Caltech Student-Faculty Conference (SFC) to be held this Wednesday

SANDHYA CHANDRASEKARAN
News Editor

"It is important for every educational program to ask, "How are we doing? What's working? Where can we do better?""

On Wednesday, April 6, Caltech will hold its biennial Student-Faculty Conference (SFC), which caters to the aforementioned views of Vice Provost Melany Hunt as well as several other Caltech students and faculty.

Overview:

As stated by the Academics Research Committee (ARC), "The Student-Faculty Conference is an all-day forum discussion between students and faculty about issues relating to individual majors and undergraduate life as a whole.

The feedback and suggestions that come out of the SFC shape the future of the academics and student life around campus. It is held every other year as a measure of self-scrutiny and review of Caltech academic life.

The conference is organized by the ARC, with support from the faculty, Student Affairs, the Council on Undergraduate Education (CUE), and the Provost’s Office.

Value to the Caltech Community:

The Student-Faculty Conference was originally intended to be, and still very much is, an open forum through which students and faculty can discuss relevant issues and come to solutions that improve both the students’ and faculty's experiences.

While evaluative tools such as the end-of-term TQFR reports do provide some feedback, a qualitative understanding of the course stems from the comments of the course, which predominantly consist of one or two sentence complaints.

Although this does communicate the existence of problems, it does not propose an effective way of altering the courses. Relating these issues to faculty in a professional, yet informal, setting results in actual, implementable changes for future students.

Ray Deshaies, Professor of Biology, relates his experiences on the SFC Biology Committee this year. "The [SFC] meetings coincided with my putting together a design for Bi9, which I am teaching (along with Dr. Aravin) for the first time this year. A number of issues came up that I had not previously thought about, and as a result I made significant changes... all based on input that was a direct result from talking to my student colleagues who were on the committee. It is too early to say how good of a course Bi9 will turn out to be, but if it is successful, it will be due, in no small measure, to the useful input I got from being a member of the [SFC] committee.”

ARC Chair Margaret Chiu stresses the importance of the SFC in helping to bridge the inevitable gap between the students and the faculty. "Realistically, as undergrads, we have no actual power to change academics at this school. We are very lucky, however, to exist in a community where the faculty respect and value our input. Although this does not grant us the ability to instigate change, the ability to instigate change.

An importance piece of this is to start a dialogue between students and professors. The SFC is definitely a good thing, in that it gets students and faculty in the same room talking about how we can make Caltech better for everyone."

In fact, as SFC Chairman Karthik Sarma states, SFC is a good mechanism for gradually improving academics at Caltech. By consistently making a review every two years, the student-faculty committees can evaluate the success of any changes made at the previous conference and then build upon them.”

A Brief History:

[Based on Caltech’s 2010 WASC accreditation report, prepared by Vice Provost, Melany Hunt]

Caltech began to host these student-faculty conferences in 1989 as a way to facilitate active discussions about academic and student life concerns between students and faculty.

During these early years, the conferences were two-day events where the faculty was asked to cancel class to promote campus-wide participation.

Continued on page 3

News briefs from around the globe

Provided by Tech correspondent Sam Barnett

Need to know

< 100 words about the world this week – topics sorted from good to bad

Job market improving 216,000 new hires in March – lowest unemployment since 2009

Thorium-based energy 200 times more energy per mass than uranium – research in China

Debates over gun laws 4 states discuss fewer limits – Arizona, N. Dakota, S. Carolina, Texas

No federal budget yet < 1 week to reach a deal – temporary government shutdown possible

Japan’s car sales drop 43% since earthquake, nuclear crisis (March 2011 vs. March 2010)

Higher radiation levels 25 miles from damaged power plant in Japan – long-term danger

Gadaffi bombs hospital 16 people injured – regime’s army outnumbers Libyan rebels 10 to 1
The deadline for submissions to the Totem has been extended!

