

# OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, February 2, 2001

## OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

### Crash into...the pole?

Tech is very lucky that last week's Stinger crash did not end in disaster. The accident occurred at a time when few students were around and only a handful of passengers were on the bus. If brake failure actually caused the accident, the driver's expertise avoided a situation that could have been more serious—or even deadly. If negligence by the Stinger driver caused the accident, however, he needs to be disciplined.

Two people were injured, and it reflects poorly on the three uninjured passengers that they fled the scene and went to class instead of staying to record their names as witnesses and tending to those with bruises. In the future, hopefully passengers will continue to realize the importance of staying behind the white line and out of harms way. If someone had been in that location, the injuries would have almost certainly been much worse.

### Fly the new flag

Since the previous Georgia state flag was instituted as a backlash against desegregation movements of the 1950s, it was time to change the flag to represent the history of the state without alienating and offending a significant percentage of the state's population. While the new design is unattractive, it is still an improvement over the old one. Since the members of the public had already picked their sides—and were not likely to change their opinion—the swift action by the Georgia legislature eased the change. The flag legislation was the General Assembly's most elegant action in recent memory.

### Our condolences

The *Technique* sends its deepest sympathy to the friends and family of student James Banger and to other students in the Tech community who have passed away this semester.

*Consensus editorials reflect the majority opinion of the Editorial Board, but not necessarily the opinions of individual editors.*

### Parking is also part of gate vandalism problem

Once again, parking makes it's way to the front page of the paper. This time, it's vandals attacking the equipment in the Peters deck.

The director of Parking services (how many has it been since '95?) can't understand why students would do a thing like this. In his own words, "it not only hurts students in terms of higher fees, but in terms of the gates are open, unauthorized people are in there."

Yeah, great. It's really sad that parking can't seem to fathom this backlash against them. Maybe it's the fact that people no have to pay nearly \$200 per semester for the "privilege" to park in Peters. For those of you that don't know (faculty with real parking spaces)

Peters is basically unpatrolled, as if a security gate is going to stop someone from breaking into your car. Those of us that have paid the parking fee are subject to the con-

stant frustration of having to deal with unauthorized people parking in our spaces that rarely get booted or towed.

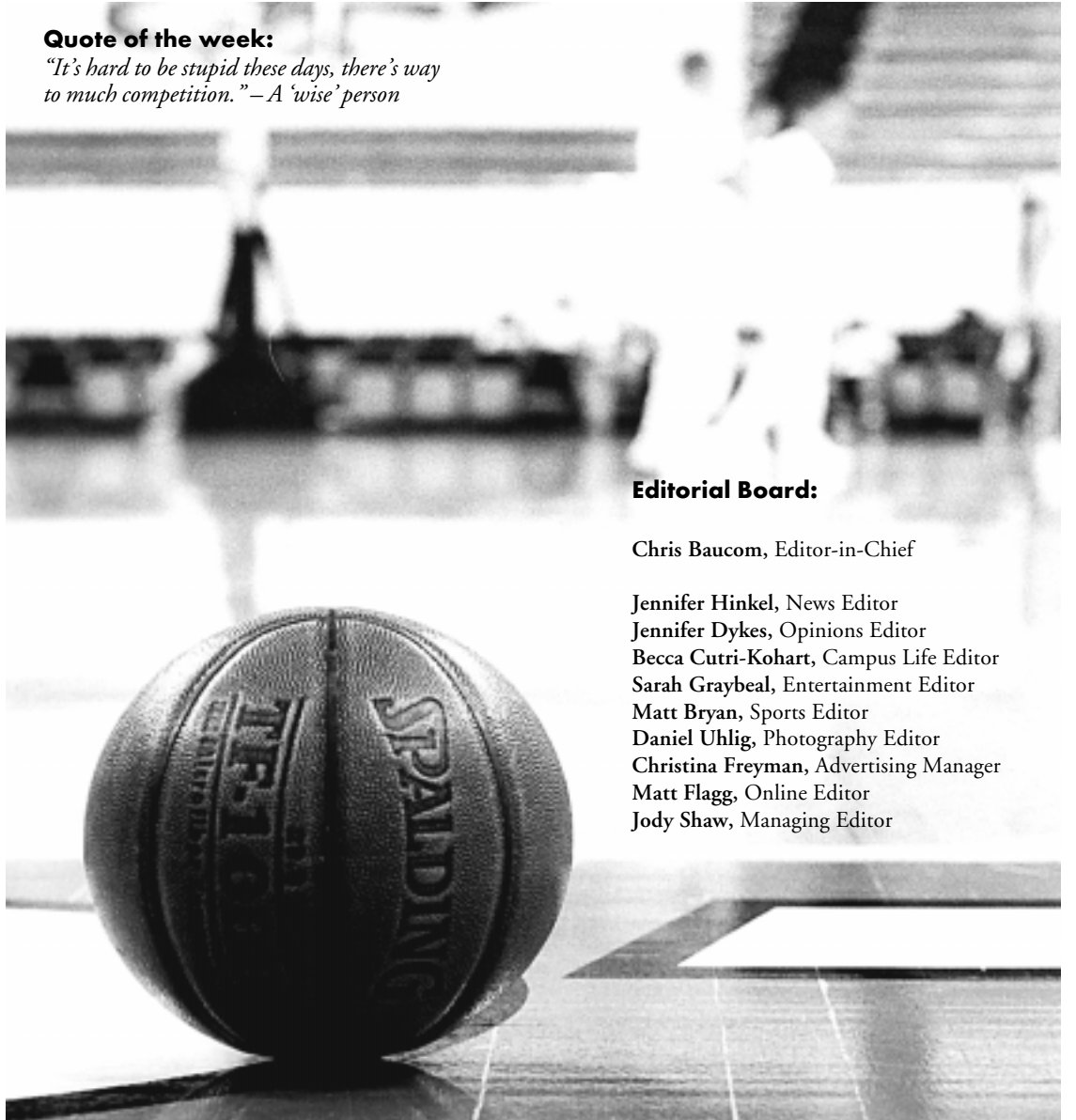
Motorcycle owners have it even worse, with less than 10 easy to access spaces around campus, usually having half of them blocked by another vehicle, which is, more often than not, either owned by the parking office, or by some other campus department.

