By Joel Nikolaus

Professor Dabiri at Year’s Fourth Watson Lecture

Beckman Auditorium recently drew crowds as people came to listen to Professor John O. Dabiri deliver a presentation on jellyfish-inspired engineering. Professor Dabiri’s lecture was the fourth in an annual series of Ernest C. Watson lectures. The lecture series, founded in 1922, features leading Caltech researchers.

During the lecture, Professor Dabiri described his biology-inspired approach towards his work with jellyfish and how they generate vortex rings. Distinguishing between bio-mimicry and bio-inspiration, Dabiri described his work as taking biological ideas and creatively integrating them with engineering and practical use. Instead of imitating nature, Dabiri works on combining ideas of biological efficiency and mechanical power to design something new or improve current designs. Covering a wide range, Dabiri’s research of vortex rings has applications in designing more efficient underwater vehicles for monitoring the oceans, finding new and practical ways of detecting heart failure in early stages, and how to harness wind power more efficiently.

The work has taken him and his students around the world, from the test runs of equipment and instruments in the Caltech pool to studies of wild jellyfish in Croatia. Dabiri kept the presentation light, and he brought laughter from the audience when he showed an old clip of failed attempt at flight by bio-mimicry, joked about Harvard and MIT, and humorously commented about his inability to scuba-dive.

Professor Dabiri is an Assistant Professor of Aeronautics and Bioengineering at Caltech. He graduated from Princeton in 2001, after which he came to Caltech and received his M.S. in 2003 on aeronautics and his Ph.D. in Bioengineering with a minor in Aeronautics in 2005. Dabiri has earned numerous awards for his work, and he was the youngest scientist (at only age 28) to be named in Popular Science Magazine’s 2008 article, “Brilliant 10,” which noted the nation’s top young scientists.
Don’t Blame the Community for Sexism

By Tanvir Ahmed Bhuyain

In response to my previous article asking for evidences of sexism at Caltech, several serious incidents were reported. Even though these incidents are very worrying and must be (and should have been) dealt with strict disciplinary actions, I still stay true to my opinion that it is unfair to pass judgment on the whole community based on these. I would have said that sexism is a very big problem at Caltech if the whole community knew about these incidents and yet failed to react. But since most of these incident were not reported to the administration or the community at large, I am indicated to see these as isolated events caused by a only a few culprits. If someone discouraged the victims to report these incidents then I agree that’s a very regrettable reaction by those people.

Since I have been here for less than one year, I might not know everything. But, I would like to ask, have there been any cases where incidents like these were reported or known by the administration or the community itself and yet no action was taken? As far as I know, the answer is “no”. And as long as the answer to this question is “no” I would not be ready to accept comments like “the whole community is devoid of standards of decency and respect” or “the whole community is crippled”. I would urge everyone to stop blaming the whole community instead of being brave and reporting the actual culprits. In no way do these few individuals represent the whole community. I am quite certain that if victims of such incidents begin to report these to the right places then the rest of the community will show their support, regardless of their gender.

2008-2009 Financial Aid Hard Deadline for Graduate Students

This year the Financial Aid Office has a hard deadline and will not process any graduate applications for loans completed after May 15, 2009. Therefore if you are still planning on applying for loans for the 2008-2009 academic year you must submit all the required documents before the published deadline, or you will need to find alternative ways to finance your education at Caltech. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact us by stopping our office, calling at (626)395-6280 or emailing us at finaid@caltech.edu.
The California Tech is obligated, under the ASCIT Bylaws, to publish the minutes of the Board of Directors as well as candidate statements for elections. The BoD minutes are published as-received and without further abridgment. For unabridged versions of the minutes, consult Laura Conwill, ASCIT Secretary.

The Editors include minutes from IHC meetings and excerpts from the ARC’s meetings voluntarily.

