Another Caltech MacArthur Genius

By Chris Zheng

Just last week, John O. Dabiri, Caltech’s Associate Professor of Aeronautics and Bioengineering, was awarded the MacArthur “Genius” Grant, a prestigious $500,000 award paid over the next five years.

Dabiri has been researching the 500 million-year-old jellyfish, a creature with a simple structure that has been able to efficiently create vortices for self-propulsion.

To see the vortices, Dabiri’s team can simply inject dye right into the umbrella of the jellyfish and observe the water swirling, or they can scatter particles into the water and use lasers to measure their displacements.

One of his graduate students, Kakani Young, developed much of the equipment they use.

Much like those created in jellyfish locomotion, as blood passes through the heart valve, it creates a vortex ring. Dabiri uses this research to develop smaller, autonomous machines.

They create ten times more power per acre than the lone windmill design, despite being smaller. They are optimal for places with inconstant wind, like urban areas.

“And,” added Dabiri, “these don’t kill birds.”

Dabiri came into the obscure world of jellyfish by chance. Before his senior year at Princeton, where he got his B.S.E. in Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering, he applied for a SURF at Caltech in Professor Mortezza Gharib’s lab, hoping to work on propulsion problems like helicopters, jets, and rockets.

Much to his surprise, when he arrived at the lab, Gharib put him in the Long Beach Aquarium, now the Aquarium of the Pacific, observing fish. This is when he discovered the usefulness of jellyfish.

See MACARTHUR on pg. 2

Caltech’s incoming freshmen excel at pranking

By Sarah Marzen

MIT’s recent attempt to prank Caltech’s prefect orientation may have failed, but Caltech’s incoming freshman class has already succeeded in pulling three pranks on Caltech’s campus with at least one more to come.

The freshman pranksters, self-named “2014,” have successfully pulled three out of four planned pranks so far. The ORT transformed the freshman class picture into a black headband, black clothing, ninja-themed photo; hanging a large 2014 banner from Millikan; and delivering a ‘giftwrapped’ “frosh plague” made out of Dubney’s playbills balls to the front of Beckman Auditorium.

The fourth planned prank, aimed at turning the Olive Walk into a Pacman Maze on the day of Caltech’s club fair, complete with human ghosts and a human cardboard Pacman running through a maze marked by orange security tape. The pranksters had the costumes and security tape made up, but they hadn’t anticipated that day’s record high temperature of 113 degrees Fahrenheit.

“We weren’t running around in Pacman costumes because we were sane,” said Spuzyntha Piszkwiecz, one of ORT’s leaders. “Plus, the enthusiastic people had shut up all the night before” carrying out the Millikan banner and frost plague pranks.

See PRANK on pg. 2

Julio Professor Jerry Marsden Passes Away

By Tina Ding

Jerrold E. Marsden, Carl F Braun Professor of Engineering Control and Dynamical Systems & Applied and Computational Mathematics, passed away after a long battle with prostate cancer on September 21, 2010 at the age of 68. Marsden was well-known to undergraduates for teaching the Control & Dynamical Systems and Bioengineering, and his tenure as advisorship. For that, I’m indebted to him.

According to Richard Murray, Thomas E. and Doris Everhart Professor of Control, and Dynamical Systems and Bioengineering, Marsden sponsored numerous SURF projects and senior theses, including many joint projects with JFL.

“Professor Marsden was a great [research] advisor. He gave me a tremendous amount of freedom to work on what I was interested in and continued to help me along the way,” said DJHPR, former Caltech 2010 alumnus and current graduate student in Math at Yale University, who conducted three projects under Marsden’s advischips.

Beylkin conducted two summer SURFs and a senior thesis in Marsden’s research group. He worked on a variety of research including the Titan project and autonomous navigation of a balloon using wind fields.

“It was an incredible opportunity,” said Beylkin. “I don’t think I’d be at Yale without his influence on my undergraduate education. For that, I’m indebted to him.”

A website of remembrances called “In Memory of Jerrold E. Marsden” has been made to honor Marsden’s work and contributions. One response from Professor Melissa Leventhal at University of California, San Diego, mentioned the influence of Leventhal’s undergraduate career.

“You are an academic father figure to me, and who I am as a student today I can attribute to you.”

