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A HISTORY
OF
UNDERGRADUATE SELF-GOVERNANCE
AT
CALTECH



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Abstract

From the founding of the Throop University in 1891, Caltech has allowed its students great freedom to govern themselves. This study investigates the key aspects of Caltech student self-governance, constructing a history of the Student Houses from 1930, ASCIT from 1913, and the Honor Code from 1910 to the present. The report also includes a brief historical sketch of undergraduate student life and a history of student issues and attitudes at Caltech. The goals of this study are to establish a historical framework from which to understand the growth of student governance at Caltech and to investigate the ways in which student governance has changed, in particular to assess the extent to which current student concerns are new developments or longstanding issues. This study includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses that draw on archived student publications, Institute histories and memoirs, a 2002 survey of alumni created and conducted for the purpose of this study, and personal interviews with alumni and faculty. The study's findings include (1) substantive changes in the scope of the honor system over time, (2) correlations between honor system changes and honor system compliance, (3) a substantial increase in office and committee membership opportunities for student participation, but (4) a decline over the past decade in students' perceptions of their influence on campus policies coupled with (5) an increase in administrative regulation of students, and (6) a relatively constant array of student concerns throughout the years.

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Introduction

From its earliest days as Throop College, Caltech has relied on its students to govern themselves. At a small school with an even smaller administration, allowing students a large degree of freedom was simply the most practical solution. Guided by an honor code since 1910 and living in unique dormitories since 1931, the undergraduates of Caltech through the years have shaped their own distinctive way of life.

This study was motivated by a feeling among the undergraduate student body during the 2001-02 school year that the tradition of student self-governance was under attack by the Caltech administration. In numerous letters to the *California Tech*, editorials in the GSC newsletter, and most prominently in a protest on December 12th, 2001, students voiced their discontent with Caltech administrative policies. Many of these complaints centered on areas of self-governance, and the general sentiment may be characterized by this comment from the protest, written by Elise Kleeman: “When I came to Tech, I used to hear good things about the administration – that they supported us and our desire to express ourselves and that they understood that this school was a unique environment deserving of a uniquely large amount of student self-government and of respect for our views & needs. Today, I see an unwillingness on the part of the administration to stand up to people who don't understand this - and it is destroying everything that makes this place worthwhile” (*Elion*, 2002).

The Caltech undergraduates of 2002 seemed to understand self-governance as a set of rights. They felt that self-governance gave them the right to create their own rules regarding student life and the right to fair representation in matters of shared concern. The perception of these rights, like many things at Caltech, was deeply rooted in a sense of tradition. Students believed that self-governance had been a vital part of Caltech throughout its history and thus felt that any modification to their conception of student governance was an unjust reform. However, few students had memories that went back further than four years and neither did many in the Caltech administration. This study aims to find out whether the concept of self-governance has changed throughout the years and whether the concerns that caused the student unrest in 2002 were new developments or longstanding issues.

Methodology

To investigate these questions, it was important to build a historical context for understanding student governance at Caltech. Historical information was obtained from a variety of sources. Much of the research was archival. Issues of the *California Tech* are available dating back to 1918; editions of the *Big T*, the annual yearbook, date back to 1920; copies of the student handbook, the *little t*, date back to 1933; and the minutes of the ASCIT Board are available dating back to 1912. Selected editions of these publications were read for this study.

ASCIT Board Minutes from 1912 to 1935 provided the only early records for this study. Editions of the *California Tech* from 1926 to 1956 and from 1965 to 1974 were read intensively to serve as the principal sources for those periods. Robert Huttenback's memoirs and Eric Tuttle's study of Rotation in the early 1960's were the primary sources for the period from 1958 to 1968. Information regarding the modern era came mainly from a previous study by Andrew Keith Strauss and from a few personal interviews. Judith Goodstein's *Millikan's School* also provided a broad historical framework. Every available issue of the *little t* was consulted to record a list of student officers (Appendix C) and count the number of student activities on campus (Figure 2). Editions of the *Big T* were used to supplement this research.

A survey was also created for this study and sent out to alumni (Appendix A). The survey was distributed via e-mail and reached approximately 3,600 of the 10,103 living undergraduate alumni. There were 632 responses returned (Appendix B), which represents about 17% of those who received the survey and about 6% of all living undergraduate alumni. The survey asked questions about general demographic information, personal involvement in student government, student issues, the honor code, and general opinions on student governance at Caltech.

I. Overview (1891-2002)

From the perspective of undergraduate students, the history of Caltech can be divided into four overlapping eras. The first begins with the founding of Throop College in 1891 and ends after the Incorporation of the Associated Students in 1935. During this time, most of the major student governance bodies were formed. The second era begins in 1931 with the construction of the Student Houses. These Houses became the main bastions of student self-governance at Caltech and each House defined its own character throughout this period, shaping a unique way of life. The creation of the ASCIT Executive Committee in 1958 and the opening of the North Houses in 1960 spark a third era in student history, a period of student activism. During this time, students became involved in many more issues concerning the campus and the world at large. In 1975, Caltech created the position of Vice-President for Student Affairs and started the fourth era, a period of student affairs administration. This modern era is characterized by friction between students and administrators and continues to this day.

The Beginning (1891-1936)

In November 1891, a small technical institution called Throop College was founded in Pasadena, California. It soon changed its name to Throop Polytechnic Institute and in the 1892 catalog for this school it was written, “The discipline of the institution will constantly keep in mind the development of self-governing citizens, self-respecting, law-abiding men and women. The helpfulness of the ever-watchful friend will take the place of the educational police officer.” Before the name Caltech even existed, Caltech students lived in an environment where they were expected to govern themselves.

According to the *California Tech*, Throop Polytechnic Institute adopted an honor code in 1910. There is no official record of the honor system’s inception, but it is clear it already exists in the oldest student government documents, which date back to 1912. Those records are minutes of the Associated Student Body (ASB), the main student government body at the time. In 1913, the ASB rewrote its Constitution. As part of the reform process, a committee was created that was charged with enforcing several student

rules. This committee was called the Board of Control. The honor system was part of its jurisdiction, and from then on, students suspected of cheating on exams would have to report to this board of their peers.

The very first amendment to the new constitution called for the creation of a student magazine called the *Throop Tech*. In the 1919 ASB Minutes, “Editor of the *Tech*” and “Editor of the Annual” were listed as elected offices; running the student publications quickly became one of the main functions of the Associated Student Body. In 1934, the annual was the catalyst of a major milestone for the ASB. In May of that year, the ASB was sued for breach of contract by Mitchell & Herb, the publishers of the 1932 yearbook. Luckily, one student had a father who was a lawyer, and after settling the case, he suggested that the Associated Students incorporate in order to protect individual students from liability in the case of another lawsuit. The ASB took this advice and on January 24, 1935, the Associated Student Body became the Associated Students of the California Institute of Technology, Incorporated (ASCIT).

The Houses (1931-1960)

In 1931, in an effort to house the majority of Caltech students on campus, the Institute built four student dormitories. Blacker, Dabney, Fleming, and Ricketts House were each colonized by existing student fraternities and operated as self-governing communities. In a report making recommendations for the Student Houses, a committee of students wrote, “Conduct of house functions and the maintenance of order shall be placed entirely in the hands of the students.”

In 1933, freshmen were allowed to tour each of the Houses and choose which ones they liked best in a process known as Rotation. Rotation became the foremost responsibility of the Interhouse Committee, a group of representatives from each House that oversaw the House system. In 1940, to assist in the administration of the Houses, the Institute created a faculty position called the Master of Student Houses. The MOSH soon became the primary disciplinarian for the undergraduates of Caltech.

This period also saw a broadening in the student conception of the honor code. As more students now lived together on campus, issues of property became large concerns. After World War II, the theft of personal belongings and improper treatment of

Institute property became understood as violations of the honor code. Rather than simply governing academics, the honor system began to govern many aspects of general student conduct.

The first 30 years of the Houses were a relatively calm period that saw the creation of many of Caltech's odd traditions. Student self-governance mostly involved the maintenance of basic services. Throughout this period, the ASCIT primarily concerned itself with running the school athletic program and the student publications. This era came to an end with the opening of three new Student Houses in 1960, which coincided with the beginning of a very active period of student history.

Student Activism (1958-1980)

The event that marks the beginning of this era is a major restructuring of ASCIT recommended by the ASCIT Executive Committee. This was a newly created long-range planning group for the Associated Students that served to collect many activist students in the same room at the same time. The defining characteristic of this period is a large increase in the number of positions available in the student government. By 1980, there was one student government office available for every five students; double the opportunities of two decades earlier.

The construction of three new Student Houses in 1960 greatly expanded the number of House offices available to students and created three new student government entities on campus. With more people involved in House issues, the Interhouse Committee became far more active. Right after the new Houses opened, the IHC engaged the student body in a complex debate regarding Rotation.

ASCIT expanded its reach to academic issues in 1962 by creating an Educational Policies Committee (EPC). In 1968, ASCIT began a flurry of activity with a student-run research project that raised over \$100,000 in grants to study air pollution. Also that year, students gained representation on several faculty committees, permitting them input into a variety of campus-wide issues. In 1972, ASCIT's EPC started publishing a Teaching Quality Feedback Report, holding professors accountable for teaching for the first time.

In the 1970's, Caltech saw its occasional student protest in a decade where that was a common sight on campuses across the country. The honor system further

expanded during this period, applying not only to academics and the treatment of property, but also to interpersonal relationships. The honor code became a simple, all-encompassing statement: “No one shall take unfair advantage of any member of the Caltech community.”

Students questioned almost every aspect of their student experience during this time, initiating a large number of reforms within the student government and with regard to the Institute at large. The ASCIT Bylaws were revised numerous times and editorials regarding student life appeared in almost every newspaper issue. The Institute greatly expanded its humanities curriculum and started making the first major efforts to raise the dismal graduation rate. One of the most drastic changes in student life happened in 1970, when Caltech went co-ed. At the end of this era, students and faculty met for a two-day conference in 1980 where they discussed a variety of student issues. Over the next decade, these Student-Faculty Conferences occurred every other year.

Administration (1975-2002)

In 1975, Ray Owen took on the title of Vice-President for Student Affairs, making the livelihood of students a top-level concern for the Institute. This most recent era in student life is characterized by a large growth in Institute resources devoted to providing services for the undergraduates, and most student concerns center around a reaction to this increased administration. The raising of the national minimum drinking age to 21 in 1984 created a permanent rift between students and college administrators across the nation. This is just one example of the legal and social movements of this period that challenged the Caltech conception of student self-governance in the late 80’s and early 90’s. Students of this era generally believed that the Institute was continually taking power out of student hands and this bred feelings of bitterness and resentment towards their school.

In 1986, a stabbing occurred during a party on campus that led the administration to consider a major restructuring of student affairs administration. In 1990, Caltech created the office of Residence Life to deal with some of the most controversial student issues, mostly pertaining to activities within the Houses. Over the next decade, the

Residence Life office became the target for many student gripes, creating an atmosphere where students felt largely antagonistic towards the administration.

Throughout this period, issues of administrative regulation dominated the student consciousness. An interesting consequence of this was that the honor system began to fade from the forefront of student minds. Less people thought deeply about the honor system, and the number of honor code violations slowly crept upward throughout this time.

In December 2001, many of these issues came to the forefront in a major student protest. Following the protest, town hall meetings were organized in each of the Student Houses and a student-faculty conference was organized after a 5-year hiatus. The next fall, Caltech hired its first full-time Vice-President for Student Affairs. A *Tech* article proclaimed that Margo Marshak would bring a new era for Student Affairs at Caltech and perhaps she will start a new era in student history as well.

II. A History of the Undergraduate Houses (1930-2002)

On his seventy-fourth birthday, the President of the Caltech Board of Trustees, Arthur H. Fleming, was surprised with the announcement that the last unit of the new student dormitories would be named in his honor. In 1930, twenty donors gave \$10,000 each to fund the construction of Fleming House, and a new era in Caltech undergraduate student life was born (*Tech*, 3/11/30).

Before that time, there was only room for about 60 students on campus in a single dormitory. Caltech students were spread throughout a variety of off-campus housing, which included five fraternity houses: Sigma Alpha Pi (est. 1914) housed 31 students at 399 S. Mentor, Pi Alpha Tau (est. 1921) housed 13 at 330 S. Lake, Gamma Sigma (est. 1925) housed 18 at 415 S. El Molino, Kappa Gamma a.k.a. Gnome (est. 1897) housed 31 at 289 S. Madison, and Phi Alpha Ro a.k.a. Pharos (est. 1921) housed 25 at 593 E California (*Big T*, 1931). This still left about 350 of the enrolled undergraduates living in their own housing. The trustees decided that Caltech should seek to house as many of its students on campus as possible so a plan for a group of four undergraduate dorms was drafted. Construction began as soon as \$200,000 per dorm was raised. On March 11, 1930, the *California Tech* proclaimed, “Dorms will Rise at Once!”

A Committee of Nine

A committee of nine students was formed to investigate student living conditions and make detailed recommendations for the conduct and organization of the new undergraduate dormitories. Members of the committee toured the U.S., Europe, and Canada to find out what organization would be best for the student residences. On March 5, 1931, they published their findings in the *California Tech*. Their recommendations formed the foundation for the undergraduate Houses at Caltech, and many of their ideals hold true today. Here are some highlights from their report:

Introduction

- “Familiarity with student opinion together with the viewpoint of the administration places the emphasis as to the reason for the building of the new undergraduate houses on the desire to supplement the present intellectual development of the students with a cultural and social development not possible where the student’s social contacts are limited,

or where his living, lounging, or dining accommodations do not reflect this atmosphere.”

Residents

- “Freshmen shall be distributed among the four houses as equally as possible.”
- “Choice of rooms in each house shall be given according to seniority.”

Dining Room Policies

- “Students shall be given the opportunity to wait on tables.”
- “Square tables accommodating eight men and round tables for eight or ten men should be placed in the dining rooms.”
- “A liberal policy shall be adopted with regard to both house and personal guests.”
- “Men shall wear coats and ties at dinner.”

House Library

- “Provision shall be made, if possible, for a small library of non-technical books in each house.”

