

THE MUDDRAKER

vol. 27, issue 2 april 2017



An exclusive
interview with
Physics Professor
Vatche Sahakian.
pg 3



An outsider's
opinion of
Harvey Mudd
College. pg 6



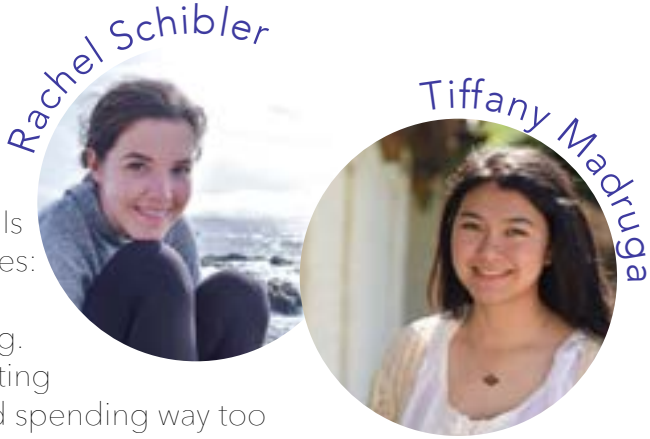
A point and counter-
point perspective on
Student Philanthropy
Campaign. pg 8

A LETTER FROM THE EDITORS:

Hi there! Our names are Tiffany and Rachel and we are excited to be your new Editors-in-Chief! To begin, we would like to apologize for the misprint in our fall issue. The front page headline should read “It Is What It Is” rather than “It Is What Is Is.” Now that we’ve gotten that out of the way, we would like to introduce ourselves:

Tiffany: I am currently a freshman and I'm thinking about majoring in Engineering. Graphic design is my passion -- I love doing layout for *The Muddraker* and updating the Instagram. In my free time I love painting, singing in choir, taking photos, and spending way too much time on Netflix and other social media.

Rachel: I'm a freshman interested in Math-Comp-Bio. In my free time I like eating fruit, hiking with other people's dogs, and editing *The Muddraker*. My only real talents are burping, making my brothers laugh, and doing handstands in weird places.






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If you are interested in writing for *The Muddraker*, please email Tiffany Madruga (tmadruga@g.hmc.edu) and Rachel Schibler (rschibler@g.hmc.edu). We also have room in our staff for photographers, graphic designers, editors, marketers, financial officers, and any other positions you may be interested in creating. All experience levels are welcome!

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Pun-of-the Mill Jokes to Ruin Your Day

written by | Zayra Lobo

Why does no one want a pet computer?

..... Because it's a *BIT* annoying when it *BYTES*!

What do you get when you cross the frequency domain and a puppy?

..... A *FURRIER* transform!

Why do you not want to get on a skunk’s bad side?

..... Because they can get pretty re*SCENT*ful!

What do you call a news report about arson?

..... *BURN*alsim!

What do you feel when you make a bad pun about windows?

..... Window *PAIN*!

Professor Vatche Sahakian

has been working in the department of physics at Harvey Mudd College since 2010. He is interested in theoretical physics, including string theory and cosmology. He is known for his brilliant sense of humor and his challenging classes.

What is your funniest experience at Mudd?

I always have nightmares about showing up to class without pants.

What is your spirit animal?

What the hell is that?

If you were an animal, what animal would you be?

Strange question. I like cats and dogs a lot. I probably like cats a little bit more than dogs. Cats, I certainly identify with and that’s probably because I’ve had cats all the time.

What is your favorite movie?

There’s one that I like a lot but my wife made me feel bad about liking it. I’m forgetting it. It’s a Brazilian movie. Unlike Trump let me give reliable information. Central Station yes. So the reason my wife made fun of me is it’s a very sentimental movie and you’re supposed to be crying throughout the movie. I am certainly a big fan of Star Trek and I’ve seen all of them including all the episodes and I used to have a phaser but it was confiscated. So science fiction movies, I like generally. I was not too much into Star Wars. I am a big fan of Charlie Chaplin. The greatest movie of all time to me is probably Modern Times by Chaplin. A more modern one that I like is Air-plane!. If you have not seen it, you have to see it. It is hilarious! Time to dig into the illegal archive of student movies online.

