

Byrd's Eye View

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Psoda-Science

BYU is home to scores of computer labs, each with their own regulations. What remains constant is the strict prohibition of food and drink. We are told, "soft drinks will spill on keyboards! They'll be ruined!" (No one has ever actually seen this happen.) More obviously, the presence of large bags of, say, pretzels, during a lab fire would clearly impede rapid evacuation. People would die.

Not to be bullied, most engineering students boldly violate this silly rule, often consuming full-course meals in the labs with impunity. Don't get me wrong – we engineers are not typically a lawless bunch, but most of us have mastered "eating-without-spilling", having picked up that skill mid-high school. Fortunately, the College of Engineering has not seen a need to crack down on us Dorito-munching, soda-swilling miscreants, potential lab fires notwithstanding.

Sadly, the Computer Science Department is not so lax. Recently, instead of installing several hundred non-functional surveillance cameras like other labs, they hired the indefatigable Food Nazi. This tunnel-visioned bloodhound patrols the open labs with her eagle-eyes and stern resolve, homing in on the slightest crackle of snack-food cellophane, to extinguish the soul of its unsuspecting owner.

I, of course, being an ECEn major, remained blithely unaware of Ms. Lab Food Nazi for some time. This was to change. One fateful day, I was in the Computer Science lab, heavily focused on eating one of those overpriced vending machine burritos, which I had somehow thoroughly nuked on the outside while keeping the middle frozen.

The Food Nazi, catching scent of my culinary disaster, leapt from her dank foxhole, sprinted down the hall, and, flying into the room where I sat, let out a howling "IEEEYHH!" Startled, I swivelled around and observed a diminutive woman breathing heavily, hair askew and eyes wild. I flashed her a brief, bemused smile and returned my attention back to my salvage operation.

Flaming indignation flushed her face as she marched resolutely towards me, arms outstretched in chilling menace.

Glancing up, uncertain of her purpose (and not wishing to share the burrito), I quickly shielded the still-smoldering briquette and questioned, "Can I help you?"

"No...food...in...lab!" she managed between gasps.

Taking a moment to fill in the verbs, I quipped, "You call *this* food?"

Humor, however, must not be in the Food Nazi job description, for I found myself swiftly escorted military-fashion into the hall. There she stood surly sentinel as I sheepishly finished the outer layer of my meal before depositing the arctic core into the trash. With triumphant air, she spun on her heels and goose-stepped back to her post. Dazed, I stumbled back into the CS lab a broken, broken man.

Unable to continue coding, I returned to my apartment where still fuming, I got I into a fierce argument with my roommate. He's a liberal-arts guy whose major has one of those sciencey-sounding names.

Now, here's a clue: if your major has the word "science" in its title, it's not a real science. Ever hear of Physics Science? Chemistry Science? Biology Science? Of course not. To clarify this point, I have compiled a sample list of non-sciences: Food Science, Health Science, Medical Science, Social Science, Political Science and of course, Computer Science. For the sake of unbiased accuracy, the following are short descriptions of these fields:

• **Food Science:** The first I-wanna-be-a-science prize goes to the same people who once claimed tomatoes were poisonous, took 100 years to mostly agree with the Word of Wisdom, and yet still cling to "wine helps your heart" philosophy. Sure it does – pour me another glass of red death.

• **Health Science:** Let's give it up for the creators of a million bogus fad diets, and those annoying fitness infomercials starring muscle-bound celebrities who actually work out with

real weights, while claiming to use cheap plastic exercise gizmos. ("Just roll, roll, roll your way into fabulous health in only minutes a day.")

• **Medical Science:** The pseudo-science crowd would not be complete without these perpetual truth-benders.

What they say: You'll feel a slight prick.
What they mean: I'm going to stab you with a foot long, 12 gauge lance. Expect blinding pain.

What they say: You might experience slight discomfort.
What they mean: An angry host of demons will now tear your limbs off.

• **Social Science:** Honorable mention in the non-science category goes to the inventors of such rigorously accurate exams as the color-code test, the personality test, and the myriad career tests. The color-code test says I'm either a Red, Blue, White, or Yellow, depending when I take it; the personality test claims that I am predisposed towards alcoholism and stamp-collecting; and my last career test predicted a glorious future in the Canadian Football League.

• **Political Science:** No list of science frauds would leave off this perpetual favorite. Who could forget the 1948 "Dewey Elected President" debacle, the amazingly accurate CNN polling (sample size = 5), and that the only consistent factor in presidential election history is that the taller man usually wins.

And let's not forget my favorite entry, **Computer Science.** Two words for you unfortunate CS majors: Food Nazi.

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