Associates

- “A resident associate shall be placed in each house to serve as a counselor and friend of the students, but not as a proctor. His purpose shall be to stimulate social and cultural life.”
- “It is suggested that the residents of each house invite faculty members and their wives, and distinguished friends of the Institute to become Non-Resident Associates of their house.”

House Organization

- “Conduct of house functions and the maintenance of order shall be placed entirely in the hands of the students.”
- “Social affairs and the entertainment of visitors should be strongly encouraged.”
- “Inter-house and intra-house competitions should be fostered.”
- “It is suggested that a committee of four elective officers and two appointive officers be formed to manage the affairs of each house. The appointive officers will be a Social Chairman and an Athletic Chairman.”
- “An inter-house committee would also be available.”

Fraternities

- “Each fraternity shall be requested to move into a single house as a group, shall be asked not to perpetuate its own organization, but to serve as the nucleus about which to build and to foster a house unity and loyalty.”

House Dues

- “Dues for financing activities shall be levied by the group and collected by the business office. It is suggested that \$2.00 per term from each man would be a reasonable and sufficient amount.”

The fraternities at Caltech all agreed to the recommendations with very little resistance and the next year, they each moved as groups into the four new Houses. The

Gnomes moved into Ricketts House, the Pharos moved into Blacker, the Gamma Sigmas moved into Dabney, and Pi Alpha Tau, the smallest fraternity, joined Sigma Alpha Pi in colonizing Fleming (*Big T*, 1933). Originally, the Houses were autonomous, with the Interhouse Committee as the only coordinating body. The RA's gradually took over more and more of the administrative duties and in 1940, the Institute first appointed a Master of Student Houses, Dr. Harvey Eagleson (*Tech*, 1/11/52).

Rotation

The question of how to assign freshmen to Houses was a problem from the beginning. At the beginning of the second year, men were assigned to Houses by a Committee of RA's. After three years, Rotation of freshmen, a system of allowing each freshman to visit each of the four Houses, was first initiated (*Tech*, 1/11/52). The actual process of Rotation was under constant revision and was not well documented. Early on, the system required freshmen to actually live in each House before making a choice, "Trekking counterclockwise from house to house for three days of food, propaganda, and entertainment" (*Tech*, 10/16/47). However, this was simplified in the 50's, when the rules specified that: "Newcomers will eat the noon and evening meals for two days in each of the four houses... Sixty percent of the choice is the frosh's, 40 percent houses. Frosh indicate first, second, third, and fourth choices. House puts out preference list" (*Tech*, 9/29/50).

Even after the completion of the Houses, there was only space for only about 60% of the undergraduate population on campus. A lounge for the off-campus students, known as Throop Hall, was created where the original dormitory stood. A non-residents association was formed that eventually took on the name Throop Club. They elected their own officers and were even allowed to participate in interhouse athletics and had representatives on the Interhouse Committee. Until the North Houses were built, Throop Club served effectively as a fifth House. Although Throop never participated in the Rotation process, incoming freshmen were not guaranteed a spot in the Houses so many lived off-campus. For many years, the Institute adopted a rule that freshmen who lived closest to Caltech were kicked off first. International students and those from the East Coast were virtually guaranteed spots while those from the LA area almost always were

not (*Huttenback*, 1968). Although many of those freshmen participated in Rotation and were picked into one of the four Houses, they were not necessarily given a room so most of them also joined Throop Club and lived their entire four years off campus.

The Houses and Rotation evolved gradually over the years. To ease the postwar transition, the IHC suspended Rotation for one year in 1947, but it was restored the next fall. Nothing major happened until 1951, when the actions of Dabney House necessitated the creation of the first written Rotation rules. The October 11, 1951 issue of the *Tech* reported, “Dabney, flagrantly violated the spirit of rotation, and is subsequently being fined by the interhouse committee...The Dabney pledges were first asked whether they might be interested in blind dates for the first weekend, a time when all Houses are supposed to restrain from organized social activities. The frosh were also given cars full of gas for these dates, giving them a completely false impression of what life in Dabney would be like after they got in...also announced its social schedule for the first term during rotation period...approached the individual men in their rooms, sometimes after they had gone to bed, and flatly asked them to state their preferences at that time.”

The first Rotation rules were simple and are still the basis for the rules today: “No publication of social schedules and no organized social events during Rotation. In addition it shall be illegal to get blind dates informally for frosh or to loan them cars...There shall be no undue pressure or encouragement to force frosh to divulge their preference of house...These rules shall be enforced by the IHC and violations may be penalized by fining of houses or denial of house preference to individual freshman...enables the frosh to make a free, independent, and intelligent choice of house” (*Tech*, 5/23/52).

The New Houses

In 1955, the Student House Office, which was the division of Caltech administration that managed the student Houses, established an Interhouse Food Committee. One representative from each House met regularly to discuss the intricacies of the food program. According to the May 17, 1956 *California Tech*, the exchanges between the committee and the administrator of the dining program were described as frustrating: “In several exchanges she has let the members know that the food purchased

is of high quality and they have let her know that it is poorly prepared and served. She claims that this is a function of serving 410 at a given meal and there it stands, a stalemate.”

Later that decade, a new construction project presented another opportunity and a new challenge for the Student Houses. In 1930, it was expected that “four units, which will be built later, will face on San Pasqual street, directly north of the new dormitories balancing both sides of campus” (*Tech*, 03/11/30). In 1959, the plan was to build three Houses, then referred to as “A”, “B”, and “C” Houses (*Tuttle*, 2001).

During the 1958-59 school year, the Faculty Committee on Student Houses, chaired by Robert A. Huttenback, the Master of Student Houses, asked the IHC to develop a plan for populating the new Student Houses. The IHC created the Committee on the New Student Houses (CNSH) to come up with a plan for Rotation and population (transfer of existing students). The committee set up two subcommittees, one to consider population, the other Rotation. There was little controversy about the plans for population, but the discussion concerning Rotation yielded many competing plans, which were publicized in the *California Tech*.

A wide variety of plans were considered, including an extra rush week before classes started, random assignment, and assignment by a committee of seniors before the arrival of the freshmen. During the second week of the 1959-60 school year, the plans were narrowed to four categories: “Long” Rotation (lasting six weeks), “Short” Rotation (1 day in each of the 7 Houses), “partial” Rotation (random assignment to either the North or South Houses followed by 2-3 days in each of those Houses), and no Rotation (assignment by the MOSH). Open meetings were then held to discuss the plans with the student body (*Tuttle*, 2001).

In the meetings, Short Rotation and No Rotation emerged as the clear favorites among the student body. The two competing opinions were summarized well in a *Tech* editorial:

Tom Jovin, the ASCIT President, argued against Rotation. He believed Rotation would hinder the development of the new Houses, since they’d be forced to adopt some sort of character right away. He mentioned that Rotation had once been suspended in 1947 and had not had a negative effect on House characteristics and spirit. He argued

that Rotation was just as arbitrary as assignment by the MOSH since decisions were made based on very little information. Tom believed that dropping Rotation would save a great deal of time and effort on everyone's part; he thought it would create an opportunity for other more productive activities, such as campus-wide mixers and social events, dinner exchanges, and term-long House exchanges. Jovin argued that Techmen were fairly compatible and the importance of choosing a House was overplayed. He concluded by arguing that experimentation is good (*Tuttle, 2001*).

Cleve Moler, the *Tech* editor, argued for Rotation. He stated first that students want and need freedom of choice in their friends and that Rotation allows that. He also thought that Rotation built House spirit and healthy interhouse competition. Cleve thought that the new Houses would actually make Rotation less tense. Since the new Houses would not have time to develop a "line," all the Houses would be forced to present their individual members to the freshmen, rather than trying to present "House characters." Another major point in favor of Rotation was that the addition of the new Houses would increase the likelihood that students would get their first choice and also reduce the likelihood that one House would dominate over the others (*Tuttle, 2001*).

On December 3, 1959, when the IHC adopted its committee's report, no consensus had been reached on the Rotation issue. It was decided that Rotation be suspended for one year, during which the MOSH would be in charge of assigning the freshmen to their Houses. The Rotation issue was thus left to be considered again the following year, which upset some members of the IHC. The report passed by a vote of 9-3 and there was no Rotation in the fall of 1960 (*Tuttle, 2001*).

The population plan was not controversial at all and in January of 1960, signups were posted for students who wished to move into the new Houses. After two weeks, 159 students signed up to live in the new Houses. 96 came from off-campus and 63 from the old Houses. Many of those who left the old Houses did so because of political aspirations. The MOSH, Dr. Huttenback, remarked on the sudden realization of "many would-be politicians that the new Houses presented a golden opportunity to achieve power and mold the destinies of a new creation" (*Huttenback, 1968*). At the time, Ricketts and Dabney were the most politically active Houses and a surplus of outgoing leader-types

caused a mass exodus. Page House became a colony of Ricketts and Ruddock a colony of Dabney. Lloyd House was populated primarily by off-campus students.

Caltech Undergraduate Enrollment

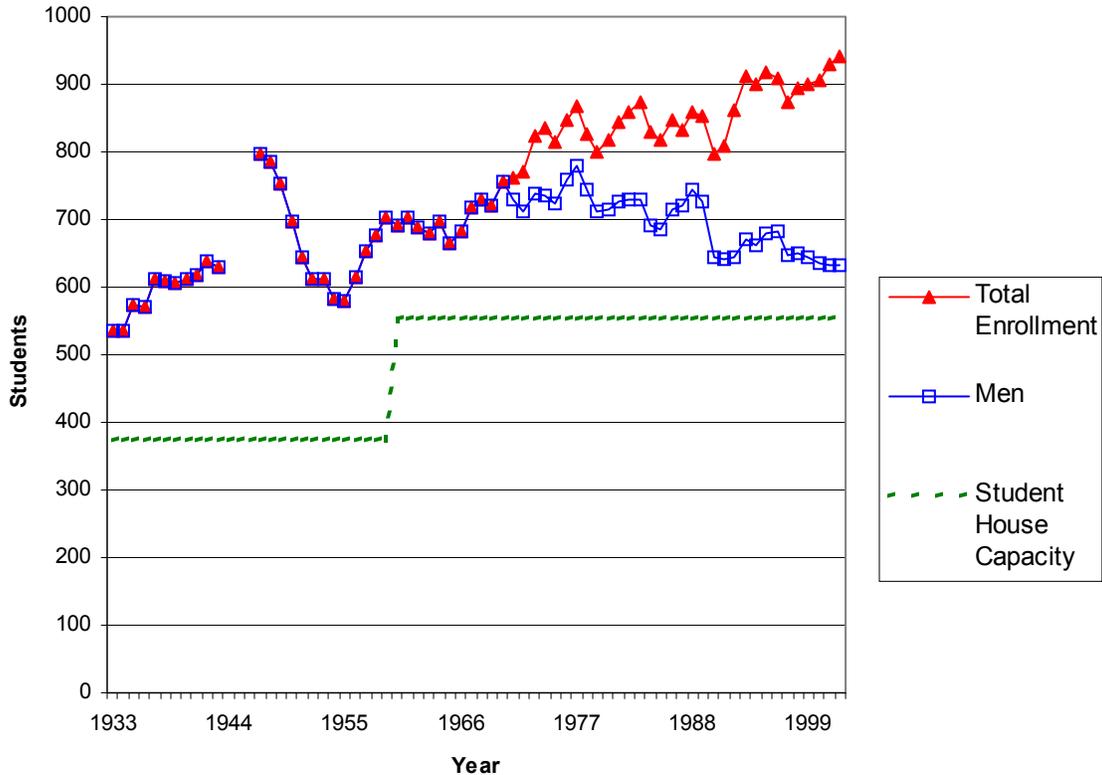


Figure 1: Undergraduate Enrollment from 1933-2002 (Caltech Registrar’s Office)

At the beginning of the 1960-61 school year, debate over Rotation was renewed. During second term, the IHC decided to go with a plan proposed by the ASCIT ExComm. This called for six days of normal Rotation where the freshmen would eat in each of the other Houses. Then, the freshmen would eat for a few days in the House where they were living, but during that time any House could “rotate” them. The Faculty Committee on the Student Houses rejected this proposal and there was again no Rotation for the 1961-62 school year. (*Tuttle, 2001*)

There was less public discussion of Rotation during the 1961-62 school year, but when the IHC began organizing meetings and ballots on the subject, the Faculty

Committee announced that there would be no Rotation in 1962-63. During that school year, the MOSH went on sabbatical and the IHC made a new proposal for Rotation. The system called for each freshman to spend a single day in each House and at the end, list the four he was willing to enter. There was no motivation for a House to try to seduce a particular freshman, as it had only a one-in-four chance of getting him at best. The Faculty committee considered this proposal acceptable and in the fall of 1963, after a three-year hiatus, Rotation returned to campus (*Huttenback, 1968*).

Over the next decade, the North Houses each developed their own unique identities. Dabney and Ricketts House, having lost a large number of their members to the North Houses, underwent extensive transformation (*Huttenback, 1968*). Fleming and Blacker remain relatively unchanged even today from their earlier characters. The South Houses became more spacious after the construction of the North Houses, with occupancy dropping from 374 to 304. The North Houses were designed with a capacity of 250, providing space for around 550 students total (*Tuttle, 2001*). This represented almost 80% of the total enrollment at that time (see Figure 1), and there was ample room for almost every student who wanted to live on campus. Contrary to the situation before 1960, almost all freshmen were able to live in the House into which they were picked. Students thus felt a strong attachment to their House identity and this led to an increase in House spirit and a general decrease in school spirit (*Strauss, 1997*).

The Interhouse Committee

In 1966, the student body began to complain that the Interhouse Committee was run too loosely. With the all-important burden of Rotation falling under the IHC's responsibility, students felt the IHC needed some rules under which to operate. In February of 1966, the ASCIT Executive Committee took the initiative and proposed that the IHC become a part of ASCIT, with its formalization written into the ASCIT Bylaws (*Tech, 02/03/66*). The amendment did not pass however, so the IHC took it upon itself to create a formal definition. The IHC Definition was ratified in May of 1966. As explained by a *Tech* reporter, "Since the IHC is an organization composed of House governments as opposed to students (as ASCIT is), it was felt that a straight-forward statement of policies, procedures, and purpose was required rather than a constitution.