What inspires your style choices?
What is your fashion sense?

My wife tells me what to wear and I wear it basically. Ok let’s put it this way. I like clothing to be simple and you don’t have to think about it. Before my strategy was to have a bunch of pair of pants that were identical and a few shirts that were mostly identically - mostly gray things. Since I got married, my wife is trying to change me unsuccessfully. One way she changes me is she buys the clothes I wear and she turns my old clothes into rags. So now I wear more colorful things but I am trying to fight it. But basically my attitude is whatever is on the table in the morning I wear it.

Has the color changed your life?

I don’t think so. At some point I had an argument with my wife because I saw a bunch of shirts that all looked different and I spent more than 30 seconds picking which one I should wear and I thought, “That’s it I’m wasting my life” I think we’ve settled now on two or three colors. It’s a good compromise.

How long have you been married now?

Five years. My daughter is 5 years old. She is often sarcastic as I am, one thing I have definitely give to her. She said to me [recently] I want to drive a motorcycle and I told her no. She said “well no practically by the time I’m going to drive the motorcycle you’ll probably be dead so you can’t say anything about it” I said how about Julie, my wife, and [our daughter] said she will be dead too. And I asked who will be dead first and she said you’ll go first.

What’s the strangest talent you have?

Strangest talent...very interesting. I can draw a dog with the word dog. Let me show you. (picture on the left)

What is your star sign?

Cancer...Wait is this a dating game -- I’m married.



Vatche Says...

written by Hannah Larson & Nisha Bhatia

How did you meet your wife?

Good question. I have two brothers who live in LA and my older brother was nagging me often about when I was supposed to get married. What you have to do is go on an online dating website. I have very particular interests in life that do not overlap with 90% of the population so it was unlikely that I find a partner by just roaming around on the streets. Of course I told him that’s bullshit. I refused to do it for a long time for years probably. Eventually he said why don’t you go on match.com and I will pay one month for you and if you do not find anything in one month I will never start nagging you again. So I did register with match.com and it was totally uninteresting as expected. Except the last day of the month when my subscription was ending, I did see someone who looked interesting. She was a philosophy professor, and I thought yes let’s send an email and she said let’s meet. So we met in Downtown Claremont. On the first meeting I think we met at a restaurant on Foothill, and we ended up talking for about 4 or 5 hours. It was quite strange because immediately on the first meeting I knew that, okay, I found someone. After a month or so I told her why don’t you move in with me and she said no. And then I said fine and after a while we spent an entire day at my place. So I told her look why don’t you move in for practical matters and then she said yes. After a few weeks I proposed and I think within three months we were married already. I’m efficient I don’t like wasting time.

remembering WILLIE ZUNIGA

Willie Zuniga '17 passed away in his suite on February 2, 2017. Willie was a mentor, leader, and friend to so many. He was a proctor for Atwood, a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Fellow in physics with an HSA concentration in philosophy, loved music and playing guitar, was a leader in HMC's Society of Professional Latinx's in STEM (SPLS), CLSA, and Claremont Caballeros, a Youth Mentor for Chinese Progressive Association in his home town of San Francisco, among other endeavors.

(Words by Dean Jon Jacobsen)

Willie's a physics major, so he's part of our department and I had him last semester in our senior E&M class. We could just always count on Willie for a smile, a good question, and a willingness to work with his peers, really a desire to work with his peers together. So for that class, we had lectures and we had recitations, and during recitations, invariably, he would raise the mood for everyone even if they were struggling on a really hard problem. Willie always managed to help everyone, stay grounded, and stay supportive with one another. He's the kind of person you want in your classroom, someone genuinely enthusiastic and smart and curious, but someone who also really cares about everyone and is willing to help. He has a very positive impact on all of our physics majors and on our department too. So, very lucky to have known him.