See MARSDEN on pg. 2

Southmaster keys no longer issued

By Joel Nikolaus

The South Master, a key that almost all Caltech undergraduates have had for the last thirty years, is one step closer to obsolescence. This fall the Housing Office decided to discontinue the use of the South Master in the Houses and, to the surprise of many returning students, finally ceased authorizing new copies of the key. Rather than replacing the key, the rooms currently under the South Master, mostly rooms in the Student Activities Center (SAC), will be taken off locks entirely.

“There are seven or eight rooms in the SAC that required the South Master that will no longer require keys,” said Peter Daly, Assistant Vice President for Housing and Dining.

“Those rooms will now be like common rooms.”

Most of the locks in the SAC were changed by the Lock Shop this last week. Some of the custodial closets and other rooms in the houses that are still on the South Master will be changed in the near future. For these rooms, combination locks are one alternative to leaving the rooms completely open.

“The South Master doesn’t do anything anymore,” said Daily, to explain the change. “With card-swipe required to get into the houses and the fact that all students essentially already had access to the rooms, there was no purpose in keeping them.”

See SOUTHMASTER on pg. 3

In This Issue

Housing exterminates bed bugs Debate about gambling on grades Bakery: Aux Delices

Soccer team wins first SCIAC game
More pranking to come from frosh

PRANKS, from pg. 1

How did Caltech’s incoming freshmen manage to organize four pranks before they had even met one another? The answer: Facebook. Jesse Salomon, another leader of the ORT, was “getting antsy” in early August, when all of his friends were leaving for college. “So I looked up Caltech on Wireshark to remember all the prank traditions,” said Salomon. “And I started thinking, it’d be a great idea to have a freshman prank.... what’s the best way to coordinate that? Facebook.”

He made a secret Facebook group exclusively for the Caltech class of 2014. Interested members became administrators so that they could, in turn, invite their friends to the secret group. Now, the prank organizers have an email list with all the freshmen in addition to the Facebook group, taken from Caltech Directory. But over the summer, Facebook was the group’s main mode of communication. Collectively, the incoming freshmen developed over a dozen ideas for start-of-year pranks, and over one hundred members voted on their favorite ideas. A group of prank leaders—primary organizer “Queen” Connie Wang and leaders Salomon, Piskiewicz, Monash Iban, Neeli Mitha, Stephanie Reyes, and Genesis Lang—decided to take on the challenge of leading the five favorite pranks before the end of Rotation.

Several of Caltech’s preseason athletes helped scout out the potential pranking areas, plan, and transport supplies, even grabbing hundreds of balls from Dabney’s hall pit in order to make models of bacteria for the frog plague prank. Tom Mannion not only funded the pranks, but also gave the pranksters a de facto all-access pass to campus. “When we asked he could find us, Tom asked if it was under $1000,” said Piskiewicz. In total, the pranks required roughly $200.

Caltech’s Security officers were also more than happy to help out, said Jilani, who led the prank to hold a banner over Millikan. “The best part was that Security was so chill, helping out with the prank, and even giving suggestions for how to make the banner hang straight.”

Only one prank remains, the details of which are secret. “It’s been postponed because we had a flood of work,” said Piskiewicz. “In the Caltech tradition, we procrastinated. We still need to do this one, and it’ll be a damn good one.”

Pranking despite a Caltech workload

Even though the first Ma1a set has landed squarely on their shoulders, Caltech’s ORT has already begun to consider how they will prank MIT. Their ideas have ranged from the more basic, e.g. hanging a large banner on one of MIT’s buildings, to the more outlandish, including physically moving an MIT building. “We definitely look forward to continuing to prank,” said Jilani. ORT member Nathan Baskin agrees, saying that prankng is “sort of part of the Caltech personality.”

However, the Caltech workload hit our frosh pranksters soon after their arrival. “After Rotation started, even I didn’t want to do anything,” said primary organizer Wang. The benefit to planning pranks in the summer, said the ORT leaders, was that there was nothing better to do, since all their friends had already headed off to college.

Previous organizers of pranks on MIT, including Prank Club leader Jordan Theriot and alumnus Anthony Chong, stress how much time and effort is involved in pulling off a good prank. Even so, Mannion is hopeful based on the energy of the freshmen class. “It’s going to be a great four years of pranking,” he said.

