OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, January 25, 2002

OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

The problem of cheating

The issue of cheating prevails in introductory CS classes. CS faculty members constantly implement new ways to try and catch students that cheat. It is more beneficial, however, to examine the reasons why students feel compelled and sometimes forced to cheat in these classes instead of just trying to catch cheaters.

The first and most obvious issue is convenience. To copy and paste someone else's code into a text file takes a matter of seconds. Comparatively, this is the easiest and most efficient way to cheat. Often, there is only one best way to solve a problem through coding. Once this solution is revealed it becomes the coveted secret that all students strive to find out from each other.

There is also the issue of desperation. After working on CS homework for several hours into the early morning and still not figuring out all of the answers students can become desperate and feel that there is no choice but to find out the right answer through asking other students taking the class for assistance.

The impersonal setup of the class is also a factor. When there are 1000 students taking the same CS class for the first time it is hard for all who need extra help to get it from the professors or teaching assistants. Not all students learn CS concepts on the same level or in the same amount of time. Some need extra help. Even when TAs do help they can often be condescending in their instruction. The frustration that goes along with trying to understand a concept that is new to many students can also lead students to cheat.

Students who take this class along with a full load can find it hard to dedicate the necessary time to the CS class. They quickly find the work to be overwhelming and feel that the only way to catch up is by getting help from other students.

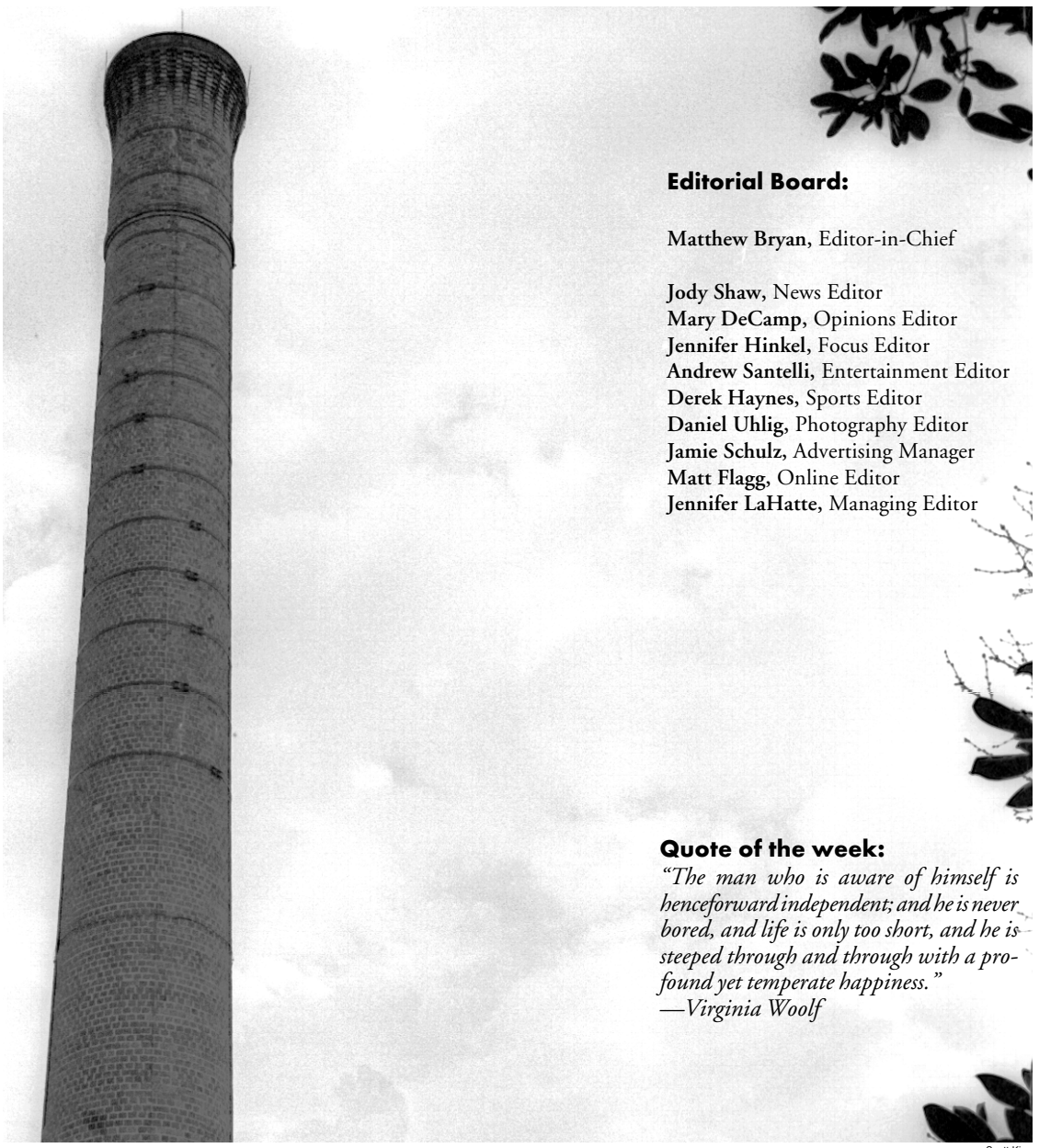
Finally, the courses are initially presented in such a way that students encounter the difficuly of the subject, are instructed in how to cheat, and then warned not to. Instructors are sending the message that cheating has been necessary for some in order to do well in these classes.