The truth is, students are sick and tired of a department that makes decisions without the input or the considerations of students. The entire system of parking on this campus needs to be removed and a new system put in place. The department has proven time and time again that they are incompetent, and therefore should be removed.

*Ryan Fernandez*  
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#### Quote of the week:

*"It's hard to be stupid these days, there's way to much competition." — A 'wise' person*



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## YOUR VIEWS Letters to the Editor

### Make academics number one priority

Academics at Georgia Tech are often times overlooked. In today's world, everything is business. Our school is no exception. Students need to get that straight. It is apparent that our school is trying to become the best. This is an excellent goal. One which everyone here will benefit from. President Wayne Clough said, "We are now entering the 21st century, and we want to make it our century—a time when our collective effort lifts Georgia Tech from the ranks of the good, solid schools and establishes us as a center and

source of innovation."

Well, I hate to break it to you but this is probably the least innovative and creative school ever. Sure we are extremely advanced in Microelectronics, Pulp and Paper Engineering, and Electronic Design to name a few, but how does this research make me a better person? How does it better my college experience? Our school is so much more focused on the research and the general reputation that Georgia Tech maintains, and less on the quality of education that we receive. A school

that is extremely hard is not necessarily a school where much is learned. I am not saying to make the school any easier. I am just saying that faculty and administration need to be working valiantly to teach us, the student body, how to be the best we can be. We need to be well-rounded individuals when we are handed our diploma, but instead this is far from the truth. This school is an engineering machine. Just pumping out the engineers. A school that

*See Academics, page 10*

### State flag celebrated history

With the passage of the bill to change the Georgia state flag, heated discussion on campus has sprung up. I would like to comment on this discussion:

When will people realize that this flag serves as a memorial to those who died in this state fighting for a cause that they and many others in the state believed in? It is the "battle flag": the flag that men fought under and died for. If Georgia wanted to honor the principles that the Confederacy stood for, it would fly the Stars and Bars, but it doesn't.

Rather, it strives to provide a memorial to those who died fighting for the state; therefore, it flies the Battle Flag instead. This is in memory of those who died, not the principles they died for.

Show some respect for your Southern heritage if you are from the South. If you are from the North... bear with us as we work out our state issues. It is really none of your business anyway.

*Wes McIntosh*  
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opinions@technique.gatech.edu.  
Limit 400 words.*

### Psych 1000 wastes time

To be short, in my opinion, for anyone who researches jobs, Georgia Tech, and Atlanta on their own, Psych 1000, the class, is a waste of time. I do believe, though, that the book is a valid source of good information to base success. If we were only required to read the book, the "class" would be a lot better. The class is a good idea and should not be canceled, yet students should not be treated like kindergartners in some instances.