The first prank involved the most coordination, according to Jesse Salomon, because it required the entire incoming freshmen class to dress up like ninjas for the freshman class picture. Students were encouraged to wear black and prank leaders passed out homemade black cloth headbands the day of.

MacArthur continued from page 1

Many undergraduates can remember their colorful talk on jelly fish that at their convocation or frosh orientation. But Caltech freshmen didn’t have Convocation to introduce them to the campus, so their freshman class picture, planned for the end of Rotation, was the best way to coordinate that? Facebook.”

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Bedbugs finally Exterminated

By Joel Nikolaus

It may have been years since any of you have heard the proverbial saying “don’t let the bedbugs bite,” but it might be time to pull that old saying off the shelf. After a serious infestation that occurred in a number of buildings, Caltech Housing, like many colleges, hotels, and other public places has lately found bedbugs, and with a resurgence of the small and versatile pests.

For students concerned that bedbugs might still be lurking in their quarters, they need not worry. The infestation in Fleming was dealt with, rooms checked, and the bedbugs are gone. Fleming is one of the major, major problems that the bugs are a nationwide crisis. According to Daily, the general manager of Housing and Dining, is dealing with a resurgence of the small and versatile pests.

“Though the rooms might have been cleared, that does not entirely mitigate the problem. ‘Bed bugs are a nationwide crisis… one of the major, major problems across the country,’” said Daily.

“The occupant normally brings them in the buildings… and from somewhere else,” he said.

To deal with this, Housing is taking a combination of both preventative and reactive measures, and according to Daily, plans to do “self-treatment of dealing with things as possible.” This includes, most noticeably, changing the mattresses. Though traditional mattresses were replaced years ago, the current mattresses will also start to be phased out for a mattress less conducive to the hiding pests. The amount of knowledge and types of treatment in the last nine months has dramatically increased. Started off as just being sprayed by an exterminator, to being heat treated, to the latter it is treating with the vapor strips,” said Daily.

These improved understanding of bedbugs should allow Housing to deal more effectively with the problem. “I think we are in good shape,” said Daily. “We react when we hear from somebody and [and] there is an exterminator here nearly 100% of the time.”

All of this on some level depends on the ability to react quickly to infestations. That, of course, also depends on the students to report the incidents to housing. If the reports are made quickly the incidents can be kept relatively isolated, according to Daily. However, bedbugs multiply exponentially and if students wait months like the students in Fleming it becomes a more serious incident.

Though predominantly on the East Coast in the United States, bed bugs are a national crisis. As a result, meeting with the bugs is a worldwide problem. But in... present times, their presence decreased since in the United States after the 1930’s, but has been on the rise again since the 1980’s. Explanations for this increase include an increase in travel and the decreased use of such pesticides as DDT.

The East Coast Mathematical and Physical Sciences of the United States of America (AA) is adding a few new programs under the leadership of interim director Denise Nelson Nash.

New AA-run programs include monthly lunches between students and alumni in all different industries and a free professional development program (e.g., resume building) for ten alumni. The monthly lunches are being reinstated after the AA office has recovered from the effects of staffing reductions last year due to budget cuts.

The free professional development program has a market price of roughly $150 per hour, which amounts to a market price of $600 per alumni participant. According to Nash, the recent pilot program was successful, and the program will be offered starting in October or November in earnest.

Additionally, the $5,000 AA fund for Caltech student clubs is being set up from a set to a rolling funding deadline, which may affect the strategy for funding decisions when more clubs apply. However, this year, the fund only had four requests from clubs so far.

On a smaller scale, Caltech freshmen now receive an AA blanket as part of their welcome package, and parents of freshmen were invited to an AA-hosted lunch at the alumni house. There has been also an increase in the number of regional AA events, hosted and run by alumni in that region rather than the AA staff.

According to Nash, the Alumni Board should have identified a permanent Alumni Association Director to replace interim Director Nash around February of this year.

For more information on programs offered by AA, see http://alumni.caltech.edu/.
Closing Hixon Writing Center: One Cut Too Many

By Wesley Yu

Money, money, money. It’s what makes the world go round. If you ask me, I believe that already you will after you hear this. Last week, Caltech closed the Hixon Writing Center to save a whopping $7,750 in tutor salaries (in order of magnitude). Huge savings for a university with a $1.6 billion endowment, right?