ELECTIONS

May 4, 2009

Off-Campus BOC Rep Statements

Alex Fandrianto

The Honor Code is one of the biggest reasons why I chose to go to Caltech. I enjoy living here because I can implicitly trust others in daily life and in academics. “Never take unfair advantage of others.” This simple maxim by which we live has allowed us much more freedom than the students of other schools. We have the luxury of knowing that our professors and instructors are our friends, and that we can talk to them about almost any topic, such as love or life. And I think that we should continue to uphold this level of transparency.

Like all Caltech students, I went through the BoC talk at frosh camp, finding it mostly boring and taking from it a general picture of “Don’t cheat, we trust you not to.” I went along my way assuming that the majority of people adhered to the Honor Code, and that the few who did not were punished justly. However, I have been troubled of late. After hearing about the Honor Code process at Pasadena, I began to wonder why our system seemed to be so unforgiving, why the BoC seemed so cold, and why it was not as transparent. At first it was just an idle question, but after attending the BoC portion of the Student-Faculty Conference last month, I have started questioning the fairness and transparency of the BoC process. I found that some of the procedures the BoC currently follows violate students’ rights in the interest of “protecting the members of the BoC.” For example, the current system forces students to choose only one silent witness: this puts the student in a very difficult position. Does the student confide in an academic advisor for advice on the specifics of the case or does the student, who is potentially wronged student if a decision has been handed down unfairly. I believe I would be an effective member of the BoC because I approach problems with an open mind. I look at every perspective and make sure that I understand the situation before making any decisions or judgments. I take these matters seriously and will always try to make the best decision. In this manner, I believe I will be able to act judiciously when sitting on cases. As my friend Ross said, “I should deal with this?” This is a choice that I do not think any member of the community should have to make. Furthermore, the BoC’s reasoning behind keeping the current system does not strike me as fair: they claim it is to protect the members of the BoC. In my opinion, if one sits on the BoC committee, he or she has decided to do so for the best interest of the community. This means that BoC process must have more transparency, and that it cannot operate without any possibility for repercussions for its decisions. All people, even those on the BoC, make mistakes, and the process should account for this truth. Though the current committee is attempting to increase transparency by publishing closed cases, it does not help the potentially wronged student if a decision has been handed down unfairly.

As a member of the Caltech community, I feel that the rights of its members must be protected. I am running for the BoC because I want to help make sure that members of our community are not wronged. As a member of the BoC, I will support as much transparency in a case as the defendant is comfortable having. Furthermore, I accept that any decisions that I make as a member of the BoC will be available for public scrutiny and will push for this to happen.

We must ensure that the BoC process is just, and that its members are held accountable for their decisions. If I am elected as the Off-Campus BoC rep, I will voice my opinions for the increased transparency of the process and an increased assumption of responsibility for the members of the BoC.

Claudia Whitten

As you well know, there are a number of benefits that are the direct result of the Honor System. I can count on one hand the number of midterms and finals I’ve taken in a classroom – how many undergraduate students at other schools can say that? Moreover, none of those exams were proctored. Walking down any given alley, you can see whiteboards covered in notes and equations from students discussing homework problems, because for the most part, professors allow collaboration on sets. And how many times have you used a South Master to turn in that set you finished as the sun was coming up, so you could crash and not worry about sleeping through the 10 A.M. deadline? We leave our doors open to encourage our friends to stop by, without worrying that someone will take our possessions while we make a C-store run. The Honor System not only benefits us, the undergraduates, but the community as a whole by allowing us to do our best while lessening the amount of supervision which has to be performed by faculty and administration. By upholding the Honor Code, we make the continued existence of these advantages possible – a breakdown of this system would spell the end of not only these benefits, but of this community of trust.

This is where the Board of Control comes in. The BoC is a committee of students that hears cases concerning honor code violations. These students work to nullify the damage done by violations of the Honor Code, help the students who committed the violations, and protect the community from further incidents of that nature. If elected the off-campus BoC representative, I will work to make sure that students understand the implications of the Honor Code, along with how the BoC operates. Additionally, I will act as a means of communication between the BoC and the student body, to make sure that all opinions are heard. I will be fair in my decisions during hearings and not jump quickly to conclusions, but instead consider thoroughly the evidence presented. Finally, I will put in the time and effort needed to uphold my responsibilities as a BoC representative, to help maintain the Honor System, and to earn that we as students continue to enjoy the community created by this system.

