

OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

Domestic partners

Georgia Tech's new policy of providing limited benefits to same-sex domestic partners will improve the Institute, as it will allow us to attract faculty from a more diverse range of academics. This policy demonstrates Tech's continued leadership among public universities and will enable the Institute to have a more prestigious academic environment. Although the policy does not extend the full range of benefits that married, heterosexual couples get, it does demonstrate Tech's commitment to recruiting the best possible faculty in order to improve Tech's standing among institutes of higher learning.

While the policy itself will bring Georgia Tech closer to the idea of equality for all people, the way that the policy is presented, applied and enforced will be essential to its success. Because Tech is a conservative campus in a conservative state, the policy should not be presented as an explicit endorsement of the homosexual lifestyle. Rather, the policy should be presented as a benefit to campus because of the better academic community it will build-a based on tolerance and equity.

Before the benefits are instated, several implementation issues must be resolved. Safeguards against fraud should be formulated to protect Georgia Tech and the taxpayers of Georgia against illegitimate claims. Assertions of long-term relationships should be required before benefits are extended.

If similar benefits are not offered to unmarried, long-term heterosexual couples, they should be extended to them in the interest of fairness. Additionally, these benefits should be extended to the same-sex partners of students as well as faculty and staff. These benefits would be especially important for attracting the most diverse graduate student body. Same-sex benefits are important for graduate students as they are much more likely to be in a long-term committed relationship. Attracting graduate students from the largest possible field will also improve Tech's rankings, making the policy providing same-sex partner benefits a positive for the entire Institute.

Smoking policy

The changes in Housing's smoking policy being investigated by the Residence Hall Association are too paternalistic and controlling. While smoking is annoying to non-smokers and dangerous to everyone, prohibiting smoking in all Georgia Tech dorms is too restrictive a policy. Instead, the current policy should be more stringently enforced. The policy should be enforced in the same method that quiet hours are. If someone is being too loud in the halls during quiet hours, any resident may ask him or her to be quiet or talk to housing staff about the problem. If a smoker's smoke is bothersome to any other resident, whether they be roommates or hallmates, he or she should move to an area where they do not bother anyone. A policy like this would effectively solve the problem without being overly restrictive.

The RHA's response to resident's complaints about smoking in the dorms reflects well on the organization. After hearing numerous complaints about a problem in housing, RHA took action to correct the situation, fulfilling its responsibility to Tech residents. Additionally, allowing students to vote on what they think the ideal policy is will make students feel more connected to the making of Housing policy and more in control of their own lives.

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Student amnesia leads to unsatisfactory policies

By Sara Cames
Opinions Editor

A recent article in the Technique reported on the lack of funds to renovate the bookstore space. Dr. Lee Wilcox, Vice President of Student Affairs, said, "The availability of funding is influencing the configuration of the space," leading to rampant speculation that this space will not be used in the way that is detailed in the Student Center Expansion Task Force report.

Although it is difficult to tell how this situation will be resolved, I'm worried that students' best interests will be ignored in whatever contingency plan is formulated. Most of the students who formulated the plans for the bookstore space have graduated, and this lack of funds presents the perfect situation for those plans to be changed.

Though students were promised this space as an expansion of one of the smallest student centers in the nation, there has been little campus outrage about the idea that Tech's numerous student organizations will not get the support they deserve.

All of this brings me to my point: because students are so apt to forget the promises of the administration and faculty, Tech officials often have free range in their actions, even if they fly in the face of student opinion. Students stay at Tech an average of five years; most administrators and faculty stay here for 15 or more. Because our time as individual students is so short, promises that are made to the student body can sometimes be conveniently forgotten, especially after the students agitating for the change have all graduated.

Senior finals are another excellent example. Many underclassmen may not even know there was a time when seniors were not required to take final exams during their graduating semester. This rule was a Tech tradition and allowed students to receive their real diplomas when walking across stage.

At the time the change was being proposed, there was a massive student outcry against the policy. The Faculty Senate voted for the change, knowing that student opposition to the plan would die out as soon as those students directly affected by the change graduated.

I understand that at times, administrators and faculty must make decisions that we as students do not like but are necessary for us to get a good education; I, however, do not believe that forcing graduating seniors to take final exams is one of these decisions. By approving a policy with little noticeable educational value over the strong wishes of a majority of students, the administration and faculty simply revealed that they believe they can ignore student opinion when it suits their own interests.