—Professor Sharon Gerbode



Photo Credit: Raunak Pednekar, Facebook

The first time that I met Willie, I had heard about a freshman student who's really into physics who was interested in doing physics research during the summer. I wasn't exactly sure what to expect when I first met him. He first came across as being quiet. Sometimes people are quiet because they are shy and sometimes they are quiet because they don't have much to say. Willie is quiet because I think he was a very good listener. He was always interested in learning and I soon learned that. He had a very special sense of humor and a very special kindness, always wanting to help other people, to listen to other people. So it wasn't really much surprise to me when I found out he was going to be a proctor and he spent so much time helping other people. So I'll certainly remember him for two things: for being really interested and passionate about science and for being a very helpful person. That's what I'll always remember.

—Professor Gregory Lyzenga

I met Willie for the first time at Summer Institute. Overall, I will remember his enthusiasm for physics and for all different kinds of learning. Willie was always excited to begin learning something new, to be doing something new, to be trying something new and it didn't always matter whether it was going smoothly or whether something was really difficult. He was always really excited about doing research and sharing it with other students around him. His smile would light up the room. What I think about a lot is that Willie was someone who I looked forward to hearing for years and for decades what he was going to do in his life. Now, it's still a little bit hard for me to believe that we won't hear for years and for decades what he was going to do in his life, because he was gonna do some exciting things for science and for people.

