of the wind.

“IT was a humbling experience, and really opened our eyes to one aspect of human suffering,” said Davis.

Brandi Belson ’08 and Zhonglin “Johnny” Zhang ’08 had to revise their trip to Western China after the Sichuan earthquake last May.

“For a while weren’t even sure we could go at all,” said Belson, “but in the end we only missed a few places.”

Belson said the highlights of the trip were the national parks in the JiuZhaiGou Valley, a 1992 UNESCO World Heritage site known for its waterfalls, and at Huanglong, where calcite deposits color the 2.5 kilometer river stretching from an ancient Buddhist temple to the Xishen Cave Waterfall.

Staying within budget wasn’t a problem, Belson explains, as goods were relatively cheap, but not being able to speak to anyone in English was a big challenge.

“At times it felt like I was watching a TV show in another language.”

San Pietro isn’t a stranger to unexpected travel experiences. He’s been “held up in Mexico City, had a bus driver handcuffed and arrested in the Yucatan, driven through rivers in Honduras, and been married in Peru...” according to a laundry list of off-beat travel experiences on the Fellowships and Study Abroad website. San Pietro has traveled to almost 40 countries since graduating from Caltech in 1969.

“Exotic travel is giving oneself the opportunity to be in cultural and physical situations so different from what one is accustomed to that one is mentally challenged and feels more alive than usual,” writes San Pietro on the website.

“This travel has greatly enriched my life and I want to make similar experiences available to Caltech students.”

The deadline for summer 2009 proposals is March 1. An informational meeting for prospective applicants will be held on Nov 21 at noon in the Brennan Conference Room.
students at Caltech may have a new friend in the White House: Senator Barack Obama. In the last Presidential debate of the 2008 election season, Obama made very clear his commitment to finding adequate funding for research, especially in the areas of alternative energy and education. He also committed to making college affordability a priority in his administration. By contrast, Senator John McCain has proposed spending freezes, rejecting what John McCain has proposed spending freezes, rejecting what

understand better the crucial role of science in maintaining this country’s position as the world’s leading military and economic superpower. The most heated part of the debate was when the candidates were asked about the negativity in their respective campaigns. Obama, who by some measures has spent the most on negative ads in the history of Presidential campaigns, was unapologetic. He quickly turned his focus to the problems facing the country saying that people are “are less interested in our hurt feelings during the course of campaign than addressing the issues that matter to them so deeply.”

Accused of allowing racism and violent comments in his rallies, McCain said that he was proud of the people attending his rallies, but would repudiate any such comments. But in the same breath, McCain fired off several unsubstantiated accusations about Obama, perhaps forgetting that he had just denied being negative. Senior moment, perhaps?

From the President’s Desk...

Improving the Caltech student experience: Venturing beyond the “bubble”

By Caleb Ng

A common thread at the eight colleges and universities visited during the Student Experience Trip was the “bubble,” the modern student’s version of the ivy tower. Since we generally think that the “bubble” is an experience unique to Caltech students, the SET Team was quite surprised to observe it everywhere. And it is perhaps true that we are more prone to disconnect from the outside world, even as a presidential election and the financial crisis swirl around us.

Caltech’s core educational objective is “to provide an outstanding education that prepares stu- dents to become world leaders in science, engineering, academia, business, and public service.” No matter which of these we choose, as leaders we should strive to make a positive impact on people from all backgrounds.

Caltech encourages freedom of expression, and Caltech faculty, students, and staff are free to join with others in support of candidates for public office or in furtherance of political causes”, it appears this is not the case, to the extent that my opinions are to be suppressed at my very residence. Therefore I wonder, was that email meant to make students think and stop before they express themselves politically?

I know that so far my efforts at “freedom of expression” have been seriously discouraged by Caltech Housing.