Thus the term ‘definition’” (*Tech*, 05/19/66). The Definition specified that any action of the IHC must have the consent of four Houses, and that the presence of four House representatives would constitute an official IHC meeting. Amendments to the Definition required the approval of six Houses. With the ratification of the IHC Definition, the Interhouse Committee assured itself a permanent place in Caltech student government.

In 1970, the acceptance of the first female undergraduates altered the social landscape of Caltech forever. Women entered House governments very quickly; the first female House President was Deanna Hunt in 1975. The growing number of women on campus made Techers less dependent on other schools as sources for women, and inter-university relations became less important. In turn, the student body as a whole became less unified in its goals, and ASCIT began to share more and more student governance responsibilities with the IHC. Soon after students gained representation on faculty committees in 1968, the ASCIT Board enlisted the help of the IHC in identifying students to serve as representatives (*Tech*, 04/30/70). The IHC slowly became more prominent in undergraduate governance, and Caltech drifted toward a disparate mix of seven distinct social groups (*Strauss*, 1997).

Residence Life

In 1986, an incident occurred on campus that drastically changed the way Caltech administered the Student Houses. For decades, all of the undergraduate Houses would come together once a year to throw a huge party on campus. With seven separate parties going on at once, the Caltech campus became a social Mecca for one night a year. Rumor has it that this party, known as “Interhouse”, once made *Playboy*’s list of top ten college parties. Caltech students began advertising the party off-campus and it became a popular event for teenagers throughout the LA area. At the 1986 Interhouse party, the Master of Student Houses, Dr. Chris Brennen, was the first to arrive on the scene of the stabbing of a Caltech undergraduate by a visiting partygoer. The administration suspended Interhouse indefinitely after 1989 and began to rethink the position of the MOSH. On September 18, 1990, Kim West took her position as Caltech’s first Director of Residence Life. The Residence Life office assimilated all the disciplinary duties of the MOSH, while the Master was reduced to simply an advocate for students.

Off-Campus Students

Although the Houses could hold almost the entire student body at capacity, about a third of all upperclassmen lived outside the Student Houses in the fall of 1971. This led some motivated students to create an Off-Campus Club, resurrecting the ideals of the Throop Club that had disappeared with the construction of the new Houses. The goals of this Off-Campus Student Association were “To give voice and focus to the grievances of off-campus students...To represent the interests of the O.C. people before the Interhouse Committee and Institute powers that be...[and] to provide, for those who are interested, a substitute for the Houses as a focus of social life, camaraderie, and prostitution” (*Tech*, 12/02/71). Although this club was formed with big ideas and a reasonable amount of organization, there is no mention of it after 1971, and it does not exist at the present time.

The number of women at Caltech grew continuously through the 70’s and 80’s, and the size of the undergraduate population grew as well. In fact, as one *Tech* writer observed, “the number of men admitted has remained fairly close to constant” (*Tech*, 05/17/73). The number of females however, has grown to almost 300 since 1970 (see Figure 1). That 1973 article speculated of “a faculty attitude which goes something like, ‘don’t take a place in the freshman class away from a man to admit a woman’” (*Tech*, 05/17/73). Through the 80’s and into the 90’s, the student population grew to far exceed the capacity of the Student Houses, and more and more undergraduates were forced to move off-campus after their freshman years. Contrary to the situation before 1960, when some students were assigned off-campus as soon as they arrived at Caltech, students in the present day are guaranteed an assignment in the seven Houses during their freshman year and often find themselves “kicked off” in their sophomore or junior years.

Although the Off-Campus Student Association failed, the number of off-campus students continued to grow. This population bred resentment toward the seven Houses and in the early 80’s, there was a failed movement to abandon the House system (*Strauss*, 1997). In 1991, during Caltech’s centennial celebrations, undergraduates picketed on the Olive Walk for more housing. A committee of administration, faculty, and students created a vision for a new House: a residence similar to those found at Oxford and Cambridge, where faculty members, graduates, and undergraduates could live together.

With a generous donation from R. Stanton Avery, Avery House opened its doors on September 10, 1996. With many of the students who helped create Avery already graduated, the new residence was met with great skepticism. The seven undergraduate Houses maintain a monopoly on incoming freshmen and view Avery as a place for outcasts. Although a system of self-governance was installed in Avery in the form of the Avery Council, the House still remains under the strict control of the Residence Life office and distinctly separate from the seven Houses (*Strauss*, 1997).

Student dissatisfaction with the House system cannot simply be attributed to congregations of off-campus students. In the 1960's when almost all students were housed on campus, a few editorials appeared in the *California Tech* criticizing the Student Houses. In a 1961 article entitled, "McCombs Blasts Student Houses," Larry McCombs wrote, "Water fights and purity tests are fine, but why should serouis (sic) scholastic pursuits be pushed to a shameful status by these recreations? The anti-snake attitude of Techmen jus[t] doesn't make sense" (*Tech*, 10/5/61). Ira Herskowitz echoed this sentiment 5 years later, writing, "The Student Houses are off limits for serious discussion and the exchange of ideas... anyone who tries to do so is a "troll", "snake", or "eagerbeaver" – something of an untouchable." He also laments that the "oppressive atmosphere is self-perpetuating. The freshman who arrive are eager to take thir (sic) place in the new world... [but] the[y] acquire the Caltech attitude toward most things – lack of involvement... Even after four years at Caltech, the seniors are very little different from the freshmen" (*Tech*, 10/6/66). These ideas likely existed among a quiet minority before the 1960's, and they have certainly persisted since that time.

TURLI

In December 2000, with a major capital campaign in the planning stages, President David Baltimore formed a Task Force on Undergraduate Resident Life Initiatives to review the overall conditions of the current Houses and system of undergraduate residence life at Caltech, assess the need for structural renovations and systemic changes in the Houses, and formulate recommendations based on the findings (*TURLI*, 2001). In December 2001, a committee of students, faculty, and student affairs

administrators released a report with 8 main recommendations, which are listed here as described in the Executive Summary of the report:

- I. Renovate and reconstruct the existing undergraduate Houses.
- II. Create a mixture of singles, doubles, and some suites in the south and north Houses.
- III. Act on immediate physical infrastructure needs.
- IV. Reconsider Rotation.
- V. Increase interaction across Houses and lower inter-House barriers.
- VI. Reexamine House traditions.
- VII. Ensure equity in institutional treatment across different residential populations.
- VIII. Explore instituting a faculty in residence program in the North or South Houses.

At the time the report was released, Lloyd House was in conflict with the Residence Life office regarding an alcohol issue and Ricketts House was dealing with new restrictions regarding their firepot. This climate caused students to fixate upon recommendations number IV and VI, and the reaction was very negative. On December 12, 2001, the undergraduates staged a protest on the Olive Walk against the Task Force report and many other administrative actions. Students spoke out and left comments on issues ranging from House traditions to health insurance, budget cuts, parking, and the honor code. Hundreds of students turned out that day in what was the strongest showing of student solidarity at Caltech that anyone could remember (*Elion*, 2002).

During second term of the 2001-02 school year, the Faculty Committee on Student Housing held a series of Town Hall meetings to discuss the Task Force report. The meetings occurred in all seven Houses and lasted for several hours each. The vast majority of students spoke out in favor of Rotation and resolutely defended House traditions. In the end, no major changes were made to Rotation or House traditions; the release of the report and the ensuing dialogue only reaffirmed students' faith in the House system that had existed at Caltech for over 70 years.

III. A History of the Associated Students (1913-2003)

The oldest records of the Associated Students date back to 1913, when the Associated Student Body of Throop Polytechnic Institute rewrote its constitution. That year also marked the creation of the Board of Control and the *Throop Tech*, two of the main responsibilities of the Associated Students that survive to the present day.

The Throop Tech

In 1913, the student body officers sat on an Executive Committee of eight men: a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Athletic Manager, Assistant Athletic Manager, and two Representatives-at-large. Each one of these offices was elected, as was the standard for every student officer in the early days of the Associated Student Body. When the first amendment to the ASB Constitution was passed in December of 1913, two new offices were created. The Editor and Manager of the *Throop Tech*, a student newspaper, were designated to be elected by the student body and were also authorized to stand all losses and take all gains in connection with the publication of the *Tech*. The independently elected *Tech* editor and the financial independence of the *Tech* were important in establishing a student press separate from the student government. As Caltech has always been a small school, a complete divorce of the *Tech* from the Associated Students was not practical, but from the start, the system was set up to allow the greatest amount of independence for the student newspaper. In 1917, the fourth year of *Tech* printing, Frank R. Capra, the famous director of “Mr. Smith Goes to Washington” and “It’s a Wonderful Life,” became editor of the *Tech*.

That year, Frank Capra was also the Student Body Secretary and in his minutes, he mentioned a few other student body offices: Yell Leader, Football Captain, and Debating Representative. At that time and for many years afterward, the student government was charged with managing a significant portion of the athletics program at Caltech. The Yell Leader was an elected office, and he was in charge of cheers and yells at sporting events. The captains for each varsity sport were actually appointed by the Executive Committee of the Associated Students. The debate team, which competed in intercollegiate competitions, was run similarly.

World War I disrupted the 1916-17 school year and the Associated Students underwent a temporary reorganization as Throop Institute went to a year-round schedule and shifted its emphasis to the war effort. By the spring of 1919, everything was back in order and the Associated Student Body resumed its yearly elections. In the ASB Minutes for that election, the position of “Editor of the Annual” is listed. At that time, the student yearbook was known as the “Orange and White”, and became the second publication under ASB administration.

In 1920, Throop Polytechnic Institute officially changed its name to “The California Institute of Technology” and the Associated Student Body of Throop Polytechnic Institute changed its name accordingly. That year, the position of Assistant Athletic Manager on the ASB Executive Committee was replaced with a Publicity Manager, who was in charge of announcing sports scores and other events to local newspapers.

Incorporation

In 1921, the annual was renamed the *Big T* after a physical large “T” that was created by clearing brush on Mt. Wilson in December of 1915 (*Big T*, 2001). During the 1930’s, the *Big T* created a very large problem for the Associated Students. In May of 1934, the ASB was sued by Mitchell & Herb, the publishers for the 1932 Big T. To get a lower price, the business manager of the 1932 *Big T* signed a two-year contract with the publishers for the printing of the Caltech annual. However, when a new business manager took over in 1933, he found the contract unsatisfactory and printed the 1933 *Big T* with another company. Mitchell & Herb then sued the ASB for \$3,000 for breach of contract. Luckily, one student’s father was a lawyer, and the suit was settled out of court. The lawyer suggested that the Associated Students become a corporation in order to protect individual students from liability in the case of another lawsuit. The ASB officers revised the Constitution and submitted Articles of Incorporation to the State of California. On January 24, 1935, the Associated Student Body became the Associated Students of the California Institute of Technology, Incorporated.

With this newfound legal status, the Associated Students adopted another publication. A student handbook, which had been published yearly by the Caltech

YMCA, came under the control of the Associated Students. As a companion to the yearbook, the handbook was named the *little t*. Unlike the other publications offices, the editor and business manager of the *little t* were appointed positions because that was the way the YMCA had traditionally filled those positions. With the incorporation of the ASB, the Executive Committee was renamed the Board of Directors and a ninth member was included, the Rally Commissioner. This had been an elected office for many years, but was added to the Board in 1936 so there would be an odd number of voting members. The responsibility of the Rally Commissioner was to organize weekly assemblies of the student body. These assemblies generally provided entertainment for students in the form of a movie, a speaker, a performance, or a pep rally. Student government announcements were also generally made these assemblies.

The structure of the Associated Students remained relatively static until World War II, when all student activities were suspended for a period of about two years. When the war ended, the Associated Students worked to restore normalcy to student life at Caltech. As somewhat insignificant news on December 13, 1946, the *California Tech* reported that the Board of Directors of the Associated Students had decided that the Associated Students would no longer be known as the ASB, but by the designation ASCIT. To this day, the student government is known by this acronym, pronounced “ask-it.”

From 1930 through World War II, each student was charged \$15 a year for ASB membership. This money primarily went toward supporting the athletic program at Caltech. In April of 1949, when the ASB Board was proposing a \$2.50 raise in ASCIT dues, the *California Tech* reported that of \$15 in yearly dues, \$5.50 went to the Athletic Department, \$4.00 to the *Big T*, \$1.50 to the *Tech*, \$1.50 to Social Affairs, \$2.50 to Athletic and other awards, and \$2.50 miscellaneous. The main benefit of ASCIT membership was the privilege of attending athletic events. For this reason, many graduate students joined ASCIT in order to attend the football games, and they were encouraged to do so because ASCIT wanted to collect their money. There was no graduate student government at the time and ASCIT was open to both undergraduates and graduate students alike.

Another important function of ASCIT was to keep up relations with other nearby colleges. According to a 1950 *California Tech*, the ASCIT President sat on an Inter-College Council, which included students from 5 local schools that played in Caltech's athletic conference. The ASCIT President also sat on a Faculty Committee known as the Student-Faculty Relations committee. The committee was composed of a representative from each academic division, the Deans, the Master of Student Houses, the ASCIT President, the presidents of the four Houses, and the editor of the *California Tech*. The committee met once a month to discuss student issues where their discussions ranged from policies regarding smoking in class to the success of the honor code. In 1956, the committee made a recommendation to the Faculty Committee on Educational Policies that they accept student representatives (*Tech*, 5/7/56).

Since 1916, there had been a YMCA at Caltech that sponsored many student activities on campus. In 1954, The Y cabinet met with the ASCIT Board of Directors to reevaluate the place of the Y at Caltech. They recommended that the Y be placed under ASCIT control and to shift the focus of the Y away from religion and toward cultural and political affairs. In the end, the Y never came under the control of the student government. However, the Caltech Y did become more involved in political and social affairs and eventually invited many prominent speakers to campus, such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Walter Reuther and Justice William O. Douglas.