—Professor Theresa Lynn

Photo Credit:
Harvey Mudd College Website

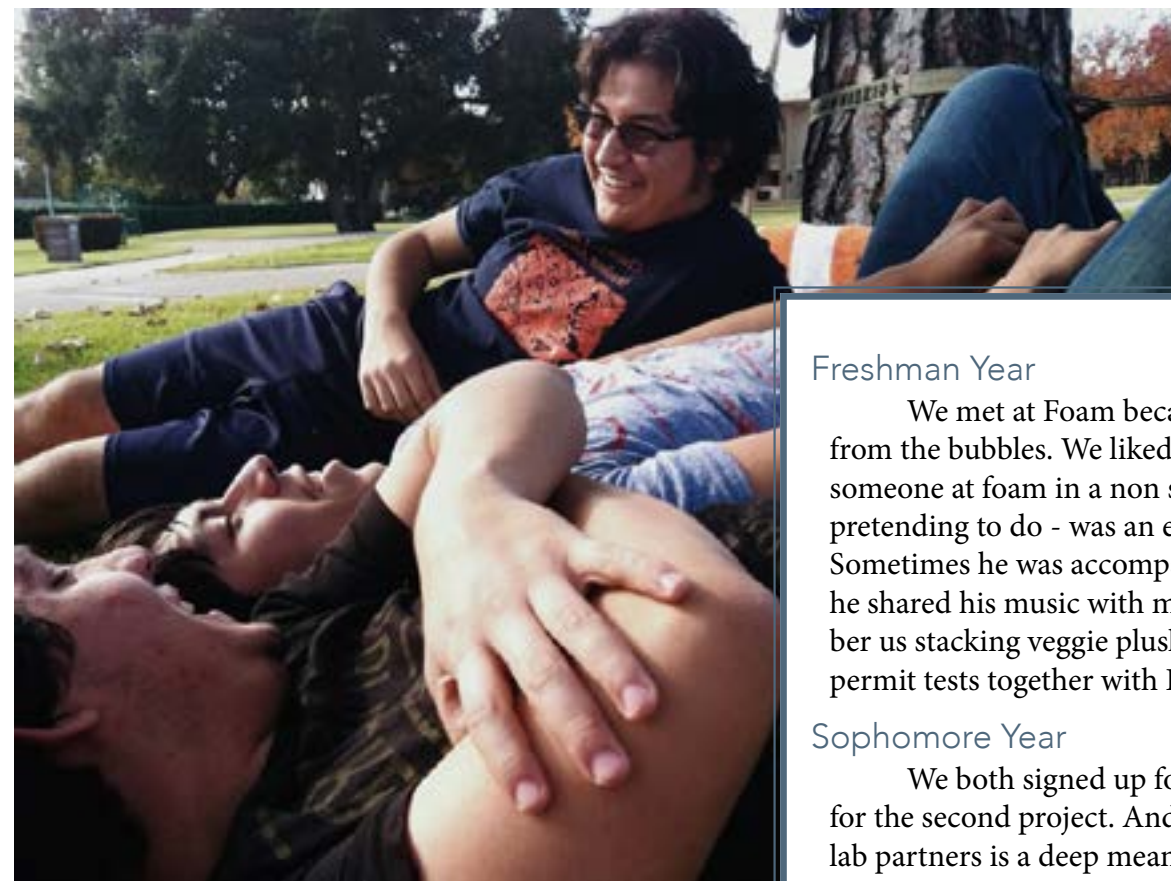
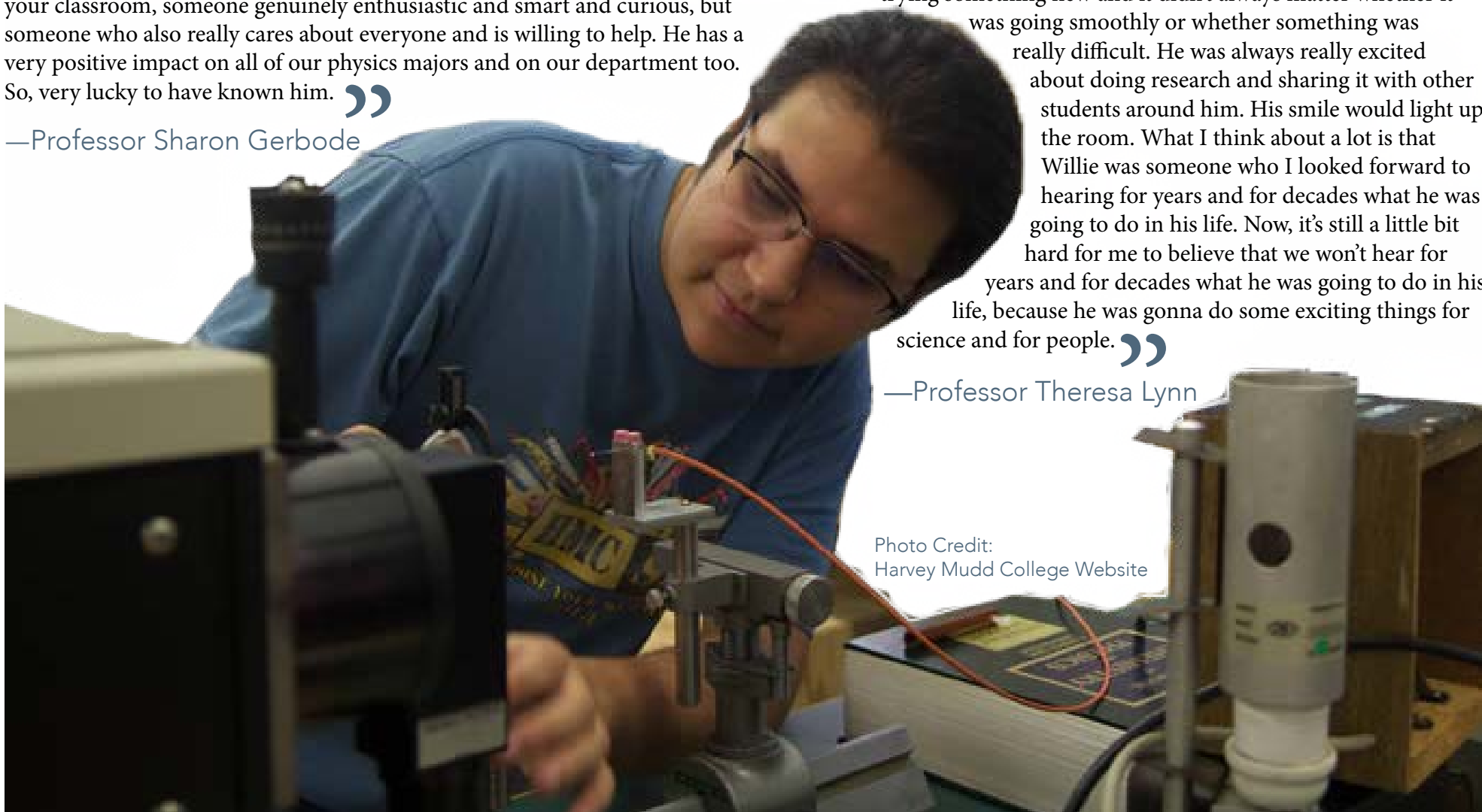


Photo Credit: Nikka Alpas, Facebook

During Orientation, Willie heard me playing Ride the Lighting, and he eagerly told me he was a huge Metallica fan too. That night, we jammed together for over an hour, talking about everything from metal concerts to life at Mudd. He was the first person to really make me feel part of this community. I remember at one point, he opened his closet to show me a new vinyl copy of Ride the Lighting he just bought a week before. We listened and played along together—I always think of him when I hear those songs now.