*Michael R. Joyce*  
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*Turn to page 28  
for this week's  
editorial cartoon*



OUR VIEWS Staff Editorials

# Academic environment deserves more serious focus

Last week SGA conducted a survey as part of its latest initiative called FOCUS. The goal of the survey was to determine the most important issues facing Tech students. As expected, the students named academics, housing, and parking as their three top concerns. SGA leaders plan to “focus” their efforts on these issues for two weeks before passing them off to administrators and committees to do the brunt of the work. While this initiative is rooted in sincere efforts on the part of SGA leaders to improve student life at Tech, an issue like academics deserves more serious attention and consideration.

Throughout the entire year, the Academic Affairs committee has been working hard on this issue—one Tech students consider extremely important. This group has already pushed a number of important initiatives including the creation of student advisory committees for each major. It’s most important and potentially most powerful initiative, the Student Bill of Academic Rights, was introduced to the undergraduate house earlier this week. If the student government representatives really want to make a difference in the academic life of Tech students, they will tirelessly devote themselves to the passage of this bill in the faculty senate and work for its incorporation into the Tech academic environment.

The Student Bill of Academic Rights, which was authored by the committee, makes twelve guarantees to students regardless of the course or instructor. If adopted by the faculty senate, teachers would be encouraged to include information about these rights on each syllabus they create—similar to the inclusion of honor code informa-

“The components of the Student Bill of Academic Rights are...measures that will only improve retention and learning.”

**Jody Shaw**  
Managing Editor



tion currently found on syllabi. A Student Bill of Rights was printed in the most recent Tech general catalogue, but later it was discovered that the bill was not Board of Regents policy. The document created by the Academic Affairs committee builds on the one already included in the catalogue. This new Bill is an excellent compilation of standards that every student at every institution of higher learning in Georgia should be entitled to. It should be adopted at Tech and made a part of Board of Regents policy so that all of Georgia’s college students can know their academic rights.

The components of the Student Bill of Academic Rights are common sense measures that will only improve retention and learning at Tech. In fact, I’d say that most instructors at Tech already provide a learning environment that adheres to the stipulations of this document. Having such a document in writing, however, can only improve the academic environment and teacher-student relationships.

Included among the assurances made the documents are: the right to attend class only when regularly scheduled, the right to qualified advisement, the right to proper evaluation, the right to consultation with faculty, the right to access to campus facilities, the right to a clear syllabus, the to a steady course pace,

the right to access to institution records, the right to evaluation materials, the right to information about appeals, the right to adequate learning facilities, and the right to a clear definition of academic misconduct. These twelve common sense measures would go a long way towards improving the overall learning environment at Georgia Tech.

The way I evaluate the academic environment at Tech, I find one problem to be extremely glaring—the relationship between professors and students. Tech lacks the academic community found at other institutions of higher learning. Some would say it because of our size, but I would argue that Tech is the perfect sized university—not too big, not too small. Others would contend that it is the personality types attracted to science and technology fields, but I would counter that suggestion as well. Many students and professors are outgoing individuals that share similar values, including knowledge and learning. The opportunity for dynamic teacher-student interaction exists on this campus. The truth we all know, however, is that students and teachers don’t really interact. The cause I see for this glaring problem is the perception of the faculty by the part of the students and vice versa.

Despite the best efforts of many individuals, students still tend to

view professors as the enemy. In some cases, this fear of faculty is justified—there are many out there who have been repeatedly victimized by “the shaft.” A similar stereotype also exists among faculty members. There are professors out there who view Tech students as lazy, grade-obsessed whiners. Once again, this stereotype is probably also true in a number of cases. No matter what truth exists in these perpetuated perceptions, they must be brought to an end before a desirable academic community can be created and students and professors can mutually learn from each other.

The Student Bill of Academic Rights is a step in this ultimate direction. By proving to students that they are not the enemy, the faculty will aid the transition towards a more comfortable learning environment on both sides. Once a comfortable learning environment and a mutual respect exists within the classroom setting, a true teacher-student relationship can begin to develop outside the classroom. Tech needs the Student Bill of Academic Rights to start this process in motion. This document, combined with the Honor Code already in place, creates the perfect ground rules necessary for a healthy teacher-student relationship. Once this academic community is created, Georgia Tech will reach its ultimate glory. When teachers and students want to interact with each other on academic, social, and personal levels, the Institute will have fulfilled its educational potential—for it will not only promote academic learning, but also lifelong relationships. The adoption of the Student Bill of Academic Rights will ultimately further this ideal of an academic utopia.

