TEDxCaltech: The Brain brings many to campus

On the morning of January 18, Caltech’s Beckman Lawn played host to more than its usual fare of passing students and professors. With occupations ranging from doctor to journalist, psychologist to artist, crowds of people braved the chill air to gather outside the Beckman and Ramo auditoriums. They had journeyed from lands and cities as far away as Belgium and Washington D.C. to attend a one-day event at Caltech.

As early as 8 am, people began forming neat lines on Beckman lawn, eager to be among the first to enter the auditoriums. Within an hour, the lines had stretched to more than the length of the lawn. By 9:30, the line to enter Beckman had wrapped around the corner of Beckman Behavioral Biology, extending past Schlinger and ending past Braun.

When the ushers reminded attendees that no food or drinks were allowed in the auditorium, one enthusiastic woman threw out her coffee rather than lose her place in line.

As attendees entered the auditoriums, there was a buzz of activity and excitement. Some were flipping through the event booklet; others were playing games on their iPads. Several were sitting quietly with notebooks and pens at the ready.

Such was the reception for TEDxCaltech: The Brain, Caltech’s second TEDx event. Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) is the name of a set of conferences owned by the non-profit Sapling Foundation. These conferences consist of talks from a wide range of topics in science and the humanities with the intent to inform, entertain, and distribute ideas in a way that is accessible to practically everyone.

According to the organization website, “We believe passionately in the power of ideas to change attitudes, lives and ultimately, the world. So we’re building here a clearinghouse that offers free knowledge and inspiration from the world’s most inspired thinkers, and also a community of curious souls to engage with ideas and each other.”

Continued on Page 3

News briefs from around the globe
Helping readers burst out of the Caltech bubble

Need to know
< 100 words about the world this week – topics sorted from good to bad by The Tech Eds

- Treaty limits mercury
- Obama sworn in as prez
- Cuba’s internet cable on
- Iranian public hangings
- Assassination attempt
- Boy kills family
- Algerian hostage crisis

140 nations make agreement to prevent emission of mercury [Nature]
4th time Obama has been sworn in due to Judge Roberts’ error [Huff Post]
1st high-speed optic cable in Cuba activated two years after creation [NYT]
2 hung for stabbing, gov responds harshly to crime to send message [BBC]
20-year political veteran Ahmet Dogan knocks gun from assailant [Guardian]
15-year old suspected of killing parents and siblings in New Mexico [ABC]
37 foreigners killed after militants attack gas plant in In Amenas [Reuters]
Write articles for the Tech

get paid up to $30

ASCIT Bylaw Amendment Proposal: Amendment to Article IX, Section 5

Replace: Each Corporation member will be assessed thirty-six dollars ($36) for the Big T, payable on the days of registration at the rate of twelve dollars ($12) per term.

With:

As of 2013, each Corporation member will be assessed fifty-seven dollars ($57) for the Big T, payable the day of registration each term at a rate of nineteen dollars ($19) per term. The values shall be adjusted in these bylaws each year by a relative amount equal to the percentage change in the average Consumer Price Index through a majority vote of the Board of Directors.

Rationale:
The current Big T dues cannot support an annual yearbook, due to an increase in publication costs and inflation. That was the main reason that the 2006-2009 yearbooks were combined into one yearbook, and that our last few yearbooks have been late. Currently, the student fee only covers half of the yearbook (approximately $35,000 per year), which is not enough to cover printing costs (approximately $66,000 per year). This would increase the student contribution to approximately $55,000 per year, which combined with advertising revenue will be able to fully support the annual printing costs of the Big T in future years. Also, the dues would be updated every year to account for inflation based off of the Consumer Price Index. Each year, the BoD would vote on a change, and the dollar prices and the year would be the only thing to change in the bylaws.

This year, the BoD pulled from reserves to allow the yearbook to be published, which is not a sustainable practice. If the yearbook is to survive in its current form, the dues must be changed, and so the BoD unanimously chose to propose this amendment.

*Approximation of the inflation rate of the past 20 years based off of the Consumer Price Index.
Since its founding as a single event in Silicon Valley, TED has spread all over the U.S. and made its way to Europe and Asia. In 2009, TED began licencing it to independent groups around the world to organize TED-like events. These events are distinguished as TEDx, with the x denoting the independent status. Two years ago, Caltech held its first TEDx. Titled “Feynman’s Vision: The Next 50 years,” this event was intended to reflect the spirit of Richard Feynman, a scientist of the 20th century and former Caltech professor, whose sense of curiosity and adventure was legendary.

