

OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, November 17, 2000

OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

Freshman Camp

The new Freshman Camp is an excellent idea, and it will go a long way toward increasing the spirit of community at Georgia Tech. However, campus administrators need to keep a few things in mind when organizing the retreat. A deal needs to be arranged with Housing so that incoming, out of state students can store their belongings or move in before the retreat. The week before college starts is hectic enough with FASET, moving in, and getting ready for classes without having to find a place to store all of one's belongings for a few days.

Another concern is the gap that could develop between freshmen who attend the retreat and those who don't. Encourage participants to expand beyond the bounds of the retreat to meet other people, so the freshman class won't be divided between the retreaters and the non-retreaters. It's great to see an old Tech tradition being brought back to life.

Holding the line

The line—and campout—for U[sic]GA tickets went very smoothly this year. The Athletic Association and Ticket Distribution Committee had the right idea by distributing red tickets to students who arrived early, which prevented people from cutting in line at the last minute. Tech students showed their ingenuity—and their love for Yellow Jacket football—as they slept outside with many of the comforts of home.

Happy birthday to us

The *Technique* celebrates its 89th birthday today. Okay, so it's a random number to mention, but how often does November 17 fall on a Friday? We didn't take the time to figure it out, but it's not that often. Go 'Nique!

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

Support all Georgia Tech sports

Since many of the people on campus seem oblivious to the sports scene in general, I figured I would let people know the status of our non-revenue generating sports. The women's volleyball team, which ends its regular season with a game against Georgia in Athens the Friday before the football game, is the top team in the Atlantic Coast Conference. They play with a desire and intensity unmatched by any other team that I've seen play the sport. Feel free to support them next year in O'Keefe Gymnasium at the corner of 8th Street and Techwood Dr.

The women's basketball team is coming off of its first post-season trip in a few years, and deserves the support of Tech sports fans. They return all but one starter from last year's team, and all players have shown remarkable improvement from last season. Even many of our freshmen are garnering playing time, and hope to get the program's first ever win against U(sic)GA this year. Even the men's team, who reeled last year after the loss

of Dion Glover, is back with a new sense of direction under a new coach. The ice hockey team, swim team, and the tennis teams are all wondering the same thing: Why don't Tech students watch our games? The games are advertised all around campus, on ramblinwreck, and through various clubs. But still few fans attend. Maybe it's because a lot of people just don't understand something: games are FREE! By attending Tech and paying the athletic fee each semester (yes, the same one you pay to get football tickets and AT points), you are entitled to watch as many free sports games as you choose.

All games aside from football are easy to get into. Flash your buzzcard on the way in, and you're sitting in the crowd. Stand up and be heard, because the teams need extra motivation in the ninth inning, when they're down by one and the Number 1 ranking is on the line. Show up and be loud!

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Quote of the week:

"...to know even one life breathed easier because you lived. This is to have succeeded." — Ralph Waldo Emerson

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YOUR VIEWS Guest Editorial

Focus is character development, not harm *Greek system and its members responsible for preventing hazing*

"Pledgeship is a testing period." This is the opening sentence in one of the pledge manuals of a fraternity on this campus. Whether a house refers to their new members as associates, pledges, or new members, all fraternities have a membership education and development program. This is what builds a brotherhood. The goal of any fraternity program is to develop young men into men worthy of carrying on the traditions and principals of each respective fraternity. A fraternity is not an honor society. Membership is not open to all who meet certain requirements. Fraternities intend to choose individuals who they believe have the potential to carry on the traditions and principles on which the fraternity was founded. Many organizations have interviews and group oriented activities to choose their members; the Greek system has pledgeship and new member development.

While every brother contributes to the fraternity, the new members generally contribute by performing various tasks which can be as simple as picking up cups after a football game, answering the phone when they are present, and assisting other brothers in general upkeep of the house. Since the brothers have the ability to serve in roles not yet available to new members, it is important to present an opportunity for the new members to take an active role in their respective fraternity. Through this hard work and dedication, the new members will gain the respect and appreciation for the fraternity that the brothers gained during their respective pledge period.

While someone may be quick to conclude that these actions are considered hazing, one should stop and ask himself, "Is this new member doing anything which IFC consid-

"An activity must be assessed within the context of the organization in which it is taking place."

Jason Perry
President, InterFraternity Council



ers hazing in their by-laws?" According to IFC, hazing is any activity that produces "mental or physical discomfort, embarrassment, harassment, or ridicule." Since the establishment of the Greek system on this campus over 100 years ago, fraternities have continued to produce successful men through these well-established pledge programs, and it is unfair to the Greek system as a whole as well as each individual fraternity for a judgment to be made about an event by someone who is completely uninformed to the circumstances that surround it.