Funding for SAC II is another situation in which student opinion did not play the role that it should have during the decision-making process. While most students supported the idea of updating Tech's recreation facilities and were even willing to financially support it, many of them felt that poor fundraising on the part of the administration was behind the \$54 fee increase that students were being asked to approve.

Some students even suggested alternate plans, such as increasing fees only when the facilities were complete so that those students who had access to the improved gym would be the ones to fund it. Student Government failed the fee increase, but the administration continued with plans to raise the fees anyway, claiming that the close vote in SGA demonstrated that students wanted the new facilities.

While most students are happy about the coming improvements to SAC, the idea that the administration would ignore a vote opposing the fee increase demonstrates the extent to which student opinion is disregarded.

I bring up these examples not to renew controversy on issues that are in the past but to point out that student input is often ignored on this campus. Sometimes, it is not even sought—the bookstore move and the changes to the introductory CS courses being prime examples. There are probably countless other policies and programs that created long-forgotten student controversy that I have not even heard of because of the extent of student amnesia on this campus.

What is especially disturbing about this phenomenon is how successful programs and policies are that administrators and faculty collaborate on. Undergraduate research creates benefits for professors, students and the Institute as a whole. The Honor Code, which required collaboration of faculty, administration and students, was successful in its first years but has recently suffered many troubles as faculty have stopped supporting the Code and students have lost faith in the system.

While the faculty and administration have a responsibility to take student opinion into account, we students also have an obligation to use the power that we have. We must begin exercising our right to discuss issues of concern with the faculty and administration as well as communicating to upcoming upperclassmen and incoming students the problems of the past. It is only with this sharing of history that we can begin to make the faculty and administration more responsive to our needs. If we are content to forget problems as soon as an unsatisfactory solution is forced upon us, we will never be able to achieve changes that would make Tech a better place for us all.

Advertising on the internet is ubiquitous, unavoidable

By Stephen Baehl

Copy Editor

Congratulations! If this article is not flashing, you've been selected as a winner! Click here to claim your prize!

Oh, wait, wrong media type.

Yes, we are in the midst of the Golden Era of Internet Advertising in all its glorious...um, splendor. No one is safe; this is a threat that bears down upon us all with equal weight. Something must be done, if only to help the vast Internet community cope with the invasion of their once pleasantly independent, uninterrupted surfing spree. **CLICK HERE FOR 4 FREE DVDs!!!**

It all started with some sadistic little marketer (probably spawned from a place similar to the genius that brought us telemarketing) and his emails one day. Sending out letters to all his little marketer cohorts, he suddenly realized how similar this "emailing" thing was to choking thousands upon thousands of mailboxes full of worthless junk mail. Only, this would cost less.

And so, the virus that is junk mail spread to the Internet. It was only a logical step, then, to take the idea of large, annoying billboards lining the highway and translate it to the concept of large, even more annoying banners cluttering the information superhighway.

Even better, those banners could be made to pop up on the innocent browser's computer, coming between said user and said user's browsing experience! "Let's make everything as impossibly inconvenient and annoying as possible-people are sure to buy our products!"

This brings us, then, to the present day. **BUY THE NEW WIRELESS X-CAM TODAY!!!** Er, sorry about that. Okay, let's try to look at the positive. After all, there is a reason for everything's existence-even the duck-billed platypus has a purpose (it amuses people just by the way it looks). So, perhaps pop-up ads, banners and spam have a purpose too, right? ...Right? Hey, where are you going?

Okay, so all those intrepid webmasters out there that provide us with all these wonderful web sites have to pay for their efforts with both time and money. In return, allowing some advertiser to leech off a page at least serves to bring a source of income to the webmaster. This makes it viable for people to continue producing pages that can be viewed for free.