However, the burden of the situation does not lay entirely on the College of Computing. Students who take these classes should always start their work early. If problems exist, they will know right away while there is still time to get help from professors and TAs. They should also not be afraid to use newsgroups to ask questions and get help from people who are authorized to help them.

There are several things that faculty can do as well. First, one-on-ones, or something similar, should be brought back into use. This way students will have a weekly opportunity to get help from their TAs. If old homeworks were archived the number of cheaters could be tracked over time and compared to the changing student support structure. There should also be a set of homework or test problems that students can collaborate on so that they can learn together without honor violations. Also, it should be recommended to incoming students who are not familiar with CS concepts to not take any CS classes while taking a full load or while taking other time-consuming introductory classes.

Most students do not go into these classes hoping to cheat. Professors should not bring students to the point that they feel cheating is necessary, and students should practice integrity and time management in the completion of assignments.

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



Quote of the week:
"The man who is aware of himself is henceforward independent; and he is never bored, and life is only too short, and he is steeped through and through with a profound yet temperate happiness."
—Virginia Woolf

Scott King

Fight for your right to advertise on campus

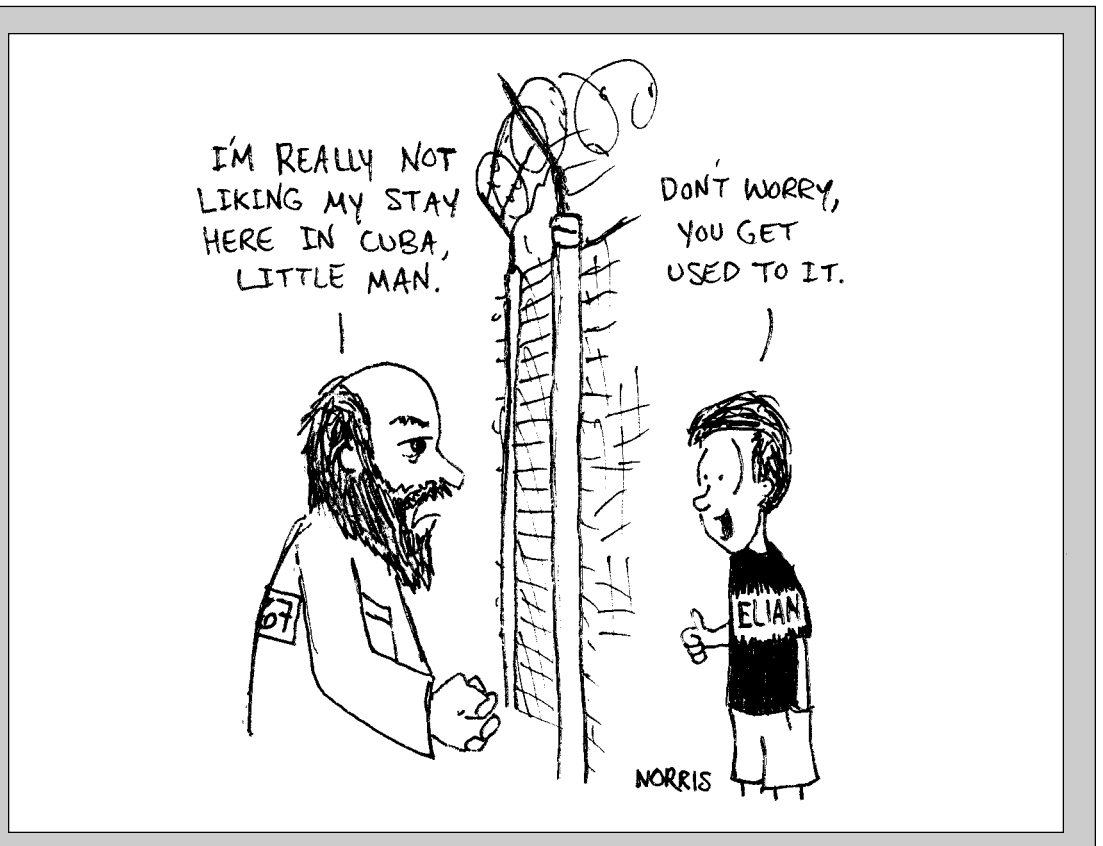
In response to a letter written last week, I would like to bring out a nasty little secret to the Tech community. Mr. Coker wrote about not being allowed to compete with the campus bookstore. I encourage him to try again and not back down until he is shown written rules that prevent him from doing so!