The ExComm

In 1957, ASCIT took on a fourth publication: A literary magazine known as the *Totem*. Also that year, the ASCIT Board formed an Executive Committee to serve as a long-range planning group. In 1958, at the ExComm's recommendation, ASCIT underwent a major overhaul. This was most obvious in the designated officers on the Board of Directors. The President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Athletic Manager remained, but the Publicity Manager, two Representatives at Large, and Rally Commissioner were replaced by an Activities Chairman, Social Chairman, Business Manager, and a single Representative at Large. That year, the ASCIT President, Michael Godfrey, went before the Board of Trustees to ask for more student housing on campus.

When the undergraduates had their wish granted, it created a new challenge for the ASCIT ExComm.

Counter to popular opinion, the ASCIT Executive Committee spoke out against the traditional House system. “The ExComm feels,” the student committee wrote in its report, “that in general, the philosophy of the Student Houses, as they are now, tends to kill the natural intellectual curiosity of the student and makes him feel that “neatness” (the ability to be accepted by all people at all times) is the thing most desired...The problem of the Houses perhaps centers on the fact that the student, without making a conscious choice, tends to adopt a pattern of living based on the existing House prejudices and traditions – a pattern which is irrelevant to the aims with which he came here” (*Tuttle*, 2001). Throughout the early years of the North Houses, the ASCIT ExComm took an active role in the Rotation debate.

In 1963, ASCIT recognized the importance of the Houses in student affairs. At that time, a vast majority of the student body lived in the Houses and Rotation was the most prominent student government issue, so the ASCIT Business Manager was dropped from the Board of Directors in favor of the Chairman of the IHC.

In 1962, ASCIT created the Educational Policies Committee, which was a student committee dedicated to investigating academic issues. This was the first time the students took an active role in the academic program at Caltech, which was previously the domain of the faculty.

ASCIT Research Project

In 1967, a single student motivated far more dramatic changes in ASCIT’s operations. Joseph Rhodes was elected to the ASCIT Board in 1966 as the Activities Chairman while still a freshman. In 1967, the ASCIT Bylaws were amended so that he could serve as ASCIT President in his sophomore year. Soon after his election, Joe Rhodes called a Corporation meeting. About 400 students attended the meeting on April 19, 1967 in Beckman Auditorium where the student body passed several important resolutions. The first two resolutions asked for a reduction in the number of required courses and formed several Academic Reforms Groups, which included both students and faculty members. The third resolution had the greatest impact on student governance at

Caltech; it asked for student representation on faculty committees that were relevant to students. This resolution passed with 78% of the vote and was very quickly accepted by the Faculty Board (*Tech*, 04/27/67). By 1970, the IHC was interviewing students for 27 positions on 15 separate Institute and Faculty Committees (*little t*, '70-'71).

The first issue of the *California Tech* in the fall of 1967 proclaimed, "Rhodes Plans Massive Student Undertaking" (*Tech*, 09/21/67). Over the summer of 1968, ASCIT carried out this bold task, engaging in a research project to investigate air pollution. In June of 1968, ASCIT received a grant of \$68,250 from the National Air Pollution Control Administration and seventy students from fifteen schools around the country participated in the summer project. The students were divided into ten research teams: Cost to the Home, Computerized Carpool, Government and Pressure Groups, Photochemistry, Biological Effects of Lead, Psychological Effects of Ozone, Community Survey, Correlations, Role of the Public, and Cost Benefit Analysis. Each team conducted its own tasks and the results were to be combined in a consolidated report (*Tech*, 09/26/68).

In 1969, the year Joe Rhodes graduated, ASCIT underwent another major overhaul. The Activities Chairman, Social Chairman, Athletic Manager, and single Representative-at-Large were replaced by a Director for Academic Affairs, a Director of Student Life, and two Directors at Large (*Tech*, 11/21/68). These new offices remained for years after Joe Rhodes left the Institute, but unfortunately, many of his initiatives disappeared from Caltech in his absence. The ASCIT Research Project Board became dormant in 1969 and the Academic Reforms Committee ceased to exist. However, the Educational Policies Committee, now chaired by an ASCIT Board member, gained prominence and continued to pursue academic initiatives for many decades. In 1974, the Educational Policies Committee began publishing the Teaching Quality Feedback Report (TQFR), which evaluated the teaching of instructors at Caltech (*Tech*, 10/06/74). In 1981, this became the Course Listings for Undergraduate Education (CLUE), which included the grade distributions for each class and expanded student comments. The ASCIT Research Project faded from memory in the 1970's, but it was certainly not the end of undergraduate research at Caltech. The SURF program was initiated in 1979, and over 24 years SURF has funded over 4,200 student research projects.

Growth and Change

In 1974, when the first undergraduate women at Caltech were in their fourth year, the first female President of ASCIT, Liz McCleod, was elected. In that same year, the position of Director of Student Life was replaced by a Director for Social Activities. This necessitated the creation of an Executive Social Committee to complement the Educational Policies Committee. In 1978, the Directors at Large were renamed the Upperclass Director-at-Large and Freshman Director-at-Large, reserving one position on the ASCIT Board exclusively for entering freshmen.

Through these multiple reforms, the Activities Chairman and Athletic Manager remained elected positions, but were often held by multiple students at one time. Starting in the 1960's, ASCIT gradually phased out its weekly assemblies and the primary responsibility of the Activities Chairman became showing movies on campus. In 1994, the position was officially renamed ASCIT Movies Chairman. A similar evolution occurred for the ASCIT Athletic Manager. As the Institute took over a larger share of the athletic program, ASCIT's Athletic Managers saw their roles reduced significantly, eventually being in charge of only athletic awards and Interhouse sports. In light of these reduced responsibilities, the position of ASCIT Athletic Manager was officially discontinued in 1998 in favor of an IHC Athletic Manager.

All these changes among student government offices were not a zero-sum game. Since World War II, when student government activities were briefly suspended, the number of student government offices had been steadily increasing. The most dramatic growth occurred around 1970, when students gained representation on faculty committees. In 1969, the *little t* only listed 59 positions in school-level student government, but by 1971 this number had grown 55% to 92 offices. The addition of four new Houses also greatly expanded the number of student government opportunities available to undergraduates. The *little t* did not list House offices between 1960 and 1976, but the expansion can be inferred from the 40 House offices listed in 1959 and the over 80% growth to 73 offices in 1977. The number of student clubs can also be extracted from the *little t* by counting the number of entries in the list of student activities (see Figure 2). The growth in this area has occurred steadily over a much longer period

of time. In 1940, there were only 24 different student activities. In 1971, this number had grown to 45. By 1985, there were 70 different activities listed in the *little t* and in 2002, there are 98.

Student Government Opportunities and Participation

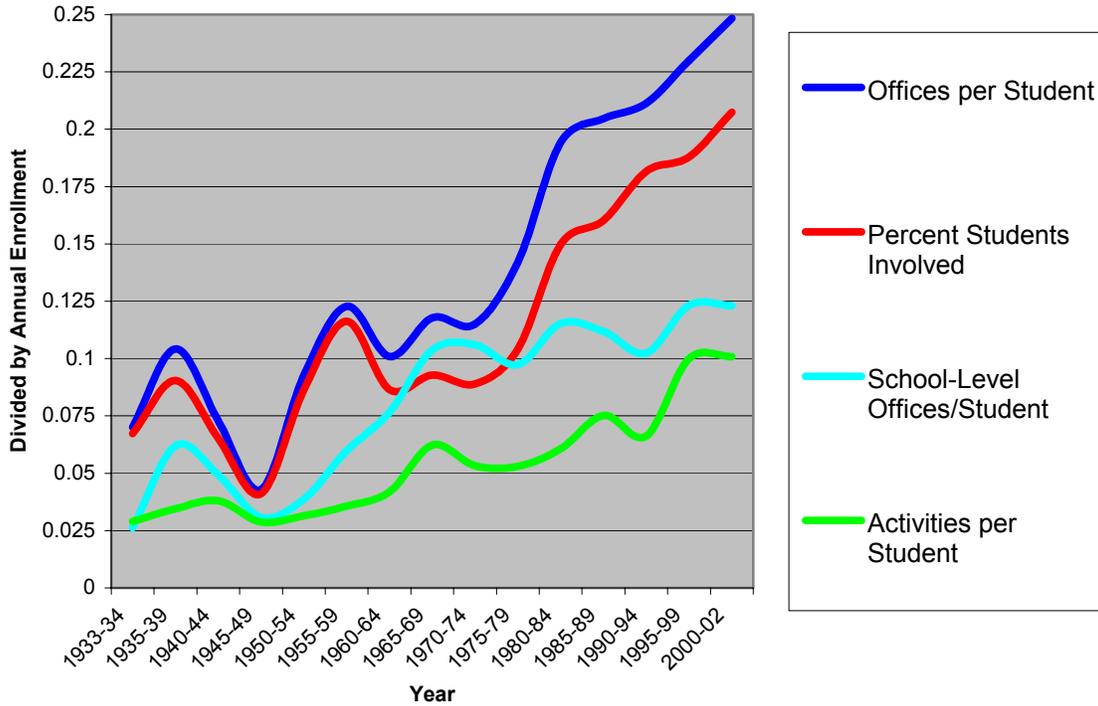


Figure 2: Student Government Participation from 1933-2002 (*little t*)

These numbers are extraordinary for such a small school. 263 student government offices in 2002 is more than one office for every four students. There is also more than one club for every 10 students, which would be practically impossible at any other school. This phenomenon did not go unnoticed by the 1949 *Tech* editors, who conducted a survey of Caltech students and “Engineering and Science men of a large state university located near a big city.” They found that 28.4% of Techers participated in major activities, which were defined as “affecting the whole student body” while only 4.6% of men at other schools participated. Overall, 87.7% of Techers participated in some activity as opposed to 58.1% from the other school. On average, each Techer participated in 0.55 major activities while men from the other school averaged only 0.05 (*Tech*, 4/7/49). The next fall, Dick King summed it up well, writing back from Cornell

graduate school, “That business about engineers at Tech competing only with engineers for the extracurricular activities is really the truth. You don’t realize what an advantage that is until you go to a big school” (*Tech*, 11/10/49).

Some of the growth in student government is coupled with the rise in undergraduate enrollment over the years, but, as shown in Figure 2, the expanding number of offices has far exceeded the growth in enrollment. The number of student government offices per student has grown from wartime lows around 0.05 (1 office for every 20 students) to over 0.25 in the present day (1 for every 4). The data for the graph comes from editions of the *little t*, and thus reflects the fact that through the 1960’s, most House offices were not listed; school-level offices account for almost all the listings at that time. This lack of data causes the major expansion of student government offices to appear in the late 70’s, when it actually occurred during the 1960’s. By counting the number of unique names appearing in the *little t* each year, an estimate of the percentage of the student body involved can be obtained. Figure 2 shows that the expansion of student government exceeded not only the growth in enrollment, but also the number of students willing and able to participate. While students generally held only one office in the student government before 1960, many students hold multiple offices in the present-day student government. While there is 1 available office for every 4 students, only 1 in 5 actually get involved. This is still a far higher percentage than could be imagined at any other school, and it is this strong solidarity and dedication that has kept the tradition of student self-governance alive at Caltech.

As the student government expanded, its responsibilities began to change as well. During the 1970’s, the Institute asserted greater control over the athletics program, leaving the Associated Students to take on a variety of different responsibilities. A student-run coffeehouse, where students could get food at any time of day, was conceived. The Coffeehouse Managers were appointed by the ASCIT Board and were guaranteed free housing inside the coffeehouse, located in the basement of the student Houses. Eventually, Caltech Dining Services took over the financial responsibilities of the Coffeehouse, but ASCIT still retains control over the management today. Up until 1983, ASCIT also ran the student phone system. The switchboard operator was a student

position in the 70's, and students were still billed for their phone service by ASCIT in mid-80's.

In February 1980, ASCIT organized the first Student-Faculty Conference. The two-day marathon event was held in JPL's von Karman Auditorium and it sparked numerous reforms on campus, including course evaluations and an expanded humanities curriculum. The event became a biennial tradition in the late 80's, with students and faculty meeting every two years to discuss issues ranging from the core curriculum to an on-campus ATM. In 1995, the Educational Policies Committee was restructured to a system of House representatives and renamed the Academics and Research Committee (ARC); the Student-Faculty Conferences became their primary responsibility. Ironically, the Student-Faculty Conference was forgotten for a few years soon after the ARC took over, but in 2002, in the midst of much controversy on campus regarding a wide variety of issues, the tradition was revived. The 2002 Student-Faculty Conference investigated issues of the Honor Code and Academic Advising, but left many hot-button issues regarding student morale and administrative miscues unaddressed.

In 1999, ASCIT joined the internet craze and began a web development project to bring more services to students. The website, at <http://donut.caltech.edu>, incorporated an online book market, student directory, online voting, restaurant guide, and much more. As almost half the student body lived off-campus in the year 2000, ASCIT faced major challenges in trying to represent a more diverse student body. The internet, as a primary method for communication among the students, became an important aspect of ASCIT's functions. The *donut* website was recognized as an official ASCIT publication in 2003, and will serve as the basis for ASCIT operations for many years to come.

IV. A History of the Honor Code (1910-2002)

In the 1892 catalog for Throop Polytechnic Institute it was written, “The discipline of the institution will constantly keep in mind the development of self-governing citizens, self-respecting, law-abiding men and women. The helpfulness of the ever-watchful friend will take the place of the educational police officer.” The ideals of the Caltech Honor Code have existed since the school’s founding, and that they certainly predate the name Caltech.

Board of Control

According to a 1947 edition of the *California Tech*, the Honor Code began at Caltech in 1910. The official records of the Honor Code began with the creation of the Board of Control. On May 14, 1913, a committee known as the “Student Rule Committee” presented a report to the Associated Student Body Executive Committee. The report proposed a committee composed of 3 seniors, 2 juniors, 2 sophomores, and 1 freshman whom would have “complete jurisdiction over the conduct of students according to the rules.” The report named five rules:

- No unnecessary disturbances in the buildings during recitation hours
- Any damage to property shall be compensated for by offender
- There shall be no smoking about the buildings or quadrangle.
- [No] Conduct unbecoming a gentleman or engineer.