With the recent interests from the administration as well as extensive media coverage locally and nationally, a few important facts need to be kept in mind. There is a difference between hazing and building character. There is a difference between physically challenging and physically discomforting. There is a difference between mentally challenging and mentally discomforting. It is up to the InterFraternity Council as well as the Greek system to distinguish between hazing and pledging. It is also the responsibility of the InterFraternity Council and the fraternities to ensure the Greek system is a hazing free environment.

When cities establish curfew ordinances, they do so with the mindset that they will not be enforced strictly, but rather they will be used in cases where mischief is suspected

but unprovable. Similarly, current hazing guidelines are exhaustive in their scope, and if they were strictly enforced, most student organizations would be guilty of something. Similar to curfew laws, hazing regulations are broad in scope so as to capture all of the possibilities for mischief and wrongdoing. We need guidelines to establish what constitutes hazing, and they must be thorough, or groups that actually have hazed will use the gaps to escape judgment due to a technicality. Not every activity that violates a single rule is hazing.

Not only do fraternities have the obligation to promote a hazing free environment, but also the administration and campus as a whole should not be quick to judge activities based on their outward appearance. An activity must be assessed within the context of the organization in which it is taking place; the guilt or innocence of a group must hinge on more than the letter of the law. There is a distinct difference between mindless activities with malicious intent and events designed to instill lessons and traditions in new members. This distinction needs to be acknowledged before tradition and wisdom are stripped from the membership education of our Greek system based purely on technicalities.

The Technique accepts guest editorials on a limited basis. E-mail us for more information.

Election controversy teaches us patience and history

On this Election Day (no wait, few days, no week) we all saw history happen. Our poor children will have tests on this. In the meantime we wait as New Mexico, Oregon and Florida try to count and recount and triple count their votes. We have made a perplexing piece of history which is probably the closest for people watching today. I have decided in my hunt for editorial topics that I will talk about a few random things I have seen and observed as both sides fight for their position.

First I will talk about the poor TV anchorpersons who were all excited over calling the 'big one' and giving Florida to Gore. A few hours later it was back to undecided and then we had a 43rd president in Governor Bush. However, they finally decided they were at least a week early on that call. People complained the media called the election too early and swayed the vote or just misled the American people with half-truths. I say deal with it. The media never said this was official and you should know that they were making an educated guess. Obviously they could be wrong. Smart statisticians and experienced pollsters attempted to figure out who had won each state. The data first showed a Gore victory then they saw a mistake and called it for a Bush victory. They corrected themselves quickly each time. They are not reporting delayed events that happened hours ago, but they are reporting as fast as the people can type up the stories. Yes, this leads to errors, but we should know that and wait until the morning news or

"I feel patience is a great virtue here. Wait till January, someone is going to be inaugurated, I promise."

Daniel Uhlig
Photography Editor



papers have a real answer. So watch a live event and wait till they say it is over before you know for sure that it is really over.

"Follow the arrow" sounds simple enough. However, after a long wait a lot of people seemed to have a problem doing just that, and they can be nice and loud and complain about it now. Palm Beach has a huge number of Buchanan votes. So much that Buchanan admits he got votes he should have not received. Only one other county gave Buchanan more than 1,000 votes (Pinellas gave 1,010). Palm Beach had 3,000 plus. I think any intelligent person can see something is strange here. Then again, any 'intelligent' person should be able to follow the arrow. So people complain about how fair it was, and how dumb people should not be able to vote. So when you find a Democrat who thinks it is fair and people should have checked it by reading the instructions, and a Republican who sees how the setup might confuse people, we have made it a long way. Now it is just partisan bickering and shouting sound bytes at each other while protesters argue for the camera and march the streets in Palm Beach. I believe that yes, it

was confusing to some people and yes, they should have read and checked over the results at the end. I think this just shows that the updating and checking over of ballots needs to be done with a little more thought.

As the vote gets exceedingly close in New Mexico and Florida anyone can add the Ralph Nader vote or even a tenth of it to either of the candidates vote total and see him winning. Many supporters of Nader were simply hoping to help push Nader to 5%. So did a few people's willingness to vote for Nader elect Bush? They were willing to take a real stand on issues and vote for what they believed as opposed to voting for the lesser of two evils. America has two parties, and they are trying to shove each other out of the center of the political perspective. This makes the choice between the two candidates very small. Only third party candidates will take steps to the left or the right. The system we have gives nothing to third party candidates and only allows them to hurt the candidate closest to their beliefs. I feel we will not have any real choice until we find a way to include Nader and other third party candidates in the political scheme.