Having produced a number of events on campus for students, I have been confronted with similar situations. In my experience, administration and, more often, Auxiliary Services, will try to prevent competition of products and services on campus. They can do this because they supposedly have power, so students blindly trust what they say. The problem comes about when asking for written proof to back-up these "monopolistic" claims of contractual agreements and binding rules. Does Marriott have sole control of catering on campus as well as right of first refusal? Not according to the contract that they signed! Can companies that compete with the bookstore, and possibly offer a better price, advertise on campus? I am willing to bet that there are no rules that prevent it!

I am not saying that outside sources are better than what we have. Marriott has given a lot of money to renovate the dinning facilities, Coke gives huge amounts of money to the school and Barnes & Noble is sinking a lot of money into the new bookstore! These companies evidently care about the Tech community, so they shouldn't be dismissed.

What I am saying is to beware of mysterious rules and contracts. It is easy to say that certain things are against the rules even when that may not be the truth. Next time you are told that you can't advertise on campus or bring in an outside caterer for your event, ask that person to see where it is written.

Erik M. Gordon
gte779j@prism.gatech.edu



By Matt Norris / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Students helping students does not constitute cheating

"This isn't an excuse to copy code; it's simply getting help from people who know what they're doing."

Mary DeCamp
Opinions Editor

When I think of introductory CS classes two conflicting feelings come over me. One is a feeling of relief; the other is total panic. The relief stems from the fact that I have been through the bowels of CS hell, have lived to tell about it and never have to go through it again. The panic is a little harder to explain, but I'm going to try to explain it in the next 800 words or so.

First, I have to make two statements that I think most students will agree with. The first is that intro CS classes are hard. The second is that, since it is a requirement for everyone, most students who take Intro to Computing (1321) are not coding geniuses and have a moderately to extremely difficult time in the class on one level or another (I never took 1322, so I can't really comment on what that class is like in terms of stress, but from what I hear it's pretty much the same and often worse). So, was I surprised when I heard that the CheatFinder caught 187 potential cheaters in CS 1321 and 1322? Yes and no.

It surprised me because, to my knowledge, the number of potential cheaters caught by the CheatFinder in those two classes has never been that high before, and for it to jump to almost 200 students in one semester was kind of a shock. On the other hand, I wasn't surprised at the number because I think it is actually a lot smaller than the true number of students who get some sort of unauthorized help with their work in those classes.

I think that most people would agree that directly copying something that someone else created and then trying to pass it off as your own work would fall under the category of cheating. That is blatantly wrong, and if any of the accused students actually did directly copy the code that someone else created then they should be punished for violating the honor code. I would be very surprised, however, if all 187 students who have been accused of violating the honor code really did directly and knowingly copy code that someone else created.