This year, the theme of Caltech’s TEDx was the brain. Researchers from Caltech, the University of Toronto, and the University of Washington, among other institutions, came to share their research. Each talk explored some aspect of the human brain, from its processes of cognition and decision-making to its physical and chemical organization.

Frida’s TEDx talk was self-contained and would be unique to the Caltech community and re-tell the story of the butterfly, from the chemical soup to the adult butterfly. This talk would be an opportunity for the audience to learn about the brain and its processes. The audience would be encouraged to think about how they can use this knowledge in their daily lives.

The event featured eighteen talks spanning an array of topics, local entertainment groups and past TEDx talk attendees interpreted and translated the talks to their audience.

While several of the speakers had decades of experience and professional ties with Caltech (three were graduates, and six are currently pursuing their Ph.D.), quite a few shared their unique stories. Students, Jatin Chaudhry and Eugene Korsunskiy, graduates from Stanford University, spoke of the creation of ParkTruck, their cross-country vehicle equipped to inspire students across America to try prototyping.

Dr. Tom Insel of the National Institutes of Health discussed the brain’s role in mental disorders. Shannon West Photography

Continued from Page 1

Overview of TEDxCaltech: The Brain (continued)

many clapped and expressed their heartfelt sentiment aloud. At the end of all the presentations, a woman finished off the night with a humorous rhyming poem that summarized the events of the day.

All in all, as Anderson put it, each TEDxCaltech lasted for over 8 hours. Those who attended TEDxCaltech came from a variety of backgrounds. Stephanie Huard, 16, is a junior at South Lakes High school located at Reston, Virginia. Because of her interest in the biological sciences, she decided to attend the conference. With flair and confidence, she introduced herself as a budding scientist with a passion for watching TED videos online. When asked about the event, she said, “I’ve been watching the TED for years!”

Little did she know that the theme was intended to reflect the spirit of Richard Feynman, a scientist of the 20th century and former Caltech professor, whose sense of curiosity and adventure was legendary.

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Dr. Tom Insel of the National Institutes of Health discussed the brain’s role in mental disorders. Shannon West Photography
At the TEDxCaltech event on Friday, 25 professors, students, scientists, and engineers spoke passionately about the brain. This was the second TEDx conference held at Caltech, and many people hope it will become an every-other-year tradition. These talks are broadcast worldwide to over 100 countries worldwide. According to the TEDx website, 242 TEDx events will take place on six continents next month.

TEDxCaltech's first presenter, Thomas Insel of the National Institutes of Mental Health, described the brain as an “organ of surreal complexity,” and the audience certainly seemed to agree. When Jeff Lichtman of Harvard University described some of his work with connectomes, several audience members exclaimed “Ooh!” and “Whoo!” while others appeared to have been left speechless by the scale of his project.

During his presentation, Allan Jones of the Allen Institute for Brain Science emphasized the need for fresh, healthy brain tissue in his research. Where does his team get these brains? The medical examiner's office, of course. The ensuing nervous laughter from the audience relaxed a little when Jones spoke about a particularly memorable trip to the ME's office. A newly widowed younger woman gladly donated her husband's brain, Jones said, “She told me he wasn’t at all disorders, either. He committed suicide, and she said, ‘I want to help the next generation.’” Mark and Amy Weidman, a middle-aged couple from San Diego, California, are long-time TEDxCaltech attendees. They missed out on tickets for TEDxCaltech two years ago, but this time they registered as soon as the topic was announced to be sure that they would be able to get in on the excitement. Mark Weidman, a high school English teacher, said he likes the TED format because it provides “bite-sized portions for the audience to understand without being overwhelmed.”

After the first session, Amy Weidman, also a high school teacher, agreed. “Presenters didn’t pressure people with the information. We were able to appreciate how astonishing the topics were and how to apply this to our own students and inspire them in class.” Glória (declined to state her last name), who described herself as a “liberal arts person” and admitted that she was largely unfamiliar with biology, also said she was able to understand and appreciate the talks.

““They were not over my head!” Glória particularly enjoyed the presentations by graduate and undergraduate students. “The undergraduates’ enthusiasm was contagious,” she said. Sam Miao-Liy, the 22-year-old son of Caltech alumni, appreciated the fact that Friday’s conference was “much less competitive and much more community-driven” than others he has attended. Miao-Liy currently works at Massachusetts General Hospital, but he said the six-hour flight was well worth it. He laughed at the “cohesive feel” of the day but wished there had been a few more breaks between the talks. They would have given the audience more time to “digest the information that was relayed and discuss the concepts with likeminded people,” she said.