As machines and people count in multiple states adding up the votes I wonder how accurate the count is. Can the machines or people really count down to the last 300 votes? Out of almost 6 million votes the machines found an additional 3,500 votes in the first recount. The margin of victory in Florida is a tenth of the 'new' votes. Not very much. If they find a quarter of that one more time through we could have a different president. Would a researcher conclude a result off of .0035% of the data? I hope not, but that is what we are doing with the presidency.

I just feel that in a race were we have seen four (4) vote leads, recounting and making sure we don't end up with a big "Oops" in January or February is not unreasonable. "President Bush/Gore—the president who never won an election" would be a very weird chapter in our history.

I feel patience is a great virtue here. Wait till January, someone is going to be inaugurated, I promise. Now for the trauma this poor country is going through, if Bush thought it was really that bad he should just concede and give up the election to Gore. However, Bush and Gore have decided to let the process of law run its course and triple check if necessary. Maybe next time we talk to a dictator about creating a democracy, he will ask how fair our system is and whether we count every vote. I feel counting would only help us to figure out for sure who is president. We supported the protests against

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No recounts: it's time to digitize national election process

What thoughts come to your mind when someone says "election?" Are you fed up with the incredible inefficiency of our election process? I certainly am. As a Computer Science kid, nothing pains me more than to see photos of election officials holding individual ballots up to the light to determine which vote for the President was cast. It's clearly time to digitize the voting process.

This task is surely not easy to accomplish, however. The first idea that comes to most minds when someone suggests moving the current analogue voting process to a digital one is the great "digital divide" which claims that voting would be difficult or inaccessible to the elderly, poor, and typically less technically savvy population. Moving the voting process to a web-based system would certainly be a bad idea at this point in time. There are many American citizens who would have a difficult time voting on a website, especially if it were their first time using the Web. I think it's too much to expect people to find publicly accessible Internet access and learn how to use it just to vote.

Aside from being an interface problem, having a Web-based system would be somewhat of a difficult authentication challenge. How could the system know that the person voting didn't just log on for somebody else? How would passwords be distributed? When Georgia Tech students vote in SGA elections, we already have the infrastructure set up for a nice online election with Oscar's login and password information. On a national scale, issuing

"Taking baby steps would be the only way to get national elections up to speed, technologically."

Matt Flagg
Online Editor



passwords to every registered voter would create quite a logistics challenge. What happens when somebody loses their password?

Of course, there are a few commercial sites out there that have already started to do large-scale elections and would probably work very well in a national election. Delegates at the 2000 Democratic National Convention in Los Angeles cast their nomination votes for Al Gore from the convention floor using Web-based technology provided by election.com. So, many of these technical problems have already been solved. Nevertheless, we're not ready for a national, Web-based election. Using a service like election.com will only become a viable choice for elections when Internet access for the general public becomes ubiquitous (and it will). The migration to a digital system will have to go very slowly.

I think the first iteration of this new design should be as close to the current election process as possible while still maintaining a database of recorded ballot information. If the voting booths were modified so that every hole punched would not only puncture a paper ballot, but would also register itself in a database stored

locally at the poll, there'd be a clear record of the vote cast stored in both an analogue and digital format. If the voter happened to choose more than one candidate for a particular position, the mistake would be logged in the database and the paper ballot would clearly show the error with the extra puncture. After the poll has closed, the database would have a clear record of the vote count and it could easily be checked against the paper ballots.

The advantages of this basic system are obvious. It would make the tallying of votes quicker and more efficient while maintaining the exact voting procedure as our current system, thereby saving the public from usability worries as a result of change. This system would definitely solve the huge vote counting problems currently happening in Florida and the people would know for sure who was elected on the same night as the election. This system would still be far from perfect, however.

Saying this would solve all the problems of the current voting experience would be close to claiming the current system has no problems. While implementing this system would solve counting problems, it

would do nothing to improve the voting experience. Voting is not easy enough for the general public. The reasons for improving the read-and-pick part of voting are evident from this election with the huge number of fouled ballots where voters picked more than one candidate per position. Even though it's quite easy to punch the pin straight into the ballot, it's hard to tell where the paper has been punctured. The wording on the ballot isn't as clear as possible, either. I honestly think there should be a tiny dictionary available in each booth with words like "indemnification" in it. The voting experience seems to be the perfect HCI (Human Computer Interface) challenge—I'm sure there is an abundance of research on this topic.

