Candidacy Statements for ASCIT Positions

President (3)

ANDRE-COMELLA
President Candidate

Let’s talk about ASCIT.

In my too-long time here, ASCIT has largely been composed of people who failed to represent the wills of the people they were supposed to serve. I’ve seen ASCIT Presidents ignore the plights of entire Houses and sell out to Admin for good will and a pat on the head. I’ve seen a Treasurer neglect to refund clubs for months, if ever. I’ve seen ASCIT President candidates make large promises, only to see them fall to pieces, to insane amounts while money promised to Houses for their own events often fails to materialize.

ASCIT was created to organize and protect students, but has fallen short because we are allowing that to be the norm. Many people of great power at this Institute aren’t familiar with undergraduate culture or government. You cannot overestimate how much titles mean to people like this. A title tells people that their wider has power, popularity, and the support and consent of the governed. There could not be a more dangerous misconception. The ASCIT President has serious codified power as well, being one of the few students who has the right to speak and be heard at faculty board meetings. The President is a point of contact with administration, along with the IHC chair, one of the first opinions they ask for, and a frequent member of ad hoc meetings on major changes.

The election for ASCIT President, as well as for most ASCIT offices, is little more than a popularity contest. A good deal of ASCIT officers have been friendly faces who said nice things at House dinners in the week leading up to the election. I’ve met many candidates who haven’t even heard of you before them? How many times since? Officers have often failed to stay connected to the people they claimed to represent. Regardless of what you think of their Houses, we can all agree that there are some things wrong with holding an office tasked with representing the campus only interacting with one’s own House. As the construction of Bechtel continues, this year’s President will have a large role in discussions on the most fundamental aspects of student life, so make sure they understand your life.

Let me be clear, I don’t want to be ASCIT President. I won’t even be here beyond fall term. This is about making a statement, and hopefully, a difference. If you do, for some reason, decide to elect me, I’ll do what I’ve always done: work hard for the student body to make this place better in whatever ways I can. Those of you have known me, who have seen me work for this campus, have seen me fight for students before, will know that that’s a genuine promise. One that I’ll keep because not just got me elected, but because that kind of service is as core and vital to me as the beat of my heart or the breath of my lungs. I’m not asking you to vote for me (honestly, mostly the opposite), just to only vote for people that can guarantee you the same commitment I would. If that’s not you, then remember that No is on every ballot, and is a drastically underutilized option. Leadership is more about serving than leading, and we all need to remember that. Let’s make a commitment, all of us, to elect people who will genuinely care for us and to hold the elected accountable to their duties and their promises.

SAKTHI VETRIVEL
President Candidate

Hello everyone! My name is Sakthi Vetrivel, and I’m running to be your ASCIT President. *waves aggressively*

this past year, I served as the ASCIT Director of Operations, managing clubs, publications, and ASCIT equipment. As a member of the ASCIT Board of Directors, I’ve had the privilege of contributing to discussions surrounding student life with the deans, Vice President of Student Affairs, and the rest of our student leadership. Through these conversations, I’ve not only gained the trust of our administration, but also context surrounding decisions such as Bechtel and the Hameetman Center. Given the opportunity to continue on the Board of Directors, I’m excited to continue these conversations to fight for big changes, like maintaining control over our UCC systems, and for the little details, like keeping a deep fryer in Chouze when it moves to Hameetman.

If elected as ASCIT president, I’d like to host drop-in hours every year for every class to vote on and hold them accountable to their duties and their concerns. I’d also like to set up opportunities for more of the student body to interact with members of administration, such as lunches hosted by the Deans for a rotating assortment of students, since they currently only regularly interact with a few select student groups.

I will also open up channels of communication between students and our Security team to make sure we’re on the same page to work towards a memorable college experience. Part of that plan is to work to reduce the severity of alcohol policy by offering to implement more alcohol education programs from students. I believe that will help us rebuild the trust with admin that we need for campus to flourish. I’d also like to advocate for more streetlights on campus, so students are safer walking back to their houses at night. I would also like to work with our environmental team to refill Millikan Pond and run our fountains as the drought lessens.