So, if nothing else, thank the ads for the free browsing. Then promptly curse at them and close the window. Of course, be sure to make a mental note of the product being advertised so you can boycott it. **CLICK THE MOVING MONKEY AND WIN A PRIZE!!**

A more practical solution might be to try a pop-up killer. I'm not going to go into too much detail on how one works-those of you who would care know more about it than I do, and those of you who don't care wouldn't want me to go beyond the words "Java script." And no, that has no relation to Starbucks. The handy thing about pop-up killers is that they can be disabled whenever they interfere with a site you are actually trying to view properly. Otherwise, they rather successfully do what their name suggests: kill pop-up ads. We can only hope the death of those annoying things is slow and painful. Perhaps a pop-up torturer would be a good alternative program... **CLICK HERE FOR FREE MONEY!!!**

So, on to another serious topic of concern. Spam. Junk email. The spawn of Satan. Call it what you will; we all know what you mean. This creation is much like the curious mosquito. It serves no real purpose other than to annoy you, and perhaps occasionally suck your blood. Or, at least your limited space on a free web-based email account.

So what can be done about these binary terrors? There are several methods of combating them. One is fairly common: junk mail filters. Hotmail.com offers one, as do many other email servers and programs. Just make sure you don't accidentally filter out your weekly newsletters of...well, whatever it is you subscribe to.

The second solution is far less practical, but far more fun. Chain letters. That's right; fight fire with fire. Who jumps for joy when they see "FWD: SEND THIS TO 20 FRIENDS OR DIE IN 2 HOURS!!!" in their mailbox? Ooh, ooh...not me. If you are one of these people, the Health and Wellness Center offers help for these kinds of things, and I'm sure someone at the College of Psychology can even assist, too. Otherwise, at least feel glad that a use has finally been assigned to these denizens of the world of email: ammunition. Just reply to each and every one of the offending spammers with a chain letter.

In reality, of course, this will have little effect on the actual sender of the mail. People who send chain letters most likely love getting email of any type as they are obviously desperately lonely. It's really an option intended more to make you feel better, as though you have done something back to those idiots annoying you with junk emails. If you really hate pop-up ads and junk email, the best solution is simply to stop using the internet entirely.

So, when you next face the arduous task of wading through the barrage of advertisements on the Internet (likely within moments, seeing as how this is Tech), remember: **THE FIRST MONTH'S MEMBERSHIP IS FREE!!!**

Student tickets not a way to profit

It is immoral to sell student tickets for profit. Such acts are against the spirit of the game and an insult to the students who attend these games. All students pay an activity fee which entitles them to free tickets to home sporting events. For one student to acquire these tickets and then sell them to other students is horrific. This is behavior that goes on all the time at U(sic) GA, not something that we should condone on this campus.

Many of these student scalpers talk about capitalism and free trade as justifications for these acts. I agree that it is capitalism, but are you really that cutthroat that you are willing to shaft a fellow Tech student? If you don't need your tickets, just give them to a student who wants to go to the game, don't sell them! This begs the question, "Would you sell your own grandmother if you thought you could make a quick buck?"

The point of those tickets is to go see our Jackets whoop up on the sorry Seminoles and cheer on the Brave and Bold, not to make a quick dollar on students who weren't able to get a ticket. I stand opposed to these nameless carpetbaggers and encourage all students to do the same. I would rather sit at home and watch the game on T.V. than pay one red cent to a roach of a person who would sell student tickets back to students.

Classroom Controversies

Class group work facilitates learning

By Jennifer Hinkel

Apart from the core curriculum of equations, formulas and theories, Tech students should also expect to learn something of teamwork, communication and leadership skills. The ideal place for developing these skills is in the classroom, but some professors acquiesce to group work only in the form of take-home projects. While in-class group work is ideal for cooperation and communication, take-home group work undermines these goals and results in a breakdown of the skills teamwork should teach.

Group learning in the classroom is both needed and welcomed. Some departments have mastered ways to incorporate a group environment into their classes, such as the Biomedical Engineering department's use of "problem-based learning" (PBL) for undergraduates, where groups of eight students work on projects with a professor's supervision and guidance.

When group learning is kept in the classroom, everyone must participate. Groups have an equal amount of time to work on their ideas and the majority of discussion, collaboration and sharing take place with a professor on hand to answer questions, guide efforts and direct groups to various resources. While individuals gather information outside of class, it only becomes completely relevant and useful in the group context. In various other departments, many professors allow time during class for small groups of students to work on practice problems or projects. However, too many professors take group learning out of the classroom and assign it as homework.