But is getting help from someone other than your CS professor or TA cheating? That's the message they send when you take the classes. In 1321, an entire day at the beginning of the semester is spent lecturing on the evils of cheating and the horrible things that will happen if you turn in work that has not totally come from your own brain. You hear about the CheatFinder and how, if it catches you, you won't find out until it's too late. You walk around afraid to even mention the words 'computer science' to anyone.

Then as the semester goes on and the work gets more difficult and your average gets lower the panic starts; you often end up having nowhere to turn at the end of the day but to your hall mates and friends for support and advice. This isn't an excuse to copy code; it's simply getting help from people who know what they're doing. The CS department makes students feel that this is wrong (and I don't believe it is); all the while the professors continue to make problems harder and put more stress on students who are only trying to keep their heads above water.

I think that classes should be stimulating, but if a class is stimulating to the point of panic and stress students should be able to converse with one another about it without feeling like they are committing a mortal sin. They should not be punished for trying to get a better grasp of the material by asking their roommate a question.

I took the Intro to Computing class my very first semester here in the fall of 1999. At the time the course number was 1301, but that number didn't last too long. Looking back I would have to say that it was a mistake to take that class my first semester in college. Along with trying to adjust to a whole new way of life, I was taking a class that taught material I was totally unfamiliar with and that, in many respects, was almost impossible for me to ever totally grasp in time for the quizzes.

Anyway, I put a lot of time and effort into the Intro to Computing class (often forcing me to neglect the four other classes I was taking), but it really didn't matter. The assignments and quizzes were so tedious and involved that I rarely completely understood the complexities of many of the problems. My professor and TA were, of course, willing to help, but they couldn't be around all of the time. If I hadn't made friends with people who knew what they were doing and gotten their help on some of the problems, I don't think that I would have been able to get through the class.

I don't personally know any of those students charged with cheating. I don't know their individual stories; I am not trying to make excuses for them or point fingers at them. All I am saying is that, drawing from my own personal experience and the experiences of other people that I know, these classes are difficult, even for CS majors. Classes should be challenging, and students should really try to figure out problems on their own. But for many students in these classes the answers just never come, and they have to reach out for assistance.

The CS professors are there to help and are good at what they do, but they can't realistically sit down with every student that they teach for hours every week. The TA's for the classes work hard to help students, too, but they have other things to worry about as well. I have no doubt they do the best they can, but it gets to the point where students often have nowhere to turn but to each other for help and support. They should be allowed to do so without losing sleep at night wondering whether or not their innocent collaborations with other students to get a better grasp of the material and do better in the class will get them accused of violating the honor code.

Atlanta a city with many flaws, not worth living in

"In the long run you really don't notice the mucus in your nose freezing while you walk outside."

Derek Haynes
Sports Editor

Dear Sir,

I hear you are thinking of moving to Atlanta because of a job opportunity but are a little scared. You've read the new James Howard Kunstler tale "The City in Mind" in which Kunstler bends Atlanta over the principal's desk and paddles her more times than a 1950s elementary school principal does for an entire year.

Let me highlight a passage for you:

…this was Atlanta every day nowadays: one big-ass parking lot under a toxic pall from Hartsfield clear up to the brand new completely absurd Mall of Georgia (which we will get to presently). In fact, the whole city—if that's what you could call this giant hairball of a thirteen-county demolition derby—had come under the most intense pressure to quit doing what it was doing and being what it had become.

I'm sorry, but Kunstler is correct. Like you, I was raised in an idyllic northern city where you could hold your breath while you went through the downtown area. Like you, I've played tag in corn fields, chased chickens and worn a snowsuit to school. Let me tell you the reasons why Atlanta is not the place for you.

First, lets talk about the weather.

Did you know there was more snow down here when I came back after the break than there was back home? Of course, this didn't last too long because the temperature climbed and the sun shone the next day, but the weather here really isn't that much different from home. Of course, the sun is out most of the day and the temperature is usually 15 degrees warmer, but in the long run you really don't notice the mucus in your nose freezing while you walk outside.

Second, lets talk about the cost of living. Some friends and I went looking for a house to rent for the summer and found a 3-bedroom ranch home with an Escort-sized backyard on sale for 300,000 dollars. Where we're from, we'd have a Corvettee in the garage and Jessica Simpson sitting in the passenger seat for that price.