Budget decisions are complicated and there very well may be a good reason for closing the Center. But if there is a reason, it needs to be explained to the students that have used the Center. Over the last few years, “bespoke cuts” and “financial crisis” seem to have replaced Caltech’s motto, “the truth shall make you free.” Administrators don’t often justify their actions with rational arguments, as long as they can point to some monetary savings for the Institute– partly, perhaps, because there are so many decisions that they need to justify. However, it is the student leaders begin to question this cost cutting actions and demand more substantial explanations. Otherwise, we risk losing things that make our world go round.

As Emerson once said, money offers the opportunity to improve skills. The closure of the Writing Center is a devastating blow to Caltech’s commitment to improving students skills. We are told repeatedly that scientists need to be better writers, but how can we become better writers without help? The Writing Center provides free help to a student and played a central role in showing students how to improve their writing skills. Over the weekend, I sent an e-mail to all the undergraduate houses asking whether students use the Center and find it helpful. I received many enthusiastic responses from students who frequently use the center and have improved their writing because of it.

One student told me that approaching a professor about writing can be a daunting task and that she was willing to go to the Center because the tutors at the Hixon were “casual and friendly, but also very efficient.” Another student said the center was a “big help during [her] stressful freshman year […] , especially after getting confused about what one of [her] professors was trying to get [her] to add to [her] rough draft of a philosophy essay.” Yet another student attributed winning the Students Award to the help of the Center and was “positive about the financial crisis, he asked, “Why did students spend on maintaining them.

John de Menil – John de Menil

Caltech is renowned for its research, and students here receive the best scientific education in the world. But with such a specific focus on technical studies, do Caltech students miss out on something important, something powerful and beautiful? something called the humanities?

The humanities are well expressed early summer in an article written by David Brooks. Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times, bemoaned the decline of the humanities in university life and took it upon himself to “stand up for us” in the history, English and art classes, even in the face of today’s economic realities.” He argued, as many have before him, that technical competence may lead directly to a job but that the ability to express ideas cogently, to use analogies effectively, and to interpret language confidently give students an immeasurable advantage in the job market. But beyond these well-worn arguments, the most important and unique things Brooks did in his article was to describe a creature he called The Big Shaggy.

What is The Big Shaggy? The Big Shaggy is, like Freud’s id, the animal in each of us (the hairy unfettered caveman, if you wish). Unlike the id, though, the Big Shaggy is also responsible for our greatest passions and destructions. You may recognize him by other names— Love, Fear, Courage, Lust, Pride, and Nobility—each describing a part of Shaggy, but not all of him. You’ve seen him at work in your own life. The Big Shaggy was there when we chose to attend Caltech, when we pulled our first all-nighter, when we went on that

“Art: Take it off its marble pedestal and show it as a daily companion, refreshing, human and rich: witness of its time and prophet of times to come.”

John de Menil – John de Menil

Caltech Library Services will hold a drawing for a $25 Amazon gift card on October 19, 2010. The drawing is open to Caltech faculty, students, and staff. To be eligible to win, correctly identify the campus location of the image below. Submit your answer via the library’s text service, Text a Librarian. Text caltech, the location of the image, and your name and contact info to 66746.

Shaggy

Caltech

Shaggy

Shaggy

Shaggy
The Mischief of Men: Our National Debt

By Dan Alvarez

Let’s cut to the chase. In the world of politics, minds are sel-dom changed. Democrats will talk about social justice and im-prove their social programs. Republicans will talk about equal-opportunity and fee-d the defense industry. Democrats will cringe at the words “profit” and “cor-poration”, just like Republicans will cringe at the words “wealth redistribution” and “entitlement”. Democratic taxes look like Republi-cans want cuts in spending.

In the eternal struggle of politics, it is really the people who have the greatest difficulty, and other pertinent fac-tors, the site will calculate the odds for the gamble and subsequent-ly contribute a reasonable amount to the move.