Ever since that day, he always greeted me with a wave and a huge smile, one that would make me smile too, even when I was feeling my worst. I felt so much safer during my first months here knowing that I could always go to him for advice, support, and guidance. Willie, thank you so much for making me feel welcomed and loved here at Mudd.

I love you and I miss you.

—Matthew Calligaro '20

He sure loved music, and I don't say that about many people. I remember over the summer after I showed him a new artist, I could hear him playing it from his room while I was listening to my own music in my room, two doors down the suite. This went on for at least a week. We jammed together – we both played guitar and both loved thrash metal, a rare connection around these parts. We weren't professionals but it sure was fun.

—Sam Miller '17

memories from a friend

— (Written by Annisa Dea '17)

Freshman Year

We met at Foam because a mutual friend was trying to drag me out to save me from the bubbles. We liked to retell this story to each other - not often do you meet someone at foam in a non sketchy way. Mechanics homework - or what we were pretending to do - was an excuse used to come visit Max and I in our messy af room. Sometimes he was accompanied by Juan, Kevin and Johan and that was the first time he shared his music with me and it was weird at first but I kinda liked it. I also remember us stacking veggie plush toys on a free line. Over the summer, we also took our permit tests together with Leonardo, Cherie, and Vidushi. Only one of us got a license.

Sophomore Year

We both signed up for synthetic bio and I asked if you wanted to be my partner for the second project. And as all bio/chem/maybe-also-other-majors knows being lab partners is a deep meaningful relationship as you have to kinda talk to each other while the hour long gel runs. I was also super excited you were taking P-Chem! Also I remember getting mad that I couldn't take pchem lab because E4 counted as overload-ing, and that because you took E4 first and CS60 next, the credits didn't overload. This was such a minor thing but I would go in circles and circles and circles and all you were was patience and understanding and also agreeing with how "that's so stupid". But even without lab P-Chem was great - sometimes we would start homework the night before which meant 10% homework time, 90% real heart-to-hearts about anything. Other times we would start with Raunak after you finished Pchem lab at 5:15. And it was due at 6. Actual PChem didn't even matter - I would always freak out about turning homework too late and you kept that smile on that face knowing we will make it. And we did. Not just in pchem but other things - we declared our majors, made new friends, and sadly for a little bit we drifted apart the second semester.

Junior Year

We started catching up with each other again, finding each other at parties until one day we just started talking up till way past midnight just like we used to. I remember him being so excited yet nervous for the SPLS retreat - and after winter break, you told me how amazing it was, and that it was so great that he found a new community at Mudd and hope it keeps growing and supporting each other. A few weeks later, you told me you were thinking of becoming proctor - he had always looked up to his freshman year proctor and wanted to be like him. I think I said that he would do an amazing job and that his frosh proctor would be so proud of him. He didn't want to. And then I saw his name on the proctor input list. And he said "I wasn't going to but I got an email from Dean Leslie saying someone nominated me to apply, so I was like well fuck it I'll apply". And to whoever who nominated him, thank you so much.

