Our Views

Consensus Opinion

House stumbles

The Student Government Association (SGA) voted on proposed changes to the policy that governs how the mandatory student fee is allocated this week. The changes, including a name change from Joint Finance Committee (JFC) policy to Student Activity Fee Allocation policy, were proposed to promote equity in the allocation process. The new policy gives more weight to the JFC by requiring a two-thirds vote to pass a bill if it is not amended per JFC recommendations rather than a “regular majority” vote to pass a bill. This requirement is a fair way to make sure that SGA policies and procedures are only overruled for clear and necessary exceptions.

However, the Undergraduate House of Representatives (UHR) and Graduate Student Senate (GSS) passed different versions of the bill. GSS made a few minor changes to the original policy. However, UHR seems to have missed the mark by removing two full articles. UHR’s version scraps a new appeals process for bills that are not approved and also removes the two-thirds requirement if JFC recommendations are not made—essentially reverting to the previous policy.

Members of UHR said that the amendments were necessary to ensure separation of powers. However, the changes simply put the task of ensuring that bills are meeting SGA policies in the hands of the JFC before they are brought before both governing bodies. All bills will still be voted on by both houses, only with stricter requirements if a bill requests funding above set policies.

The JFC is composed of people appointed as experts on allocation policy and both houses confirm each member. The UHR should trust the members of the JFC, which has equal representation from both UHR and GSS, to do their jobs. Following JFC policy except in rare, valid cases will help prevent groups from claiming that SGA disperses money in a biased manner. Thus, implementing and following the new policy will help protect SGA by making it more difficult to overrule policy.

A conference committee composed of members from both houses will revise the policy this week and a new version will be presented. Hopefully the wisdom of the graduates will prevail in the new version and the two articles removed by UHR will be reinstated. It would be prudent for both UHR and GSS to pass the new policy sooner rather than later, as any additional delay only prevents student organizations’ bills from being funded. If both houses work together to agree on a fair, clear policy, organizations’ bills can realistically meet JFC recommendations before they come before UHR and GSS.

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

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Atlanta needs better transportation

There's a story on the front page of this paper about the Georgia Brain Train Group. How do I know? I wrote it. If you haven't read it, I suggest you go back and do so before continuing to read this rant of mine. My issue is not with the Georgia Brain Train Group, even though I have heard mixed reviews from some of the students I have talked to about it. My issue is with the fact that this project has taken so long to get off the ground and that it still has to gain support in the various levels of government to receive funding.

Atlanta is a city that is completely dominated by the automobile. A person cannot get from one point to another in the city without the use of a car. The city is too spread out and the mass transit system is nearly non-existent. True, MARTA exists, but MARTA is unreliable at best, is too expensive and does a poor job of connecting the city.

Not only that, but the city is resistant to expand MARTA to meet the needs of the citizens, since the company had corruption issues in the 1980's and 70's. However, Atlanta needs a reliable mass transit system that will ease road congestion and provide a connection among the various neighborhoods in the city.

The Brain Train is a good first step, or rather second step, since the Beltline will be completed before the Brain Train. The Brain Train will provide more connectivity to the areas nearer to the Downtown/ Midtown area. This project is a way to start connecting the suburbs to the city by a means other than a highway, an idea that the white-dominated suburbs have opposed for many years.

Instead of focusing on the good that a mass transit system will bring, they focus on the bad, mainly the possibility that poor people from the inner city will ride out to their perfect little worlds of strip malls, cul-de-sacs and every other form of parasitic urban sprawl that would drive any city planner insane.

People keep saying that Atlanta is progressing and becoming a premier city in the country. True, at the 10-year anniversary of the Olympic Games in Atlanta, it is evident that the city has made leaps of improvement over its former self. New development is cropping up all over the Downtown/Midtown area. Two prime examples are Atlantic Station and Midtown West. These two new developments have drastically improved the area surrounding Tech campus.

However, neither of these new areas have seen improvements to the mass transit system. Atlanta’s roads are in bad shape. The city needs more connectivity, not just between the suburbs and downtown, but also in an east-west direction more so than the single line that currently exists.

These two new projects, the Beltline and the Brain Train, should have some connectivity between each other. The Brain Train will only interact with other rail lines at Five Points Station, where it links with MARTA and Amtrak.

