NEERA SHAH
Editor-in-Chief

On Oct. 18, Caltech students who participated in the Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF) program presented their research at the annual SURF Seminar Day. Of the 392 students who were awarded a SURF this year, 318 were Caltech students. Every year, some non-Caltech students are given a SURF to participate in research on campus. Similarly, a few Caltech students use the opportunities of the SURF program to pursue research interests at other locations. (More research statistics can be found in the table.)

Senior Daniel DeFilippis completed his third SURF this summer—he has done research both on campus and at JPL before. This year, he worked with Professor Jon Swift in astrophysics on campus. Comparing his past experiences with this year’s, DeFilippis said, “All of the [previous] projects have been various forms of data analysis, but this was the first one where I actually participated in creating source lists for observing and also being in the observing room all night.”

The culmination of his SURF was a project titled “Characterizing M-dwarf Eclipsing Binaries in the Kepler Field.” DeFilippis explained his research as a focus on using the Keck telescopes to observe eclipsing binaries. According to DeFilippis, “Eclipsing binaries are stars that orbit each other in such a way that they pass in front of each other at regular time intervals when viewed from Earth. In this case, both of the stars in the eclipsing binaries were M-dwarfs, a small, cool type of star which are very common in our galaxy but not well understood. In observing these objects on different nights throughout the summer, we measured radial velocities for each of the stars to accurately calculate their masses and radii (also using light curves from the Kepler mission). Doing so would triple the number of measured M-dwarfs and provide a big step towards better understanding these stars.”

As most students do, DeFilippis learned a lot about both his field and about research in general throughout his SURF: “I sort of

CASEY HANDMER
Contributing Writer

Hong Kong is one of the most vibrant, prosperous cities in the world. Rising to power and prominence under British colonial rule, it was formally handed over to the People’s Republic of China in 1997. Despite being part of China, Hong Kong has always enjoyed a privileged administrative status under the One Country, Two Systems model with a substantially different economic structure and a vibrant political life. Hong Kong is ruled by a Chief Executive and a vibrant political life. Hong Kong is ruled by a Chief Executive and a Chief Legislative Council (something like a Senate) by universal suffrage to a large extent earned murmurs of approval.

In 2007, the Chief Executive at the time, Donald Tsang, published the Green Paper on Constitutional Development which was subsequently ratified by the National People’s Congress Standing Committee, the relevant governmental body in mainland China. Since the end of British rule there have been only three Chief Executives. They preside in a responsive way over the rapidly-developing economy and political climate, leading to a much more dynamic constitutional framework than that to which we are accustomed in the US. This Green Paper was seen as a compromise between mainland China and the Pro-Democratic movement, which enjoys the support of about 60% of the population, as it ruled out the possibility of a general election by universal suffrage in 2012 but allowed for the possibility of election of the Chief Executive and Legislative Council (something like the US Senate) by universal suffrage in 2017, then a decade away.

Fast-forward to 2014, and it is now time for the National People’s Congress (the Chinese governing assembly) to decide how to implement the recommendations of the Green Paper. To the original wording they added the stipulation that the Election Committee must preselect two or three candidates who “love the country and love Hong Kong,” and that any election by universal suffrage must include institutional safeguards for this purpose. While historically all elected Chief Executives have been Nonpartisan (pro-Beijing), a general election may spark this balance and lead to the legitimization of separatist policies. Beijing worries that this would set a dangerous precedent. The proposed vetting of candidates by >50% approval from the (mostly pro-Beijing) Election Committee largely obviates this concern, as does the process by which Beijing must officially appoint the Chief Executive for the duration of their term.

It is thus important to realize that the resulting protests are not pro-democracy in the sense that Beijing is removing pre-

Kayané Dingilian explains her project to a SURF Seminar Day attendee.

Photo Courtesy of Neera Shah

NANCY WEN
Contributing Writer

Laughter would be the best word to sum up this year’s 2014 Moon Festival Gala hosted by the Caltech Chinese Association (CaltechC). It was more than polite chuckles; the audience was ringing with belly-aching laughter. Gala organizers made a smart move to make this year’s performance focused on fun and humor, rather than the nostalgia of spending the Moon Festival away from home.

