

OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, August 31, 2001

OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

Campus Diversity

Minority enrollment—specifically that of African Americans—has decreased in the past three years. While Tech continues to actively recruit minority students, there is still a lack of minority applicants and an even larger decline in minority entrants.

The main reason for this drop appears to be insufficient scholarship funding from the Institute. Minorities who do get accepted to Tech seem to choose other colleges because they offer more attractive scholarship and financial aid packages. Combining this with other universities who are competing for talented minority students, leaves Tech's desire for more diversity in the shadow of other schools.

Tech has made some positive reforms with regards to minority enrollment, such as early recruiting through letters and telephone calls, the Challenge program, and special Connect With Tech-type events. However, it fails to provide what is most important to incoming minority students: money. And, still, the Institute does not intend to offer better financial packages to attract more minority students.

In light of this, the Foundation should approach alumni as well as outside minority organizations about funding need-based scholarships for minority students. Although Tech is not ready to give away more money, appealing to these potential donors could prove to be extremely valuable. In addition to spicing up Tech's financial offerings, pursuing alumni and local organizations could help provide another outlet that encourages minority students to choose Tech over other schools.

The bottom line is that in order to increase minority enrollment, the Institute must somehow provide the funding to minorities that other schools are already offering. Since they are not willing to provide the money themselves, they must request support from outside organizations who have a personal interest in helping minorities. To become as attractive to minorities as competing universities, and at the same time diversify campus, Tech must demonstrate its interest in bringing minorities to campus, both through recruiting and adequate funding.

Regents' Test

The Board of Regents is finally making its test more challenging. A higher level of difficulty will further test students' communication skills, while the increased focus on effective writing will prove to be an incredible asset to graduates.

While the greater intensity should not pose a problem to most students, it could present difficulties for international students. Such students come to campus after being taught in a non-English environment and are suddenly immersed in English, probably without knowing essential writing and grammatical concepts essential to passing the Regents' Exam.

LCC should be prepared to help support the needs of these international students prior to the test by providing basic English courses that focus specifically on Regents requirements. Also, if the student fails the test, the supplementary courses required afterward should be more in depth.

Communication is an important skill needed for life. It is great that the Board of Regents' realizes this and is altering their current exam, but universities should not forget about international students who may need extra assistance.

Consensus editorials reflect the majority opinion of the Editorial Board of the Technique, but not necessarily the opinions of individual editors. Letters should be 400 words and should be submitted to editor@technique.gatech.edu.

Quote of the week:

"I can't feel anything but gratitude for every single moment of my stupid little life." - Lester Burnham, American Beauty