Examinations

- The honor system is in vogue, with all it implies. Violations shall be dealt with accordingly by the Committee with the right of appeal for the offender to the student body.

This committee was named the Board of Control (BoC) and from then on was the body that enforced the honor system among the undergraduates of Caltech. In the beginning, the honor system was only one part of the responsibilities of the BoC. The term “honor system” applied only to cheating on examinations, and other rules of conduct were categorized separately.

The Board of Control was described in the 1936 *little t* as “the disciplinary body on the campus,” and that was how it was viewed from the beginning. Rather than

allowing faculty or administrators to discipline students, Caltech left that responsibility up to the students. The more serious cases came before the Board.

Over the years, the BoC remained in this role, but the term “honor system” grew beyond academics to include everything in the Board’s jurisdiction. In the present day, the honor system and the BoC are synonymous in student minds. However, that was not the original purpose of the Board of Control, which is apparent by the omission of the word “honor” in its name; the Board of Control was not called an “honor council” or “honor committee,” which is common at other schools with honor systems (Appendix D). The reason the Caltech honor system is so expansive is not because it was explicitly created as such. The honor system owes its present-day scope to the ambitious creation of the Board of Control. History shows that it was the honor system that grew to accommodate the BoC.

In 1922, the Board of Control created its own subcommittee to deal with issues of student conduct that were slightly more trivial. At the November 10, 1922 meeting of the BoC, a Court of Traditions was established to “regulate the violations of traditions by Freshman.” These traditions generally involved such things as proper attire at dinner or sitting on the designated senior bench. The punishments doled out by the court usually involved community service or manual labor. The Court never really revived itself after the Second World War, but survived on paper until 1956 when it was deleted from the Bylaws.

The Board of Control maintained a close relationship with the student government from the very beginning. The student body Vice-President was designated as the ex officio Chairman of the BoC and the President of the ASB was an ex officio voting member. When the ASB incorporated in 1935, the Honor System appeared prominently in the Bylaws as Article III: “Sec.1. The honor system shall be the fundamental principle of conduct of all members of this corporation. It shall apply to all scholastic activities, to all relations between members of this corporation, and to all relations between members and the Faculty.” It is clear that by this time, the term “honor system” had already expanded to include the many non-academic responsibilities of the BoC. Unfortunately, this statement of the scope of the honor system, which survives relatively intact to the present day, does not convey what exactly the system entails.

Frank Jewett, the BoC Chair in 1936, provides some insight into the perception of the honor system at that time. In the *little t* he wrote, “ ‘On my honor I will conduct myself as a gentleman at all times;’ this is the simple statement which every man who enters Caltech thereby agrees to adhere to.” In that same *little t*, the description of the honor system reads, “Here at Caltech this policy applies to each of us, in the class room, when taking examinations, on the campus, in business dealings, and in our relations with our fellow students.” Clearly, the honor system was meant to encompass practically all of Caltech student conduct at that time.

Scope of the Honor System

A survey of Caltech alumni found that although Board of Control officers may have believed the honor system was all-encompassing, these beliefs were not always shared by all students. Almost all students believed that taking exams fell under the Honor Code, but not all students believed the Honor Code extended to other parts of student life. The assimilation of non-academic aspects into the popular understanding of the honor system occurred in two distinct waves, the first occurring in the 50’s and 60’s and the second in the 70’s.

During World War II, the Navy V-12 program took over campus, and the honor system was modified accordingly. The 1944 *little t* informed students that BoC decisions would be reviewed by their Navy commanding officers. As Caltech returned to civilian life after the war, the honor system became a common subject in the *California Tech*. On February 21, 1947, the editors wrote, “Since its inception in 1910, the Honor System has become more than a means of regulating conduct in examinations; it has broadened to include the entire range of student activities. It is the fundamental principal (sic) on which the whole structure of student and student-faculty relationships at Caltech has been erected” (*Tech*, 2/21/47).

During the postwar years, many editorials lauding the honor system appeared in the paper, especially around midterms and finals. Through these efforts to publicize the honor code, issues of property and finances were slowly assimilated into student minds. This is seen very clearly in Figure 3, which shows alumni answers to the question, “Which of the following do you believe fell under the Honor Code while you were at

Caltech?” Less than 50% of respondents graduating in 1940-45 believed that Paying for Institute Goods and Services, Theft of Personal Belongings, or Treatment of Institute Property fell under the Honor Code. Through the next two decades, these percentages rose dramatically. By the 1960’s, over 90% of alumni believed theft fell under the Honor Code and around 70% believed in issues of property.

Which of the following do you believe fell under the Honor Code while you were at Caltech?

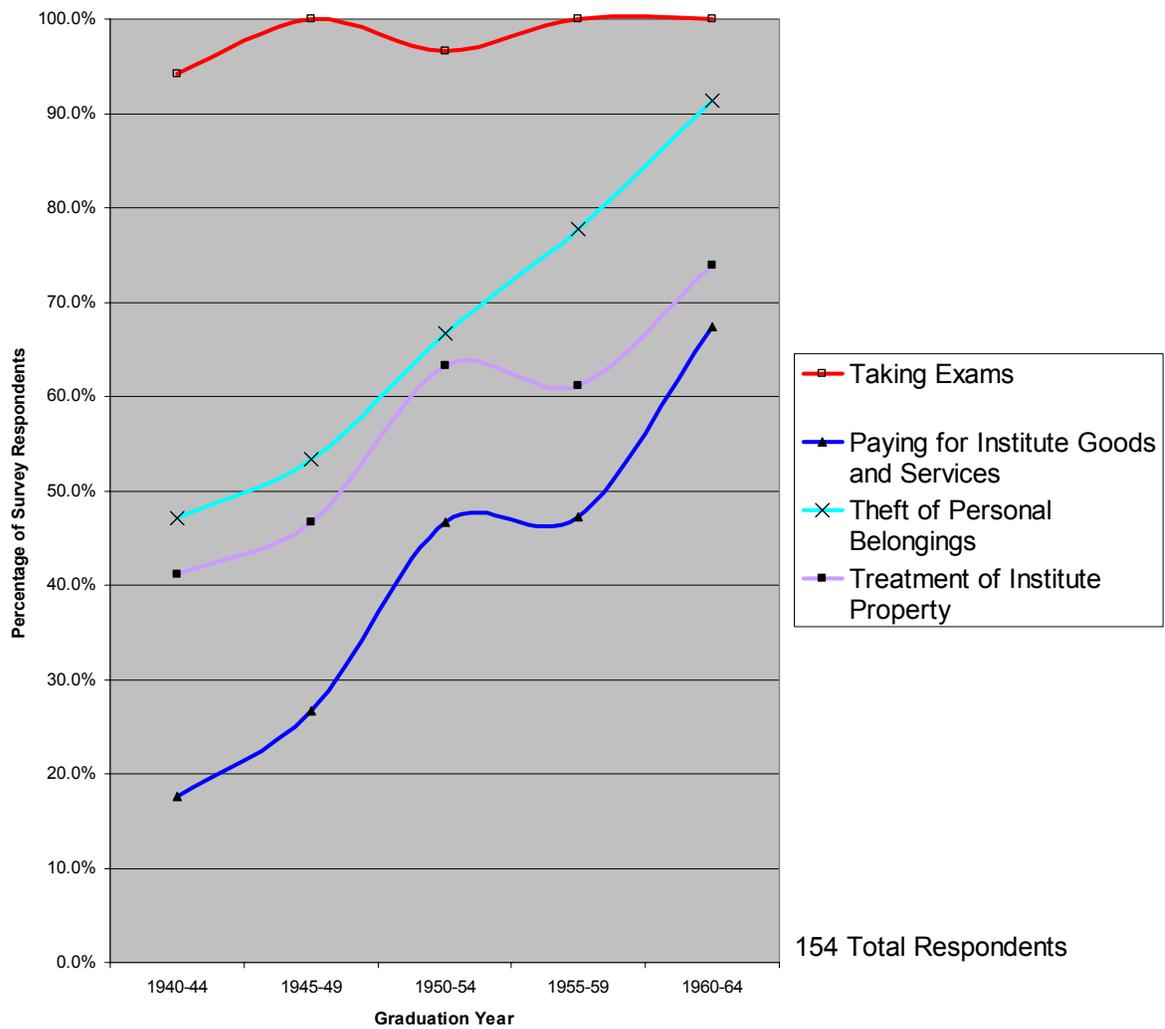


Figure 3: Aspects of the Honor Code from 1940 to 1964

It is somewhat surprising that the popular acceptance of these aspects happened so late when student government documents had been claiming the honor system as all-

encompassing since the 1930's. However, this disconnect probably arises from the fact that students saw the honor system as synonymous with the BoC, and very few cases involved non-academic issues. Between 1930 and 1955, the Board of Control "recommended corrective action in the case of 92 individuals, an average of three to four per year. Sixty-one of these cases have dealt with cheating on exams; 24 with copying papers, themes, lab reports, and homework (plagiarism); and four with theft" (*Tech*, 1/12/56). With so few students seeing the BoC because of non-academic issues, these aspects of the honor system were not prominent in student minds. Only after decades of rhetoric and a few example cases was the majority of the student body indoctrinated to a more open view of the honor system.

This conception of the Honor Code involving academics and property issues was relatively stable into the 60's, when the Board of Control underwent a major structural change. In 1962, the Board changed from a committee of two representatives elected from each class to a committee of representatives from each House and two appointed representatives (*little t*, 1962). This change not only expanded the Board from seven to ten members, but may have shifted the Board's focus more towards residential life issues.

The transition to a more House-centric system and the arrival of women formed the backdrop for honor system reform in the 1970's. The 1970-'71 *little t* editors claimed, "Because one of the main benefits of the Honor System is a vast freedom from rules, attempts to state it explicitly are futile. Just respect the rights of others and expect them to respect yours." Ironically, that very school year, the Honor Code was characterized with the phrase, "No member of the Caltech community shall do anything to take unfair advantage of any other member of the Caltech community" (*little t*, 1971).

This explicit characterization of the Honor Code coincided with a period of heightened rhetoric similar to that during the 40's and 50's. Sometime during the 60's the BoC started more aggressively pursuing non-academic cases and the discussions of the early 70's focused on how to deal with the wider scope of the honor system (*COSGAA*, 12/02/98). Leonidas Guibas, the Ruddock BoC Rep, wrote, "The Board finds itself faced with an increased number of such 'violations' and therefore with the dilemma of either ignoring them or having its efficiency threatened by having to call weekly case meetings" (*Tech*, 01/29/70). Robert Fisher, the BoC Secretary, shared this sentiment,

saying “Case Meetings, aside from being time consuming, are monumentally unpleasant for everyone involved. The BoC is not anxious to hold them over relatively trivial matters” (*Tech*, 01/22/70).

Which of the following do you believe fell under the Honor Code while you were at Caltech?

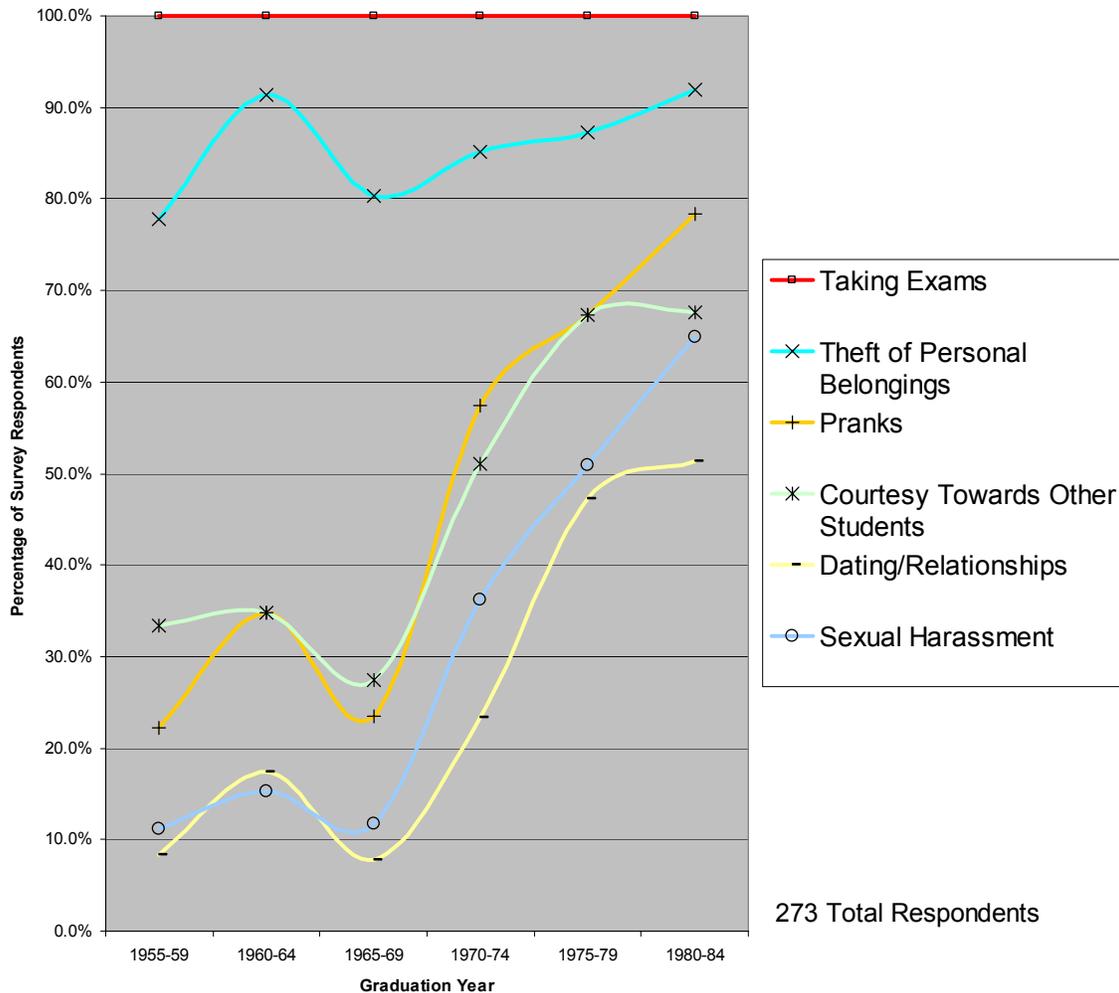


Figure 4: Aspects of the Honor Code from 1955 to 1984

With the expansion of the honor system into interpersonal issues, the Board of Control found itself ill-equipped to adjudicate trivialities that occurred on a regular basis. Many proposals were made to alleviate this problem, such as creating a second board, giving full judicial authority to the BoC Chairman, or relying on the House UCC’s to deal

with minor honor system infractions. However, after much discussion in the early 1970's, no permanent solution was found to the problem of minor infractions.