Caltech's literary and visual arts magazine is looking for submissions for this year's edition.

The deadline was extended by a week, until April 11th. We are looking forward to seeing your work!
World news: Yale returns artifacts to Peru

BRANDON COMELLA
Contributing Writer

On Wednesday, after almost a century, Yale returned artifacts taken from Machu Picchu to Peru. Hiram Bingham, the Yale lecturer and explorer who is credited with bringing the site to international attention, borrowed around 4000 artifacts to study at Yale. The government of Peru has been fighting ever since for their return.

in the past ten years their efforts have intensified, with Peru filing two lawsuits, and a personal appeal to President Obama by Peruvian President Alan Garcia. Peru and Yale signed an agreement last year to return the pieces to be exhibited in Cusco, the capital of the Incan empire. The first 363 artifacts arrived in the capital Wednesday morning, and were escorted by 600 police officers to the Government Palace. They will be exhibited in Lima for a week before reaching their ultimate destination of the Casa Concha museum, run by the University of Cusco, San Abad.

This is the first of several shipments. Another one is scheduled to arrive later this year, with the rest arriving throughout 2012. The pieces taken by Hiram Bingham include textiles, pottery and ceramic fragments, as well as mummies and human remains.

The arrival of these archeological treasures was celebrated in a grand ceremony in front of the Incan relics, as Peru is preparing festivities to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Machu Picchu’s introduction to the world.

The UNESCO World Heritage site is one of the most popular tourist attractions in South America, and Peru hopes to attract more visitors with celebrations in July that are rumored to include music superstars Sting and Sir Paul McCartney. The ancient treasures will be available for viewing in Cusco, the main stopping point for tourists on their way to Machu Picchu.

While the exhibit will charge tourists for admission, the museum has decided to give free admission to all Peruvians as a celebration of the return of part of their heritage. Tensions between Yale and the Andean nation have run high over the past few years. At one point, a rumor that only 20% of the relics were going to be returned caused a national uproar among both politicians and citizens.

Negotiations were further strained when Yale called the artifacts ‘Incan trash’ and expressed their fear that they would not be ‘properly appreciated.’

Workers carry a crate of relics to present to the president of Peru during the welcome ceremony. - Ernesto Benavides/AP

Realistically, as undergrads, we have no actual power to change academics at this school. We are very lucky, however, to exist in a community where the faculty respect and value us and our opinions so that we do have the ability to change things.

- Margaret Chiu

Contributing Writer

SFC expected to be forum of change (continued)

While the conferences were held on a regular biennial schedule during the 1990s, they lost some momentum during the 1990s. After a hiatus of five years, the tradition was revived in 2002 and was shortened to a one-day event. Since then, these conferences have been held in 2003, 2005 2007, and 2009.

There was also a half-day conference in 2008 pertaining to the student experience trip taken by some undergraduates to learn about academic and student life programs at other universities.

In 2009, the conference was moved to a one-day event. Since then, these conferences have been held in 2003, 2005 2007, and 2009.

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Revisiting Student-Faculty Conference 2009:

In the 2009 conference, there were campus-wide sessions involving the core curriculum, the humanities and social sciences, undergraduate research, and the aforementioned student experience trip taken during fall 2008. In addition, there were smaller undergraduate option-specific sessions.

These committees began meeting as early as six months prior to the conference to develop specific discussion topics and key areas for improvement. These issues were raised during committee meetings, student surveys, and pre-conference open forums.

Possible resolutions were discussed prior to the conference as well. The sessions and meetings were structured according to a letter sent out to all of the SFC chairs once the final committees were chosen.

Not only did the ARC Chair require monthly updates to ensure that goals were accomplished according to a general proposed timeline, but each committee was also strongly urged to prepare a final summary of the discussion and the current status of any recommendations proposed by the committee.