Senior Year

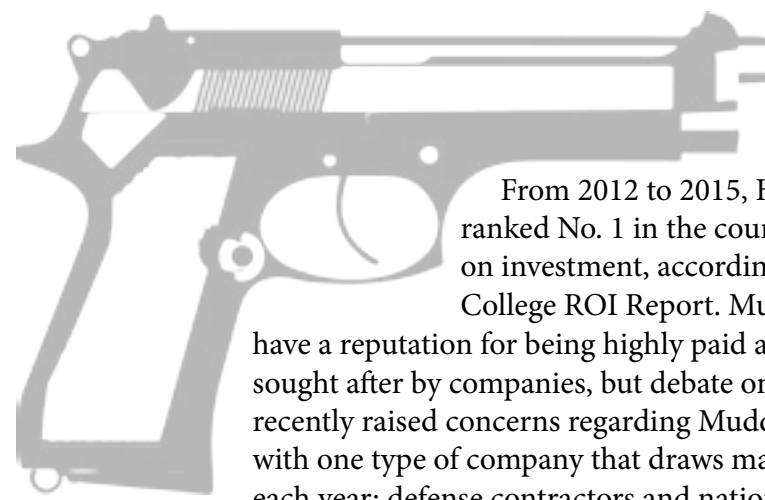
I would have meals with Willie maybe once a month or biweekly. And in one of them he said something along the lines of "Man I'm kinda done with classes. I really wish I could proctor full-time. I really want to dedicate more time to this job 'cause I really like it." And that's what kept him going. Even when senior year had its woes, he kept being positive and found something that was truly his passion. Helping people, being with them - something that I think we agree was one of his many many qualities. And just last week, he said he met up with his advisor and talked about his future. And he told me he'd like to go home and be closer with his family after graduation - and that while he wasn't sure if he wanted to stay in STEM, he knew he wanted to work with people because that's what made him happy.

And that's what made all of us happy.

There aren't many Mudders that I've kept such close contact with for all 4 years. Willie would have been one of the few.

I miss you Willie. Rest In Peace, Rest In Power. Hope you're jamming up up there, you're still making us smile down here.

DEFENSE CONTRACTORS RECRUITING AT MUDD



From 2012 to 2015, Harvey Mudd ranked No. 1 in the country for return on investment, according to Payscale’s College ROI Report. Mudd graduates have a reputation for being highly paid and highly sought after by companies, but debate on campus has recently raised concerns regarding Mudd’s relationship with one type of company that draws many graduates each year: defense contractors and national labs.

Clinic Projects have been offered with companies like Northrop Grumman and MIT Lincoln Laboratory for several years, and organizations such as the Defense Intelligence Agency and Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard have also been recruiting at Mudd’s career fairs. While some students apply for internships at and work on Clinic Projects for these government-funded groups, other students, especially this semester, are complaining about the implication of Mudd students working with these organizations. Many students are claiming that the college is failing to satisfy its mission statement.

“I think that when choosing Clinic Projects and internships, we must consider the mission statement, which proposes that we hold ‘a clear understanding of the impact of [our] work on society,’” physics major Andrew Bishop (’18) said. “So, while I would not work on any military project, I would not prevent a fellow Mudd from pursuing that project if they have thoroughly considered its impact. I don’t think the current curriculum or Mudd culture prepares us or encourages us to make these analyses.”

written by | Zayra Lobo

Because of the increased concern on campus regarding this issue, some students have decided to take action to voice these complaints to the administration. One student in particular, who has asked not to be named, has been meeting with the clinic directors and President Klawe to discuss the issue and try to eliminate Mudd’s ties with all defense companies.

“However,” the student said, “I currently realize that that is a hard position to push forward with the administration, so I am currently talking to clinic directors to push smaller baby steps: getting more student involvement in choosing Clinic companies and adding more non-profit and socially aware companies.”

For other students, taking action means refusing to work on certain Clinic Projects or leaving the Project they were placed on because of the government funding those Projects receive.

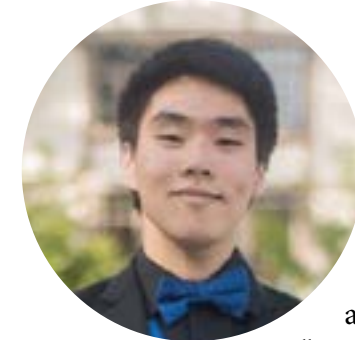
Though many students feel strongly about limiting defense contractors’ interactions with Mudd, others feel satisfied with the current relationship the college has with such companies.

“The relationship should be similar to other organizations’ relationships with Mudd because while I don’t personally don’t want to work with defense contractors, I know there are students that do and the school shouldn’t limit their opportunities,” engineering major Marissa Lee (’18) said.

Despite the wide spectrum of student opinions, the issue has sparked debate across campus and been raised with the college’s administration, so perhaps the results will be seen in upcoming career fairs and the 2017-18 Clinic Program.

