



The

# GSC Newsletter

Special Budget Edition • March 2006

## Overview of Changes

*Arthur Fitzmaurice, GSC Vice-chair*

With the announcement of the parking fee at the end of the summer, it has likely come to your attention that Caltech is currently undergoing a process of budget-cutting. The plan is to cut the General Budget by \$28M and to demand \$3M in revenue from the Auxiliary Budget. We understand that some of this plan has been advertised by the administration in a piecemeal fashion through various Caltech Directory emails as well as from GSC newsletters and weekly announcements. In addition, some details are still being worked out by the administration. This newsletter is our effort to provide you with the most up-to-date information of the budget cuts that will affect the graduate student body. Fortunately for us, the impact on graduate students is not as drastic as that on the undergraduate population, although there will be some very real changes to the quality of graduate student life as a result of the budget cuts. The GSC plans to work with the administration to mitigate the potential effects of these cuts over the next few years. We look forward to receiving your constructive feedback and suggestions for how we can address these and other issues as the extent of the impact of these budget cuts become realized. The administration has committed to reevaluating the budget cuts at least annually as we are affected by these changes and as the needs of the members of the community change.

Student Affairs has put together a website that addresses many questions you may have. It was originally set up to address the concerns of the undergraduates, but it also presents the rationale for and general details of the budget cuts. Please visit <http://www.studaff.caltech.edu/townhall.htm> for this more detailed information.

## Stipend Levels

*Arthur Fitzmaurice, GSC Vice-chair*

Let's begin with some good news. In the past year, the GSC has worked with the Provost, the Dean of Graduate Studies, and the Graduate Studies Committee to establish a minimum stipend level for students supported by GRAs and/or GTAs. As a result of your responses to our Quality of Life survey conducted last fall, we requested a minimum annual support level of \$23,000 in addition to tuition for all graduate students. This was accepted by the Graduate Studies Committee and will be recommended by division chairs to faculty in every

option. As in the past, faculty have the final say regarding how much to support their students, but we are confident that most faculty will follow this recommendation.

## Health Insurance

*Emily Schaller, GSC Executive Director*

Health insurance for all grad students will continue to be covered. Though Caltech will no longer subsidize health insurance for the undergrads, all graduate students regardless of their funding source (ie TA, RA or Fellowship) will continue to receive free health insurance.

At recent Faculty Board Health Committee meetings, there was some discussion about looking into lower cost health plans. However, the earliest a new plan could be implemented would be Fall 2007.

## New Graduate Student Housing Rates

*Scott Miserendino, GSC Chair*

Caltech housing is planning an approximate 8% rent increase in all Caltech owned graduate housing complexes. This is to help the Caltech auxiliary businesses (Caltech Housing, Dining, Bookstore, Child care, etc.) meet the \$1.4 million goal set by the university. The rent schedule for 2006-2007 is

Grad Catalina 4-bedroom (1 room)	\$485.00
Grad Catalina 2-bedroom (1 room)	\$575.00
Grad Catalina 2-bedroom	\$1,150.00
Grad Catalina 1-bedroom	\$995.00
Grad Off-campus single room	\$675.00
Grad Off-campus single studio	\$755.00
Grad Avery Single	\$615.00
Grad Avery Single Suite	\$645.00
Grad Off-campus 1-bedroom apt.	\$810.00
Grad Off-campus 2-bedroom apt.	\$1,025.00
Grad Off-campus 1-bedroom house	\$1,300.00
Grad Off-campus 2-bedroom house	\$1,600.00
Villa Apartments 1bed	\$740.00
Villa Apartments 2bed	\$850.00

This schedule is only a summary and some specific locations are not listed. A complete schedule will be available from the Caltech housing office in March.

In addition to the increases in rent, Caltech Housing will be engaging in a variety of other cost saving measures. Housing will be eliminating three maintenance mechanics and between 16 and 20 custodians (effective in June of 2006). The

biweekly cleanings in the Catalina apartments will end in the summer of 2006. The Housing office will allow interested Catalina residents to continue the biweekly cleanings for a fee.

The new rents were established by the housing office and approved by the Faculty Board Committee on Student Financial Aid and the chairman of the Faculty Board Housing Committee. The new rents also received the approval of the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies. There was limited graduate student involvement or discussion on the new rent schedule. The only opportunity given for graduate student input on the new rents was by the graduate student representative on the Student Financial Aid committee.

