PROPOSED CHANGES TO ASCIT OPERATIONS

8 November 1994

Introduction

Over the past few months there has been widespread interest in evaluating and improving the operations of the undergraduate student government. Questions have been raised about the many resignations, the academic risks of serving in an office, and the unclear division of responsibilities and jurisdiction. The need for improvements in the government is clear. In the interest of making some progress in the short term, and drawing on my experience as ASCIT Secretary, I am proposing several changes in the internal operations of ASCIT. I will make no effort to address the relationship between ASCIT and the IHC, as this has been a point of considerable debate.

There are a few key motivations behind the suggestions in this proposal. First, the government should be structured in consideration of the unique aspects of Caltech. The government must function in this academically-intensive environment; officer responsibilities should not conflict with academic obligations. For each office, care should be taken to set a reasonable workload. In addition, the government must function in our small student body, so adequate incentive must be given (e.g. through election or salary) to encourage students to become involved. Second, the specialization of offices should be explored. One office or committee handling too broad an agenda may face time constraints; it may be best to shift some responsibilities to other offices or committees to maximize effectiveness. The Executive Social Committee and Educational Policies Committee are potential resources in this approach. At the same time, the structure of ASCIT should be reviewed to minimize bureaucracy and overlap, and to make sure all operations are held accountable to elected undergraduate leaders.

It is my hope that the Board of Directors, and undergraduates in general, will review this proposal in the coming weeks, suggesting improvements where desired. Eventually, Bylaws amendments will be drafted from the outlines in the proposal. Ideally, an election can be held before the officer elections second term. Questions, comments, and suggestions may be sent to me at dderkits@cco, x1402, MC 64-58, or Page 130.

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ASCIT Secretary

1. Strengthen the Educational Policies Committee

The Educational Policies Committee has the potential to be a valuable asset in the student government. With the changes in the core curriculum, the need for undergraduates to guide their academic environment, and the increasing opportunities for research, a standing committee is greatly desired. This proposal expands the role of the EPC and gives it a more suitable name.

The Academics and Research Committee (ARC), like the present EPC, will handle the nominations for the ASCIT Teaching Awards, and it will be involved in the publication of the CLUE. Faculty-Student Conferences will be organized by the ARC. The specific charge of the committee will be to actively enhance the academic and research experience available to undergraduates at Caltech. ARC Members will work with the Registrar, the core curriculum
committee, the freshmen ombudsman program, the Administration, and the SURF Office, under the guidance of the Board of Directors.

The membership of the committee will be modified to cope with the additional workload and increased responsibility. Members of the ARC will be the Chairman, a Secretary (who will assist the Chairman and help run the committee) elected by the student body, one member elected from each House (to ensure broad input), and two at-large members (selected by the committee). The House members will be elected to the position of "ASCIT ARC Member" using procedures similar to the successful method of electing ASCIT BOC Reps.

2. Strengthen the Executive Social Committee

The Executive Social Committee can become a valuable part of student life. At present, the ESC consists of the social chairs of the Houses, and meetings have been rare and only for the purpose of coordinating House activities and some planning for major ASCIT events. This proposal changes the ESC with a more direct role in planning, funding, and conducting ASCIT and undergraduate social activities. In this role, the ESC is to be responsible for allocating special event, House, and club funding. This committee should be able to assume a more proactive role in student activities, perhaps working with Residence Life, the Y, and other activities offices to coordinate student activities and funding. On an annual basis the Board of Directors could allocate lump sum funds to an ESC Social and Club Budget, for disbursement by action of the ESC.

As with the ARC, the membership of the committee will be modified to cope with the additional workload and increased responsibility. Members are now the Chairman, a Co-Chairman (who will assist the Chairman and record ESC decisions) elected by the student body, one representative from each House (to ensure broad input), and two at-large members (selected by the committee). The House members will be elected to the position of "ASCIT ESC Member" using procedures similar to the method of electing ASCIT BOC Reps.

3. Rename the Athletic Committee to the Executive Athletic Committee (to distinguish the committee from House Ath Committees in the same way the ESC is distinguished).

4. Create the office of Vice President, separate from the Board of Control Chairman

At present, both the offices of President and Vice President/BOC Chairman are heavily burdened. The duties of BOC Chairman prevent the Vice President from being as effective as possible and creates problems when the presidency is vacant. The addition of a third officer should significantly lower the burden on the President while freeing the BOC Chairman of the Vice Presidential duties.