On Oct. 18, the CaltechC hosted the 2014 Moon Festival Gala in Ramo Auditorium to celebrate the Moon Festival and to welcome new incoming students. It was a night filled with delicious Chinese food, and delightful performances. The Moon Festival is an important holiday in the lunar calendar that symbolizes the joy of family reunion. For many of the new international students here at Caltech, this year’s Moon Festival was the first one they spent away from their families. The goal of the Moon Gala was to bring people together and welcome them to the bigger Caltech family. The CaltechC Auditorium to nearly full capacity, to watch the free performance.

The performances showcased the many talents of Caltech students, from opera to K-Pop, from instrumental renditions of Chopin’s Fantasie Impromptu by 11-year-old Shanshan Wang. Her calm stage presence and passionate performance at such a young age earned murmurs of approval.

The funniest performance of the night was the Two-Man Act by Lingxin Liu and Yefei Wang. Dressed in similar Chinese robes (something like a governor) who is elected by an Election Committee of (today) 1200 entities, representing individuals, districts, large business interests and other organizations, and serving up to two consecutive 5-year terms. Not unlike the governing structure of a modern multinational corporation, economic power carries real political power.

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Chen Ma is dancing to the Guoheng song Snow Mountain in Spring.

Photo Courtesy of Michael Wong

The Moon Gala was widely attended with around 350 tickets sold for the 45 dinner buffet from 5–7 p.m., according to TsaiKun (Xander) Zheng, vice president of CaltechC and one of the lead organizers of the Moon Gala. A local Chinese restaurant called Oriental Express catered the dinner. The food featured more traditional Chinese instrument.

Many of the other musical performances had an interesting fusion effect of playing Chinese songs on Western instruments such as piano, guitar, and violin. The audience was treated to a virtuosic rendition of Chopin’s Fantasie Impromptu by 11-year-old Shanshan Wang. Her calm stage presence and passionate performance at such a young age earned murmurs of approval.

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Caltech students discuss SURF research projects

Continued from page 1
already knew this, but observing, can be very frustrating! For one of our observing nights, fog came in about 3 hours before the weekly group meetings so this was Caltech, all of it was really cutting edge and neat," he said.

Jensen needed an MRI machine to collect some of her data, which she said was a great experience: "I got to use really powerful machines, which made me feel like I had more authority than I actually did. But, truly, I had a fun time learning how to use the MRI machines and watching the scans as they occurred." Something she learned that surprised her was that taking a hammer within 5 feet of the magnet (MRI machine) would rip the hammer right off your hand. She also encountered some interesting people as her study involved 26 subjects who participated in the research. During a previous SURF, she had also studied social influence on decision making. This was Jensen’s first SURF and said, “I had the best lab group that I could have gotten into. Everyone was very friendly and reasonable in what they expected of me as a first-time SURF student. They were always patient in describing new techniques or general methods of doing things.” She also sat in on the lab group’s meetings and was able to gain even more exposure to the field by talking with post-docs in the group.

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Continued from page 2

It opened my eyes to how I could incorporate the two in the future and inspired me to keep looking for new things,” Park said.

In the field of mechanical engineering, sophomore Sheila Murthy spent her summer designing the shutter assembly for CIBER2, which “measures the cosmic microwave background radiation and compared it for vibration testing which ensures that the more fragile components will be stable in space-like conditions.” Murthy was especially interested in novel 100 nm nanoparticles stuck to a surface earned her a trip to the International Society of Exposure Science conference in Cincinnati during the week of Oct. 13. Candace Rypisi, director of student-faculty programs, reflected on the 2014 SURF program and thought it went well: “For a few years we’ve been working on increasing the number of Caltech students who SURF at JPL. Last fall we began the Explore JPL Seminar Series. This is a lunch series where JPL scientists and engineers come down to campus to talk about their work and available projects for interested SURF students. It was well attended and this summer we jumped from 25 to 37 Techers SURFing at JPL. We are continuing the series this fall on Mondays at noon and hopefully the numbers of JPL SURFs will continue to grow.”