### **Student Affairs Departments**

*Arthur Fitzmaurice, GSC Vice-chair*

This section attempts to highlight the major changes in Student Affairs that will affect graduate students. Both programs and staff positions have been eliminated or reduced as a result of budget cuts. Dr. Margo Marshak (VP of Student Affairs) has committed to keeping the website mentioned above updated with additional changes as staff members are made aware of their employment status.

### **Athletics and Recreation Programs**

Positions eliminated: Associate Director, Director of Sports Information, Coordinator  
Facility hours will be eliminated during academic breaks. There is no intention of establishing an additional fee for student use of the athletic facilities.

### **Career Development Center**

Positions eliminated: Associate Director, Career Counselor, Counseling Intern  
There will be reduced availability of career counseling appointments and reduced hours of drop-in advising. The Caltech Project for Effective Speaking will have reduced administrative and financial support. Resumania, the Emerging Leaders program, and the Alternative Spring Break for Navajo Nation will be eliminated.

*To contact the GSC with questions, comments or concerns about any aspect of this Newsletter, please email [gscchair@caltech.edu](mailto:gscchair@caltech.edu)*

*To write a Letter to the Editor, please email [gscnews@caltech.edu](mailto:gscnews@caltech.edu)*

### **Men's Glee Club / Chamber Singers**

Position eliminated: Lecturer/Director  
The Women's Glee Club Director will now be responsible for the Men's Glee Club and Chamber Singers. The GSC is working with her to ensure success of these groups which many graduate students participate in or enjoy as audience members. Free vocal lessons for glee club members will no longer be available.

### **Minority Student Education**

Position eliminated: Assistant Director  
The elimination of this position after elimination of the Assistant Director in the recent past means that the entire office will only be staffed by the Director. This will mean a significant reduction in the programs that this office will be able to support, including the YESS program and efforts to recruit minority students. The GSC Underrepresented Students Committee plans to work with MSE to provide support in an effort to mitigate this loss. Furthermore, the GSC plans to appeal to the new administration for increased support of underrepresented students through increased programming after this fiscal year.

### **Registrar's Office**

Position eliminated: Department Assistant  
The duties of the remaining staff will be redistributed to meet the demands incurred by this loss. Increased turnaround time for official transcripts and degree/enrollment certifications as well as delayed development of online functionality are expected.

### **Women's Center**

Positions reduced to half-time: Assistant Director, Administrative Assistant  
As a result of the reduction to half-time, Assistant Director Jennifer Cichocki has accepted a position at USC. Katie Polsky is currently serving this position part-time as the Acting Assistant Director. Various programs are being eliminated including the Weekly Graduate Women's Support Group, the Undergraduate/Graduate Mentoring Program, the Alumnae/Student Networking Conference, the Health and Wellness Series, the Reel Women's Film Series, Women's History Month, and the Healthy Relationship Series. In addition, there will be reduced maintenance of services including the specialized libraries, website, and lactation room. The weekly e-mail calendar will no longer be sent to 550+ subscribers. Finally, the Women's Center is unable to fund new programs initiated by itself or other organizations seeking co-sponsorship. The GSC Underrepresented Students Committee hopes to work with the Women's Center and perhaps other departments to support programming for women at Caltech. As mentioned above, the GSC plans to appeal to the new administration for increased support of student life programming after this fiscal year.

## **Special Programs**

Family Night will no longer be funded by Student Affairs. As of next fiscal year, workers' compensation funding for the Child Care Centers will be eliminated. The GSC Underrepresented Students Committee has improved the quality of life for graduate students with dependants through new programs such as potluck dinners once per term. To better meet the demands of this population, the GSC welcomes feedback about your needs.

## **Graduate Studies Office**

*Arthur Fitzmaurice, GSC Vice-chair*

The Graduate Studies Office has announced the following changes that will affect graduate students and the graduate program:

- Application fee increase from \$50 to \$80 beginning Fall 2006. Waiver requests will still be considered.
- Elimination of the printed Graduate Student Handbook / Planner. The information will be available online.
- Decreased frequency of printing of The Technique. The online edition will be edited frequently, but the printed version will be edited only every three years. Copies will be distributed only to new students during New Student Orientation.
- Elimination of the new student travel allowances through Student Affairs. Divisional support may still be provided.
- The Graduation Dinner previously held at an off-campus hotel will instead be a lunch held at the Athenaeum (co-sponsored by International Students Programs).