Vice Provost Melany Hunt details the work of the 2009 Computer Science SFC committee. “As an example, the CS students and faculty chose five areas to focus their discussion: specific advanced CS courses, introductory CS courses, teaching quality, the relevance of the CS program for students interested in industrial positions, and the relevance of the program for students interested in pursuing research opportunities within CS. For each of these five topics, the CS students and faculty members developed both short- and long-term recommendations. Some of the recommendations regarding course changes have been implemented [since] fall 2010, including a new frontier course for incoming students interested in CS.”

Other notable changes include the new restriction on freshmen taking EE51/52 [time-intensive electrical engineering labs offered during the fall and winter terms]

because of their mandatory pass-fail situation, as well as Bi8 and Bi9, biology classes intended for students interested in biology, fulfilling the CORE biology requirement in the place of Bi1 for non-Bio majors.

Student-Faculty Conference 2011:

This year, the Student-Faculty Conference this year is structured slightly differently from the previous ones, and dedicates the first hour to discussing the current CORE proposals.

In the afternoon, option-specific discussions will be held in individual rooms, listed below.

Schedule for SFC 2011:

- 11:00-12:00 - Core Discussion in Ramo Auditorium
- 12:00-1:30 - Lunch - Free lunch provided to the first 200-300 people. (A fee will be charged to those not participating in a board program)
- 1:30-4:00 - Option-level Discussions.
Today's Puzzle:

KenKen

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Rules: Fill in the 7 x 7 board with numbers between 1 and 7 (inclusive), making sure not to repeat a number in any row or any column. Additionally, the numbers contained in each bolded set of boxes must equal the number indicated by performing the operation indicated. For example, a bolded set of two boxes that say “2x” must have the numbers 2 and 1 contained in the two boxes, with the order of these numbers determined by the other numbers in each row and column.

A look at class warfare:

Who's #WINNING and how can we turn the tide?

EVANS BONEY

Contributing Writer

I'm worried—beyond just the usual “my tax dollars will probably kill scores of civilians in at least 4 different nations today” feeling.

There's a trend in American politics that is going uncovered, and risks being stuffed behind ever tightening corporate walls.

There's this: Corporations and rich people are #WINNING.

Since 1980, the top marginal tax rate in this country has been cut in half. Integrated over that time period, a person who made a million dollars annually every year would save over $10 million dollars on their tax bill in the last 30 years.

That's a lot. And we have a lot of millionaires. 7.8 million millionaires. Including, by the way, 54 senators.

Just go ahead and munch on that for a second.

One of our legislative branches is majority-millionaire.

Each of these millions of millionaires is reaping at least a $350,000 annual reward compared to their 1980s counterparts (by marginal tax rate, calculated for a million dollars, assuming no billionaires make more!). That's a MINIMUM $3 Trillion dollars in tax revenue that could be gotten not by any huge leap to “socialism”... but a return to the days of the Reagan tax code:

$3 Trillion dollars by just taxing the wealthiest 2.7% what they were taxed in the years of disco.

So why do we have to slap food from the mouths of the poor again? Why are we firing teachers, and firemen, and policemen. Are our kids smart enough, houses safe enough, and streets clean enough?

Am I really supposed to believe that Wisconsin teachers are living the good life?

Locally, am I really supposed to believe that Wisconsin taxpayers are living the good life?

And by the way, why not use our natural wealth of greedy millionaires to refuel our national successes?

$3 Trillion dollars buys a lot of national improvements for all of us. Roughly four times the total cost of war in Iraq.

Every year.

And getting just a little bit of that back counts as socialism?

Incidentally, you get another $2 Trillion dollars just by taxing them at 1%.

EVERY YEAR!

How does this not get people riled up?

Compared to our 1950s selves, the rich are stealing six Iraq Wars every year. Now that's what I call a pretty good estimate of how the class war has been going.

The poor, and by that I unfortunately mean the median wage-earners, are losing six Iraq Wars every year to the richest 2.7%.