I was lucky enough this year to join the Prefrosh Yield Committee to work with all of the houses to coordinate Prefrosh Weekend. Meeting the newest members of our community has reminded why I fell in love with this campus. And as terrible as it is sometimes, I’m glad I’m here. I’ve worked to cultivate a welcoming and compassionate community as a member of groups such as the Title IX Advisory Board. And through coordinating Techstock and various other social events, I’ve worked to make Caltech (at least many many) more fun. I’d like to continue that by bringing back big next year, which I believe to be an important, long-standing tradition.

I believe in protecting students. And I believe that we as students have the power to change Caltech for the better. If you have any questions or any changes you’d like to see implemented, I encourage you to email me at svetrive@caltech.edu. I’d love to hear from you!

Let’s take charge of our campus.

ROBIN BROWN
President Candidate

We, as undergraduates, owe it to ourselves to protect our own interests in light of the changes being brought to Caltech. We can do so by electing student government officials who will listen to us, and make our voices heard to administration. This is exactly what I would do as ASCIT President. I plan on regularly publishing updates on issues concerning undergraduates, and hosting office hours, during which students are encouraged to bring up issues they would like addressed, and voice their concerns.

Many of you, myself included, chose Caltech for the unique undergraduate experience. As ASCIT President, it would be my primary goal to preserve this unique experience as we interact into the workforce. With decisions about Bechtel looming in the future, it is important for us to engage in thoughtful discussions with administrations about what makes Caltech so special to us. It is also necessary for us to listen to the concerns of administration so we can respectfully address and dispel them as necessary. To achieve this, I will create more forums for productive conversation; for example, small group lunches with administrators in Student Affairs (in addition to the current town halls). Secondly, I would create a committee to work with the Caltech Alumni Association to gain a better understanding of the Caltech undergraduate experience, and how it has evolved in time. Most importantly, I will bring complete transparency to this process by publicizing the timeline for these decisions, who is making the decisions, and what conversations are being had about Bechtel.

The recent reforms to the UCC (soon to be Peer Advocate) program is the result of a several yearlong effort to strengthen the mental health network. The program will standardize the role of selection of students functioning as supportive resources and provide access to a more in-depth training; this is intended to address an apparent lack of confidence in the UCC program. However, this program fails to take into consideration the very different, and important roles UCCs currently play in the Houses. As ASCIT President, I would work with the IHC, Head UCCs, RAs, RLCs, and the Counseling Center, to determine the unique needs that UCCs meet in each house, and further refine the Peer Advocate program to meet these needs without sacrificing the improvements to the program.

Finally, I would like to address concerns about career support for undergraduates in all fields. During the most recent Student Faculty Conference, the Industry Opportunities Committee recommended creating formal student committees to liaise with the Caltech Career Development Center and Caltech Alumni Association, and the formalization of mentorship programs within the Caltech community. As President, I would work closely with the Academic Review Committee to see these projects through to completion.

I have had the privilege of serving the student body since I first became involved with ASCIT my freshman year. In that time, I have developed the strong, longstanding relationships with members of administration necessary to being an effective President. But most importantly, I hope I have demonstrated my commitment to improving student life. If elected, I would continue to devote my time and energy to serving the undergraduate community.

Feel free to reach out to me at rbrown@caltech.edu with any questions, comments, or concerns. Thank you for your time.
**Upcoming Events**

**Poster Making for March for Science**
Thursday | April 20th | 6:00 - 8:00 PM | Avery House Courtyard / Dining Hall
Join teachers preparing signs for the LA and Pasadena science marches while experiencing the talents of Magici Castle magician Rmax! Rmax will do strolling magic during the sign-making and will have a stage performance to round out the refreshments and sign-making Materials Provided.

