

Recommendations for Further Work

Introduction

As with any research, I came across more questions than answers over the course of this project. During my research, I uncovered numerous interesting questions, and did not have nearly enough time to explore them all. The following is a list of some of the most interesting questions that I believe have the potential to be useful research projects. I have ordered them according to my personal gauge of how interesting and/or useful the topics may be – if I had another summer, I would start at the top of the list and work my way down.

History of the Modern Era (1975-2002)

I did not carefully read any *Tech's* or ASCIT Minutes after 1974 because I was going chronologically and simply ran out of time. Although I uncovered a lot of interesting ancient history that was long forgotten, the real roots of the current state of the student body lie in events of the past three decades. How has student affairs grown? What happened at each of the Student-Faculty Conferences? What happened to Interhouse? What is the story behind Avery House? A lot of things happened in the modern era that I leave somewhat vague in my report. A careful study of this time period would be invaluable to current student leaders and student affairs administrators.

History of Caltech Student Affairs

I have focused on the student government side of things, but the Institute administrative side is just as important to understanding student life at Caltech. In 1940, the first MOSH was appointed, and in 2002 we got our first full-time Vice-President for Student Affairs. In between, there were numerous Deans and Directors, music and athletic programs, Residence Life, the Women's Center, the Health Center, and Minority Student Affairs. How and when did all those offices come to campus? What effect did they have on student life?

The Big Incidents

In the minutes of the Committee on Student Government and Administrative Action (COSGAA, 1999), Chris Brennen mentioned the profound effects of “confidence-shaking incidents” on administration-student relations. This is an interesting observation, and it is clear that neither the student government nor the student affairs administration evolve at an even pace at Caltech. There are certain big incidents that have caused major shifts – I mention the construction of the north houses and ensuing rotation debates of the 60’s and the end of the interhouse party of the 80’s, but I don’t really delve very deeply into any specific incidents. What happened that led the Institute to appoint a MOSH in the 1940’s? Why was a VP for Student Affairs created in 1975? What happened at Interhouse in 1986? What was the Dabney “Sex Party” incident of 1989? What happened with the Ricketts fireball in 1997? The Daihatsu accident of 2000? Many of our rules can likely be traced to one big incident, and it would be interesting to analyze how each of these situations were handled.

Insider’s History of the Honor System

Someone who has access to the BoC/CRC files could give an accurate record of the number and types of cases that occurred each year. They could also likely pinpoint the origins of the peculiar aspects of our honor system: “unfair advantage,” Nullification and Protection, loss of only partial credit, and numerous procedural details. My report is generally from the perspective of an outside looking in, but the real action all occurred behind closed doors in Board of Control deliberations. The only way we can really understand the history of the Honor Code is to go to the source.

History of the Undergraduate Academic Program

Since the school was renamed Caltech, we have had a rather unique undergraduate program, and the strict requirements of the core curriculum and humanities requirements are deeply rooted in traditions that date to Millikan’s time. Over the years though, many things have changed – requirements have been added and subtracted, more

and more different options have been offered, and the curriculum we have today is certainly different from the original. Some professors have had a profound effect on the system – Tom Apostol and Richard Feynman come to mind. Some changes came from student suggestions and others from the administrative side. This is likely pretty well documented through Caltech Catalogs and would provide an interesting perspective on the current undergraduate experience at Caltech.

History of Student Traditions

The 2001 *Big T* claimed that the first ditch day was in 1921, and it is still going strong today. When did our other traditions originate? The Big T on the hill? Floating? Showering? Tunnelling? Bonfires? Pajamarino? Mudeo? ASCIT Movies? ASCIT Donuts? ASCIT Formal? When did these traditions die? This might be a slightly more frivolous research project, but would definitely be fun and could uncover some interesting things.

History of _____ House

I didn't delve much at all into the history of each House, but they have their own unique traditions and characters to be uncovered. Especially interesting might be Dabney and Ricketts, who have clearly changed since the early days. The Houses have long been the center of Caltech student life and the small changes within each House could reveal the incremental changes that led to the shifts we see on the macro level. The list of House officers is also woefully incomplete, and a motivated student could easily compile a complete history for at least one House.