The Vice President will be elected by the student body. He will assist the President in the representation of ASCIT to the Faculty and Administration (the President and Vice President will coordinate their actions to ensure that all the bases are covered). To ensure continuity, in the event of a vacancy in the presidency the Vice President will assume the office of President and elections will be held for a new Vice President.
5. Rename and modify the Executive Committee

In standard terminology, the name "Executive Committee" is given to the committee which runs the day-to-day affairs of the corporation. The ASCIT ExComm has no such role. To clarify the role of the ExComm, it will be renamed to the Bylaws Review and Interpretation Committee (BRIC). The BRIC shall be charged with reviewing possible violations of the Bylaws and clarifying unclear sections. The BRIC should actively search the Bylaws for unclear areas, and recommend patches to the Board of Directors. The Board may delegate to the BRIC the responsibility for reviewing Bylaws changes proposed by a member of the community. The members of the BRIC will be selected by the President and confirmed by the Board. The Vice President will serve ex-officio as chairman of the BRIC. The limited interim appointment powers of the ExComm will be removed from the BRIC and dealt with as follows: 1. Upon a vacancy on the Board, another Director will perform the duties until an election can be held, and 2. if NO wins an election, another election will be held.

6. Create the offices of Publications Chairman and Operations Chairman

A problem easily visible in ASCIT operations is the lack of supervision over certain areas, for example the publications and movies. The Publications Chairman, a Director of ASCIT, will be in charge of the publications. He will act as a liaison between the publications and the Board of Directors. He will assist in the selection of editors and business managers, monitor the finances, ensure the publications are progressing on schedule, and report to the Board. Complaints and concerns regarding any publication will be handled by the Publications Chairman, and suggestions for any publication may be directed through his office. The Committee on Student Government supported the creation of a publications officer. In addition to the above duties, he will have responsibilities as a Director of ASCIT.

An Operations Chairman, also a Director of ASCIT, will be elected to supervise ASCIT operations, which include the ASCIT Movies, the ASCIT Van, the copier, and athletics. He will act as a liaison between the operations/services and the Board of Directors. He will assist in the selection of officers, monitor the finances, ensure that operations are performing adequately, and report to the Board. Complaints and concerns regarding any operation may be directed through this office. In addition to the above duties, he will have responsibilities as a Director of ASCIT. These two Directors will replace the Directors-at-Large. The duties of the Operations Chairman are very similar to the duties of the Upperclass Director-at-Large, for example.

7. Remove the Secretary and Treasurer from the Board of Directors, and create the office of Corporation Chairman to represent this area of ASCIT on the Board

The duties of the Secretary and Treasurer may be too in-depth to allow them to hold the office of Director of ASCIT, as is done at present. In the past, office holders have often been forced to neglect the Director part of the office, or portions of their duties as secretary or treasurer, in order to survive academically. This proposal removes both officers from the Board of Directors and groups them under the Corporation Chairman, a Director of ASCIT. The Corporation Division will be responsible for the corporate operations of ASCIT, including the finances, archives, communications, elections, and documents. Both the Secretary and Treasurer will still be elected by the student body, as will the Corporation Chairman.
8. Provide for appointed Tech Editors

The office of Tech Editor has been a major time-drain, and in recent years Editors have expressed concern that their salary is not sufficient to cover the effort they exert. Many students are unwilling to allow an elected office to have a high salary. Hence, fewer and fewer students are attracted to the Editorship, which in recent years has led to one-candidate races.

This proposal modifies the office of Tech Editor by making it appointed. As such, the salary can be raised to the appropriate level. Appointment may lead to concerns that the Editors will lose their independence from the Board of Directors. To address this concern, the Tech Editors may be appointed by the outgoing Board. The Committee on Student Government has recommended that the Tech Editors be appointed.

9. Replace Dues with an Activities Fee

There is a distinction between the services ASCIT provides and the representation ASCIT provides. While the dues are used to cover the services, students who decline the services and do not pay the dues lose their membership and representation as well. It may be advantageous to replace the mandatory Dues with a voluntary Activities Fee, so that all undergraduates can be ASCIT members. The Honor System would apply to protect this system from abuse (and it would demonstrate to outside groups the faith undergraduates hold in the Honor System).

10. Modify the election procedures to allow write-ins the full ranking privileges of regular candidates.

Results

- The modifications should allow ASCIT to operate more effectively. The various areas of ASCIT can be easily categorized into several divisions: Academics and Research, Corporate Operations, Honor System Enforcement and Education, Operations and Services, Publications, and Social Activities. Each division will be supervised by one Director, who will coordinate the activities and be there to respond to problems within the division.

- Committees of ASCIT will deal with certain individuals in the faculty and administration.
  - Academics and Research Committee - Registrar, SURF Office, core curriculum committee
  - Corporation Committee - Student Accounts, Finances
  - Board of Control - Deans
  - Executive Athletic Committee - Athletic Department
  - Executive Social Committee - Residence Life, MOSH, Y

- The number of Directors will remain at nine: President, Vice President, ARC Chairman, BOC Chairman, Corporation Chairman, ESC Chairman, IHC Chairman, Operations Chairman, and Publications Chairman.