All the while that Christian and I were chatting, I kept imagining Chelsea's glance as she tried to get a better look at Christian. He left, he walked past her and I saw her duck over the remains of her lunch. I left soon after that and hurried off to prepare for my Physics 18 recitation section. On my way, I was thinking about how to best explain velocity transformations in special relativity to my section, but my thoughts were interrupted when I almost collided with Joe, zooming off to his next class.

Good old Joe. Always thinking hard about something, always focused. He doesn't care much for his interactions with others, but he is one great student, and he will be one great scientist. Perhaps he's hooped himself up in his studies because of what Chelsea was always complaining about. He decided to focus on his work while he's here, to get the most of the best out of Caltech and once he graduates, we will see how things change. He will become a full citizen, with a very good education. But perhaps, he will still be looking for someone he's created and remain in it even after graduating. Only time will tell. Thinking of this, I got completely confused because next I thought of Christian. As far as I know, he's no worse a student than Joe, but yet he has such a different personality. This contrast still confuses me. I caught myself in these thoughts when I realized I was already in the lecture hall and had to refocus on special relativity.
January 22, 2013

Zero Dark Thirty is a thrilling, must-see film

MALVIKA VERMA
Contributing Writer

DISCLAIMER: THIS REVIEW CONTAINS SPOILERS. READ AT YOUR OWN RISK.

“Where do you want to go?” Maya, a CIA operative and the heroine of Zero Dark Thirty, never answers, and the film ends as she stares at the other end of the cargo hold. She sits alone, and the audience is left to wonder if her personal struggle is over.

Kathryn Bigelow, director of the Oscar Best Picture The Hurt Locker, returns with a thrilling story about the chase for Osama Bin Laden, known as “UBL” (Usama Bin Laden) by the FBI and CIA.

The film takes viewers on a decade-long journey with the lonely CIA operative Maya (Jessica Chastain) from Sept. 11, 2001 until May 2, 2011.

In 2003, Maya is assigned to work at the U.S. embassy in Pakistan with fellow officer Dan (Jason Clarke).

In a CIA-operated black site, a location outside US legal jurisdiction, Dan interrogates Ammar, a detainee with connections to Saudi terrorists, and uses torture and humiliation to extract information from him. Maya stands masked in the “torture room,” where Ammar is waterboarded, deprived of food and water, and beaten.

After a short break outside, Maya returns with Dan to talk to Ammar, but with her mask off. She tricks him into obtaining information about “Abu Ahmed,” the personal courier for UBL. Maya believes that if she can find Abu Ahmed, she can find UBL. As she transitions to a veteran officer, Maya survives many attacks including the 2008 Islamabad Marriott Hotel bombing and an attack at her home.

She finds Abu Ahmed in his east Pakistani village and his large, isolated compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. As the compound is placed under heavy surveillance by the CIA for months, Maya attends a meeting with the President’s National Security Advisor and confidently states that there is a 100% chance that UBL is in the Abbottabad compound.

With President Obama’s approval, a U.S. Navy SEAL team raids the compounds on May 2, 2011. This last hour of the film is one of the most gripping film sequences I have ever seen.

Innocent lives are taken, a helicopter crashes, and as we are told by the government, UBL is found and killed. Maya visually confirms the body as that of Osama bin Laden and then boards the cargo hold to take her somewhere.

The film raises several questions aside from the ethics of torture. When and how will the war on terror draw to a close? Was bin Laden’s death worth the price we paid? How many “bin Ladens” are there for Maya to find?

Just as I prefer happy endings to movies, this review deserves a happy ending. 2012 was a great year for film, as good films actually made money (Argo, Lincoln, Skyfall, and Life of Pi for example). Go watch Zero Dark Thirty, and set your 2013 film to a winning start.

Rating: 8/10
Note: This film is rated R. There are torture scenes and some language you may be uncomfortable with.
OPINION

Reactions to Issue 10’s Caltech Couture

KIRBY SIKES
Contributing Writer

In a recent Caltech Couture article, writer Nina Budaeva described one person as “Not a man-girl who is only feminine by the biological definition, ... but a true girl.” I was not sure what Ms. Budaeva meant by this because there is not a biological definition for “feminine” maybe the word Ms. Budaeva was looking for here is “femal[e].” People who are only female by the biological definition, and nothing else are usually called “genderqueer,” not “man-girls.”