As can be seen in Figure 4, this public discussion added many interpersonal aspects into the Honor Code in some students' minds. Academic and property aspects were already a well-established part of the Honor Code. However, through the 1970's, pranks, courtesy towards other students, sexual harassment, and even dating became part of the Caltech Honor Code. By the end of that decade, there was little a student could do at Caltech that wasn't governed by the Honor Code. In 1980, the students made this official by writing the phrase, "No one shall take unfair advantage of any member of the Caltech community" into the ASCIT Bylaws.

Honor Code Compliance

While the scope of the Honor Code has grown monotonically throughout history, compliance with the Honor Code has fluctuated. On the survey, alumni were asked four questions that began, "During your time at Caltech, what percentage of students do you believe always abided by the Honor Code..." and ended with: "...while taking exams?" "...while working on problem sets, essays, or lab reports?" "...in financial matters, such as lending money, paying for goods, or theft of personal belongings?" and "...in social affairs, such as hazing, pranks, and interpersonal interactions (e.g. common courtesy, glomming, and sexual harassment)?" The answers were multiple-choice: "More than 99%," "95-99%," "90-95%," "80-90%," "60-80%," and "Less than 60%." Figure 5 shows a weighted average of these responses (taking the median of each range as the weight), grouped in 5-year blocks. The results before 1960 for property issues and the results before 1980 for interpersonal relationships are likely not reliable because as discussed above, the student body did not have a very uniform understanding of those aspects of the honor system at those times.

The two periods of expansion of the honor system, one in the 50's and the other in the 70's, are preceded by slight dips in compliance in the honor code. It may have been these slight declines that led students to start discussing the honor system. In the early 70's, Paul Levin and Phil Neches wrote, "We have noted a weakening of the Honor System, especially over the last two terms. This weakening has been subtle, but

nonetheless readily detectable. The Honor System’s malaise stems in part from a seeming reluctance on the part of the Board of Control to tackle a few difficult issues ... and also in part from a similar reluctance on the part of some students to govern themselves ...” (*Tech*, 02/24/73). Declining compliance with the honor system served as motivation for students to take action, and in both eras, that action resulted in both improved compliance and an honor system with an expanded scope.

During your time at Caltech, what percentage of students do you believe always abided by the Honor Code with...

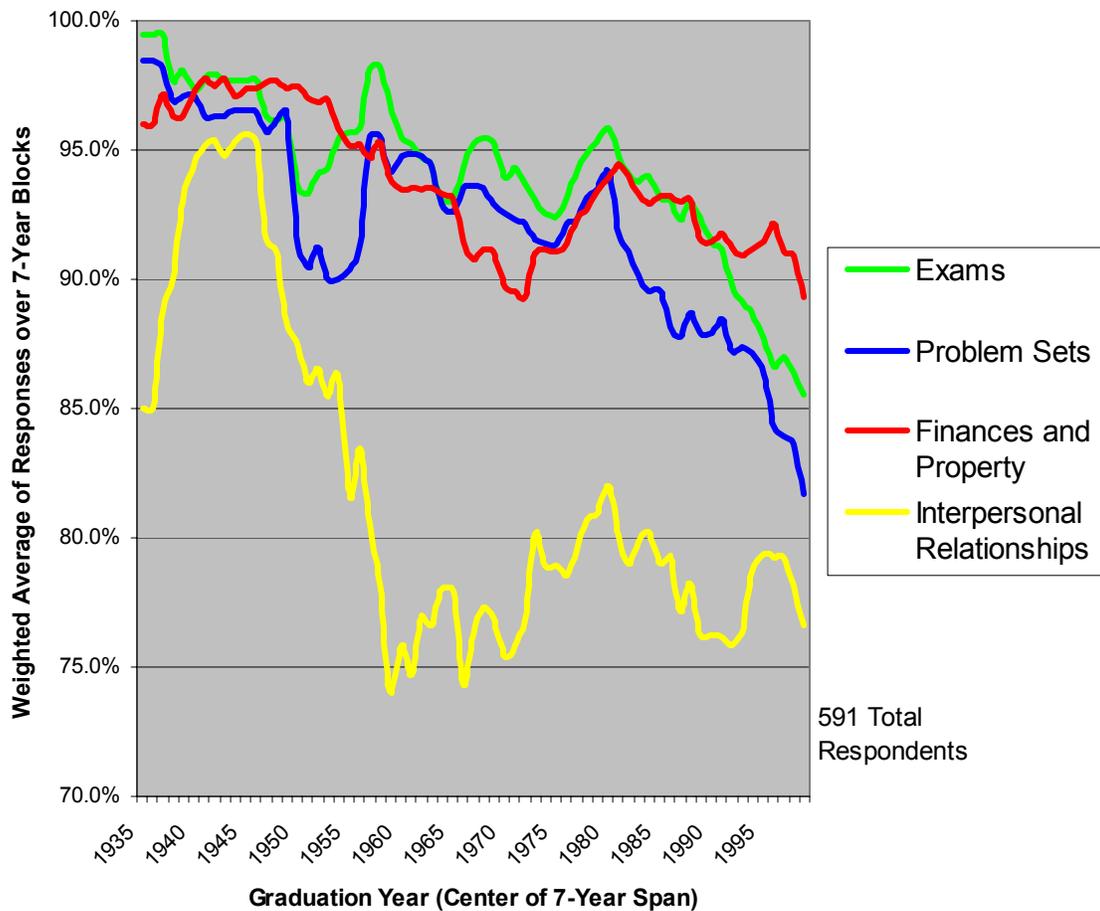


Figure 5: Compliance with the Honor Code in different aspects

During both the 50’s and the 70’s, the recovery of honor system compliance occurred in parallel with the honor system expansion, but interestingly, the recovery does

not occur in the newly created aspect of the honor system. During the 1950’s, compliance on exams and problem sets recovered strongly while the new aspect of property issues maintained a slow decline. During the 1970’s, finances and property recovered along with the academic aspects, but the interpersonal aspects remained at low levels. These two periods establish a pattern where the honor code is weakened for some reason, inspiring public discussion and eventually a formal expansion of the honor system’s scope. After this period of reform, the honor system’s original foundations become stronger.

	1988	‘89	‘90	‘91	‘92	‘93	‘94	‘95	‘96	‘97	‘98
Dismissed By Chair	5	4	28	5	22	5	6			6	9
Referred to Other Body	5	5	4	3	1	0	2				3
Dismissed by Board	4	2	2	2	4	3	2			1	1
Leading to Conviction	12	10	13	11	22	14	10		27	21	22
Upheld By Dean	12	10	13	11	18	14	10		27	21	22

Table 1: Board of Control Statistics for 1988-1998 (*little t*)

Although there are some short-lived patterns, the overall trend over the past 70 years has been a decline in compliance with the honor system. This decline is corroborated in the number of honor code violations that the Board of Control finds each year. As noted above, BoC convictions numbered three to four per year between 1930 and 1955. There are no available counts for Honor Code violations through the 60’s or 70’s, but the 1998 and 2000 *little t*’s published some statistics for the Board of Control, which are shown in Table 1. From the late 80’s through the early 90’s, the number of Board of Control convictions was rather steady in the 10-15 range, which is a definite increase from the three to four per year in the 30’s, 40’s and 50’s. Towards the latter part of the 90’s, there is a rather substantial increase in the number of convictions, for ’96-’98, the average climbs above 20, which is consistent with the sharp drop in honor code compliance in the alumni survey data for the same period. These two sources provide strong evidence that the honor code is working less well in the present day than it has in even the recent past.

The Conduct Review Committee

In 1998, a major change in the honor system occurred with very little fanfare – it was unaccompanied by the *Tech* editorials and public debate that had characterized earlier expansions in the honor system. Rather than coming from the actions of motivated students, this most recent honor system reform came from the student affairs administration. Chris Brennen, the Vice-President for Student Affairs, formed a committee of students, administrators, and faculty called the Committee on Student Government and Administrative Action (COSGAA). In his charge to the committee, Dr. Brennen noted that, “Over the past few years, several incidents have given rise to much discussion of the roles of the Dean, the Director of Resident Life, the Board of Control, ASCIT and the IHC in the administration of undergraduate student issues, problems and crises” (COSGAA, 09/30/98). After a full year of almost weekly meetings, COSGAA recommended the creation of the Conduct Review Committee (CRC). In the fall of 1999, the members of COSGAA visited each of the undergraduate Houses to present their proposal. The front page of the October 29, 1999 *California Tech* proclaimed, “COSGAA redefines justice.”

Currently, the CRC is a committee co-chaired by an elected student and the Associate Dean of Students. The two chairs and a group of representatives selected from a pool of students, faculty members, and administrators adjudicate cases. Typically, the CRC handles incidents involving fire, drugs and alcohol, and hazing. The Dean or Director of Residence Life deal with the more minor issues, such as roommate conflicts or minor pranks. This has left the Board of Control to primarily consider issues of an academic nature. The lines of jurisdiction are flexible though; each case reported to the BoC or the administration must first be considered by a Routing Group, composed of the CRC Co-Chairs, the BoC Chair, and the Dean of Students. The Routing Group decides which body is most appropriate to handle the case, and then the investigation proceeds. Although the CRC is an Institute Committee rather than a student committee like the BoC, the CRC still maintains a close relationship with the student government. In 2002, the CRC student co-chair was elected by the student body for the first time.

The creation of the CRC may be seen as the resolution to the problems of the 1970's regarding minor honor system violations. It can also be seen in a larger context, as an adaptation of the honor system to increasing administrative regulations. However, in the history of the undergraduate honor code, the creation of the CRC represents a major step. The honor system, which grew from a rule governing only exams to become synonymous with the Board of Control, has now outgrown the BoC.

At the 2002 Student-Faculty Conference, a committee reported on the current state of the honor code. In their presentation they noted that 20% of undergraduates and faculty and almost half of graduate students did not believe that the Honor Code was working (*SFC 2002*). That committee's main recommendation was to work towards improving communication regarding the honor code. If their suggestions are taken to heart, Caltech may be headed toward another reformatory period for the honor system. The current period of falling compliance coupled with increased public discussion would mirror the periods of recovery and expansion of the past.

V. A History of Student Issues and Attitudes (1940-2002)

The main issues that have concerned students at Caltech have all been mentioned in other parts of this report. The strong spirit of the self-governing Student Houses has bred a constant concern over outside regulation of House activities. Social life is a concern for college students on every campus, and social activities have consumed a large portion of House and ASCIT resources throughout history. The honor code is the foundation of Caltech student self-governance and has long held a prominent position in the student conscience. However, the greatest concern for all Caltech students has always been academics, and in the classroom, there have been two major issues of concern: the academic workload and the quality of teaching.

Five Issues

Alumni were asked the question, “Which issue was most important to you while you were a student at Caltech?” In the 1940’s, the top 5 responses were Academic Workload (37.0%), Quality of Teaching (18.5%), Regulation of House Activities (7.4%), Social Life (7.4%), and Honor Code (7.4%). In the 1990’s, the top 5 responses were Regulation of House Activities (19.0%), Academic Workload (16.5%), Social Life (13.9%), Honor Code (13.3%), and Quality of Teaching (10.8%). Remarkably, over six decades, the top five student issues have remained relatively constant. Their relative frequency has changed somewhat over the years, which is illustrated in Figure 6, but this set of five issues have dominated student thought across several generations. Considering all 587 responses to this question on the survey, Academic Workload (18.1%) is the top issue, followed by Honor Code (14.5%), Social Life (14.0%), Regulation of House Activities (13.4%), and Quality of Teaching (11.2%). During the earlier years, Student-Faculty Interaction (4.1%) would occasionally displace Regulation of House Activities as the fifth issue, and during the later years, Restrictions on Personal Behavior (4.5%) or Student Morale (5.5%) would sometimes creep into the fifth spot over Quality of Teaching. Overall, the five issues illustrated in Figure 6 have clearly been the top issues on students’ minds at Caltech.

There are some patterns in the popularity of issues at certain times that correspond to changes in the structure of student governance. Most obvious is an overall upward trend over time in concern with Regulation of House Activities, which corresponds to an increasingly House-centric student culture. This is coupled with a downward trend in concern with Academic Workload and Quality of Teaching. There are also very interesting patterns regarding the Honor Code when compared with other factors.

Which issue was most important to you while you were a student at Caltech?