# Sharpton case raises legal issues with mandatory fees

Al Sharpton is a race-baiting, divisive, anti-semitic demagogue. In case you haven’t heard, the African-American Student Union has invited him to speak at Georgia Tech—and has sought funding from the Student Government Association to finance the speaker’s fee. Regardless of his intended message for a February 15 speech scheduled at the Alumni House, his mere presence will reflect poorly on AASU and Georgia Tech as a whole.

Although I completely disagree with that organization’s choice in a speaker, I defend AASU’s right to invite the speaker of its choice—and to seek funding to pay for it. Furthermore, SGA cannot fail an allocation bill based solely on Sharpton’s ideology.

In a March 2000 decision (University of Wisconsin v. Southworth), the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of mandatory student fee systems, but only if the fees are distributed in a viewpoint-neutral manner. Furthermore, universities are not required to refund fees to students who disagree with the political, social, or religious ideology of a specific group or speaker funded through the fees. Universities are allowed to implement such an opt-out system on a voluntary basis, however.

The court’s decision was a necessary step in the continued protection of students’ first amendment rights. After all, the mission of any

“Remember to pick up both the quote and the picture box when moving this onto your layout. Don’t change the picture size!”

**Chris Baucom**  
Editor-in-Chief



educational institution is to promote learning and the free exchange of ideas. Attempting to censor AASU’s choice of a speaker is clearly not in the interest of promoting a free exchange of ideas. We as a community can exercise our first amendment rights by being harshly critical of AASU’s choice. However, we as an institute of higher learning cannot deny them their constitutional right to invite a speaker of their own choosing.

We all pay taxes to the federal government, but we don’t all agree with how our tax dollars are spent. Similarly, we all pay mandatory student fees, but we don’t necessarily agree with how SGA allocates our money. How nice of the Supreme Court to provide a bit of guidance, and how fortunate we are that the Undergraduate House made the right decision Tuesday night by passing AASU’s allocation request. It was the only decision they could legally make. Discussion during the house’s meeting centered primarily around Sharpton’s ideology, which hovered

dangerously close to violating Supreme Court’s “viewpoint-neutral” standard for allocating fees.

In order to be fully approved, the allocation bill must pass the Graduate Student Senate meeting on Tuesday morning. If the graduates fail the bill based on political, ideological, or religious grounds, they are opening themselves and the institute up to legal action. Tech will not have a legal leg on which to stand. However, GSS may fail the bill on legitimate grounds, such as AASU’s past financial troubles or the senate’s own precedent for failing large allocation requests.

AASU is requesting \$5,000 specifically for Sharpton’s fee. Since the bill was written, however, Tech’s Chapter of the National Society of Black Engineers has agreed to co-sponsor Sharpton and finance half the fee.

Simply put, student fees can be allocated based on variety of financial criteria (Tech’s SGA outlines these in its Joint Finance Committee policies, available online), but

not based on the ideologies of the groups seeking funding. SGA has a responsibility to allocate student fees in a fair, consistent, viewpoint-neutral manner that maximizes student benefits while encouraging the free exchange of ideas.

Legal and financial issues aside, I still maintain that Al Sharpton’s appearance will not represent Tech well. When I think of Black History Month, I can think of so many other African-American individuals who have helped shape history but do not put down other races. Or incite people to violence. Or pit one student group against another.

AASU’s choice takes Tech five steps backwards in the arena of race relations, especially considering the giant strides Tech has made in the past few years. We should look to Stephanie Ray’s efforts in fostering true diversity an example of the right way to do things.

One problem facing AASU, however, is a lack of institute support for Black History Month. Perhaps if they had better relationships with the administration, both politically and financially, we would not be dealing with this controversy in the first place.

At any rate, this issue has been a valuable lesson in both free speech and student fee distribution. I just hope Tech survives the process unscathed.

*Chris is an avid supporter of free speech.*

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MORE VIEWS Letters to the Editor

Focus on dating ignores bigger picture

I was completely discouraged by Chris Rockett’s letter in the January 26 issue, which bore the headline “Maybe girls to blame for lack of dating.” It would be almost impossible to cover all of the serious troubles with his letter, but I would like to confront some of the more obvious issues here.

Rockett included in his argument that “TBS (or something like it) is an absolute reality.” First and foremost, I cannot believe that anyone with such negative attitudes toward women in general, and Georgia Tech women in particular, would expect or even WANT a date with members of that group which he so resolutely detests. He is calling us bitches. BITCHES. And complaining that he can’t get a date with one of us. He follows this statement with, “I couldn’t possibly be doing everything wrong.” I find it hard to believe that he would need an explanation here, but I will attempt to clarify the situation. Women absolutely expect and deserve just as

much respect as men. The false myth that women like jerks and enjoy being disrespected often manifests itself in sexual assault and domestic violence. So my advice to Rockett, and to everyone, is to be more aware of the broader social implications of the things we say, because each time this happens we perpetuate the things in society that so desperately need to be eliminated.