I want to be able to focus my energies on furthering my education instead of styling my hair...

However, Ms. Budaeva was not referring to genderqueer people when she said “man-girls.” She was referring to women who choose not to conform to the rather narrow definition of femininity that our culture has created. One aspect of Caltech culture is the dismissal of many social norms and an overall acceptance of other lifestyles, so I was surprised and offended by Ms. Budaeva’s statement.

We, as Techers, are smart people, and we are usually able to distinguish important values like integrity from morals that don’t really make sense like an aversion to homosexuality or an overemphasis on personal appearance. To me, Caltech is a community in which I can participate in generally socially unacceptable, but not ethically wrong behavior. Caltech is a place where I can be different ethically wrong behavior. Caltech is a community in which homosexuality or an overemphasis socially unacceptable, but not really make sense like an aversion to

KATHERINE KNOX
Contributing Writer

I don’t know what the reaction to the new Caltech Couture articles was in other houses, but at any house, let’s call it “Buddock” to protect its identity, we have discussions whenever a new issue of the Tech comes out about how ridiculous and offensive these articles are to any woman who doesn’t derive her entire self-worth from her looks. According to the most recent edition of Caltech Couture, which used to be about techers’ individual styles, you can’t be a “real girl” unless you spend an equal or greater amount of time on your looks as you do with your books.

The least edition of this wonderful testament to the creativity and varied skills present at Caltech admonished Chelsea’s “try for trying to impress her crush by excelling in the realm of academics instead of just being pretty.” Sure it might be easier for someone to find a man if she spends all her time improving herself and only briefly following him around and giggling at everything he says, but who wants a man who falls for that? It’s acceptable for a man to wait for his prospective partner about how for his personality and his intellect, why would it be any less acceptable for a woman to do the same? If all you’re looking for is physical attractiveness, then go ahead and make yourself physically attractive so you can attract someone with similar desires. But don’t tell the rest of us we’re wrong for trying for something more meaningful.

On the subject of “Lily’s” tutelage to Chelsea, it may be true that “no one knows who’s hiding under that t-shirt,” but the solution is not just to wear a tighter t-shirt. No woman is defined by the combination of her busts, waists, hips, and ass. Emphasizing your feminine traits and hiding your less attractive traits as “Lily” would suggest would not make it any easier for a stranger to get a concept of who you are. If the implication in the article was that enhancing your femininity was just one of the ways to attract someone’s attention before you get to know them better through conversation, it wouldn’t be a problem.

But the scorn for the girl who works hard on problem sets to get attention makes it clear that enhancing your physical traits is the only method endorsed. As mentioned before, some women prefer men who appreciate more than their physical attributes. Why would those women spend time on things that would attract a shallow, immature guy when they can just demonstrate their talents and personality and let things happen naturally?

Now that I’m ranting about the advice in the column I may as well get into “Lily’s” advice about not being a “man-girl.” Talk about offensive...

Apparently any girl who doesn’t spend all her time preening and trying to attract a man is not really feminine. It’s not even the description of which actions distinguish a “true girl” from the brutish “man-girl” which is offensive. There’s no problem with wanting to be pretty.

I’m willing to admit that I hate my body hair, and I spend time removing it because I greatly prefer my body hair, and I spend time removing it because I greatly prefer being pretty. Sure it might be easier to do the same when wearing $55,000 a year. Unlike “Chelsea,” I don’t know of anyone who is merely becoming a scientist in between “nourishing her real dream” of becoming a beautiful fairy tale princess.

My studies here are what I’m passionate about.

The Caltech Couture articles suggest that this is abnormal, or something to be ashamed of, which makes me wonder if we’ve gone back in time to the 1950s every time I pick up the new issue of the Tech. If Caltech Couture went back to what it was last year, a celebration of the multitude of unique styles present on campus, I think we could all be a little prouder of our newspaper. Even if the tips, which are buried within the preaching, were dug out and placed in a more prominent light we could count that as an improvement. It is certainly merited within the bulk of vitriol-inducing rubbish.

For one thing, the suggestion that we should take it upon ourselves to change when we first feel the desire rather than waiting for the new year is valid and something we should all take into consideration. And the tips on makeup are good, and if I were so inclined I would like to have a source to teach me how to enhance the features of my face.

However, any inclination I may have had to follow these tips is immediately stifled by the outrage I have at the insistence that I must follow these tips or else I’m some kind of monstrosity.