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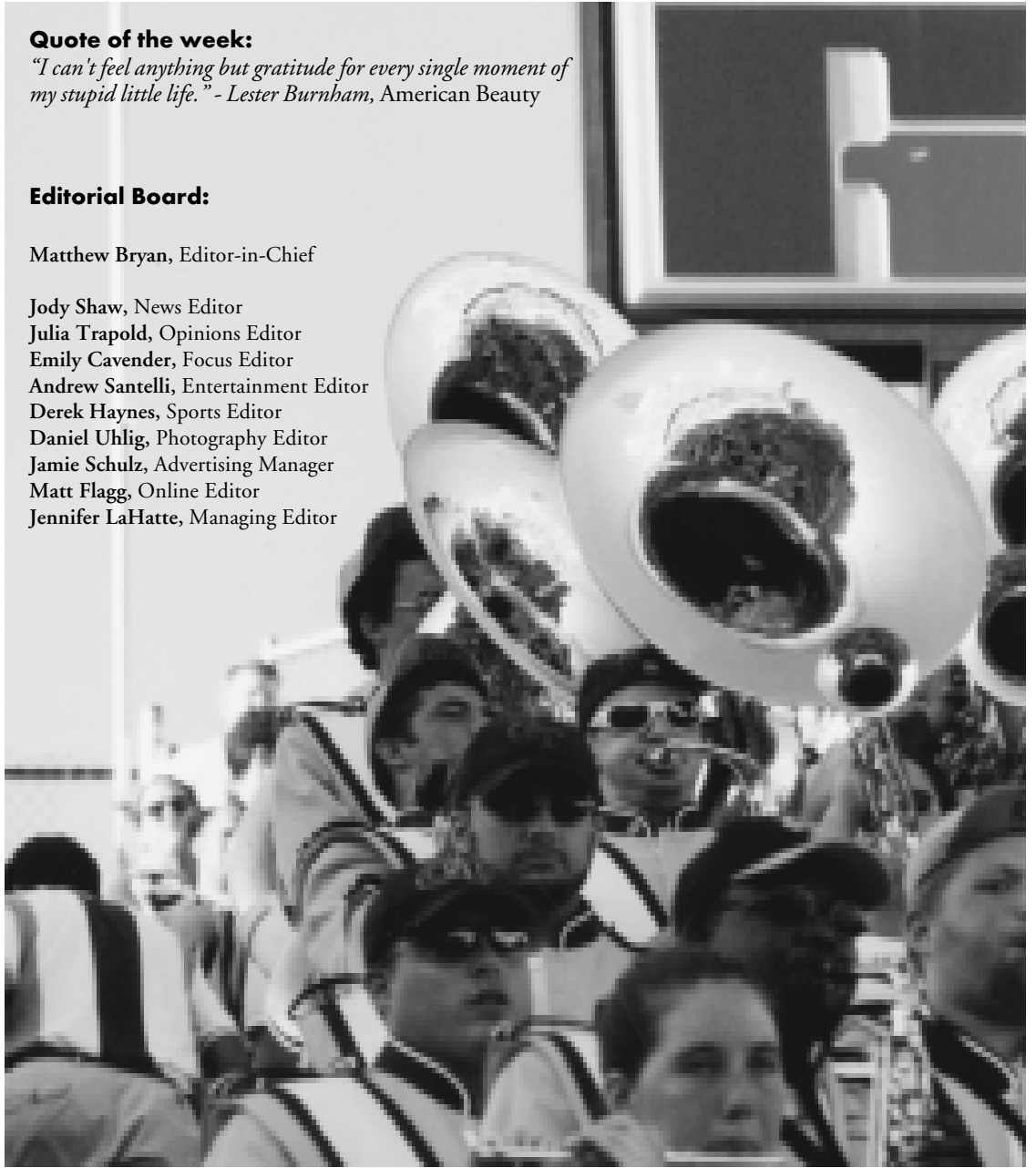
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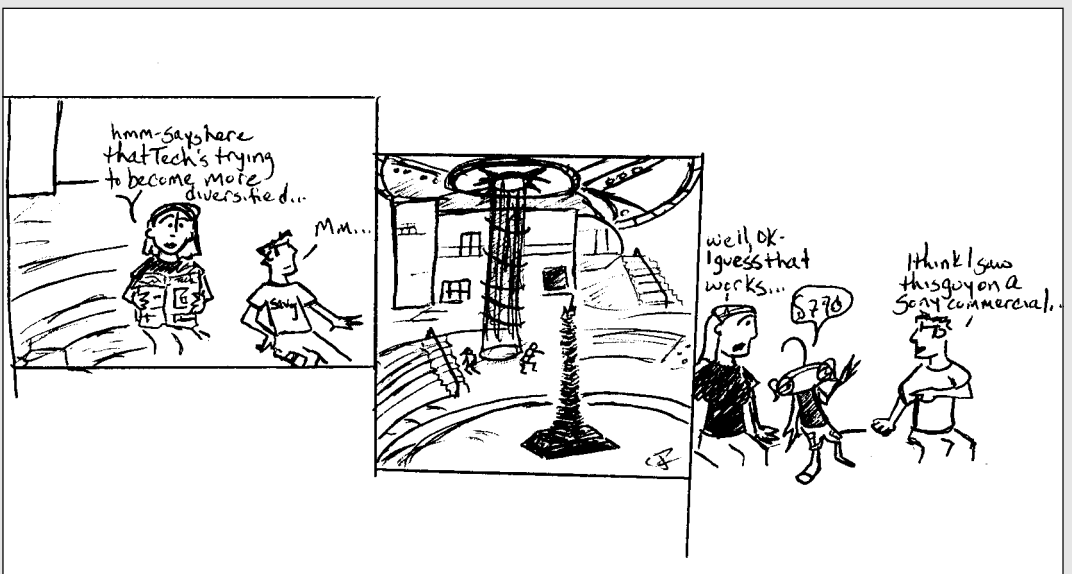
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By Matt Norris / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS



By Jamie Schulz / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

New admissions policies needed to increase diversity

The University of Georgia lost a battle in court on Monday. For over two years now, UGA has been fighting to preserve its admissions policy—an admissions policy that some in Georgia claim is discriminatory and led three white women to sue the University after they were denied admission in 1999. Earlier this week, those women, and whites across the state who believe affirmative action is a lingering program from a bygone era when discrimination against blacks was rampant, won a moral victory in the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Whether or not that victory is maintained in the future remains to be seen, but for now, UGA, and other schools in the Eleventh District, can no longer use race as a factor in college admissions.

Throughout the judicial process, UGA has maintained that diversity in the University is a compelling interest of the State of Georgia; the Attorney General's office has vigorously defended UGA as the "flagship" institution of the State in this cause. It is true that diversity in higher education is an important interest of the State, and with this latest blow to the traditional method of diversification, UGA and other institutions of higher education will be forced to find new ways to encourage and maintain diverse student bodies. In the past several years, one Federal Appeals Court ruled in favor of affirmative action, while another ruled against such programs. With such varying opinions the Supreme Court is likely to take up the issue in the near future and may strike down such policies across the country. Whether or not such programs should be saved is not within the scope of this editorial. Instead, all institutions of higher education,

"Colleges and universities must...acknowledge that factors other than race can be used to shape a diverse student body."

Jody Shaw
News Editor



including Georgia Tech, must reconsider their values and policies to prepare for a future without such affirmative action programs. Colleges and universities must continue to develop their definitions of diversity and acknowledge that factors other than race can be used to shape a diverse student body.

Tech already strives to attract and retain students of all different backgrounds, and it does so without using such an admissions policy. While Tech is still a predominately white, upper-middle class, Southern, Engineering school, the demographics of the student body are slowly changing. Tech produces more African-American engineers than any other school in the nation. It can also boast a number of International students, an increase in female students over the past several years, and a recent jump in the number of students who are interested in fields other than Engineering. Such measurements are a testament to Tech's diversity. While not the perfect microcosm of American society, Tech is nonetheless a fairly diverse academic institution.

How does the Institute manage to attract bright students from different backgrounds? The academic reputation of Tech certainly helps. I believe that all students are drawn to Tech because of its strong reputation as being a great place to re-

ceive a college education. Beyond that reputation, however, Tech also does a good job of actively recruiting minority students. Tech hosts a number of programs to encourage minority students to consider the Institute as an option for higher education. While this recruiting has typically been focused on African-American students, the recent grant from the Goizueta Foundation will allow Tech to focus more attention on another underrepresented minority—Hispanics.

Once Tech is able to attract these students to campus, it also does a good job of making minority students feel welcome. The Office of Minority Education (OMED) provides a summer orientation program for minority students called Challenge, and it also sponsors tutoring and other educational programs throughout the school year. While this type of attention has, in the past, been primarily focused on African-American students, Tech administrators recognize the importance of retaining students from all backgrounds and encouraging them to succeed. In the near future, more outreach programs will appear—just wait and see.

Even Tech, however, can do much more to improve and diversify its campus and student body, but, as the three-justice panel that overturned the UGA admissions

policy noted, "Racial diversity alone is not necessarily the hallmark of a diverse student body." If academic institutions like Tech and the University of Georgia truly believe that fostering a diverse student body is just as important a part of the academic process as any other part of the college experience, they may want to consider other statistical means of building diversity, if such policies remain constitutional. A policy, for example, that takes into consideration race, sex, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic conditions of the student's family, in addition to academic and merit-based considerations, might be more just. Such an admissions policy may be necessary in the future, as the state's premier institutions attempt to maintain diversity in the face of an increase in the number of white Georgians staying in-state thanks to the HOPE scholarship.