Sarvesh Garimella

Our Honor Code sets us apart from other universities. When I was considering schools during my senior year of high school, my appreciation only scratched the surface of understanding what it meant to have a strong and well-respected system. Now, as a sophomore, I’ve lived under the Honor Code for nearly two years and spent my time trying to explain to prefrosh and friends at other universities just how special it is. While there’s a number of examples such as take-home, unproctored exams, that one can give to a prospective prepher, it’s not just a long, enumerated list of privileges: It’s a way of life. Any list that might offer a few innocuous privileges compared to other universities, which we live to nullify the damage done by violations of the Honor Code offers on the basis of mutual trust.

Occasionally, that trust is broken. The Board of Control stands as the guardian of the community to ensure that potential violations are investigated and, in doing so, the community is protected. Yet, the notion of trust which underpins the Honor Code itself is not limited to expecting us not to cheat: It carries into the enforcement of the Honor Code itself. We choose members of the BoC whom we trust to be just in their deliberations and decisions. Faculty must be willing to trust our enforcement mechanisms, not by coercion, but by providing clear and convincing evidence that the process is, in fact, fair and just.

Having discussed the Honor Code considerably with students and faculty well before SFC and afterwards, it is clear that skepticism in the BoC has emerged in the minds of some faculty members and students. As I wrote in the April 13th issue of The Tech, we should have a discussion to allay these concerns: The proposals of the Honor Code Task Force are a start, but more work potentially remains to be done. As a community, we must determine what level of transparency is necessary for our own comfort in the decisions being made in our name by the BoC. If elected to the BoC, I would be open to a level of transparency which satisfies the community rather than individual BoC members.

There is little anyone can say or do to prove that he or she can live up to that standard: Being fair and just are qualities that are ingrained by habit and in mind. In serving on the BoC, I believe that I can take the community’s interests to heart, not in speedily convicting all defendants, but in ensuring that decisions being made in the name of the community are correct. To wrongly convict an innocent defendant does a disservice to us all. For the community, eligible voters and the ineligible alike, I offer my solemn conviction that I believe I can be just; any further assertion on my part would be an empty, baseless guarantee.

Chris Kenneally

I am running for the Off-Campus Board of Control (BOC) to provide a means of communication between the BoC and the student body. I hope to alleviate concerns: The proposals of the Honor Code Task Force are a start, but more work potentially remains to be done. As a community, we must determine what level of transparency is necessary for our own comfort in the decisions being made in our name by the BoC. If elected to the BoC, I would be open to a level of transparency which satisfies the community rather than individual BoC members. I believe I can be just; any further assertion on my part would be an empty, baseless guarantee.

Chris Kenneally

Please vote for me, Alex Fandrianto, to be your off-campus BoC representative.
The California Tech
Pasadena, CA 91125

The 29th annual

BANDORAMA
Directed by William Bing

"Fun and Games"
Caltech-Occidental Concert Band
Caltech Monday Jazz Band
Caltech Thursday Jazz Band

featuring
Stephen Bent, juggler
Barry Schwam, theremin
Pat Olguin, vocal soloist
Hjerstin Williams, vocal soloist

And special guest conductor
Thomas Mannion

May 8 & May 9
8:00 PM
Ramo Auditorium
Caltech

Information:  626-395-3295 or bands.caltech.edu
Admission is free, no tickets required

Caltech Personal Account Statements will be available online only beginning in July.
If others should view and/or pay your bill, please go online to access.caltech, then select CASHNet and set up a user name and password for them.
All previous payment methods including checks will still be accepted.

Thank you in advance for supporting our effort to economize and go green!
The Bursar’s Office

‘Spare Me’ by Mark Eichenlaub