Election 2008
The Last Debate

By Wesley Yu

I am writing this in response to the campaign email we have all recently seen. I am writing this in response to the campaign email we have all recently seen. And I believe that it is time to get serious about solving problems, we need to give more funding to research.” Obama seems to

Caltech Goes Too Far

By Evans Boney

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The California Tech

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If you support a candidate on this campus, do it loudly. Put up a campaign flag in your personal residence, paint a mural, wear an Obama or McCain shirt, and do whatever the heck you want short of actually altering anyone’s property. Organize a Democratic students rally, march from one end of campus to another, do a politically motivated hack (it would get some press...), show the world that you care.

We may live at Caltech, but our rights don’t end here. Join me in expressing your disgust with the stifling of graduate student political opinion by sending a blank email to Tim Chang, Senior Director of Housing at tpmcm@caltech.edu , subject “Change Section G”.

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Caltech’s core educational objective is “to provide an outstanding education that prepares stu- dents to become world leaders in science, engineering, academia, business, and public service.” No matter which of these we choose, as leaders we should strive to make a positive impact on people from all backgrounds. Exposure to different environments can provide context and perspective to enable us to do so. Students at Caltech have many opportunities available to them. Two good starting points when seeking guidance are the little t and donut, two ASCIT publica- tions with extensive listings of new and interesting food and cultural options in Pasadena and the greater Los Angeles area.

In fact, since LA is the enter- tainment capital of the world, you should take advantage of social team-sponsored trips like last year’s trip to The Price is Right or the Caltech Y-sponsored Explore LA series.

MOSH Cathy Jurca brings

students to various musical and theatrical events with faculty members, and Campus Life has a stockpile of Metro tokens avail- able for students. Even including the study abroad programs and travel grants barely scratches of what Student Affairs offers in this realm.

If nothing within the dizzying array of existing options piques your interest, you can follow the example of one Caltech sopho- more, who recently founded the LA series. The ASCIT leadership will be taking an off-campus retreat next weekend to consider other new ways to continue improving the Caltech student experience in this and other ways. Be a part of the conversation—let us know your needs and wants, concerns, and suggestions.

join the tech
The New Kids on the Block
Caltech welcomes new faculty

Jean-Paul Ampuero Saenz, Assistant Professor of Seismology
Jean-Paul Ampuero, a Peruvian citizen, earned his degrees at University of Paris. Ampuero’s research focuses on assessing, preventing, and mitigating earthquake hazards, “in particular in large urban areas close to subduction earthquake hazards, “in particular in zones, like in Peru, my native country. I am building up a team around the broad earthquake physics theme, with a mixture of theoretical, computational and observational approaches,” said Ampuero Saenz, “Students are welcome to join us.”

Matilde Marcolli, Professor of Mathematics
The Professor of Mathematics studied Theoretical Physics at the University of Milan and received his PhD in Mathematics at the University of Chicago. After working at MIT and the Max Plunk Institute for Mathematics, Marcolli traveled through 21 countries organizing conferences, lecturing, and training graduate students. Amongst all his work, the math professor plays didgeridoo, reads the ancient Greek classics, and writes science fiction stories in his free time. Marcolli holds a unique view on government politics, or the lack of it. “I am an anarchist,” said Marcolli, “but I would vote for Obama if I could.”

Thomas F. Miller, III, Assistant Professor of Chemistry
After completing his BS at Texas A&M University, Miller received his PhD at Oxford University under a British Marshall scholarship. Miller works with theoretical chemistry with his new lab group of 2 graduate students and 2 post-docs. Miller’s lab devices methods to predict chemical processes such as how biological molecules interact and function. “I have worked with people here before,” said Miller “I like the heat and am excited to be back.” On November 14, you can watch the young professor and his wife run at the 1st Annual Pasadena Marathon.

Matthew Shou-Chung Shum, Professor of Economics
Matthew Shum studied at Columbia University and received his PhD at Stanford. After teaching in Toronto and Johns Hopkins, he is now the Professor of Economics at Caltech. “I am amazed at the undergraduate’s strong math background,” said Shum, “It is a pleasant surprise and makes my students fun to teach.”