Gene Griessman said, "I believe that diversity brings new solutions to an ever-changing environment, and that sameness is not only uninteresting but limiting." One of the great things about attending an institution like Georgia Tech is the amount of interesting and diverse individuals I get to interact with on a daily basis. These individuals are not diverse, however, simply because of their race. A number of factors contribute to the diversity of a community, and when shaping an admissions policy, it is near-sighted to merely consider one factor—race—as was the case in UGA's policy. An intensive recruitment and retention system for all minority students combined with an admissions policy that values the many aspects that make each individual student unique will provide true diversity in higher education.

Proud to be a Jacket: From Tech to UGA and back

A year and a half ago my roommate and I decided to make Athens more than just a weekend getaway. We finally transferred to the University of Georgia, something we'd been thinking about doing ever since we set foot on Georgia Tech's campus our freshman year. While I thought I was transferring for all the right reasons, like a good journalism school and a more social college atmosphere, I began to realize that the things I thought I hated at Tech were ultimately the things that I had grown to love.

Unfortunately, it took me a semester in Athens to come to this realization. My roommate on the other hand, well, she was born to bleed red and black and quickly adopted UGA and the Agricultural Engineering department as her new home and family.

Soon after I arrived at Tech in the fall of 1998, I realized something was missing. I started thinking about my high school experiences and about how my life was very hectic because I loved being involved in so many different activities. So I began my quest for involvement at Tech with the idea that if I searched for what I liked to do, I was bound to find people who shared my interests. Although I tried a number of organizations and met handfuls of new people, I was left thinking, "There has to be more to college life than this." Everyone always told me that college is the best time of your life and it is so much fun, but I couldn't even imagine putting Tech

"Although I..met handfuls of new people, I was left thinking, 'There has to be more to college life than this.'"

Jennifer LaHatte
Managing Editor



in the same sentence as the word fun. I felt overwhelmed trying to balance studying with work and play and it left me burnt out and stressed out. I had turned into someone that I didn't recognize as myself. I didn't see the point in working so hard for these four or five (or six) years just to get a job where the vicious cycle starts all over again, leaving me no time to really enjoy my young adult years.

Although Tech had its moments, overall I was really unhappy with my experiences and I began to look to UGA to round out my college years. Like my beginnings at Tech, I was determined to get the most out of my college experiences and got involved on campus right away. I was accepted into the Journalism school, found a job on campus, and submersed myself in Athens life.

Wow, I never thought two schools could be so incredibly different! No matter how many extracurricular activities I took on, I never felt like I was busy and almost started to feel lazy. I never felt a true sense of accomplishment in my academics because my classes didn't challenge

me to think in ways that Tech had demanded. Don't get me wrong, I worked hard for the 4.0 GPA that I earned at UGA, but I have yet to come even close to that at Tech and I easily study two or three times as much here as I did there. The basic attitude towards academics that I felt radiated from the student body at UGA was almost lethargic and unmotivated. While of course I can not say that about everyone I met, I definitely noticed a stark contrast between the atmospheres of these two schools.

As I swam deeper into that fall semester, I began to reevaluate my decision and realized that I did not need a liberal arts degree to justify my interests in writing and communication.

So, this daughter of two UGA graduates, put on her white and gold and came back to Atlanta, with a greater sense of confidence and direction and higher level of appreciation for every aspect of Tech life. It was not a wasted trip because it allowed me to discover that my Tech degree would make me just as qualified and competitive as students

who graduate from a more traditional journalism background.

I applaud the majority of this year's freshmen class for choosing to see Tech as more than just a reputable engineering school. An impressive 30 percent increase in Ivan Allen enrollment and 37 percent increase in the College of Management, shows that students, like myself, have wised up to the importance of combining technology with liberal arts.

Like President Clough said, we carve out a unique role for society, as well as Georgia Tech, by seeking out the best of both worlds. The respect surrounding a Tech degree already puts us at a great advantage, but this unique combination helps to make us more marketable because it shows potential employers that we are willing to rise to the challenge of being different.

Although we remain the minority on campus and at times are not always respected as equally as our engineering counterparts, it doesn't mean that the quality of these students, professors or programs is any less than that of more traditional liberal arts schools.

The experiences that I have had here have been invaluable and something that a traditional liberal arts degree could never match. I encourage you to stand firm when people look at you funny and question your reason for going to Tech. Because you've already figured out an important lesson that for some of us, takes being a Dawg to realize.

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