The SURF program began in 1979 and continues as the primary way students get involved with research at Caltech. Some students presented their research earlier this summer at the end of the 10-week SURF period, but most presented at Seminar Day. All presenters were eligible to compete to become a semi-finalist in the Doris S. Perpall Speaking Competition, which will be held in January 2015.

### Nak Won House: a reasonable choice for late-night meals

**HELEN EVANS** Contributing Writer

It’s 12:30 a.m. Seven hours have passed since you last had sustenance—or has it been longer than that? The hunger is starting to cloud your mind; you can scarce remember 10 minutes ago now, let alone how far back you wonder faintly if you would really miss a couple of toes if that is just society’s conditioning talking. And all the while, the growing is growing louder.

Yes, we’ve all been there: the late night hours of desperation, when scrounging up an odd, otherwise thoroughly unattractive brew of fast food seems the only way to stave off starvation. For those with non-pedestrian modes of transportation and a few burnable dollars, there are many decent late-night restaurants.

One such place is Nak Won House, a small 24-hour restaurant about 15 to 20 minutes from campus. Located in LA, it is tucked into a complex of other small Asian restaurants that is on the popular side, which can make parking difficult, but Nak Won itself is usually not too busy late at night, aside from maybe a smattering of people occupying a few tables.

Little is striking about the place as you enter. The décor looks as though it was lifted straight from a B-list Korean drama: small wooden tables; their surfaces covered in panes of glass, are laid out neatly across the room, matched with inexpensive wooden chairs; the walls are plastered in menus with pictures of their food to make you salivate and full-length mirrors to make you self-conscious—a sound business strategy; all in all.

Upon arrival, the waitresses are fairly quick to seat your party at a table and begin taking orders; while their English is slightly lacking, they are genial and generally provide good service. They begin by serving a round of barley tea, a dull orange-brown liquid, in plastic pitchers with a matching set of cups. The tea has a vaguely dusty flavor that can be strange and off-putting on first blush, but after a sufficient quantity is imbibed, it is a most quenching drink indeed. For example, a spicy daikon kimchi, a green bean and separate rice come still in their final stages of cooking, sizzling in their pots as steam rises from the depths with a high probability of fogging many pairs of glasses.

Best of all, particularly to come still in their final stages of cooking, sizzling in their pots as steam rises from the depths with a high probability of fogging many pairs of glasses. For example, a common favorite is the BBQ beef, a rich, sweet meat dish that is $13.99, the BBQ beef dish is on the expensive side of their prices, but it is also a very filling dish. However, the majority of their menu options like my dumpling broth dish fall around $8.99, quite reasonable given the plentiful appetizers and, for those with small- to moderate-sized stomachs, the significant amount of leftovers that is often left on them to your heart's content. The hunger is starting to cloud your mind; you can scarce remember 10 minutes ago now, let alone how far back you wonder faintly if you would really miss a couple of toes if that is just society's conditioning talking.

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**THE CALIFORNIA TECH**

Student-Faculty Programs hosts SURF Seminar Day

**Continued from page 2**

Sheila Murthy spent the summer working on CIBER2's shutter assembly. **Photo Courtesy of Neera Shah**
Various groups lead peaceful protests in Hong Kong

Continued from page 1

existing rights, but that they are being punished promised progress on the issue. Hong Kong has never had anything like representative democracy. It is also far from clear that the current majority government would naturally serve the best interests of the people, who enjoy prosperity borne by the free-wheeling economic nature of the city, a prosperity certain to be harmed in any chilling of relations with the West.