I know, down here I can go to the grocery store from the house in three minutes, rent a video in two minutes, stop for pizza in six minutes, and go to a Braves game and the mall in 15 minutes, but I think we both like the privacy that comes from being ten minutes away from our nearest neighbor.

Third, Atlanta and urban sprawl go together like cheating and computer science. I have never seen a city that has a haphazard skyline like Atlanta. There simply is no flow. What you really have is a bunch of cities within a city instead of a seamless unit.

If you end up not taking my advice and head down south, remember these mini-cities: Buckhead, Briarcliff-Lavista, Sandy Springs, Virgina-Highlands and West End. Some say it creates diversity, some say it is interesting traveling from one area to the next, I say that it is simply confusing.

Fourth, lets talk about what it is like to be dependent on a car. Have you ever thought of walking the hour journey to the grocery store up there? How about walking to the town athletic center in under 3 hours? Kiss all that walking goodbye down here! For some reason, automobiles have really caught on in the foothills of the Appalachian mountain chain.

Fifth, let me tell you about attractions outside of the city. None. If you get scared of the stars after spending your nights without them in Atlanta, you won't want to take the hour and a half drive to North Georgia. There, you'll see gorgeous mountains, waterfalls, white water rapids and a huge gorge. In North and South Carolina you'll see more of the same. Up north, we like it flat. Flat is simple.

Sixth, let me tell you about diversity. It is something we aren't used to in our small town up there; my high school graduating class was as white as a six-inch snow. Here, you'll be in for a shock. You'll see Asians, Blacks, Indians, Mexicans and more.

It shouldn't surprise you that if you come down I-75 and visit Atlanta that you'll see these people out in groups together. There are all kinds of restaurants serving different types of ethnic foods, foods that I have to order by number or with my index finger because I can't pronounce the name. It is frustrating.

Seventh, let me tell you about events. It seems like Atlantans are always getting themselves into something. Like you, the county fair is enough for me, but here they want the Super Bowl, the Men's Final Four, the Women's Final Four, the Peach Bowl, the SEC Football Championship and a plethora of concerts and fairs.

I can guarantee you that the first time I get the chance to get out of Atlanta, I will. I've just got a good job right now; maybe I can get transferred though. Plus, after work I'm always doing something in the city, so I really haven't had time to research new jobs.

Stay away.

TECHNIQUE

"The South's Liveliest College Newspaper"
Established in 1911

Editor-in-Chief
Matthew Bryan

• • •

News
Jody Shaw, Editor
Tony Kluemper, Assistant Editor
Daniel Amick, Eleanor Baccay

Opinions
Mary DeCamp, Editor
Matt Norris

Focus
Jennifer Hinkel, Editor
Kimberly Rieck

Entertainment
Andrew Santelli, Editor
Bryan Basamanowicz, Jon Kaye, Alyson Laura, Ananya Paul, Kimberly Rieck, Chris Webb

Sports
Derek Haynes, Editor
Derick Stanger, Assistant Editor
Al Przygocki, Kimberly Rieck

Production
Jamie Schulz, Advertising Mgr.

Copy Editing
Jennifer Schur, Benjamin Small, Tiffany Vliek

Photography
Daniel Uhlig, Editor
Wade Burch, Darkroom Mgr.
Ian Clark, Assistant Editor
Scott Meuleners, Assistant Editor
Danielle Bradley, Rob Hill, Kimberly Hinckley, Peter Jensen, John Jewell, Scott King, Zachary Kraus, Marques McMillan, Brian Oxford, Andrew Saulters, Matthias Shapiro, Clinton Smith, June Zhang

Online
Matt Flagg, Editor
Martin Wiggins, Assistant Editor

Managing Editor
Jennifer LaHatte

• • •

Board of Student Publications
Dr. Carole E. Moore, Chair
RoseMary Wells, Publications Mgr.
Billiee Pendleton-Parker, Adviser

Advertising and Accounting
Nancy Bowen, Business Mgr.
Marcus Kwok, Accounts Mgr.
Donna Sammander, Advertising Mgr.