I also applaud the effort to make the articles less of depression more widely known, although I’m not sure how that fits into an article on fashion.

Three-in-one Professor of the Month Reception

October

Join Professors of the Month Michael Vanier, Joel Tropp, and Jason Alicea on January 25 from noon to 1 at the Olive Walk.

November

December
Caltech men’s basketball team battles CMS in hard fought, thrilling OT game

FROM GOCALTECH.COM

PASADENA, CA - In a game that saw 10 lead changes and eight ties the Claremont-Mudd-Scripps men’s basketball team pulled out a thrilling and hard fought overtime win over Caltech 69-65.

The Stags, who won the league's regular season and tournament title last season, came into the game in the top half of all major statistical categories in the league.

"The three underclassmen really stepped-up and played hard this evening. Probably the best game we have played since I have been here and we showed what we are made of," fifth year head coach Oliver Eslinger said. "Also, being alumni weekend, it was great for them to see us battle hard against the SCIAC’s top team."

The first two minutes of the extra session were played at a back-and-forth clip until the Stags took the lead for good with 2:57 left. Kevin Sullivan hit a driving lay-up to give Claremont-Mudd-Scripps a 62-61 lead they wouldn't relinquish. The Beavers turned it over on their ensuing possession which enabled the Stags to spread their advantage when Sullivan grabbed an offensive rebound and banked in another lay-up.

Still down by just one possession Caltech came-up empty when Michael Edwards missed a jumper with 1:42 left on the clock. Chris Rama made two foul shots to spread the Stags lead to five points (66-61). Edwards came down and hit jumper on the Beavers next chance with the ball but the Stags were equal to the challenge as Remy Pinson converted a lay-up with 34 seconds left.

Edwards got Caltech within three points once again as he nailed a jump shot with 21 ticks on the clock. Forced to foul, the Beavers sent Jack Grodahl to the foul line but he missed both free throws. Caltech's offense raced down the court but Bryan Joel missed a lay-up with 10 seconds left and the Stags grabbed the rebound. Caltech was forced to foul and when Jack Earley made the second of two free throws with five seconds left it sealed the win.

The Stags led the game for most of the second half but a hard fighting Caltech squad never let the game get out of reach. Andrew Hogue's three-pointer with 4:20 left gave the Beavers their first lead of the second frame at 51-48. Claremont-Mudd-Scripps retook the lead at 53-52 when Grodahl hit a three-pointer with 2:01 left.

The score stayed that way until Grodahl hit two free throws with 23 seconds left to increase the visitors lead to 55-52. Hogue brought Caltech within 55-53 with 10 ticks remaining. After the Stags missed two free throws two seconds later the Beavers were able to force OT when Joel calmly nailed two shots from the charity stripe with four seconds left. An off balance three-pointer by the Stags didn't draw iron at the buzzer.

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The Stags scoring was led by Sullivan's and Pinson's 13 point evenings.

FroM gOCAlTECH.coM

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The first half was low scoring as each team played solid defense but, in what proved to be a pivotal play in the contest, Pinson hit a running 25 footer as the halftime horn sounded. The off balance shot gave the visitors a 28-21 lead at intermission.

Each team placed four players in double figures. Joel’s 16 points off the bench led all scorers. Edwards chipped in a running 25 footer as the halftime horn sounded. The off balance shot gave the visitors a 28-21 lead at intermission.

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Caltech held a 42-34 rebounding edge over the SCIAC’s top rebounding team.

The Stags scoring was led by Sullivan’s and Pinson’s 13 point evenings.

Weekly Scoreboard

Women’s Swimming and Diving vs. Mills College W, 152-56 Final

Women’s Basketball vs. Claremont-M-S L, 63-40 Final

Women’s Basketball at La Verne L, 105-45 Final

Men’s Basketball at La Verne L, 90-66 Final

Upcoming Games

January 23, 2013 Men’s Basketball at Chapman 7:30 PM

January 24, 2013 Women’s Basketball at Chapman 7:30 PM

January 26, 2013 Fencing vs. IFCSC South vs. South @ UCSD 10:00 a.m.
Humor

GRASS-TYPE STARTERS

BY ALEC KRISTUFFU

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String theory is such a breeze...

Also students: in this equation, we have a mu, a nu, and an upsilon...

For more photos, videos, and archives of previous issues, check out the Tech website!

tech.caltech.edu

The California Tech
Caltech 40-58
Pasadena, CA 91125