AN OUTSIDER’S PERSPECTIVE OF MUDD

written by | Andrew Kim (PO ‘20)



Mudd is widely known as an impressive school that compares to other engineering juggernauts such as MIT and Caltech. The teachers are incredible, the labs and other resources are plentiful, and the students are talented. Many students from outside the 5Cs believe that Mudd is not the school for them and that Mudd lacks the diversity that makes it a “number one” school.

Mudders look at their peers with respect, envy, and even wonder, but what do other students within the rest of the Claremont Colleges think of Harvey Mudd? Why is Mudd a school that’s respected, yet also a school that other 5Cs tend not to lean towards.

Students often come to the 5Cs with little knowledge of the collective organization or the individual schools except for Harvey Mudd. When asked what students knew about Mudd before coming to the 5Cs, one freshman from CMC said that “the school had one of the highest job prospects in America.” Two sophomores from Pomona and CMC thought the students “were quirky [and] similar to CalTech/ MIT students” and were “were all wicked smart but more collaborative and fun than MIT and CalTech students respectively. Though many comments revolved around the highly touted academic reputation of Mudd, others were more skeptical. One junior from Scripps recounted that she had “only heard about the Claremont Colleges a year before [she] came [to Claremont], so [she] hadn’t heard about Mudd before. When [she] did though, [she] had heard about its STEM, but had also heard an exaggerated story that everyone [was] depressed and that there was a high suicide rate, given heavy workload. I know that’s not true now though after coming here.”

Perhaps this preconception comes from the widely acknowledged intense workload that Mudders are associated with. One Pitzer freshman said that Mudders seem “to have classes all day up to 5-6 and the rest of

their days are a heavy mix of labs, homework, and extracurriculars all the way up to 10 or 11 at night, earliest.” A Scripps freshman told me that she “literally think[s] of Mudders as people who just work 24/7 and party really hard on the weekends.” Others seem to know that they would not be able to cope. One Pomona sophomore told me that he has “a friend who goes to HMC and [the friend] shared his schedule with [him...] he immediately knew that [he] would not be able to cope with a schedule like that. It was very packed, and full of labs, and tutoring sessions.”

There are other concerns that “outsiders” have about Mudd. If given a hypothetical acceptance letter to the dreamland called Mudd, students disproportionately argued that they would not attend Mudd. Some students touted reasons from “I simply don’t think I’m smart enough to be there [due to the] crush[ing] workload” (Pitzer ‘17). Others felt that the “administration [was]n’t sensitive enough about issues that marginalize people, and they don’t respect that people have more complicated issues than school” (PO ‘20). One student simply stated that “[he] would never go to Mudd because [he] doesn’t like complex math” (CMC ‘19). It seems to be generally agreed that Mudd is a school continually respected, but people wouldn’t be able to incorporate Mudd schedules into their lives. One junior, who did not want to disclose his home school, said that “I would not go to Mudd just because for me it wouldn’t be the right fit. I’m not a hardcore STEM person. But for people who are STEM-oriented, they can do very well at Mudd, and I think it would be a good place for them.” A freshman from Pomona said “Mudd doesn’t create a good environment for people in many different situations to get a good education there. All of this wouldn’t fit my ability to do school.”

All of the students I interviewed from the other 5Cs were worried about Mudd’s approach to promoting campus diversity and improving students’ mental health. There is no doubt that Mudd is a unique school with its own identity. However, is it a school that leads to sustainable lives for its students?

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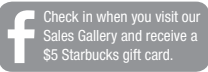
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HURRY! SAVE UP TO \$10,000!

SUPPORT: written by | Rebekah Justice, David Olumese, Joe Sinopoli, Anjaneya Malpani

What is the Student Philanthropy Campaign? It is an opportunity, primarily for current Mudders, to support a cause that we, as a community, care about. It is an opportunity for Mudders to learn that philanthropy is not about giving large amounts of money but giving what you are able to, even if that is just a \$1. This is the primary reason why we focus on student participation and not on the dollar amount raised. It is an opportunity to support our friends, classmates and fellow Mudders in a tangible way. It is a campaign run by Mudders with the purpose of supporting Mudders.