Erik Snowberg, Assistant Professor of Economics and Political Science.
After finishing his BS in Physics, Mathematics, and Earth Science at MIT, Snowberg spent four years working with computer startups before getting his business degree at Stanford. The professor teaching business strategy and public policies has once run for city council during his undergraduate at MIT. “Students think of humanities as filler, something they have to take,” said Snowberg, “I hope to change that perception.”
“I believe the work that I do matters.”

MYEISHA PEGUERO GAMIÑO, MAHOD ‘03
Vice President and Corporate Giving Manager
Washington Mutual, Inc.

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Professor of Mathematics,  
Harvey Mudd College

TUESDAY,  
OCTOBER 21,  
2008

12:00 NOON  
TO 1:15 P.M.

RAMO  
AUDITORIUM,  
CALTECH

PIZZA SERVED  
after  
performance

Dr. Arthur Benjamin will dazzle and delight you with his dynamic “Mathemagics” presentation. In his day job, he’s a professor of mathematics at Harvey Mudd College. In his other calling, he’s a Mathemagician, taking the stage in a tuxedo to perform high-speed mental calculations, memorization, and other astounding math stunts. Join us for an enthralling session of mental gymnastics, together with some awe-inspiring magic tricks.

Dr. Benjamin specializes in combinatorics, game theory, and operations research. He earned his B.S. in applied mathematics from Carnegie Mellon University and his Ph.D. in mathematical sciences from Johns Hopkins University. He has written three books and is co-editor of Math Horizons magazine. In 2000, the Mathematical Association of America awarded him the Haimo Prize for Distinguished Teaching. Reader’s Digest called Dr. Benjamin “America’s Best Math Whiz” in their “Best of America” issue.

This event is free. All members of the Campus and JPL communities and retirees are welcome. Following the performance, there will be a book-signing session, and pizza will be served. The CMA gratefully acknowledges the Caltech Y and the Caltech Math Club for help in promoting this event. For more information, please send e-mail to cma.announce@jpl.nasa.gov or call Doris Shimabukuro, (626) 395-3652.
A postmodern novel... ...that might make your head explode.

by David Renshaw

I first came across David Foster Wallace’s Infinite Jest about four years ago. A friend of mine had buried his nose in it for practically the whole summer. He said it was a ****ing ***t of a read, and I wanted to love it, but I couldn't. I picked it up and put it down, and I said, "I need to give this a chance." I read the first 100 pages, and I was like, "This is interesting," but I was also thinking, "I don’t know if I want to read this." I decided to read it because I was curious about the author, and I thought it was a big book, and I wanted to see if I could finish it. I started reading it, and I couldn’t put it down. I was hooked, and I was in love with the book.

Wallace’s prose is beautiful, and I was struck by how much it reminded me of a lot of the classic postmodern novels of the 1960s and 1970s. The book is a tour de force, and I think it is one of the greatest works of fiction of our time. It is a book that I would recommend to anyone who is interested in literature, and I think it is a book that everyone should read.

The book is about a group of characters who are trying to cope with their addictions and the addictions of those around them. The characters are all flawed, and they all have their own problems. I think that this is what makes the book so interesting, because it is about real people, and it is about real problems.

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Upcoming Games

Oct. 21
Women’s Volleyball at CMS
7:30 P.M.

Oct. 22
Men’s Soccer vs. Cal Lutheran
4:00 P.M.
Men’s Water Polo vs CMS
7:00 P.M.

Oct. 24
Women’s Volleyball at Cal Lutheran
7:30 P.M.

Oct. 25
Men’s Water Polo vs La Verne
11:00 A.M.
Men’s Soccer at La Verne
11:00 A.M.