We have a long way to go to a class war in the strictest sense, if by that conservatives mean the net transfer of wealth from the rich to the poor.

Compared to the prosperous Americans of yore, we are getting massaged.

Every two months, the poor lose another Iraq War to the rich.

And then you wonder what's happened to the American Dream?

You know what I'd say about traders making millions off derivatives trading in oil if they were taxed at 70% for those earnings? I'd say they lose half of their incentive to rob us all blind.

Republicans, Bankers, you understand incentives, right?

Why exactly do we need shared sacrifice again? Have we had shared benefits?

In the last three decades, the rich have been gaining outsized benefits. We bail out their hedge funds so wealthy bondholders can get 100% return on the dollar, while Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac take losses on loans backed by still-bankrupt Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. We've paid (with everyone except the wealth and power of government officials make over $250,000 annually who pay, with everyone except the wealthy 2.7% of this country can afford to sit in their mansions and gripe about every penny of the taxes they do pay, with everyone except Charlie Sheen ignoring the fact that they have been treated like bitching rock stars from outer space for decades.

Meanwhile, the Koch brothers talk about incentives!

That’s socialism and real class war, don’t let the Republicans fool you. We have lots of other options between here and there besides stopping services to children, the poor, the sick and the elderly.

And how did that go for the poor? The Netherlands this week approved a 100% retroactive tax on all bank bonuses after their government bailout.

Talk about incentives!

The poor, and by that I unfortunately mean the median wage-earners, are losing 6 Iraq wars every year to the richest 2.7%.

...are you hurting at the gas tank? Are you hurting at the gas tank? Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum executives aren't hurting. Neither are the traders at Goldman Sachs and JP Morgan.

Corporate Tax rates now make up just 12% of our national revenues, where once they made up 35% (late 1950s).

This is not because corporate profits or any other taxes have risen substantially (although the payroll tax has).

So you know what I say to those who say it's for labor to step up and take a hit?

No, it's for class warfare.

Let's demand the rich (and their businesses) pay their fair share and an increase in the top marginal tax rate to 50%, and 70% or higher on finance industry profits.

They'll still be winning three Iraq Wars against the poor each year, but at least there would be some triage.

Not that I think this is very likely.

The poor are winning three Iraq Wars against the rich, this week.

And how did that go for the poor?

Every year.

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Answers to last week's crossword

Key provided by Helena Zhang

PRIMATES

RIBALDRY

NTS

ARILKINOVUM

CODASEAMANA

COPACTACR

OTECPISATAI

VEGAALATESITU

ERGASKSCREM

RTPASSER

LISPFDQUARK

OASTAAAAPANO

AREIDEALGAS

DYLGLARGEHIT

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That’s socialism and real class war, don’t let the Republicans fool you. We have lots of other options between here and there besides stopping services to children, the poor, the sick and the elderly.
Caltech Dance Show exhibits talent

Serpentina, “ which combined student Heather McCaig entitled solo performance by graduate group of graduate students in the particularly loud cheering by a particular performer was regaled Following the performance, one arms to reach the closest woman. maneuvers, ducking under linked at various times through intricate sequence. The men and women were lively, at times passionate, dance professors, discussing science in as the dream of a group of Caltech Salsa music. The dance was billed night was by a group of graduate activities. at conventionally “liberal arts” at science, they can be quite good that, although Tech students excel that, although a shout-out that was promised to me by the pair was never delivered. Next, a group of tap related, the girls did a good feature of keeping the performance thugged-out, despite the fact that the “RUDD” sign they held at the end pretty much quyashed any hopes of true gangsta spirit. The next performance, to Verano Porteño by Astor Piazzolla, featured guitarist Richard Verdugo and dance instructor Marta Leteltier. The two sat on a simple set of two wooden chairs, which Leteltier incorporated into her graceful movements. Though the dance was not as flashy or acrobatic as

From top, clockwise: Nina Budaeva and Nina Park perform a sultry rendition of music from Burlesque; the Keshia girls strike a pose as they dance to Blow and Hey Daddy (Daddy’s Home); K-Pop enthusiasts rejoiced as dancers performed Hoot by SNSD, miming shooting arrows at a bad boyfriend.