**Caltech Y Spring Friends Dinner with Dr. Charles Elachi**
“The Golden Age of Exploration”
Thursday | April 20th | 6:00 PM | The Athenaeum | $85 pp
Please join us for our upcoming Friends Dinner with our guest speaker Dr. Charles Elachi who will be speaking on the topic: “The Golden Age of Exploration”
JPL missions have visited every planet in our Solar System. Over the last fifteen years, three rovers have explored Mars in coordination with a number of orbiters. Samples have been brought back from a comet tail and the solar wind. Saturn and its satellites have been studied extensively with Cassini. Planets around neighboring stars were discovered. Many new insights in our planet’s environment have been acquired.
Dr. Elachi will describe, from firsthand experience, the excitement and impact of these discoveries and the challenges and risks for the next 15 years.

**March for Science**
Saturday | April 22nd | Pasadena and LA
Join Caltech students in demonstrating support for science and science funding in the US. Groups of students will be attending both the Pasadena March for Science and the LA March for Science. Also look out for March for Science t-shirts and a banner that you can sign outside of Chandler during lunch.
The Pasadena March will start at Beckman Lawn at 8:00 am and walk to Memorial Park. Visit www.facebook.com/MarchForSciencePasadena for more details.

Students wanting to attend the LA March must meet on campus at the parking lot north of the Beckman Auditorium and receive a free shuttle to the Gold Line, more details at https://www.facebook.com/events/566007587183467/.
For general information on the LA March see http://marchforsciencela.com/.

**Your world awaits... will you act?**
The Caltech Y Advocating Change Together (ACT) Award
Applications are due by Friday, April 21st no later than noon
www.caltechy.org/programs/services/commservice/ACT/index.php for applications and more information
Optional Info Dinner – Tues. April 11th - 6 pm - Hosted By Tom Mannion.
RSVPs by April 7th to http://tinyurl.com/Y-Awards
Get an issue or cause that warrants attention? Explore the issue - by attending a conference, training, or workshop, or choosing to immerse yourself with a mentor or organization and be their inspiration. If you feel unqualified, don’t worry. Ultimately, mentoring is about being a consistent, dependable friend—not a surrogate parent or psychiatrist. To get started, contact noelle@caltech.edu.

**March for Science**

The LA March will start at Caltech’s Beckman Auditorium www.events.caltech.edu | 626.395.4652

Photos should demonstrate the pillar in action. Photos of people are preferred, but exceptional scenic pictures will also be accepted. After the deadline, we select the finalists, upload them to our Facebook page, and our fans vote for their favorites to determine the winners. Winners will be announced on June 1st.
Deadline to Submit Photos: Wednesday, May 10, 2017

**Hathaway Sycamores**
Every Wednesday | 6:00 - 8:00 PM | Highland Park
Volunteer at Hathaway Sycamores, a group that supports local underprivileged but motivated high school students. There are a variety of ages and subjects being tutored.
The service trip includes about an hour of travel time and 1.5 hours of tutoring. Transportation is included.
For more info and to RSVP email Sherwood Richers at strikers@tapir.caltech.edu. Eligible for Federal Work Study.

**Pasadena LEARNS**
Every Friday | 3:00 - 5:00 PM | Highland Park
Volunteer at Hathaway Sycamores, a group that supports local underprivileged but motivated high school students. There are a variety of ages and subjects being tutored.
The service trip includes about an hour of travel time and 1.5 hours of tutoring. Transportation is included.
For more info and to RSVP email Sherwood Richers at strikers@tapir.caltech.edu. Eligible for Federal Work Study.

**Beyond the Y**

**Caltech Earth Week 2017 Events**
April 15-22, various locations
Join the Caltech community for a week of events! April 15-22 to celebrate Earth Day! There will be theater performances, opportunities to engage with local environmental organizations, and lunchtime speaker seminars on a variety of topics ranging from environmental justice to urban forestry. Visit www.earthday.caltech.edu for the full schedule of events!
The ARC chair has the power to guide the direction of the ARC and shape campus wide discussions. My biggest goal for the ARC has been better communication between students and faculty, in both directions. In the student to faculty direction, I’ve emphasized using survey data as a starting point for discussions and producing written reports that can be easily distributed. In the opposite direction, the ARC runs a mailing list that students can sign up for news about meetings with administrators and potential academic changes. After the election, I’ll be stepping aside as ARC Chair and retiring to my log cabin in the sub-basement of Moeur. The ARC Chair that follows will have the chance to create their own agenda and develop their own vision for the ARC.