As a second iteration of the voting process, improvements of the voting experience could be implemented. An effort to connect each poll to the Internet would also expedite the counting process since each database could report its result to a central database immediately following the closing of a poll. Each iteration would pose further technical and usability challenges, however.

People would probably object to the changing state of each voting process, but I think taking baby steps would be the only way to get national elections up to speed, technologically. Eventually, online voting will definitely be the way to vote. Using this iterative procedure for revamping the voting process would be the best way to ease the American public into voting digitally.

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Election from page 9

Milosevic because of an inaccurate count, but heaven forbid we have to check ours.

So yes, there is a nice long time delay between this being written and the publication of this. I voted for Gore in a Republican state so my vote did not count. Trying to track down a Gore sign in Auburn, Alabama was a chore. My mom had to find the Democratic headquarters in a strip mall without any signs because the property owner refused to allow them to advertise, but that is another story. I am still torn whether it would be better for Gore or Bush to win this mess.

If Bush wins, four years of struggle to be a president of a country that did not elect by popular vote would be hard for the Republicans to work with. People might also see some of the hypocrisy of the GOP, and watch the environment deteriorate. A moral party running a candidate, who has three arrests, did crack, and made youthful indiscretions until he was 40 does not make sense to me. If Gore is declared the final president elect, he will face the similar struggles to do what he hopes for the country. However, both candidates could get things done. Kennedy won on a small margin (0.2%) and was still effective.

In the meantime we will watch the bickering continue. One leader is in Texas asking for it all to end so he can win now and another in DC asking for everyone to make sure they know if their 350-vote difference is correct. Who do you want for president?

OSCAR limits chances to diversify knowledge

First, I would like to congratulate all of the people who put hard work and dedication into OSCAR's prerequisite system. However, I must say that OSCAR's major restriction system is a detriment to the entire campus community. I understand the need for allowing all students within a particular major to have first shot at their major classes. But, to my surprise, I found many of the upper level non-major courses that I wanted to take were major restricted.

Therefore, I spent the better part of three days trying to receive permits into these courses. Some major departments were extremely helpful, others were totally uncooperative and offering permits or overloads only if "spots" remained during phase two registration.

In today's rapidly changing job market, employers actively recruit individuals who diversify and represent the concept of learning and participation. In short, no one can afford to receive an education that is not well rounded because all must diversify or perish. In recognizing the seemingly vast differences between engineering and non-engineering students, the Institute should strive to encourage students to bridge the gap and explore interests outside their major. Under the current system, sure you can explore your interests, but only if they are in the 1000 level tier or in a select number of courses that are not restricted,

which I am sure are "tailored." Don't misunderstand my argument, I fully understand that there must be some sort of restrictive system, but I would like to present a solution, not of my own invention, that many may have not considered.

Why not offer a "preregistration" week for students? During this week, student would preliminarily sign up for classes that will be offered the following semester but no courses will have major restrictions or enrollment limits.

Under such a system, the students would tell the administration what was in demand rather than the guess and offer system. The students all take what they want instead of being "stuck" with the "leftovers" and the administration no longer has to deal with extensive permits, restrictions, and long lines of disgruntled students.

Additionally, such a system steadily removes any time ticket registration competition that exists under the current system for "choice" classes.

Stepping down from the proverbial soap box, I conclude in saying, as a "graduating" engineering student, I was shocked at such a blatant message to "stay within your major" from the new OSCAR system which I do not recall students having any vote or opinion about.

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YOUR VIEWS Letters to the Editor

'Bamboozled' more than comedy

I am writing in response to the article "Don't take 'Bamboozled' too seriously-enjoy" by Jamie Schulz. I just saw 'Bamboozled' and it was not a movie to enjoy. It was not about whether or not we are politically correct but about the image of African Americans in America. I did not take the movie lightly because Spike Lee was trying to make a point about how this image reflects in the everyday life of African Americans. We must look beyond the comedy and see the real message that is portrayed in "black face." The message teaches that African Americans are stupid, ugly, and inferior. The fact that we still laugh at these antics displays

our current ignorance. History can repeat itself.

From the article I see Spike Lee accurately wrote the movie to show that America has hardly changed. African Americans are still looked upon as pure entertainment. The whole movie angered me because that is what Americans have been fed for hundreds of years and the stereotypes are still perpetuated in modern television. I hope people will see the movie, look beyond the comical images, and reevaluate their view of African Americans.




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