To promote active communication between graduate students and the Deans, "Coffee Hour with the Deans" will be held on the third Friday of every month at 3-4pm outside The Red Door Cafe, beginning March 17th.

## **Campus Parking**

*Arthur Fitzmaurice, GSC Vice-chair*

During the summer, it was announced that a parking fee would be instituted effective October 1, 2005. The GSC worked with Gregg Henderson (Chief of Campus Security and Parking Services) to delay the fee until January 1, 2006. The current parking fee is \$35 per month. No commitment has yet been made regarding next year's fee, although Dean Currie (VP of Business and Finance) has stated that he expects the fee to increase by no more than the rate of inflation (2-3%). This and future decisions will be made by the Parking Committee.

The Parking Committee is one of the Institute's faculty committees with student representation. Professor John Ledyard has been selected as the new chair of this committee.

At the end of January, Campus Security and Parking Services suspended enforcement of the zoning policy for commuters and students/residents in order to address issues of safety and unnecessary inconvenience of graduate students. The future zoning policy, if any, remains to be determined by the Parking Committee.

## **New Dining Plan for Graduate Students**

*Scott Miserendino, GSC Chair*

Caltech dining services (CDS) expect the yearly increase in pricing to track the consumer price index (CPI) which typically varies between 3% and 10% depending on the good. Café at Broad will be increasing its hours and now will be open until 8 pm Monday through Wednesday, 9 pm on Thursday, and 10 pm on Friday. CDS recently acquired a liquor license which was used to launch a beer & wine concept at the Broad, along with a Thai concept in conjunction with a Beverly Hills Thai restaurant called "Talesai". The additional hours and new beer & wine concept are targeted at the graduate student population. A new optional graduate student "Premium Dining Plan" will be unveiled in March. The plan will offer a 10% bonus for a contribution of \$600 to a Caltech premium dining account and a 5% bonus for a contribution of \$300. The total contribution plus bonus will act as a debit account and the remaining balance at the end of each term will roll over to the next term. The remaining balance on the account will be refunded after a student graduates. CDS is also working with local restaurants to allow a portion of the Premium Plan dollars to be used off-campus.

The new Premium dining plan was reviewed by the Board of Directors of the Graduate Student Council and was altered to address the concerns of the Board. Overall, the GSC representatives felt the Premium plan was well suited for graduate students and was a win-win formulation for those students that wish to participate in it and for Caltech dining services.

Additional cost saving measures that CDS is implementing in light of the budget changes include eliminating an executive chef, two bakers, two service managers, a general helper, and a catering delivery position. A business administrator and special projects coordinator positions will also be eliminated in March of 2006. Andre Mallie (Senior Director of Business Enterprises) is leaving Caltech on March 17th, 2006. Tom Mannion (Assistant VP of Campus Life) will fill in for the remainder of the academic year. Student Affairs is hiring an outside consultant to evaluate the needs of the department before resumes are solicited to fill the vacancy.

## Letter from the Chair of the GSC

Caltech has undertaken an ambitious round of budget reviews to cover a projected \$27 million structural deficit in its annual operating budget. Not only is the sheer size of the deficit imposing, but so too is the time line over which the new budget was organized. Over an approximately six-month period, senior administrators, in consultation with several senior members of the faculty, decided what specific budgets to cut and what areas of operation could be used to generate greater revenues for the Institute. It was the goal of both the administration and the faculty advisors to target the budget cuts such that those areas of greatest importance to the mission of the university were least affected. Both the timescale and the structure of the decision-making process led to a failure to involve the student population in any meaningful way.

Each portion of the Institute will bear some of the burden of the reduced budget. A disproportionate burden will be carried by those who had no say in the new budget's formulation, are among the least able to adapt to increased financial demands, and benefited most from the programs that were greatly reduced or eliminated. The decision-makers have thus failed in their mission to protect those areas of key importance to the Institute's mission, which is to expand human knowledge and benefit society through research integrated with education. The new budget, prepared under the direction of faculty members and senior administrators (many of whom are current or former faculty members) does protect Caltech's research facilities, but while undergraduates and graduate students constitute the target of the educational efforts of the Institute, their opinions were neither requested nor considered.