• • •

Advertising Information
Information and rate cards can be found on our World Wide Web site at **http://cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/technique/**. The deadline for reserving ad space and submitting ad copy is noon on Friday, one week prior to publication. There are no exceptions to this policy. For rate information, call our offices at (404) 894-2830, Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Advertising space cannot be reserved over the phone. The *Technique* office is located in room 137 of the Student Services Building, 353 Ferst Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30332-0290. Questions regarding advertising billing should be directed to Marcus Kwok at (404) 894-9187, or RoseMary Wells at (404) 894-2830.

Letter Submission Policy
The *Technique* welcomes all letters to the editor and will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Letters should be hand-delivered, mailed to Georgia Tech Campus Mail Code 0290, or e-mailed to **editor@technique.gatech.edu**. Letters should be addressed to Matthew Bryan, Editor. All letters must be signed and must include a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 350 words and should be submitted by 8 a.m. Wednesday in order to be printed in the following Friday's issue. Any letters not meeting these criteria or not considered by the Editorial Board of the *Technique* to be of valid intent will not be printed. Editors reserves the right to edit for style, content, and length. Only one submission per person will be printed each term.

Contacting Us
editor@technique.gatech.edu
news@technique.gatech.edu
opinions@technique.gatech.edu

Online
http://cyberbuzz.gatech.edu/technique/

Techs and the City: Forget McDonaldization. Now, it's Atlantafication.

By Jennifer Hinkel
Focus Editor

"...Economic futures determine whether or not we will have paying jobs and places to spend our money."

Jennifer Hinkel
Focus Editor

I hadn't heard about "McDonaldization" until my sister began discoursing on the evils of over-efficiency and simplifying people's jobs. She used it to refer to the way America is growing less refined and more automated at the same time.

In McDonaldization, the world becomes one big fast food restaurant. The jobs require less skill; the people demand fewer services. Life loses its urbane qualities and becomes a boring cookie-cutter existence.

Well, maybe the world hasn't gone that far. But globalization is afoot, and whether we see it in an America that is becoming McDonaldized or foreign countries that are rebelling against the tide of American culture, the end result is homogeneity, no matter how much better we may think the American culture is.

And now, to make my own verb, I think the problem might be even worse. Forget the McDonaldization of America. Now, the planet is being Atlantafied.

That's right. Atlantafied. (And you thought Atlanta was just a noun!) If modern English can McDonaldize and weaponize, I will gladly Atlantafy.

Atlanta could easily be the birthplace of agessive globalization. Coca-Cola makes Atlanta its home, and you can now get Coke in 200 countries. More countries have Coke machines than are members of the United Nations. We also have a handful of the AOL–Time Warner companies, such as Turner and CNN, which spew information instantly across the globe from their Atlantan headquarters.

Atlanta is low on four-star restaurants and high on traffic, smog and Starbucks. We also can claim rights as the birthplace of Waffle House and Longhorn Steakhouse, two fine establishments that I'm sure will soon follow McDonald's around the globe.

The problems with McDonaldization are simplification, dumbing down and elimination of the finer things in life. When jobs require less skills, people can be paid less to do them.

The problems (and benefits) of Atlantafication would be endless urban sprawl, cell-phone overload and a Coke fountain in every home. People world-wide would trade fine dining for Waffle House, prefer Wal-Mart shopping to the mall, and spend hours looking for a parking space. Not surprisingly, quite a bit of America is headed in this direction.

Globalization, or McDonaldization or Atlantafication might all sound as silly as Georgia Techification. You could argue that they are just by-products of modern living, technological advances, or improvements in transportation and communication. But such forces are so prevalent that you can see their socioeconomic impacts on the front page of national newspapers and on the eleven o'clock news.

Just this week, KMart filed Chapter 11 because Wal-Mart offers more efficiency, more products and more choices. The original one-stop-super-shop began replacing mom and pop stores years ago, and now the superstores are replacing each other. This example highlights only one instance of where America is heading. Will the global economy follow?

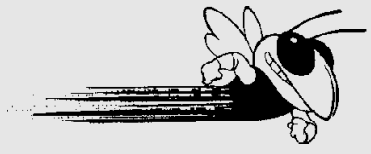
We need to be aware of these trends because they determine economic futures, and economic futures determine whether or not we will have paying jobs and places to spend our money. Big corporations can do things efficiently, but at what cost? In the same way that McDonald's sacrifices quality and service to let people eat out quickly and cheaply, are we looking forward to a future of Engineer-Marts where the bottom line takes over for quality and integrity?