When take-home group projects become de rigueur, students are left not only with the cumbersome task of coordinating up to ten different schedules to find a meeting time, but they also lack the guidance of a professor and the more disciplined environment of the classroom. Even if the group can coordinate a meeting (which, in much of my experience, is nearly impossible), no one is present to ensure that group members attend and participate in discussions. It is this communication that creates the benefits of collaborative group learning.

While some may argue that such projects teach responsibility, the responsibility for the entire group often falls on one or two students, overburdening them while allowing the rest of the group to free-ride. Teaching healthy group work practices in the classroom should be a function of a good university; leaving students on their own to coordinate teamwork is irresponsible and ineffective, as it fails to teach cooperative values.

In-class group learning is essential. Numerous studies have shown its effectiveness over traditional lectures, especially in the education of women. It also has several good "side effects" ranging from teaching discussion skills to encouraging healthy competition among group members. My most

meaningful and complete learning experiences at Tech have been in eight-student Biomedical Engineering PBL classes and in small International Affairs seminar classes with no more than twelve students. In those settings, I felt challenged and engaged to participate as an individual.

These group efforts and discussions were only successful, however, because they took place within the classroom and under the watchful eye of a professor willing to pilot the group. My numerous experiences with take-home group projects have been ones of headaches over the inability to set meeting times, the lack of participation from some members and the overall feeling of being unprepared when the time came to present the assignment. Professors should be discouraged from overburdening students with the administrative responsibilities of scheduling out-of-class meetings and hounding less responsible group members to do their part. Group learning is valuable to the collegiate experience. Professors, take the lead in developing in-class group work for your classes and departments. Students, encourage your professors to give you supervised classroom time for group work, or at the very least help with group administration when they do assign outside projects.

Neither group will regret their efforts when they reap a harvest of team sharing, collaborative communication and intellectual activation that can be found only in a cooperative setting.

Test scores not only important thing in life

(U-WIRE) California Poly State U.-I bombed the Law School Admissions Test. While this is something that I'm not necessarily proud of, I feel it is somewhat therapeutic to talk openly about it.

I spent my summer studying for it and then managed to completely blow it. It still seems strange-I think I'm still in shock. In one phone call to an automated voice message, my dreams of going to Boston University were shattered.

I'm now in day three of the new world I've entered, the one where it's okay that I'm not going to go to law school next fall and instead taking a year off. I'm not sure why I thought that this was a negative thing, but this forced realization opened my eyes to the idea of taking a year off and doing something low-key. Throw in some insight from Jesse James, and I realize my life is far from over (which I completely thought it was).

So how does Jesse James fit into this? The Jesse James I'm talking about is not an outlaw from the 1800s (although they are related) and is actually a tattoo-covered Californian with a hot-rod heart.

James is the owner of West Coast Choppers. After watching a Discovery Channel special about him, I realized that not only is my life far from over, but everyone has something unique to capitalize on.

Seeing James for the first time, the stereotypical bad-boy image popped into my head. Here is this guy whose arms are covered with tattoos (including a "Pay up, sucker" tattoo on the palm of his hand), his fingernails are permanently stained from working on cars and bikes and he's dressed like a punk. Stereotypes clamored in my head.

Before seeing this documentary, I never would have thought that he would be a renowned millionaire, as well as the owner of a very lucrative business. Stereotypes are stupid, obviously.

James started riding motorcycles at age seven and found something he enjoyed. Taking his hobby further, he found he had a talent for design. His education stopped at high school, but that doesn't mean his chance for success ended there, too.

Today we put so much emphasis on higher education that it's easy to lose sight of personal talents. James didn't need to attend college to find his career. Ask any of his famous clients (Shaquille O'Neil and Keanu Reeves to name a couple), and they can tell you that it didn't take some college-level algebra to make James' choppers some of the best.

While I can't name something I excel at, I know there's something there. The best part is that I don't have to know right now. Somewhere between midterms and resume building, I forgot that I'm 21 and still have a few more years of self-discovery. During those years, I am sure I will find some way to

capitalize on my personal talents.

Work shouldn't be what we do in life, but rather who we are. Seeing James' success made me realize that all it takes is finding something you enjoy to find those talents.

With the LSAT over and behind me-for a year at least-I can focus on the other things, like being 21, in college and having a few more months of freedom from the job world ahead of me.

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