-Jaainam Chalpoomkaew

dance.” At the risk of sounding trite and uneducated in the nuances of ballet, I would compare the performance to something out of Black Swan, dark and foreboding but, perhaps because of this, utterly captivating. The movements that McCaig made, imitating a snake from the muscials Chicago and Burlesque, ending with an alluring sequence of moves involving a chair. The self-described “fun [and] sassy” dance did not disappoint, although a shout-out that was promised to me by the pair was never delivered. Next, a group of some of the other performances, the simplicity of the movements, and the passion infused into them by Leteltier, certainly seemed to fit quite well with the soulful melody from the guitar. The final two performances before the intermission consisted of a rendition of Hoot by the Korean Pop band SNSD and a modern dance to Send in the Clowns by Judy Dench. The former was a sassy rebuke of a boyfriend who couldn’t keep his eyes off other women, which was certainly fun to watch. Unfortunately I can’t say I understand K-Pop any better, especially considering that “Hoot” is apparently the sound people make when they “laugh/smirk and add a slight scoff to it.” The latter was certainly more somber, but was beautifully done. Junior Renee Wu, both a performer in the group and the choreographer, certainly did a wonderful job of using movement to convey emotion, as did the other two undergrads performing, Nina Budaeva and Mireala Shoddike. The second half of the dance show was even more dynamic then the first portion for the fact that two of the performances featured Ke$ha songs. Renee Wu made use of a long red ribbon in her dance to Michael Bublé’s Fever, creating the illusion of swirling shapes that surrounded her as she moved, while another dance duo showcased the West Coast Swing. Particularly interesting was Pallavi Gunalan and Sara Venkathees’s performance to Creater by Santogold. The two panicked a fight, which ended with the grisly scene of Venkateesh snapping Gunalan’s neck.

One of my favorite performances, partially due to the music, was entitled “Catch the Moon,” and was to Cosmic Love by Florence and the Machine. The four dancers used what my untrained eye would term “modern ballet,” or ballet set to contemporary music. The final sequence had the group passing a circular object, ostensibly the moon, down the line, with that lights fading out as the last dancer took hold.

Other dances during the second half included two group performances to pop songs (one was to Keshia’s Run Devil Run and the other was to Blow by Ke$ha and Hey Daddy (Daddy’s Home) by Usher) and one final ballet performance, based on a performance of the Sofia National Opera Orchestra. I have to say, coming to Caltech I was not expecting to be exposed to such a vibrant (albeit small) community of singers, dancers, actors, and musicians. I’m pleased to announce, though, that performances like those at the Caltech Dance Show have given me hope that, even as Techers, we can excel at the performing arts.

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APRIL 4, 2011
Imagine the most fun, girly Spring Break trip you possibly can. That's the Spring Break trip I took. In order of importance, my friend I and I shopped, window shopped, gave away $40 to San Francisco street performers, and ate way too much greasy Chinese food. When I got back to Tech, I was ready to get back down to "business".

"Business" is in quotation marks because I'm taking almost nothing this term. I was describing marks because I'm taking almost "business".

"They stare at me blankly when I say that it's a phi-four theory!" The term was so familiar from Ph127, but familiar just doesn't cut it in theoretical physics. (Trust me-- it is actually embarrassing that I don't know what phi-four means.) Unfortunately for me, I had fallen into the trap that my highest-achieving friends here had warned me about: it's one thing to finish problem sets and get good grades, but it's another thing entirely to really understand and remember concepts.

As Dumbledore would say, "We must all face the choice between what is right and what is easy." Easy: eating, shopping, good food, socializing. Right: re-reading Goldenfeld. It's time that I say good-bye to my wonderful life of senioritis.