This year the student body voted to use the Student Philanthropy Campaign to support Student Mental Health Services by subsidizing specialized individual mental health services; a topic that is important and relevant to us. The funds raised for this cause last year proved to be very valuable to our fellow Mudders, quoting Dean Q: “I can say, with confidence, that 2 lives from this group of 10 were *literally* saved by the philanthropy funds.”

The Student Philanthropy Campaign surpassed its success from the year prior, going from 43% student participation last year to 53% this year, far beyond our goal of 45%. Along with that, \$3,000 more was raised this year compared to the number last year, for a total of \$7,500, all of which will go directly towards subsidizing services for our community members. Five of our nine dorms accomplished our dorm participation challenge of 61%, and the freshmen body, Class of 2020, took highest class participation with 63%. These numbers speak volumes and several members of the alumni, faculty, staff, parents and wider community saw how much we care and showed their support for us monetarily.

Although, for the past two years, the Student Philanthropy Campaign has gone towards supporting Student Mental Health Services, the campaign can be and is about whatever the student body wants it to be about. It has been said that SPC should not be used to raise funds for mental health services which should already be supported by the institution, especially when we go to a school with a ~\$70k sticker price. While a completely valid point, our school budget supports two full-time deans focusing on health and wellness, in addition to two new graduate interns at OHW after Mudd recently got approved as a clinical practicum site and adding. Realistically, there is only so far that a budget can go, we need the SPC funds for services further than what the college already provides for us. The achievements of this year’s SPC demonstrate how much our students value SPC and its goals—with more than half donating personally. Our success can not only help encourage continued budget modifications in the future, but also ultimately serves the real goal of the campaign—promote student mental health services on campus. It gives our fellow Mudders the continued help they need, when they are unable to afford to do so themselves. At the end of the day, isn’t that what really matters?

CONCERNS: written by | Evan Kahn

There are many excellent reasons to visit a psychiatrist or a therapist, especially if one attends a college like Harvey Mudd. I have a shrink that I like a lot; since I have insurance, as mandated by the college, my out-of-pocket cost per appointment is fifteen dollars. The office is five minutes’ drive away.

This is an immensely privileged statement. Not everyone at Mudd has fifteen dollars, access to a car, or precious daytime hours, to spend on something that isn’t obviously keeping them alive.

But therapy is keeping some of us alive — therefore, the barrier to access ought to be lowered as much as possible. Having a fund to cover treatment, co-pays, and the like for the Mudders most in need is a noble cause, and something that we should be able to rally around — right? So goes the logic of this year’s student philanthropy campaign.

This year, SPC raised about \$7,500. To be clear: this is a win for our community, and I have no doubt that the money will be used well.

But why was it necessary?

We’re told that the SPC mental health fund “literally” saved two lives last year. If that’s true, I’m glad that it did, but it’s kind of an ominous sound bite! If we hadn’t collectively coughed up in such force last year, would there just be two fewer Mudders? Can our commitment to our friends’ lives be measured by the depths of our wallets?

Last year’s senior week cost \$5,500. Last year’s Wednesday Nighter donuts cost \$3,400. If you told me I could save the life of two Mudders by giving up senior week and donuts, I would. I’d like to think most people here would do the same, and there are smaller, equivalent sacrifices that would be equally impactful.

Infographic by Tiffany Madruga



On the other hand, here’s what happens when the safety net fails. Three years ago, I spent a weekend in a hospital following an episode of self-harm. If I had been seeing a therapist at the time, it may not have happened. The incident cost thousands of dollars in medical bills and hours of effort and worry from the long-suffering folks at DSA.

So even from a purely financial perspective, student mental health is a worthwhile investment. But that investment should be institutional, not individual. The students that ran SPC accomplished a commendable goal, but it’s a stopgap solution to a problem solvable via other means. Student Philanthropy ought to be optional; student well-being ought not to be. If \$7,500 is enough to bring vital treatment to the Mudders that need it most, then we should shake down a trustee, defund a club, or raise ASHMC dues by ten dollars. We already pay Mudd extraordinary amounts of money to maintain a self-contained social ecosystem with many safety nets; the alleged need to crowdsource one of the most important ones is not only insulting, but dangerous.