Rockett wrote that “someday, girls will begin to care about the things in life that matter.” Throughout his entire letter, Rockett failed to mention the masses of men on this campus that, like the women he is addressing, do not date. If it is such a concern that women are not casually dating, then is it not also a problem that men share similar sentiments? Women have worked hard for years to eradicate the stereotype of the infamous MRS degree, the notion that women attend college for no other reason than to find a husband. Now we’re attending college in larger numbers than ever,

and we have BETTER THINGS TO DO. I’m certainly not speaking for everyone here, I am only recognizing that many people value other aspects of the college experience more than they value a “random” date. By writing his letter exclusively to women, he was implying that men have other “things in life that matter,” that perhaps those other aspects of the college experience are more important to them. Rockett was not only being arrogant in believing that he would be a natural choice for a companion but also old-fashioned and sexist in thinking that dating/companionship is so important to college women.

Lastly, I would just like to say that this has very little to do with dating and much more to do with gender issues/problems. Don’t approach dating/companionship with stereotypes and generalities that eventually exhaust us all.

Katie O’Connor  
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Women are people, not simply a thing to ‘date’

Reading last week’s letter by Chris Rockett, I couldn’t help but feel pity for him. His gt number ends in u, which means he has been here for a relatively short time, but oh, how the bitterness is flowing... like a river.

Perhaps sharing my views on the matter might ease things up a little for him. I have been here three years. In that time, I haven’t had a girlfriend. And while I don’t think I tried as intensely as Mr. Rockett claims to, I certainly didn’t deliberately shrink away, either. However, I have come to a realization, through meeting many wonderful women who ended up with another man. Women are people too.

No, really. That means that having female friends is every bit as satisfying as having male friends (more, even, because of the flirting that can go on... but I digress). It means that they are people you can talk to, joke with, spend time with, go out to dinner with. They are not simply “girlfriend material”.

No indeed, women are companions that don’t need to be significant others to make your life better. I am fortunate in the number of female friends I have. I can laugh with them, I can talk with them, I can argue with them over stupid issues and I can discuss serious ones. I am generally happy to know them.

I am not bitter. I am happy. And perhaps someday, I will meet a woman who will want a closer relationship. Until then, I will enjoy the relationship I have with my friends. Male and female.

Alex Salazar  
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Parking fails to understand frustration

I am writing this in response to the “Parking takes steps to curb deck vandalism” article that appeared in the January 26 issue. There are a couple parts of the article that just strike me as plain idiocy and I’m tired of just griping to friends.

The first problem concerns the statement they made about the stolen car and the vandalism that occurred the night that the gates were ripped up. They state that the gates were protecting the cars and because they were ripped up several cars were vandalized and one was stolen (page 2). How can those small pieces of wood in any way prevent

vandalism much less a stolen car? I think just about everyone in Atlanta can walk around those gates at Peters. And anyone who has been on campus before knows that you don’t need a card to get out of the parking deck with a car. I fail to see how those gates are stopping someone from walking into the garage, stealing a car and driving out.

Also, the quote from Rod Weiss just shows that the parking office has no care or knowledge of how the students feel about things. He says that he doesn’t understand why students would want to vandalize parking. Obviously this guy has never

parked on campus before. Or had to argue with that annoying committee about getting a ticket when you were parked perfectly legally. I’m not condoning the vandalism (or approving of it) in any way but just noting that about any student on campus can relate to why these people were angry at parking.

The *Technique* is supposed to be a paper for the students. Why then, would you all not question the parking office about such obviously inaccurate or misled statements?

Jared Parsons  
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Academics

from page 8

is truly established as “a center and source of innovation”, a.k.a. Harvard, Stanford, and Princeton, are much more well rounded and student focused than Georgia Tech. We are very lopsided and everyone truly needs to realize this.

Students need to say something if their professors suck. Telling his/her friends does nothing. Tell the people that matter. We all have to work together to make this school the way we want it. On SGA’s FOCUS that surveyed big issues on campus, Academics was second on the list. I don’t understand why it

isn’t first. Why are you here at Tech? Hopefully, to learn something. Do you think the goal of Georgia Tech is to educate? Then why is our school so focused on research? Georgia Tech has successfully campaigned for almost 600 million dollars, 50 of that is going to students. Tech is a business. If you want a better, more well-rounded education, you are going to have to demand it. Education needs to be the unarguable number one goal of this institute.

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