The Weekly Scoreboard

Oct. 13
Men’s Soccer vs. Haverford
L 5-1
Women’s Volleyball vs. La Sierra
L 3-0

Oct. 15
Men’s Soccer vs. Redlands
L 3-0
Men’s Water Polo vs. Chapman
L 22-9

Oct. 17
Women’s Volleyball vs. Southwestern (Az)
L 3-0
Women’s Volleyball vs. Multnomah
L 3-0

Oct. 18
Men’s Soccer vs. Occidental
L 3-0
Women’s Volleyball vs West Coast Baptist (Az)
L 3-0
Women’s Volleyball vs. Southwestern
L 3-0
Men’s Water Polo at Whittier
L 21-8

Soccer Looks to bounce back following home losses

The Caltech men’s soccer team will be looking to end their four-game homestand on a high note on Wednesday after dropping three straight against Haverford, Redlands and Occidental last week. The team was outscored a total of 11-1 in the three games they played, with the long goal coming in a 5-1 defeat against Haverford last Monday. The losses dropped the team’s record this season to 0-14-1, including a winless 0-10 in conference play.

The team had several spots to fill this season following the graduation of five seniors last year, including all-SCIAC second team Nathan Chan.

“One player who has stepped up to fill the gap is Gray Chadwick,” team captain Daryl Coleman said. “At the beginning of the season he stepped in as goalkeeper and did a great job there [but with the arrival of freshman keeper Marcus Lucas] he has become just as big of an asset on the field.”

Junior Tyler Volkoff has picked up some of the slack on offense by scoring five goals this season. The team has already equaled the number of goals they scored last season with seven.

“So far this season we’ve played really well,” Coleman said. “While there have been a few games where we haven’t done so well, this team is by far the best performing team I’ve seen during my time here. Against CMS, we played really well as a team. We’ve had quite a few starters out with injuries, but the team really stepped up and played well.”

Volleyball works back from injuries, illnesses

The Caltech women’s volleyball team finished winless in four matches at the West Coast Baptist tournament held Friday and Saturday. The lady Beavers were dropped in three straight sets against Southwestern (Az), Multnomah and West Coast Baptist during round robin play and were knocked out in the single elimination phase by No. 1 seeded Southwestern again on Saturday.

Although Caltech were swept in all their games at the tournament, the team came within five points of winning several.

“It was frustrating,” team captain Katie Peters said. “We came cwlose in too many games to not win.”

For the majority of the team, the tournament format with back-to-back games was a new experience. In addition, the team is finally integrating injured starters back into the lineup.

“We’re working a lineup that is relatively new,” Peters said. “The team as a whole is getting over injuries and illnesses, and we finally have our stronger players being able to play at one time. Those two games were the best performances we had against both Southwestern and West Coast Baptist. We definitely played harder and kept the intensity up, we allow the other team to go on very few long runs.”
Comics

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M CHECKING MY WORLD OF WARCRAFT IN STARS

IM' GOING 520 WINS!

IT SAYS HERE THAT YOU'VE PLAYED 56 HOURS

I WISH YOU SPENT A FRACTION

OF THE TIME YOU SPENT PLATING

SHOWERING

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

I'M CHECKING MY

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IT'S LIKE EATING DINNER

GOTTA DO IT

EVERY DAY

I WISH YOU SPENT A FRACTION

OF THE TIME YOU SPENT PLATING

SHOWERING

I'M SORRY THE GOOGLE

MAPS TEAM HIRED ME

BUT I CAN'T MOVE

TO CALIFORNIA!

THEN I GUESS

THIS IS THE END,

IT CAN'T BE!

LISTEN.

WHEN I LOOK

DEEP INTO YOUR

EYES, I SEE A

FUTURE FOR US.

LOOK DEEPER.

"WE'RE SORRY, BUT

WE DON'T HAVE

IMAGERY AT THIS

ZOOM LEVEL?"

THEY... THEY HAVE

YOU ALREADY.

Surviving Dinner 101

MORNING ROUTINE:

1. WAKE UP
2. CATCH UP ON THE LIVES OF
   FRIENDS AROUND THE WORLD
3. GET OUT FROM UNDER THE COVERS

LAPTOPS ARE WEIRD.

Free Stuff Fair

The California Tech
Caltech 40-58
Pasadena, CA 91125