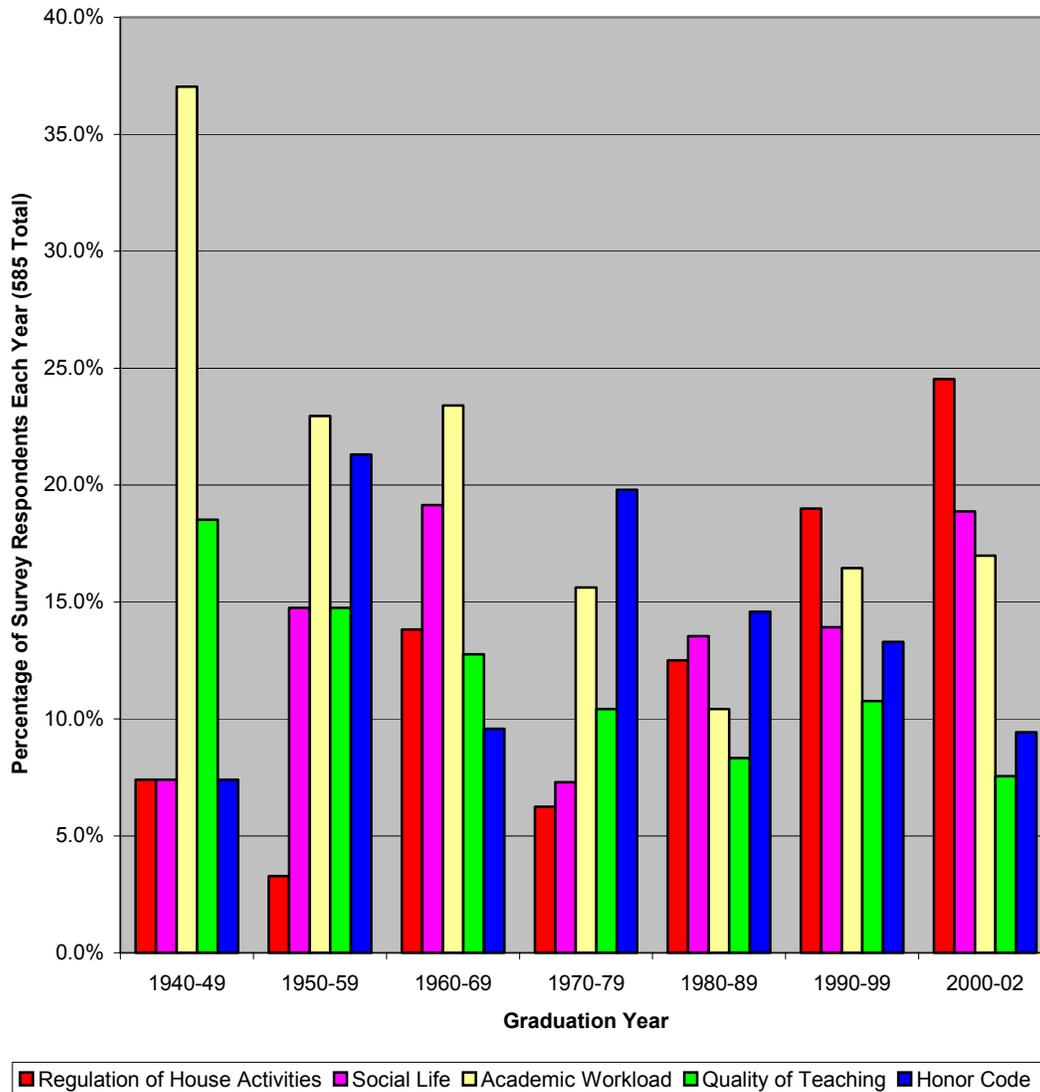


Figure 6: Student Issues from 1940 to 2002

The issue of Social Life however, does not follow any discernible pattern, except for a large decline in the 1970's – perhaps the arrival of women during this time alleviated student complaints regarding social life. Otherwise, social life is consistently the second or third most popular issue, which is likely the case on any other college campus. Social life is perhaps the one issue on this list where the student government has broad, flexible power to make a difference – issues regarding social events are the daily grind of both House and school-level government. Few generalizations can be made because social life is something that changes very quickly and does not necessarily translate across generations.

The honor code however, has been passed down from the earliest days of student government, and it has gone through several major reforms, which were discussed earlier in this report. This issue was the most popular issue during the 1970's and into the 1980's, which was one of these periods of reform. During that time, the perception of the honor system expanded to include all of student conduct and was the topic of much public discussion. It was also a popular issue in the 50's, which was another period of growth in the honor system, when the general perception expanded from the originally limited scope of academics. In the 1960's there is a sharp decline in the prominence of this student issue; this coincides with a dip in Figure 5, which shows a corresponding decline in compliance with the honor system during that time. A decline in honor code compliance also coincides with a decline in this student issue after 1990. There seems to be a correlation between honor code abidance and the prominence of honor code in students' minds – the more students think about the honor code, the more likely they are to follow it.

Student attitudes regarding the regulation of House activities were also discussed earlier in this report. It is interesting to note that this became the number one most important issue during the 1990's after the Residence Life office was established and administrative regulation reached its highest levels. Rising student concerns with administration from above also coincided with a decline in the amount of influence students perceived to have over policies.

When you graduated from Caltech, did students have more or less influence on policies affecting students than when you arrived on campus?

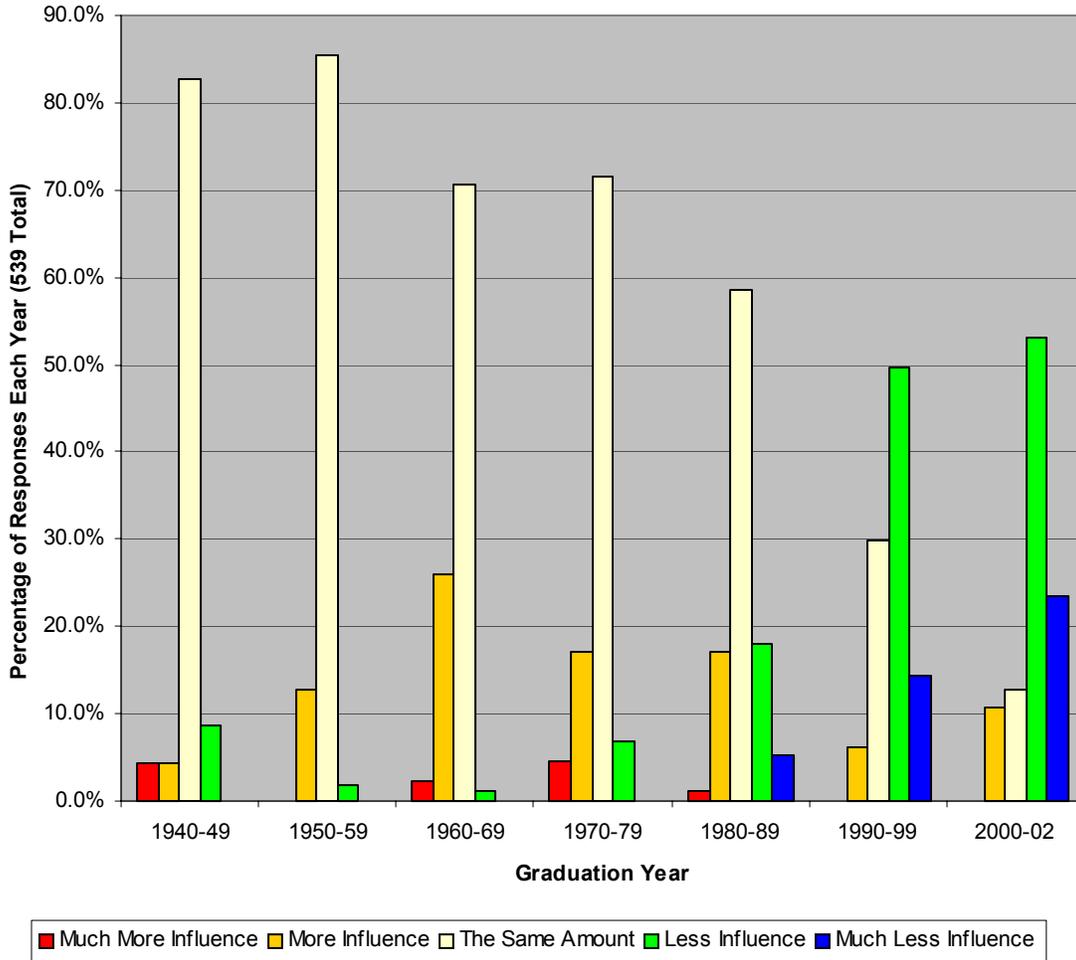


Figure 7: Student Influence from 1940 to 2002

Figure 7 shows alumni responses to the question, “When you graduated from Caltech, did students have more or less influence on policies affecting students than when you arrived on campus.” Before the 90’s, the overwhelming response was that the level of influence was the same. The only time a significant number of students believed they had more influence was during the activist period of the 60’s and 70’s, a time when students gained representation on faculty committees and the student government expanded dramatically. A group of Techers even protested the Vietnam War in 1970

(*Tech*, 5/14/70). The 1980's were split between the first half and second half of the decade. However, by 1990 and beyond, students largely believed they had less influence over policies. During this time, student life became increasingly more regulated across the country, and Caltech was no exception.

Academic Issues

Two of the top five issues both involve academic life at Caltech. With the lowest graduation rate, by far, among the nation's elite colleges, it is no surprise that Academic Workload is one of the top student concerns at Caltech. However, the appearance of Quality of Teaching on this list is probably most shocking, considering Caltech's prominent academic reputation. Both these complaints shed light on the heart of Caltech's academic program.

The 2002-'03 Caltech catalog describes the undergraduate program in this way: "Course work is rigorous and students are encouraged to participate in research. The undergraduate program is thus designed to provide an intensive exposure to a wide spectrum of intellectual pursuits" (*Caltech Catalog*, '02-'03). The center of the undergraduate program is the core curriculum, a demanding set of classes that all students must take their freshman and sophomore years. The core curriculum is frustrating for many students because it forces them to study areas of science or humanities that they never would have chosen on their own; this comprehensive philosophy of education has spawned a growing variety of graduation requirements, and this has stirred student emotions many times in the past.

Over the years, numerous editorials have appeared in the *California Tech* calling for changes in the academic program. Bernard Shore wrote an article entitled, "The Caltech Method" in 1949: "A lightening of the academic load would provide students with an opportunity to satisfy the intense intellectual curiosity that is so characteristic of them... the student is cut or stretched to a preconceived pattern that ignores individual differences, needs, abilities, and interests" (*Tech*, 3/10/49). A decade later, Larry McCombs wrote, "A student should not be forced to follow a prescribed schedule of courses... Tech is no longer a leader. If it wants to regain its position as a top institution, some daring, risky, and experimental action is going to have to be undertaken by the

faculty and administration” (Tech, 9/28/61). This argument is typical of the student feelings that reached the pages of the student newspaper. Almost all freshmen enter Caltech with an intense desire to learn anything and everything; finding their choices limited by the core curriculum often causes great frustration. Freshmen from the tops of their high school classes come to Caltech, but many become demoralized by the workload. In the freshman class of 1960, 70% thought they would graduate in the lower half of the class after four years (Tech, 11/3/60).

Some of these feelings found an outlet in ASCIT President Joe Rhodes’ Corporation Meeting on April 21, 1967. The first proposition passed on that day “asked for reduction of the number of required courses and elimination of the requirement for choosing an option.” Over time, the number of courses required to graduate has drifted downward, albeit very slowly. However, choosing an option is still a requirement at Caltech, although a few students have designed their own options through the Independent Studies Program. That meeting also established Academic Reforms Groups, which initiated several changes regarding curriculum and teaching quality. Those groups were only temporary, but the student representation on faculty committees that was gained following that 1967 meeting gave students a permanent voice on academic issues.

One of the most interesting debates over academic issues appeared in the *California Tech* over a month in the spring of 1968. Joe Rhodes, the ASCIT President, wrote a two-part editorial entitled, “The Caltech Myth.” In the first editorial, he wrote, “Freshman (sic) who come into Caltech, excited, enthusiastic and eager leave this place largely emptied. In many sad ways going to Caltech is tantamount to committing (sic) intellectual or scholarly suicide... Freshman (sic) learn that science, something once loved as a sparkling orb, light and exciting, becomes the daily routine drudgery of physics lab and math assignments (Tech, 04/25/68). The next week, several students wrote in to refute Rhodes’ arguments. Mark Jackson wrote, “There is a hell of a lot of unexciting troll work associated with even the most exciting projects. If a student isn’t willing to work at this sort of thing, it’s best he find out fast so he can cast about for another vocation” (Tech, 05/02/68). Douglas Richstone elaborated further, writing, “For the less mature students the adjustment from the easier atmosphere of high school to the professional atmosphere of Tech is difficult, being made in a situation where one is

constantly brought face to face with one's own shortcomings, and where one is under intense academic pressure. Moreover, for the student who does not love science, there is a strong urge to give up during the undergraduate years. It is this sort of student who loses enthusiasm (sic) significantly...He would probably lose his enthusiasm at a State University... For the sort of student that Caltech is intended, for the emotionally strong young man who is sure he's interested in science, Caltech offers unique advantages" (*Tech*, 05/02/68). Clearly, Rhodes' views were not shared by everyone in the student body.

In Joe Rhodes' second editorial, he claimed that "There are social benefits aplenty for going to Stanford or Berkeley" and that "much of the intellectual fervor and excitement that exists at these other schools is lacking here," concluding that "perhaps no one should come to Caltech." Rhodes also wrote, "Caltech has the responsibility for the growth of the entire student. This is an area where we fail miserably... In our present world, it becomes evident that Caltech has some responsibility to consider the social values it imparts to the student body" (*Tech*, 05/16/68). Professor Frederick B. Thompson fiercely challenged this second installment of "The Caltech Myth" in the next issue of the *California Tech*. In "An Open Letter to Joe Rhodes" he wrote, "Consider the question of social opportunities... I would observe that the serious students choose a social career quite similar to those of Techers... Do not think that ten roads from which to choose gives you more variety than two or three when you can take only one." He goes on to argue that Caltech research regarding pollution problems is "deeply founded in social consciousness." Dr. Thompson concludes his letter by writing, "Education is a social contract between two very human beings – a student a teacher... The greatness of Caltech lies in the fact that there are so many students and faculty who are anxious to sign that contract – a contract concerning ultimately the well-being of society – if through all the vastitudes (sic) of time and being human, they can find a way" (*Tech*, 05/23/68). Unfortunately, Joe Rhodes never wrote to the *Tech* to respond to the criticisms. As is typical of these public discussions, much rhetoric was exchanged, but no resolution was reached.

Joe Rhodes' "Caltech Myth" was composed mainly of recycled thoughts, and many students later on would recycle those thoughts again, completely oblivious of the arguments that had occurred a few years earlier.

In 1972, Jim Hugg, the newly elected ASCIT Secretary, became the latest student to renew this debate, writing, "The traditional, paternalistic system of instruction employed in most courses is generally unresponsive to the intellectual excitement and eagerness to learn which the student brings to Caltech" (04/27/72). Although unresolved in 1972, these complaints about teaching quality found their first constructive solution two years later, when ASCIT began publishing the Teaching Quality Feedback Report. Soon after, ASCIT began giving out teaching awards to outstanding instructors. ASCIT has devoted many of its resources towards academic issues over time, mainly through the Educational Policies Committee, which was established in 1962 and renamed the Academics and Research Committee in the mid-90's.