The K-pop protest is not by a singular group, but actually involves representatives of four distinct groups. The first participants in the protest were student-led groups who announced and executed a weeklong class strike. Comprised of Scholarism, representing secondary school students, and Hong Kong Federation of Students, representing tertiary school students, they began their protest by ditching school for a week to really get their point across. Of course, no longer in school, these students sought to occupy public spaces and subsequently had antagonistic encounters with police. While tame by the standards of the Arab Spring or even Occupy Wall Street, the use of pepper spray and tear gas against secondary school students galvanized the movement, leading to the accelerated involvement of the third group, Occupy Central with Love and Peace, a non-violent local branch of the Occupy movement. The fourth movement, the pan-democracy camp, is an alliance of the many pro-democracy political factions in Hong Kong. They must be the patient advocates of democracy in this particular instance.

The student-led groups have stated their goals are: universal suffrage, resignation of the incumbent Chief Executive CY Leung, partly in response to perceived disingenuous statements and actions as the protests unfolded; the withdrawal of the decision of the National People’s Congress to subjugate a new electoral reform plan that includes civil nomination of candidates for the Chief Executive; this is not your garden variety protest. International students in Hong Kong have voiced their concerns.

The protests, which have consisted of disruptive occupation of central arterial streets, have been exceptionally well organized, with guest lectures, homework, decentralized distribution of food, water, clothing, shelter, and the development of mobile medical facilities. Communication has also stepped up—lessons learned during Egypt’s short-lived revolution now translate to dedicated apps for encrypted peer-to-peer mesh networks, although many participants’ phones were also compromised by phishing attacks until app-based consensus gains traction. The protests became known as the Umbrella Movement due to the innovative use of umbrellas to deflect tear gas canisters, which were, as protesters noted, often manufactured in the US and a relatively tiny fraction of injuries. The protests, which have generally interacted with a great deal of mutual respect, as the key stakeholders, consisting of entrenched business interests and a deep-pocketed government, have not been a single death, a relatively rare occurrence.

To date there has not been a single death, and a relatively large number of protestors have returned to school, but still return to the streets in substantial numbers in rapid response to progress or lack thereof during ongoing negotiations. What is the outcome? In many respects the protests have been apocalyptic. Protesting about a proposed political process three years in advance is unprecedented. The key stakeholders, consisting of entrenched business interests aligned with Beijing, as well as a Beijing extremely wary of local movements for separatist or autonomous political innovation, are unlikely to budge. On the other hand, a new generation of youth educated with relatively unfettered access to the Internet and personal communication tools of extreme efficiency have a strong interest in gaining unfettered access to the political process both within Hong Kong and China more generally. Although the state has a jealously guarded monopoly on violence, it is likely that any suppressive response is likely to spawn matching unrest on the mainland, with the possibility of future Peking Opera Square-like troubles. Although the main sources of endemic unrest on the mainland—perceived economic injustices against the people of Hong Kong, the possibility of a forged common cause is likely to lead to some tense meetings in the halls of power. At the least, token concessions carefully measured to avoid encouraging protest action are nonetheless likely to materialize in order to appease ongoing frustration in the youngest generation.

Perhaps the least terrible hypothetical outcome is the eventual formation of a second, lower house of government, a chamber of the people, elected by universal suffrage, to complement a senate-like body of the Executive Committee and Legislative Council, where the Chief Executive becomes in essence a powerful Secretary of the Treasury. Meanwhile a Secretary of State elected by the lower house leads the government and bargains hard for Hong Kong’s ongoing semi-autonomy and ensures that Hong Kong’s continued prosperity is not derailed. This blunder is probably the single greatest contributor to the current protests, especially in contrast to the overworked Hong Kong police, who have also protected the pro-democracy protestors from violent attacks by pro-business or Triads-linked counter protestors. As of this week, many protestors

CaltechC celebrates Moon Festival with community

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In addition to musical and comedic performances, the audience also received some words of wisdom from Professor Yuk Yung of Caltech’s Department of Planetary Science, who performed two pieces of poetry in English and Chinese with the latter poetical twist for the latter written poem for his wife in celebration of their ruby anniversary (40 years of marriage). He shared this gem: “To be successful in academia, you must write papers. To be successful in love, you must write poetry.” According Xiao, the Moon Gala has a rich history as it has been held every year since 1993. Preparations of the Moon Gala start even before classes at Caltech begin. Auditions are held the first weekend of the fall term. All the new members of the CaltechC have gotten to know each other. The auditions are fairly informal, and performances are sometimes focused or combined in order to give everyone a chance on stage. The result is a close-knit group of performers who have fun while rehearsing and share their joy with the audience through their performances.

