

FOCUS

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TERMINAL VELOCITY

Tom Hanks stars in a new flick about an immigrant stranded in an airport. Is it an improvement over *The Ladykillers*? Page 9

HIGH-JUMPIN'

Track and Field wins big at the NCAA Nationals, capturing the top prize in Women's High-Jump. Page 16



AIRPORT FUN DAY



By Jonathon Mehlberg / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Aaron Sohacki shows off one of the Yellow Jacket Flying Club's five airplanes at Airport Fun Day last Saturday. The club performs flight instruction, aircraft rentals and organizes aviation events.

When there's no way out

Depression, stress drive some students to suicide

By Joshua Cuneo
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Rome Lester, Marriage and Family Therapist at the Counseling Center, readily admits to something that every Tech student already knows.

"Georgia Tech is a very, very stressful environment," she said. But she then added, "And sometimes, I guess, the stress can be so severe that someone might choose to think that their only way out is to contemplate suicide."

Stress is not the only cause of suicide on campus, but it does contribute. Ten to 24 suicides are attempted every year at Tech, with two or fewer successes per year on average, depending on the source of the statistics.

While more women than men attempt suicide, more men usually succeed because they use more violent means. Tech is predominantly male.

"We've had...straight-A students who have chosen to take their lives," Lester said. "It's an interesting phenomenon that somebody who has their whole life in front of them would choose to take [it]."

The issue is not limited to

the student body. Tech has also lost faculty and staff members to suicide.

Suicides have grown into a national concern over the past few decades. Over 30,000 people commit suicide each year, with an average of one attempt every 45 seconds and one success per

a variety of other means to end their lives.

"Sometimes one of the masked suicides, or I call 'autocides', is [the] one-person single car accident," Lester said. "People don't really know because it appears to be an accident, but sometimes it could actually be a suicide."

Suicide now ranks as the third leading cause of death for college students, behind car accidents and death by violent means (although it has dropped from second place in recent years). College students are more likely than their non-college peers to commit suicide.

Depression is the most common cause of suicide. Not every suicidal person is depressed, but most are, and this is a condition which may be exacerbated by Tech's stressful environment.

The depression itself may be rooted in that stress or may stem from personal trauma, such as the death of a family member, the end of an intimate relationship or a sexual assault or similar violation. A family history of suicide, mental or physical illness or drug or alcohol abuse are also linked to suicides.

"Don't be afraid to ask about suicide. Asking them will not cause them to decide to do it."

Rome Lester
Therapist

10 attempts.

This concern has extended to college campuses, for while the groups most susceptible to suicide are still divorced, unemployed, middle-aged, white men and the elderly, rates of student suicides have been rising.

Students with suicidal desires use guns, alcohol, drugs, jumping from heights, asphyxiation and

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Seeking creative outlet, students launch webzine

By Jonathon Mehlberg
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Creative writing, poetry, music and painting—these are all things that are seldom associated with campus life. Classes often require technical writing or drafting, but students rarely get the opportunity to creatively express themselves in an open forum.

A group of students set out to create something new that would provide not only a creative outlet, but would also create a stronger sense of community within their department. After working long and hard, the students of the ECE department recently released the first issue of a brand new webzine called *ecesis*, which can be found online at www.ece.gatech.edu/ecesis.

Ecesis means the successful establishment of an organism in a new environment. The students chose this name after sorting through close to 70 different suggestions ranging from the technical to the humorous.

"[The name] seemed to embody what we were trying to do," said Christina Bourgeois, one of the faculty advisors for *ecesis*.

The evolution of *ecesis* began several years ago when Bourgeois first started working in the ECE department. Her job allowed her to spend a great deal of time interacting with the students and helping them with their technical writing and oral presentation assignments.

Through this work, she realized that the students were very creative writers, musicians, and artists. Last

summer, Bourgeois began to ask around to gauge the student response to her idea for a creative outlet designed solely for ECE students, staff and alumni.

After she received many positive responses, she approached Dr. Jeff Davis and asked if the ECE Student Faculty Committee would be interested in co-sponsoring the project.

After getting his support, Bourgeois set up an informal meeting to entice students to participate in the project. Students were very receptive to the idea and before long there were regular meetings and an editorial board consisting completely of students.

At first, the *ecesis* board planned to accept and publish all submissions so the webzine would be a noncompetitive creative outlet for anyone within the department of 1900 undergrads, 1000 grads, 115 tenured or tenure-track faculty and 300 staff members. However, the community response was much larger than anyone expected since the board received more than 100 submissions.

"Many students were apathetic at first, but now they have seen the first issue and think it is really cool," said Bourgeois.

This means that the board can probably expect to see many more submissions to the Spring 2005 issue. In fact, submissions have already started coming in. In order to handle the large number of submissions for the next issue, the editorial staff is now thinking about adding a competitive element that includes first,



By Ethan Trehwitt / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Ecesis is now taking submissions for its Spring 2005 issue. Any ECE student, faculty member or staff-person is welcome to enter a submission. Ecesis is composed of art, music, film, poetry and prose.

second and third place prizes for the best submissions.