These efforts led to numerous reforms, including an expanded humanities curriculum and pass/fail for the freshman year. These changes have raised the graduation dramatically, from under 50% to over 85% in the present day. An interesting positive indicator came from a 2002 ASCIT Survey, which found that only 40% of Caltech freshmen expected to graduate in the lower half of their class (ASCIT, 2002).

Student Morale

Public discussion of student issues, especially those related to academics, often amount to complaints about the quality of the overall Caltech experience. The issue of student morale has also become an increasingly important student issue in recent times. This raises the question of whether or not Caltech students approve of the Caltech experience. To find an answer to this question, alumni were asked, "If it suited his academic interests and abilities, would you encourage your son to attend Caltech?" The same question was asked regarding a daughter, but the results are not significantly different from those shown in Figure 8. This question was asked because it was not desired to learn whether or not each individual's own Caltech experience was satisfactory, but whether they would be willing to recommend it to someone they cared about.

The results hold relatively stable from 1940 all the way into the 1980's, with around 80% of respondents marking "Encourage" or "Strongly Encourage." In the 70's, more than 10% of respondents mark "Discourage" or "Strongly Discourage," indicative of a time of strong student activism where many questioned the value of Caltech's program. The number of dissatisfied alumni drops back down to around 5% during the 80's, a sign that perhaps the reforms of the 1970's actually had a positive impact on student life.

If it suited his academic interests and abilities, would you encourage your son to attend Caltech?

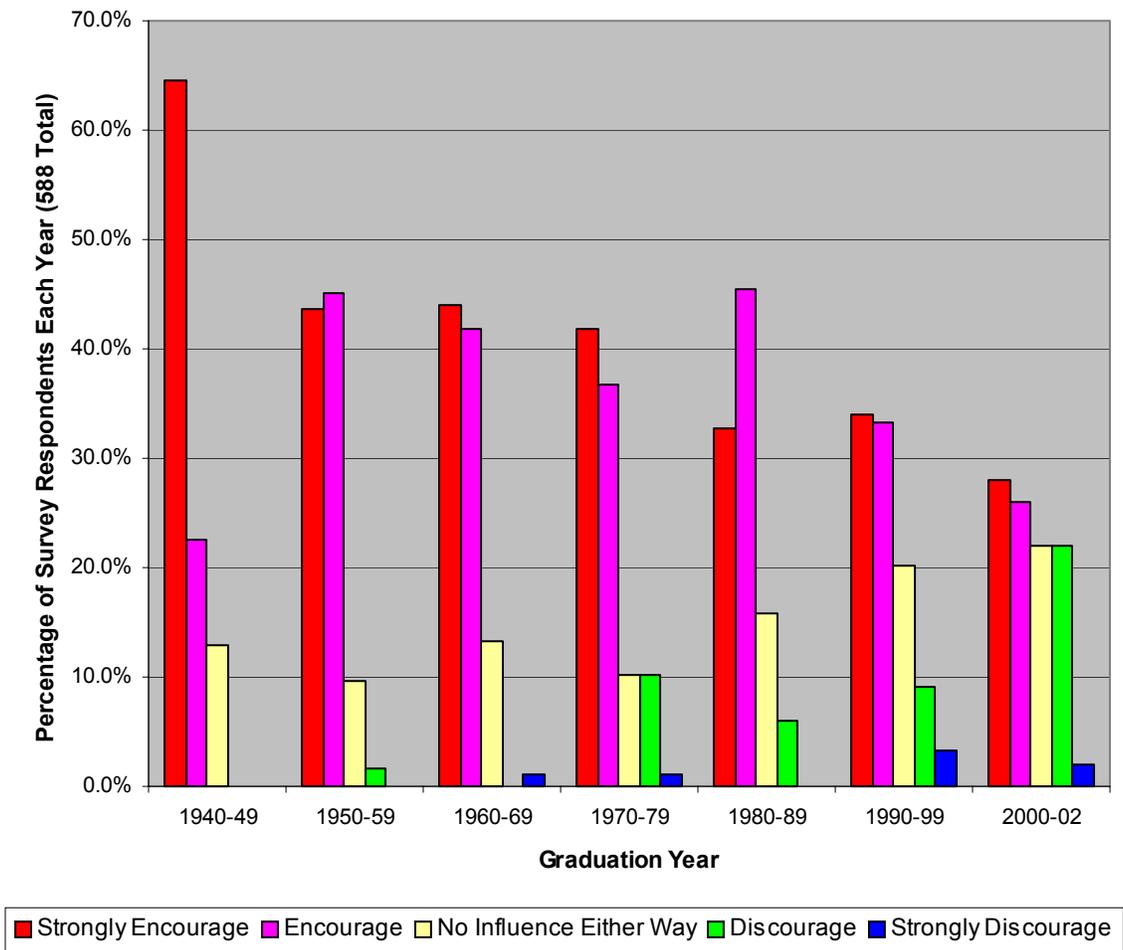


Figure 8: Student Satisfaction from 1940 to 2002

During the 1990's however, the percentage of respondents on the positive side drops significantly, with less than 70% of respondents marking "Encourage" or "Strongly Encourage." This statistic then drops below 60% for the most recent respondents, continuing a rapid deterioration in alumni support for Caltech.

The reasons for this decline may be related to the honor code, since 13.3% of respondents in the 90's chose it as the most important student issue. The rapid decline in honor code compliance shown in Figure 5 also occurs after 1990, and dissatisfaction with the honor system may be leading to dissatisfaction with Caltech. However, these two red flags may not necessarily have a causal relationship. Declining faith in the honor code and diminishing approval of Caltech are likely symptoms of an underlying problem

19.0% of survey respondents in the 1990's and 24.5% of respondents in 2000-02 chose "Regulation of House Activities" as their most important issue. This is the largest single student concern, and may be one of the main causes of the other problems. With respect to the honor system, administrative concerns compete with the honor code for students' attention, and the less students think about the honor code, the less they seem to follow it. With respect to overall approval of the Caltech experience, a declining perception of student influence may play a large role. When asked, "While you were at Caltech, how important was it to you that students had influence over policies affecting students?" 50% of all respondents to the survey marked "Very Important."

Conclusions

Since Throop University was founded in 1891, student self-governance has been an essential aspect of life at Caltech. This principle of self-governance became embodied most clearly in the philosophy of the honor system, which was officially instituted in 1910. However, the perceptions of students regarding the honor code have changed substantially since that time, expanding from a simple pledge not to cheat on exams to a guiding philosophy of student conduct.

Over the past century, the student government has also grown extensively. The number of available offices has grown faster than the undergraduate enrollment, creating one office for every four students in 2002. The larger government has also extended student influence into many more areas over the course of time. While students of the 1930's and 40's primarily governed only themselves, the student government has since expanded to have a say in academic issues and broad Institute policies.

Despite this student government expansion, there has been a sharp decline in students' perception of their influence over Institute policies in the last fifteen years. This attitude comes in reaction to the increasing regulation of student life by Caltech administration that has occurred over the same period of time. Responding to national trends, Caltech has been devoting more and more resources towards student affairs. In 1980, student affairs at Caltech consisted of four faculty members working part time as the Vice-President for Student Affairs, Dean of Undergraduate Students, Dean of Graduate Studies, and Master of Student Houses. Since that time, Caltech has hired many full-time student affairs professionals to fill the positions of Assistant Vice-President, Associate Dean, Director of Admissions, Director of Minority Student Affairs, Director of Counseling, Director of Residence Life, and Director of International Student Programs (EMN 2002). In 2002, Caltech made the Vice-President for Student Affairs a full-time position.

This incredible growth has resulted not only in more student services, but also an increase in administrative oversight for those services. This increased regulation threatens the long-held philosophy of student self-governance and has made students suspect that their influence is being taken away. This perception of student influence also

plays into Caltech students' morale and their overall satisfaction with the Institute; both have been declining rapidly in recent years.

The level of concern may be rising, but the reasons students are dissatisfied with Caltech have not changed significantly through history. Academic workload, the quality of teaching, social life, regulation of House activities, and the honor code have stood as the 5 most critical student issues for over 60 years. Although these issues have all been addressed at various times, the student body has a short memory and in many cases, the same arguments play out precisely as they had just a few years earlier. The pressing concerns that caused students to protest in December 2001 were very much the same issues that have plagued the undergraduate population for decades.

Although the issues that students deal with and the complaints that students are raising about Caltech today are not much different from those aired in 1970, 1950, or 1935, the structure and responsibilities of student governance at Caltech have changed dramatically over the years. The characters of the Houses, the responsibilities of ASCIT, the scope of the honor code, and the role of student affairs administration at Caltech have all gone through major changes. However, these changes seemingly have not solved any of students' major concerns. Some of these problems are unique to Caltech's rigorous academic program and student governance traditions. Concerns over academic workload, the quality of teaching, social life, regulation of House activities, and the honor code are almost inescapable in Caltech's student environment.

The changes in student governance over time have almost always come in reaction to student complaints. However, the reformers quickly graduate, and the foundations that are established are quickly forgotten. Sometimes it is unclear if any progress is made because it is hard to establish continuity when students graduate in four years. Imparting future student leaders and administrators with a knowledge of history may help, and perhaps this study can contribute toward that goal.

Whether or not this study makes an impact on the future, Caltech student government has proven capable of responding to a wide variety of challenges in the past, and the tradition of student self-governance appears to be relatively robust. However, students' present-day understanding of self-governance does not necessarily correspond precisely with tradition, as it places a heavy emphasis on rights and largely neglects the

idea of responsibility. After investigating the history of undergraduate self-governance, it is clear that the responsibility of providing services and disciplining students were once much more prominent parts of student government than they are today. The tradition of student self-governance has not been defined by Caltech administrators asking students for input but by students taking primary responsibility for running the athletics program, punishing cheaters, publishing a newspaper, or placing freshmen in Houses. Student self-governance may be more precisely defined as both the privilege of fair representation in matters of shared concern and the responsibility for creating and enforcing rules governing conduct.

This decline in responsibility is correlated with a decline in honor code compliance, rising concern with regulation of House activities, and other disturbing trends of present-day undergraduate life at Caltech. However, these trends are not yet cause for alarm and may simply be the inevitable consequences of a rapidly changing outside world. An increasingly litigious society and changing expectations of college life have forced Caltech's idealistic self-governance to face reality. Caltech went through comparable changes during the 1940's and 50's because of the GI Bill and again in the 1960's and 70's as campuses around the country went through major upheaval.

During each of those earlier periods, reforms in student governance responded to changing student concerns and reversed downturns in the honor system. There are also many signs at the present time that the future will bring reforms in many facets of undergraduate life. At the time of this report's completion, Caltech's first full-time Vice-President for Student Affairs is settling into her office, reform-minded ASCIT officers have just endured the most competitive elections in history, and a very ambitious student-faculty conference has the entire campus talking about improving the curriculum. The coming years should bring some major changes in undergraduate student governance; if historical trends hold true, these reforms should serve to strengthen the honor system, expand the student government, and reaffirm the tradition of student self-governance that is as old as Caltech itself.

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Epilogue

This project was only supposed to take a summer, but as I type these last words in April, I realize that this has become almost a senior thesis for me. The discoveries I've made have been among my most rewarding academic experiences at Tech, and completing this report has given me a sense of accomplishment that I hadn't previously achieved in my college years.

First and foremost, I must thank the SURF office. This is my fourth SURF, and each summer I have been given opportunities (and money!) far beyond what I deserved. Carolyn Merkl, Carol Casey, Cheryl Gause, Ryan Tischler, and Norma Davalos are the ones who really made this all possible.

I think back to how I could have possibly gotten into a project like this, and I realize I owe a lot to my student government experience. In that respect, I owe everything to Melinda Turner and Jason Cardema, who first got me involved in ASCIT. I would also like to thank the two ASCIT Presidents I served under: Eric Tuttle and Martha-Helene Stapleton. Most of all, I'd like to thank the ASCIT officers who served under me during my Presidency, whose names will be preserved forever in this report. In particular, I want to recognize my Board of Directors: Vikram Mittal, Joe Jewell, Janet Zhou, Marcus Williams, Basit Khan, Jialan Wang, Neda Afsarmanesh, and Andrea Vasconcellos.

Much of the information I needed was not readily accessible, and I relied on a number of people who were invaluable to this study. Gary Lorden's personal experience served as a great starting point, and I also benefited greatly from his work as Vice-President of Student Affairs; he's also a great statistics teacher. Judith Goodstein's book did not provide as much information as I would have hoped, but for some reason, I couldn't put it down when I started reading it. I would also like to thank her for granting me access to the Caltech Archives. Down in the basement of Beckman, Bonnie Ludt was most helpful in retrieving long lost ASB Minutes and *Tech*'s. I learned so many things there that weren't available anywhere else.

I really didn't know what to expect when I put out the alumni survey, and I actually didn't get the results I wanted in many areas. I did come across many hidden gems, and again, this was a resource that was simply not available anywhere else. Debbie Dison Hall and Andy Shaindlin were extremely understanding throughout the process, and Tracy Davis did a lot of extra work when I knew he was already very busy with his real job.

In the early stages of this project, I didn't really talk all that much with my mentor, Miriam Feldblum. However, as I began to collect more information, she was invaluable in helping me focus the project. If not for her, this may have simply been a history project, but she forced me to look for connections and draw conclusions, which turned out to be the most enjoyable parts of this research. I could not have finished this project without her guidance and support.

And lastly, although I know I thanked her already, I need to give special thanks to Janet Zhou. She was my partner in this research project, in the student government, and in life for the past two years. All the most valuable things I have done at Caltech have been tied to her, and my college experience would not have been the same without her by my side.

Table of Appendices

- A. Alumni Student Governance Survey Text (*11 pages*)
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- C. Roster of Student Government Officers (*175 pages*)
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- E. Essays on Caltech Student Government History (*40 pages*)
- F. Recommendations for Further Work (*3 pages*)