Managing the ARC boils down to making sure the ARC runs the programs that it is responsible for and distributing the work among members. The ARC is in charge of a menagerie of programs including course concerns, software seminars, student faculty lunches, ASCIT teaching awards, and the option fair. The ARC chair is responsible for getting members to run these programs, but also for finding tasks that will interest the people on the ARC. Delegating tasks while ensuring that everything gets done is one of the key challenges of the job. Paying attention to details without micromanaging is another tricky balancing act.

The ARC chair is simultaneously the ASCIT Vice President of Academic Affairs, and is the primary student representative to faculty on academic issues. The ARC chair sits on the Council on Undergraduate Education, regularly meets with the deans, and often serves on academic faculty board committees. While ARC chair, I’ve also been included in discussions about academic issues such as the TQFR deadline when these topics sprung up.

Since the ARC chair regularly interfaces with faculty members, communication is an essential skill. I’ve realized as ARC chair that there’s a large gulf of information between students and faculty. There are faculty concerns that students are oblivious about, and vice versa. An effective ARC chair needs to be able to learn and understand the position of faculty members, while clearly articulating student views and concerns. Students and faculty both want students to succeed academically, and this common goal can help smooth potential disagreements.

Candidacy Statements for ASCIT Positions

Social Director (3)

ALICE ZHAI
Social Director Candidate

Hey everyone! I’m Alice, a sophomore in Fleming and the current ASCIT Secretary. In the past year, I have thoroughly enjoyed participating in student government and representing students’ opinions on campus policy. As Social Director, I will continue the tradition of planning fun activities like movie nights and parties as well as consider students’ feedback while making decisions for social events.

Being ASCIT secretary has taught me how to be well organized, successfully balance my responsibilities with my workload, and communicate well with administration and my fellow officers. I am reliable, approachable, and extremely dedicated. As secretary, I responded to people quickly, updated the Olive Walk display case and Donut with information about ASCIT and campus positions, and always delivered meeting minutes on time. Now that I had a year of being in student government, I am well prepared to play an active role on the Board of Directors.

Planning large-scale social events is a time consuming and challenging task, but it is a commitment that I am very excited to take on. I have many ideas for future social events, such as a campus wide Halloween party, Rath nights, and subsidized trips to local museums or theme parks. I am treasurer of the Caltech Racing club and was fundraising officer in high school, so I will be fiscally responsible with event expenses. I truly value input from students, so I’d love to hear what suggestions you all have! I plan on surveying the student body on what events interest them the most and what they are looking for in an ASCIT formal or Big I. This way, I can tailor campus events to what students want and maximize campus participation.

Caltech can be a stressful environment, so I would love to make student life more fun and bring people together through social activities. If you have any questions for me, please let me know!

ALYSSA POLETTI
Social Director Candidate

For those who don’t know me, I’m a sophomore in Ricketts who’s about to convince you to vote for me for ASCIT Social Director. For nearly the past year, I’ve worked as the undergraduate events coordinator for the feminist club. Previously inactive, I’ve played a significant part in reviving the club, planning weekly meetings, movie nights, and speakers. Organizing these events took significant time and logistics on my part, including club artwork, club fair tables, and International Women’s Day events. I’ve also helped set up a Ricketts house event where we fed and educated thirty students about healthy relationships and mental health. Considering my involvement with the Title IX Undergraduate Advisory Board, the Feminist Club, the Admissions Office, the Hixon Writing Center, Challenges and Choices, and Ricketts House social team, I have the skills and commitment to be the ASCIT Social Director. My experience sets me apart from other candidates, but so does how much I’ve enjoyed planning each one of those events. Now, I want to bring that dedication to ASCIT.