The true tragedy of these budget cuts is neither the reduction in services to the student population, nor even the increases in the cost of living for students; ultimately, most of them are unavoidable given the need to eliminate such a large deficit. It is rather the failure of communication between the administration and the student population and the lack of trust it has generated. No administration-led effort ever arose during the budget reorganization to seek out student input. Even simple tasks such as informing students in a clear and complete manner of new policies, such as paid parking, were made difficult by a lack of transparency, a restricted flow of information, and a desire to avoid debate. The decision-making process was designed to avoid personal responsibility by providing individual participants with enough bureaucratic cover to shield themselves from having to deal with challenges to the decisions.

Even if the budget cuts had been almost the same, the outcome would have been far better if the administration had taken the time before making decisions to consult with students about how the budgetary targets would be met and what effects those changes were likely to have on student life. Instead, they chose to make their decisions in isolation and thus in ignorance. While finding a way to effectively involve students in this process from the onset would have been difficult, the level of difficulty does not excuse the lack of effort.

It is my hope that future Caltech administrations will not shy away from interacting with the student body. These interactions can often lead to mutually agreeable if not mutually beneficial changes in policy. There is a long tradition of student involvement in policy decisions at Caltech. It is unfortunate to see that tradition neglected by Caltech's most senior administrators.

Sincerely,  
Scott Miserendino

## Response from the VP of Student Affairs

Thank you for your thoughtful and important letter regarding the budgetary process that took place last summer and fall. While I can speak only specifically to the budget process that we undertook in Student Affairs, I also want to address your sense that there was lack of communication with, and lack of concern for, students during the process. As you know, these issues are of critical, and ongoing, importance to me.

First, the budget process in Student Affairs. Because students are the primary users of our services (although many of our offices, such as Athletics and Recreation, the Career Development Center, the Women's Center, Dining, Housing, also serve other campus constituencies), one of our first priorities was to assess student usage and satisfaction of the different programs. Over the past year or two many of the offices had conducted surveys or solicited feedback on programs, documented the number of participants at programs, and, of course, were in continual conversation with students regarding their needs. Across all the offices, we looked at student usage, cost per program, and office and program costs per students. The analysis showed that both undergraduate and graduate students heavily used Student Affairs' offices and programs. We prioritized programs and budgets in terms of their importance to students and the Student Affairs' mission to provide the effective and efficient delivery of core services to students and other constituencies, to enable students to thrive and flourish at Caltech, and to provide opportunities for students to develop skills for academic, professional, and personal success at

and beyond Caltech. At the same time, we worked closely with the faculty who were assigned to guide our internal process, and with the priorities laid out by the Institute. Every office was affected.

It is true that students were not directly brought into the budget reduction process in most instances although student input, usage, and needs were taken very much into account, and were of the highest priority for my staff and me. One of the great and sad difficulties we faced was that this process most immediately and predominantly involved the layoff of personnel – these are decisions that must be handled as discretely and compassionately as possible. Our General Budget reductions total \$1.6M, or a 17% decrease of that budget. Our Auxiliary budgetary mandate has also meant personnel layoffs, along with program reductions and fee increases.

Could we have done more to communicate with students earlier, and bring students into the planning process? I think so. For example, I certainly learned from the mistakes involving the proposed seven-day Board Plan. I was very gratified that we were able to extend that process and involve students. The students on the Task Force that I created in late January were able to provide other undergraduates with the group's draft recommendations so that students were able to participate in a "comment period" which I found very useful. The decision I recently took to return to the five-day Board Plan, based on the Task Force's recommendations, did not resolve the revenue needs, but it addressed important student needs. In addition, my staff will work with undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and other campus constituencies before we

embark on new plans, whether in the auxiliaries or elsewhere. Communication is critical. The websites that that we have created regarding the impact of the budgetary decisions on students help to ensure that students can review the scope and breadth of the changes taking place in Student Affairs.

Let me turn to a troubling aspect of your letter in which you express the feeling that the senior leadership did not care to know about the impact of these budgetary concerns on students. I believe the senior leadership of this Institute does care and, indeed, we engaged in conversations about these issues. It is very difficult to predict the ramifications of one set of decisions when they are coupled and compounded by other decisions. I think that is the situation in which we now find ourselves. While the initial stages of the budgetary reduction process passed swiftly, we are now working through these rippling effects more slowly and deliberately. Your partnership and support will be critical.

Best wishes,  
Margo Marshak

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