Since one of the main goals of *ecesis* was to help build a stronger sense of community within the department, the project needed to involve more than just a publication.

One of the ways the whole ECE

community was involved in the project was through the launch party. The board invited everyone that they selected for publication to attend the launch party and to perform. They could discuss their work, read their poetry or play their music. Fifteen students accepted the invitation and for two hours on April 19 students

performed in a small space designed to promote interaction among the audience.

The party was open and allowed student to come and go whenever they wanted. Over 200 people stopped by during the two hours to

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Winner receives a free *Technique* T-shirt.

Tech Up Close



By Jon Kaye / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS



Last week's winner:
No one
Last week's Tech Up
Close:
Center Street Apartments

email:
focus@technique.gatech.edu

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enjoy the performances. Since the launch was so successful, next year, while there will not be a launch party, there will be a similar forum for student to perform their works.

"I found out that it was a unique opportunity to help develop a sense of community that is severely lacking in most engineering departments," said Chris Alvino, a graduate Electrical and Computer Engineering student and co-editor for the prose section. "You can work really hard for weeks or even months, but it is hard to do for years in a place where you are not happy."

Many other students echoed this sentiment and said that they

"It's a great way for students to express their creativity."

Samantha Swafford
Film co-editor

classes and labs," said Samantha Swafford, a recent Electrical Engineering graduate and the co-editor of the film section.

thought the whole project was very successful in its goals of creating a closer community.

Eccesis also succeeded in its goal of becoming a creative outlet for ECE students. The quality of the submissions surprised many members of the editorial board.

"It's a great way for students to express their creativity, which sometimes goes overlooked when getting bogged down in purely technical

Some students said the submissions were excellent, though another said that he was used to creative works from schools that focused more on liberal arts and that Tech's submissions didn't compare.

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"Sometimes the person confuses 'wanting to die' with wanting to get away from the awful pain from having lost a loved one," Lester said.

Determining why students choose suicide instead of finding some means of assistance is more challenging.

"That's the age-old question," said Karen Boyd, the Senior Associate Dean of Students for Student Life. "If you could answer that, we wouldn't have suicides."

Students with suicidal tendencies may not realize that Tech has assistance in abundance.

The Counseling Center is the most popular option, with many professional counselors available throughout the day. After hours, students may call the Center's hotline (404-894-2204) to get in touch with the counselor on call that week. A

psychiatrist who works in concert with the other counselors is also available at the Health Center.

Students can also contact the Link Counseling Center, which helps people whose lives have been impacted by suicide. They offer individual or group counseling and a support group, Survivors of Suicide (S.O.S.), at Sandy Springs (404-256-9797) and Cobb County (770-541-1114). The Center can also be found online at www.thelink.org.

In addition, depressed students can contact their mental health association, or even, if they are religious, their clergy.

Lester and Boyd also encourage student involvement and networking to recover from or fend off suicidal feelings. Institutions such as Tech's religious organizations or the Wellness Center can help students broaden their support network and

seek comfort in others.

"A lot of people who come to college have a really difficult time separating from family, so they feel pretty lonely or depressed," Lester said. "So getting involved, I think, can really be helpful."

Furthermore, Boyd added, "If you have people at your back, [you] feel like a community... Take care of each other."

To that end, students should be aware of suicidal warning signs in their peers.

"Here are a few helpful hints: people who start giving away their things, people who have had great stress, and you've been worried about them... [people who are] suddenly finding great peace," Boyd said.

Students suffering from depression may also exhibit lifestyle changes. They may not eat, sleep, bathe or socialize.

"Are they going to class? Are they

isolating themselves?" Lester said. "Don't be afraid to ask about suicide. Asking them will not cause them to decide to do it."

Lester emphasized the importance of listening with a sympathetic ear and acknowledging their feelings without analysis, argument or reason.

Encourage them to get help, she said, which can prevent suicides in most cases, as suicide attempts are often an indication that the person is reaching out for help. Students who commit suicide are generally not in counseling.

But, Lester said, don't be sworn to confidentiality.

"If they tell you they plan to kill themselves, get help from the Dean's Office or a Housing official or somebody," she said. "If you try to handle that yourself, it's too big for you."

The Dean's Office in particular

has the power to intervene on the student's behalf. While a counselor will not visit a suicidal student without the student's personal request, a dean has the power to perform a security check to see how the student is doing.

"I think that nothing is more painful than a student dying," Boyd said.

Students can learn to help themselves by leading a healthy lifestyle, which reduces the risk of depression and suicidal desires. A nutritious diet, exercise and adequate sleep are necessary for good mental health, as is maintaining a strong network of support.

Students should also avoid alcohol or drug abuse. According to Lester, nearly half of suicidal youths use alcohol or drugs shortly before their deaths. Even some people who normally avoid alcohol, she said, use it just prior to their attempts.

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