The other threat of McDonaldization is the creation of boredom. Standardization really just makes everything the same. People feel comfortable in fast food restaurants because they look the same in Lima, Peru as they do in Peoria, Illinois. The same McFoods are served, and people ask "Do you want fries with that?" in a different language, or a different accent, but the question remains unchanged.

Over-standardization threatens us because it decreases the value of our creativity and innovation. McDonaldization shoves us towards a world where not only change, but sensory diversity is scary.

As much as I love Atlanta, I wouldn't want every city to look just like it. London and Paris have their own charms, good public transportation and interesting restaurants. We shouldn't be too quick to smile upon McDonaldization.

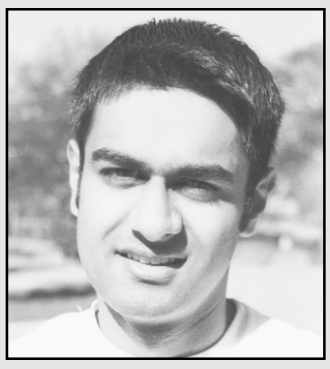
Buzz Around the Campus



Question of the week

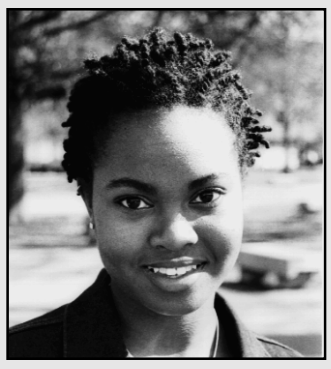
"What do you think of so many people charged with cheating?"

Feature and photos by Andrew Saulters



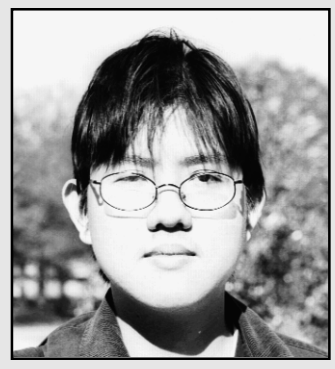
Divesh Patel
ME Sophomore

"I think it's wrong, but everybody does it. They should be punished."



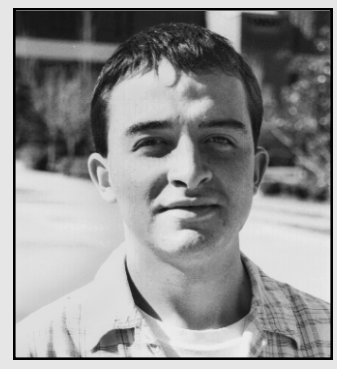
Michelle Grant
Psych Freshman

"Most kids don't believe anti-cheating software exists. Now they know."



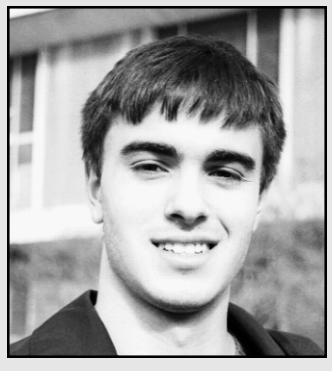
Chalit Sunthudkarn
CE Grad

"The grade is not everything. The most important thing is your skill."



Alejandro Toriello
IE Junior

"It's like a student mafia."

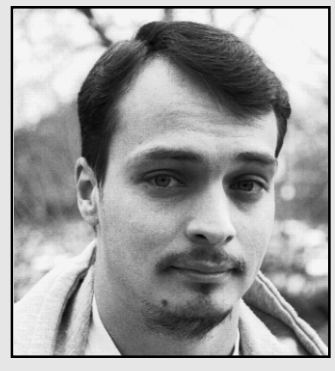


Adam Hudson
EE Freshman

"I'd rather fail on my own than take the risk of getting caught cheating."

Cathy Richeson
IE Sophomore

"I think the policy [involving anti-cheating software] should be reassessed."



David Sanford
ME Junior

"I think it's bad that percentage of people are lacking in integrity."

Valeri Pyne
CS Junior

"I guess it's about time. My semester [in CS] there were a lot of cheating students."