CaltechC was founded in 1985 and currently has over 200 members, including undergraduates, graduates, postdocs, and faculty members. The CaltechC also hosts an event for the Spring Festival Gala to celebrate the Chinese New Year. In addition to these celebrations, the CaltechC organizes events such as the campus-wide Badminton Tournament, Table Tennis Tournament, and various hiking excursions throughout the year.

More information on events and activities hosted by the CaltechC can be found on their website at www.cs.caltech.edu/~chinese/.
Soccer team plays very well, other team plays better

**GOCALTECH.COM** Actual Sports Content Editor

PASADENA, Calif. (Oct. 15, 2014) - Sophomore John David Feist (Dallas, Texas / Jesuit College Prep) and the rest of a resurgent Caltech men’s soccer team pushed the University of the Redlands to the edge before falling by the narrowest of margins in a 1-0 Southern California Intercollegiate Athletic Conference defeat on Wednesday afternoon.

The Bulldogs improve to 8-7 overall and retain their third-place position in the SCIAC at 7-4, while the Beavers are now 13-2-1 (10-10).

Having cruised through the teams’ last meeting, Redlands struggled to get anything going against what has been one of the top defenses in the conference over the past month. Redlands enjoyed the majority of possession and had several chances go begging in the first 45 minutes, but were unable to break through against the Caltech rearguard anchored by impressive sophomores Jared Reed (Miami, Fla. / Westminster Christian) and Feist, who made 10 saves on the day.

The halftime scoreline of 0-0 marked the fifth time in the last six games that Caltech has recorded a first half shutdown. A formation change looked to improve on the Beavers’ first 45 minutes and, when the second half began, it was clear that while Redlands continued to hold onto the ball, they were being denied any serious opportunities by the Beavers.

A tactical change by Head Coach Rolando Uribe 15 minutes into the half nearly paid off as a counterattack down the right side ended with a low cross that found sophomore Kevin Guo (Los Alamitos, N.M. / Los Alamitos) unmarked at the top of the penalty box, but his shot went right into the hands of the Bulldogs goalkeeper.

Six minutes later, the Bulldogs’ Nico Johnson swung in a looping cross that found the head of Charles Izdorek at the back post for the game’s only goal.

“I am very proud of the team’s performance in the last six SCIAC games,” Uribe said. “I have been here a long time and never experienced the great soccer and fight this team has shown over this period. We can compete with any team in the SCIAC and our results show that. It is a remarkable improvement from last year, and to have given up 22 fewer goals than last season at this same point is awesome.”

**We did the thing and we did it well: Cross Country Edition**

**GOCALTECH.COM** Actual Sports Content Editor

LA MIRADA, Calif. (Oct. 17, 2014) – Led by new school records in both the men’s and women’s races, the Caltech cross country teams turned in many strong performances at the SCIAC Multi-Duals at La Mirada Park on Friday evening.

Junior Aditya Bhagavathi (Plainshor, N.J. / West Windsor-Plainsboro) paced the squad with a third-place finish as every men’s runner recorded a personal-best time. Bhagavathi posted his second successive career-best performance, shaving another 28 seconds off his time to finish with a program-record 23:28.18, which bested the previous mark of 23:44 set in 2001 (records kept since 1999).

A quartet of seniors followed Bhagavathi across the finish line in quick succession, with Ian Koss (Fort Collins, Colo. / Poudre) coming in at 27:39.74, Jared Forte (Lake Elsinore, Calif. / Elsinore) posting a 27:54.85 and Juan Adame (Sylmar, Calif. / Sylmar Math/Science/Technology Magnet) rounding out the scoring at 28:11.45.