CARLOS SOSA
Social Director Candidate

No statement or photo submitted.

A 1-hour workshop offered 2 times this term:

Section 1: Friday, April 28th, 12:00 - 1:00

Section 2: Wednesday, May 17th, 4:00 - 5:00

Location: 229 Sherman Fairchild Library

More information: counseling.caltech.edu
Greetings Caltech,

What was your favorite class during your first year? I think a lot of students would have a hard time answering this question, and that’s OK. In my first year, I took a variety of classes, but none of them stood out as my favorite. However, I would say that my favorite class was Mathematics 1a, which was taught by Professor T. I found the course challenging but rewarding. I also enjoyed the problem sets, which were designed to help us think critically and creatively.

As a student in the first year, I have found that it is important to have a sense of community. At Caltech, we are fortunate to have access to a variety of student organizations, such as the Student Senate, the Caltech Student Union, and the Caltech Alumni Association. These organizations provide opportunities for students to get involved in the community and to make new friends.

I am also excited about the opportunity to work with the ARC, which is a student-run organization that is dedicated to improving the quality of life for all Caltech students. I have been involved with the ARC for a few years now, and I am looking forward to continuing my work as an ARC representative.

I hope this message finds you well and that you are enjoying your time at Caltech.

Best regards,

[Your Name]
Steady improvement for track & field in final tune-up

Girl, no one looks that good running. Are you sure you're trying—you didn't even break a sweat!?!?

best 14 feet, 3.25 inches that leaves her just a big gain the long jump, leaping a season-Championships. Senior Lucy Chen made feet) while working on enhanced techniques the discus (two feet) and hammer throw (three feet) and pitched the entire game. Senior John Galden relieved Krop and threw two on-target throws from behind home plate. Senior Kai Kirk got the start in the second game of Saturday's doubleheader, but ultimately succumbed to Quinn Hirsohn in a super tiebreaker (3-6, 6-3, 10-6).

Levine connects for six hits in Chapman Series

Levine in particular really got going, raking the Panthers for three hits of his own. In a continued theme from the game, Caltech came up short in scoring opportunities, this time stranding 12 runners on base. The Beavers did outhit the Panthers 13-12 and had they did outhit the Panthers 13-12 and had they...
Join the Meditation Mob!

Tuesdays, 12:00 - 12:50

Want to learn more about mindfulness meditation? It’s a great way to improve your attention and to become more grounded in the present moment.

There’s no religious component. We use secular, evidence-based meditation techniques.

We meet in the small room just off the lounge in Winnett. All students are welcome, from total beginners to more experienced meditators.

Mailing list and MP3 archive: counseling.caltech.edu/students/meditation

You chose one of the most trusted institutions in SCIENCE.

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When you want unsurpassed stability, integrity and value for your money, Caltech Employees Federal Credit Union offers an honest alternative. There are no gimmicks. No annual fees. No harsh penalties.

Just some of the lowest lending rates and highest savings rates in the nation…and a state-of-the-art eBranch for easy, convenient online and/or mobile access to your account. We’re the overwhelming choice for financial services among the entire Caltech family. If you haven’t yet joined, call or visit us online or in person today. You belong here.
Crossword

Across
1. Supplication
5. Part of a hospital
9. Look searchingly
13. Part of a ladder
14. Malicious burning
15. Part of a hospital instrument
17. Incorporate
19. Out of fashion
20. Spoil
21. Assimilate
23. Storm center
24. Be nosey
25. Layer
26. Level
29. Female chicken
30. Well-being
32. Reverberation
35. Strong wind
38. Mythological nymph
40. Contest or fight
41. Sheltered side
42. Wan
43. Small donkey
44. Single
45. Soapstone
47. Decelerate
48. Promptly
49. Playing card
50. Notion
51. Indispensable
52. Reflecting optimism
53. Name
54. Change of government illegally or by force
55. Severe tropical cyclone
56. Form of condensation
57. Material, can be used as fuel when dried
58. Strong wind
59. Drivel
60. Epoch
61. Indispensable
62. Rotating mechanism
63. Verbiage
64. Small donkey
65. Female hog
66. Subvert
67. Jump lightly
68. Used with a mortise to form a joint
69. Small pond
70. Fiend
71. Material, can be used as fuel when dried
73. Rind