A nifty solution for those stu-dents eager to make a quick buck or two would be to join at the beginning of their undergraduate years, when the website would be most popular. Thus, an intelligent student would be able to claim a small but not negligible share of his grade point average. Ultricin-is us-ers then agree to contribute to a monetary incentive, while Ultricin-si-also agrees to contribute to the incentive. If students meet their goals, they may collect total win-nings after submitting an official copy of their arithmetic scripts to Ultricin. But if a student fails to meet his goals, Ultricin retains his entry fee. If he receives nothing, no money is lost.

When you step back and actu-
alify look at this idea, it is a per-fectly fine idea. In fact, it’s one of the few ideas I’ve heard, and I watch PitchMen. But, seriously, betting money on how well you will perform is not only a great motivating tool, it is also a good way to prepare the student for the “hard work” we do this everyday, except we call it having a job. No, I am not a pushy at a re-

Gambling on grades distracts from learning

By Sandhya Chandrasekaran

We Tehcers may enjoy math, science and engineering a bit more than the next person, but when it comes down to it, we are pretty much your average college kid. After all, the importance of a normal sleep schedule, we stay up till odd hours of the night, procrasti-nating our sets until hours before the deadline. We forgo balanced, ad-ded diats and regular exercise in the name of work, when we are simply just depressed. Since we constantly eat with every oth-er aspect of our lives at the pres-ent, we do not treat our futures as a game, too.

Now forget the board game and the cereal. Ultrinsic Inc. has found a new way to spice up life and give all of us the adrenaline that we seem to crave with our money. The tab that this de-

Not Gambling, but an incentive to improve academic performance

By Amol Kamat

Ultricin.com’s GPA betting may sound like an unethical scam at first, but it is not.

According to The Daily Tar-

Orange County Register, the site will calculate the difficulty, and other pertinent fac-

The company launched the program last year for University of Pennsylvania and New York University students and expanded to 36 schools this year, including Pitt and Penn State University.

After a student registers with Ultricin, he or she uploads a class schedule as well as grade point average. Ultrinsic will also give the company complete access to official school records. Based on the historical data, the company sim-

On the cover of the April 8th, 2010 issue of TIME magazine, a simi-

lar idea of relating money to schoolwork was featured. The story discusses the idea of “bribing” students in el-

 elementary school to high school to improve academic performance. In fact, there are grade schools that are handing paychecks to students showing improvements in grades and tests. In the study conducted in four large cities, one city who “got paid all year under a very elegant scheme and performed significantly better on their stan-

I agree

The United States is still the richest county in the world, but if the interest on the $1 trillion that we bring in on income tax-at the rate of 15% or 20% each year, we have squandered our wealth to the point of bankrupcy. The site will calculate the difficulty, and other pertinent fac-

The congressional budget of-

OpiNiON

The California Tech

October 4, 2010

5
Adventures around Old Town for the sweet tooth

By Neha Samdaria

Part 1: Aux Delices

Moments after a delectable meal, when my stomach feels so engorged that it might just explode, and I feel as though I am entering a food coma, my hand, somewhat uncontrollably, reaches over to the dessert spoon and feeds me a bite of that tiramisu cake. Sigh. The truth is, no matter what, there is always room for dessert. Even if I’m ridiculously full from dinner and the thought of eating one more bite of my margherita pizza seems impossible, it feels possible to finish up a slice of chocolate fudge cake.

That’s why, this week, I gathered two friends to join me on a dessert-tasting adventure in Old Town, Pasadena. Sunglasses on eyes and totes on shoulders, we ventured out on a lazy Thursday afternoon to scope out the delights that are available at two charming little cafés on Colorado Blvd; Aux Delices (Part 1 of this review) and Le Pain Quotidien (Part 2, to be published next week). Each bakery had something a little different to offer from the other. By the end of our journey, we not only satisfied, but also inspired by some of the unique approaches these bakeries used to create otherwise conventional desserts.

Aux Delices is a quaint little bakery, furnished with small, round tables and cozy 2-4 person seating arrangements. Porcelain plate wall decorations and hanging chandeliers adorn the room, and perfectly set the nifty, snazzy look of this bakery. It is, at first impression, exactly how I imagine a Parisian bakery to be.

Then, I notice the music playing in the background. A constant, strumming guitar? Strong beats that you can tap your feet to? This music was unmistakably Spanish. Spanish music in a French bakery? Hm, unusual, but I guess it works.