Caltech earned sizable wins against Chapman University, California Lutheran University and the University of La Verne while coming up just short against the University of Redlands, 27-28, for a dual meet record of 3-5, marking the most wins in over a decade (2003).

Junior Elliot Simon (Alexandria, Va. / Thomas Jefferson) and sophomore Joel Kosmatka (Tallahassee, Fla. / Lawton Chiles) dropped over one minute from her time just two weeks prior to run her way into the record books, establishing a new SCIAC school record of 25:00.45, and finish 21st overall.

Freshman Caroline Attyeo (Marjory Stoneman Douglas) improved her previous time by 1:14 to run a 24:05.58 and move up to fourth on the all-time list. Racing together for the first time, sophomores Emily Mazo (Bala Cynwyd, Pa. / Harriton) and Mazo shaved 26 seconds and 24-second improvement from two weeks prior. Junior Sheila Lo (Arcadia, Calif. / Arcadia) had a breakout performance with her 29:55.8, an improvement of 2:18. Freshman Caroline Howard, vaulting to the third place on the all-time list of her life, rounded out the top seven, finishing in 30:27.54.

She was followed by junior Emily Jensen (M德est, Calif. / James C. Enoch) at 30:45.18, senior Carla Watson (San Diego, Calif. / Westview) in 31:11.41 – a 23-second improvement – sophomore Kate Evans Suwannae, Ga. / Lambert) at 31:33.1 – a 1:08 improvement – and freshman Tiffany Zhang, who made her cross country debut in 32:31.53.

**Upcoming Games**

**Women’s Volleyball**

**Fri. Oct. 24 @ 7:30p - La Verne**

**Sat. Oct. 25 @ 6p - Whitman**

**Men’s Water Polo**

**Wed. Oct. 22 @ 4p - Chapman**

**Pomona-Pitzer Men’s Soccer**

**Wed. Oct. 22 @ 7p - Cal Lutheran**

**Men’s Cross Country**

**Sat. Oct 18 vs. Cal Lutheran, L, 5-1**

**Fri. Oct. 24 @ 7:30p - Cal Lutheran**

**Men’s Soccer**

**Wed. Oct. 22 @ 4p - Chapman**

**Sat. Oct. 25 @ 11a - Pomona-Pitzer**

**Men. Oct. 27 @ 7p - La Verne**

![Scoreboard](gocaltech.com)

![Upcoming Games](gocaltech.com)
ASCIT Minutes

ASCIT Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes for 12 October 2014. Taken by Sean McKenna.

Officers Present: Catherine Jamshidi, Nima Radizadegan, Connie Hsueh, Patrick Nikong, Annie Chen, Sean McKenna

Guests: Elliott Simon, Ellora Sarkar, Chris Dosen

Call to Order: 9:05

Agenda:

President’s Report (Cat):
• Dean Dabiri has announced that he will be moving to Stanford on July 1st. The BOD will be working hard to complete “wish-list” items in the few months that remain. Contact a member of the BOD if you suggestions for what should be finished before Dean Dabiri’s term expires.

Officer’s Reports:

V.P. of Academic Affairs (ARC Chair: Nima):
• Student-Faculty Conference planning is still happening.
• Vice Provost’s office would like to work with the ARC on experimental teaching (MOOCs), improving TQFRs and other evaluations, and scientific writing.
• The Honor Code committee will present a preliminary report to the Faculty Board soon, which will be made available to students sometime in the future.
• ARC Frosh Reps will be selected on Wednesday.

Secretary (Sean):
• ASCIT now has a twitter account! Follow @ASCITtweets.

Reminders:
• The Honor Code committee will present a preliminary report to the Faculty Board soon, which will be made available to students sometime in the future.

Social Director (Annie):
• We’re still in a drought! Water conservation is important. Particularly, if you notice that a sprinkler is positioned incorrectly and is watering the sidewalk or something, report it to sustainability@caltech.edu.

