

Main Ideas from the Student Experience Conference Follow-Up Report

I. Residence Life

- A. Proposed Associate Dean of Residence Life (ADRL)
 - i. Would deal with residential life-specific issues, such as:
 - a. Ensuring better maintenance of student housing
 - b. Creating more open communication between students and housing
 - ii. Some say position is ill-defined, overlaps with existing positions, and communication with current administrators should be improved instead
 - iii. RAs should be more involved in their houses and communicate more with the Deans
- B. Student Living Environment
 - i. Some feel there is too much housing regulation
 - ii. North Houses should be rebuilt soon
- C. House Culture
 - i. Helps students bond and gives them a safety net, but:
 - ii. Often propagates bitterness and complaining
 - iii. Creates excessive interhouse divisions (i.e. students seldom socialize outside their respective houses)
 - iv. Houses, ASCIT and individuals should organize more interhouse events

II. Teaching and Advising

- A. Low Class Attendance
 - i. Causes:
 - a. Some students find lectures not interesting or useful to them
 - b. Sometimes students feel they can learn more efficiently on their own
 - c. Others often have no time to attend, as they are swamped with sets
 - ii. Solutions:
 - a. Improve lecture quality
 - b. Assign problem sets of more reasonable lengths
 - c. Relate problem sets to lectures meaningfully
- B. Underutilized Professor Office Hours (OH)
 - i. Need to find out why students don't attend OH
 - ii. It would help if professors held OH at more student-convenient times
- C. Course Feedback
 - i. Should gather more feedback throughout the term and make changes during that same term
 - ii. TQFR and ombuds systems are useful, but sometimes students give the same feedback every year without effect
 - iii. Making more adjustments based on student feedback will in turn encourage students to provide more constructive feedback
 - iv. Feedback systems should be consolidated into one
- D. Advising
 - i. Quality of advising has potential to influence the Caltech experience for many students
 - ii. Problems:
 - a. Advising, especially freshman, is generally considered hit-or-miss

- b. Advisors are often not familiar with Core or Option Requirements
- c. Student-advisor interactions are often reduced to signing add/drop cards
- iii. Solutions:
 - a. Clearly define role and responsibilities of advisors
 - b. Hold advisor training
 - c. Encourage more student-advisor interactions

III. Caltech Syndrome

- i. Defined as “Students come to Caltech highly passionate in the sciences, but leave burnt out with low academic self-esteem”
- ii. Perceived Causes
 - a. Aspects of the academic workload, e.g. Core, seem unreasonable
 - b. Lack of time for personal development
 - c. Some students choose to take a workload too heavy for them
- iii. Both students and faculty do not want to sacrifice rigor and “dumb down” curriculum
- iv. What Students can do:
 - a. Evaluate their own limits, possibly take fewer units
 - b. Improve time management skills
 - c. Communicate student workload and pressures to faculty
- v. What Faculty can do:
 - a. Reduce tedium and focus on concepts in sets
 - b. Set more realistic time limits for exams by selecting the most important topics
 - c. Review under-united courses
 - d. Re-evaluate Core Curriculum (in progress)
 - e. Make more efforts to understand student workload and pressures

IV. Student-Faculty (SF) Interactions

- A. There is often a perceived barrier between students and faculty preventing meaningful interaction
- B. Everyone agrees there should be more SF contact (considering 3:1 ratio) to make students feel more comfortable approaching professors
- C. Solutions inside the classroom
 - i. Use a less didactic approach in lectures
 - ii. Institute more courses with close SF interaction, such as Ph11
- D. Solutions outside the classroom
 - i. Students should take initiative to:
 - a. Invite faculty to house dinners
 - b. Use ASCIT’s “Take a Prof to Lunch” Program
 - ii. Hold more option socials

For more on the Student Experience Conference and the Follow-Up Report, go to the ARC website:
<http://arc.caltech.edu>