Down
1. Preen
2. Relating to the moon
3. Access
4. Era of history
5. Verbage
6. Humiliate
7. Rotating mechanism
8. Cervid
9. Drive
10. Epoch
11. Inconsiderable
12. Reflecting optimism
13. Indicating maiden name
14. Admission receipts at a sports event
15. Severe tropical cyclone
16. Looking for ASCIT laptop, which will be used for ASCIT’s Netflix account for the screening room
17. Malthusian
18. New HSS classes will be offered
19. Course capture (recording class lectures) is going to be relaunched
20. Grace Chen has been appointed as IHC secretary
21. ASCIT will be funding Ditch Day for all the houses
22. Looking for ASCIT laptop, which will be used for ASCIT’s Netflix account for the screening room
23. Hymenopterous insect
24. Vehicle
25. Car modified for greater speed and acceleration
26. Worship
27. Cloth used for drying
28. Perform
29. Bobbin
30. Female hog
31. Conclusion
32. Flow back or recede
33. Rind
34. Single
35. River embankment
36. Drama set to music
37. Flatbottom boat
38. Worship
39. Cloth used for drying
40. Bobbin
41. Female hog
42. Female hog
43. Female hog
44. Single
45. Soapstone
46. Promptly
47. Decelerate
48. Playing card
49. Notion
50. Epoch
51. Indispensable
52. Reflecting optimism
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69. Small pond
70. Fiend
71. Material, can be used as fuel when dried
73. Rind

ASCIT Minutes
Meetings are every week in SAC 13

ASCIT Board of Directors Meeting
Minutes for 14 April 2017. Taken by Alice Zhai.
Officers Present: Andrew Montequin, Tim Liu, Rachael Morton, Sakthi Vetrivel, Kalyn Chang, Alice Zhai
Guests: Kavya Sreedhar
Call to Order: 12:20pm

President’s Report (Andrew):
● Met with Joe Shepherd this Tuesday about Bechtel - have topics for small groups and future town hall discussions

V.P. of Academic Affairs (ARC Chair: Tim):
● New HSS classes will be offered
● Course capture (recording class lectures) is going to be relaunched

V.P. of Non-Academic Affairs (IHC Chair: Rachael):
● Grace Chen has been appointed as IHC secretary
● IHC will be meeting Mondays at noon
● Need to streamline process for funding houses’ blue books

Director of Operations (Sakthi):
● Will be appointing committees this coming week

Treasurer (Kalyn):
● Multihouse funding pairs for this term are Fleming/Lloyd, Page/Avery, Blacker/Ricketts, and Dabney/Ruddock
● Caltech Aarya pitched for funding for Davis Dheem Tana event

Social Director (Robin):
● Absent

Secretary (Alice):
● Nothing to report

If anyone has any questions or concerns about a section of the minutes please email the appropriate officer. We are happy to answer any questions.

Meeting Adjourned: 12:50pm
Open Letter to Prefresh

ANDRE COMELLA
Contributing Writer

Dear Prefresh,

If you’re reading this, it’s because you got in—congratulations! Maybe Caltech has been your dream school for years, or maybe somewhere else has and you’re visiting for the hell of it or because you got a free trip out here. Whether you’re sure you want to come here or sure you don’t, or somewhere in the middle, it’s worth giving it some deeper thought.

I’ve been at this place since 2012, and I’d say I’ve gotten to know it pretty well. Caltech is fundamentally a unique place, not the way that other schools claim to be unique. I mean genuinely, undeniably, one-of-a-kind. This isn’t necessarily praise, some aspects of the school’s uniqueness are... less than ideal. But the simple truth is that you will never have an opportunity to have an experience like you’d have here.