This is an inspirational quote that will attract readers and improve the article's aesthetic.

- Jorge Cham
Can Alex Lapides jump over the moon?

Alex Lapides setting the school record in high jump (last year). In this particular picture, he is jumping over his name, not the moon. In fact, any suggestion that he can jump over the moon is untrue and irresponsible. I once saw him eat a whole bowl of CDS hummus, but that’s it.

**MARK EICHENLAUB**
Alumni Writer

Alex Lapides won the high jump at the SCIAC 4-Way meet at Caltech last Saturday, April 2. He defeated competitors from Pomona-Pitzer, Cal Lu, and Whittier by jumping 5.0710^-9 the way to the moon. Whether he will attain the full distance remains an open question, though sources close to him have noted that his next attempt will occur this week, at the Pomona-Pitzer Invitational on Saturday.

Lapides is closer than the previous statistic makes him appear.

Earth's gravitational potential decreases with height, so that Lapides' kinetic energy at takeoff was 3*10^-7 the gravitational potential at takeoff that is burned down to the bone. As this method takes several months, Lapides continues his training in breath-holding. Stephanie Wueth won the 3000m steeplechase, taking only about 4.3 times as long as thoroughbred racehorse “Paper Junction” would have needed to cover the same distance.

Paige Logan took second place in a shot put with a throw that, assuming an optimal trajectory, was 4*10^-7 the way around the Earth. The atmosphere is certainly more festive.

A generous alumnus, C. Richard Johnson provided hot dogs, bratwursts, nachos, sunflower seeds, and Big League Chew for all Caltech sports being played that day (Track, Tennis, Baseball, and Water Polo). At this point, I would like to state for the record that Big League Chew is the greatest thing to happen to mankind and made my childhood infinitely better. Of course, not all share this sentiment. Grumpy graduate student Ned Perkins chuntered, “This is probably the most unethical candy. It’s teaching kids about chewing tobacco.” Then, he snarfed down a couple hot dogs.

Perhaps more intriguing than Perkins’ hatred for happiness are the circumstances under which these snacks were afforded. In an e-mail circulated throughout the houses, Associate Director of Dining Services Jonathan Webster explained his rationale: “A few weeks back I read a Tech article by one of the baseball players. He mentioned that Caltech baseball was forced to start their season off with a ‘noticeable lack of pulled pork.’ Of course, we can’t have that. So, Blaine Matulevich you’re getting your wish!”

That’s right, friends, the Tech finally caused some degree of social change, which I think we can all agree is the true goal of the sports section.

More importantly, Blaine Matulevich finally did something productive. While none of the teams actually won on Saturday, it was a nice gesture towards Caltech athletics and certainly made me feel like I attended a normal school (or maybe that’s because I’m off core).

Hopefully the increased interest and emphasis placed on Caltech sports will translate into some wins.

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**AMOL KAMAT**
Sports Editor

This Saturday, the Caltech baseball team hosted The University of La Verne in a doubleheader. Fresh off a loss at La Verne the day before, the Beavers came out swinging, scoring two runs in the first game, off a David Carrega double, although they ended up giving up 23 runs to La Verne in a 7-inning mercy.

The second game of the doubleheader was truly a defensive battle, with just 12 combined runs scored by each team (12-0 in La Verne’s favor, also a 7-inning affair).

While the games may not have gone as swimmingly as the water polo game (okay, they lost both of their games, too, but do you see what I did there?), the atmosphere was certainly more festive.

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**CHAMPIONS**

The India National Cricket Team celebrates their win in the 2011 ICC World Cup while a sad, sweaty Sri Lankan cricketer watches on, longingly.
DON’T FREAK OUT!

The next issue of the Tech will be distributed on Thursday, April 14th: the first day of Prefrosh Weekend.

The California Tech
Caltech 40-58
Pasadena, CA 91125