Treasurer (Patrick):
• Tom is working with the Alumni Association to set up an Executive Social Committee in addition to the Socteam.
• Annie is still working with administration on setting up a timeline and financial details for Big I, but this information will be distributed to the houses as soon as it’s available.
• Tom is working with the Alumni Association to set up an Interstellar event at the beginning of December.
• ASCIT projector and SAC Courtyard ping pong table have been approved.

Director of Operations (Connie):
• Club Funding is happening on Sunday the 26th.
• Applications are due on Monday the 20th.

Meeting Adjourned: 10:00
The high-energy show began with vocalists in bright ensembles: Soleil-inspired demonstration of hair, beauty and talent. The audience what the phrase “To the top!” really means by performing this. The first demonstration of how the audience feels involved and engaged, and the show’s capacity to make an audience lose themselves, if only for an hour. The answer-and-call session that followed, as if only for an hour. The answer-and-call session that followed, as if only for an hour. The answer-and-call session that followed, as if only for an hour.

The next act was perhaps my favorite of the night: a female body contortionist named Salaam from Ethiopia who slinked to the stage in a bright yellow suit and bended people. She made poses that didn’t begin to compare to my high school’s cheerleading team were up next, closely followed by a performance on Oct. 18 called “How low can you go?” another meaning by bending backwards and walking under a pole about a foot above the ground.
Humor

Caltech student sets academic record

TIM SINCLAIR
Contributing Writer

“It was like no one was even trying to beat me.” Cody Smarts, 18, makes everything seem easy when he’s in his zone. That particular zone is Baxter Lecture Hall, from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. Through the first two weeks of classes, Smarts holds the highest in-class score in Math 1a. But Smarts’ performance so far is not just amazing; it is historic. No student has ever asked as many questions, or pointed out as many mistakes on the board as Smarts has through the first two weeks of any Math 1a class.

“I’m a competitive person by nature,” Smarts tells us. “Most Caltech students don’t understand that class is a competition, not a learning environment.” Yes, interrupting class comes naturally to Smarts, but he does set his record under different circumstances than the previous record holders. We asked Jon Buscutti, a senior math major who has tutored Math 1a since he was a sophomore, what was different this year.

“Usually, math professors won’t call on students this often. Nets Katz, who started teaching the course last year, seems to be calling on students at a higher-than-average rate. We started seeing signs that a record could be set soon when, after the midterm last year, Katz explained one of the problems in class, and answered 15 questions on that problem alone.”

When Smarts first arrived at Caltech, he was full of talent. Bored in high school one too many times, Smarts decided to have more fun by interrupting class whenever he could. “I’ll admit that at some point I realized that if I slow down class enough, I could actually do better against the curve, because the teacher wouldn’t be able to get through all the material in time. I learn better from books anyway. I quickly realized that was unethical and stopped using it to my advantage. It’s like betting on a professional sports game as a player. I felt it distracted from the spirit of the game.”

He’s completely changing the game. Cody knows how to get the professor’s attention in a million different ways. He can get the professor to call on him with just a facial expression.

“He can believably both understand a lecture well enough to ask a question that demonstrates how much he knows, and also get baffled by a tiny mistake on the board that wasn’t important. I mean, obviously he’s not confused by most of the mistakes he finds because they take a lot of knowledge of the subject to notice; he just sells it so well.”

The last student to record the most class interruptions during the first two weeks of Math 1a went on to record the most class interruptions during the entire term of any Math 1a course. That student, of course, was Georgia Fu, who set her record exactly a decade ago in Fall term, 2004. Fu is the first international student to hold the record and represents a growing academic super-power: China.

“I think the other students are a little more accepting of Smarts’ interruptions than they usually would be,” Buscutti explained. “It’s like they want to bring the trophy back to America. Our education system might be behind China’s in math, science, and reading, but we can at least show our dominance in forcing all the other students to pay attention to us. It’s the American way.”

To get updates on Smarts’ progress throughout the year, follow @Sh**CaltechSays on twitter.

The California Tech
Caltech 40-58
Pasadena, CA 91125

Acquired Taste

Dr. Z

Turtle Lover

Answers to previous crossword

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Answers to previous Sudoku

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