There are many parts of this culture that I love—chiefly the Houses and the Honor Code. In the Houses, almost everyone here finds a home. They provide community, support, friendship, and so, so much more. Houses are the defining feature of undergraduate culture and have huge effect on who you spend time with, how you spend your time, and how you grow at this school. They provide unique cultures and a level of community that you will struggle to find elsewhere. House membership is a thing you keep for life, and whenever you meet a Trehcher in the outside world, the first question you’ll ask each other will be, “What House are you in?”

The other aspect, the Honor Code, works to such an incredible degree. You’ll see, all over campus, evidence of the Honor Code and the way it sculpts daily life. Doors left open, laptops left out, sets handed to friends to turn in. Life is so much easier and richer when you can inherently trust one another. Most exams you take here are take home, allowing you to work them in better into your schedule and take them in an environment that’s much less stressful than it otherwise would be. Most of my friends at other schools automatically assume take home exams mean we all cheat, but in all likelihood, you will persist. Because if you got in here, you have a level of drive and resilience far above the norm.

There will be times when you feel you can’t get everything done. You won’t be able to “make time” like you did in high school by losing an hour of sleep or cutting out your daily Reddit crawl—you’ll have 20 hours worth of work and it’ll be due in 12 hours. The teaching will often be unhelpful, especially in core classes. You’ll have sets that seem to have nothing to do with the material that was taught, and exams that seem unrelated to either. But sometimes you’ll have professors who still inspire you, who fill you with the passion and compassion that you’ve been taught is a hallmark of this place. They will butt up against policies that seem to have nothing to do with home exams mean we all cheat, but in all likelihood, you will persist. Because if you got in here, you have a level of drive and resilience far above the norm.

There will be times when you feel you can’t get everything done. You won’t be able to “make time” like you did in high school by losing an hour of sleep or cutting out your daily Reddit crawl—you’ll have 20 hours worth of work and it’ll be due in 12 hours. The teaching will often be unhelpful, especially in core classes. You’ll have sets that seem to have nothing to do with the material that was taught, and exams that seem unrelated to either. But sometimes you’ll have professors who still inspire you, who fill you with the passion and compassion that you’ve been taught is a hallmark of this place. They will butt up against policies that seem to have nothing to do with the Honer Code and the way it sculpts daily life. Doors left open, laptops left out, sets handed to friends to turn in. Life is so much easier and richer when you can inherently trust one another. Most exams you take here are take home, allowing you to work them in better into your schedule and take them in an environment that’s much less stressful than it otherwise would be. Most of my friends at other schools automatically assume take home exams mean we all cheat, but in all likelihood, you will persist. Because if you got in here, you have a level of drive and resilience far above the norm.

So maybe you want this. Maybe you want the opportunities, the trust, the quietness and nerdiness. But know that that also comes with pain, with worry, with a blow to your ego that will leave you staggering for years. There are a lot of people who will paint Caltech too rosy when they talk to you. I’m not saying not to come here, but come here for the right reasons and know what you’re getting into. Admissions likes to talk about Caltech as a place that pushes boundaries. But what often gets left out is that the boundaries push back. There’s friction with the administration and a lot of tension over aspects of student life and House culture. If you want to come here, you should want to keep the things that make Caltech unique and exceptional. I mean, really want to. We only keep things helpful than you’ve been lead to believe. Many will not show that dedication to individual attention and compassion that you’ve been told is a hallmark of this place. You’ll but up against policies that were written in broad strokes and designed to have avoiding to deal with students. But sometimes you’ll also meet people who will bend the rules in your favor, because they are fundamentally there to aid in your success. People who show you compassion when you most need it, and that’s a feeling of such warmth I cannot describe.

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P.S. If you want to talk about this place, or advice on whether it’s right for you, you can find me on Facebook or at acomella@caltech.edu.

-Andre Comella