My friends and I proceed to the counter at the front of the room to scope out the delights that are on display. Tarts, Cakes, Crème Brûlée…what should we order? After much careful consideration, we decide upon three scrumptious looking desserts; a Raspberry Tart, a Chocolate Brulée dome and a Napoleon. We find a table for three and begin tasting.

I begin with the Raspberry Tart. Much to my surprise, it isn’t conventional. Instead of having layers of buttery cream and pastry sheets, in short, it is delicious, but impossible to eat. At this point, we should not have been surprised that The Napoleon, a French-originating dessert, made up of crisp layers of vanilla cream and pastry sheets. In short, it is delicious, but impossible to eat. At this point, we should not have been surprised that The Napoleon de Aux Delices was a little out of the ordinary. Instead of having thin, crunchy layers of pastry and cream, this dessert has much thicker layers, with much more cream. While the cream is well made and doesn’t taste overpoweringly of egg, its presence makes the pastry chewy and takes away from the crispiness. We prefer the original Napoleon.

In short, Aux Delices is full of surprises! While the desserts appear conventional when on display, their distinctiveness can only be tasted. We know that not all surprises are good, some may be disappointing. But I can say without a doubt that the trip to this charming little café in Old Town was definitely worth the risk.
Beavers Knock Off Defending Conference Champions

By Amol Kamat
Staff Writer

On a hot September afternoon, the Caltech Beavers faced off against defending SCIAC champion Pomona-Pitzer. No doubt inspired by my last article, the Beavers came out swinging, with Alex Wein scoring the first goal of the game in the 23rd minute. The game remained scoreless until midway through the second half, when Mikhail Uribe was doused with water as the underdogs began their celebration. It truly looked as if Caltech had won some sort of championship, which they very well did. They gave weary Beaver fans (not just of soccer, but of any sport) something to cheer about. In a college where all-nighters dominate and a party is ten drunk guys dancing around a girl, getting a group of students excited about something non-academic that will not help them get into graduate school is definitely an accomplishment. Despite the humidity, rain, and apparent SCIAC ban on vuvuzelas, the Beavers showed true heart, and were the champions of that most memorable day.

In other news, the Beavers lost 5-0 to La Verne on Saturday.

Oxy knocks off Tech in volleyball action

By Rick Paul
Sports Editor

A strong offensive charge lead by Logan Boyer-Hayse along with a .395 team hitting percentage helped propel Occidental past Caltech 3-0 (25-7, 25-13, 25-13) on Saturday evening at Braun Athletic Center. The Tigers are 12-2 overall and 5-1 in league action. Boyer-Hayse racked up 18 kills and a .552 hitting percentage. Stephanie Gann added nine kills and a .368 hitting percentage.

Caltech is 1-10 overall and 1-6 in SCIAC action. Its offense was lead by Paige Logan who had a team high six kills.

Weekly Schedule

October 5, 2010
Women’s Volleyball at Whittier
7:30 PM

October 6, 2010
Men’s Soccer at Claremont-M-S
7:00 PM

October 7, 2010
Men’s Water Polo vs. Connecticut Col.
5:00 PM

October 8, 2010
Women’s Volleyball vs. Cal Lutheran
TBA

October 8, 2010
Men’s Water Polo vs. Penn St.-Behrend
@ Convergence Tournament (Las Flores Park)
11:20 AM

Alan Menenzes crosses the finish line at the Pomona-Pitzer Invitational on Saturday, finishing third out of the Caltech men’s team. Both the Caltech men’s team and Caltech women’s team finished 10th out of twelve teams.
The California Tech
October 4, 2010

APPLES AND ORANGES

BY REBECCA LAWLER

I'M ONE YEAR OLDER, ONE YEAR WISER, AND (HOPESFULLY) ONE YEAR SMARTER!

...NO ONE ASKED YOU.

So you're saying that you're finally smarter than a fifth grader?

...You got a haircut.

Yes! I figured a brand new school year deserves a brand new me!

Chess Club Problem of the Week

White to play and mate in 3. Composed by Al-Adli in the 9th century!

THE CALIFORNIA TECH
Pasadena, CA 91125

XKCD by Randall Munroe

FROM THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DREAM.

WHICH WAS?


White to play and mate in 3. Composed by Al-Adli in the 9th century!