A person shouldn’t have to go to Five Points in order to get to another point in the city. A person should, for example, be able to go from Little Five Points or Virginia Highlands to Buckhead via mass transit without having to make a layover downtown.

To become a premier city in the nation, let alone the world, Atlanta needs to develop its mass transit system. The proposed Brain Train will cost $400 million, which is dirt cheap for the size of the project.

The universities in Atlanta should really come together for this initiative and let the state and federal governments know that this rail system is something that we want and something that would greatly benefit not only the universities involved, but the city as a whole.
In the past three weeks, I have been to two of the biggest college football games in the nation. The first was when Tech played Notre Dame, and the other was this past weekend when I saw the Florida Gators take on the Tennessee Volunteers. After these two weekends, I have determined one thing: college football is amazing.

I don’t want to knock the NFL, but they have nothing on college football. It has a following like no other. After being in Knoxville this past weekend, it was never more evident to me. The whole city shuts down and supports the team. The grocery store was even selling real alligator meat for fans to grill out. I don’t even think you’re allowed to kill gators, but they did. You rarely see that kind of devotion to an NFL team.

Our campus alone had more people on it than ever before when we took on the Irish. I’m not a扩大 exciting game of football, but that got me excited. Seeing College Gameday, the fans for both schools and even fans from schools around the country was enough for me to recognize the supremacy of college football. People travel halfway around the country just to watch a college football game. No matter which team is playing or how far away the game is, there are always fans from that school to support their team. The NFL has trouble even selling out the stands, but college football has no problem. Nebraska, for example, has sold out every home game since 1962. To hold those massive amounts of people, the universities keep renovating and expanding.

Texas just constructed the largest HD TV in the world inside their stadium just so people could watch the game they were already attending. Tech expanded as recently as 2003 to boost their capacity up to 55,000. The four biggest football stadiums in the nation belong to college teams. All this for a sport where the players don’t even get paid.

But why do people love college football? I don’t know all the reasons, but the key is passion. The players seem to give a little more effort. They seem to care a little more when they win or lose. And they don’t have multi-million dollar contracts. They are playing because they enjoy it.

The fans also show a great amount of passion. People go to the greatest lengths just to get tickets and cheer on their team. They alter their lives and do the most mind-boggling things in the name of football.

I know of at least four occasions where wedding dates were altered because there was a game that Saturday. There are countless ‘Peytons’ running around Tennessee named after the Volunteer quarterback Peyton Manning.

Students, however, contribute the largest amount of dedication and passion. We are right in the middle of the action, even through sometimes we don’t realize it. The students do contribute a majority of the support on game day though. We paint ourselves, stand and cheer all game and sing along to every song played by the marching band. If it weren’t for the students, college football would lose its appeal.

Another possible reason the sport seems so magical is that it feels so personable. The guys we watch are in their twen
ties. We are cheering on fellow students who go through the same thing other students do every day. You could go watch one of the top receivers in the nation catch two touchdowns on Saturday and then see him in class on Monday.

These players aren’t superhuman, but they carry more than just a win or a loss on their shoulders. They show their excitement, thrills and hopes.

Whether or not you like football or college football is worth cheering for. It has more passion, better games and an all around better atmosphere than any NFL team can boast.

If you don’t attend the games, you really are missing out on something special. Take advantage while you are still here. When you are an alumni, you will beg to be in that student section just one last time.

So enjoy it while it lasts. Go to so many games you truly know the playbook, get caught tearing down a goal post and cheer for the undergrad. That’s what makes college football so special.
Wal-Mart shoppers must accept bad with good

A recent press release noted that Wal-Mart is replacing 92 percent of its workforce with low-cost, imported robots with creepy, smiley faces for heads. Furthermore, it will be considering only elderly people who are already deceased for the human position of greeter, citing that they will neither complain nor need any sort of health insurance like the barely alive staff the company currently employs at the front door. Of course, none of that is actually true, but it is an accurate representation of the Evil Empire of Wal-Mart, right? And I’m supposed to be distracted about the Colossal Corporation coming to Howell Mill, aren’t I? Well, honestly, I just can’t quite decide whether this Wal-Mart thing is good or bad—I’m on the proverbial fence.

I’m part of a generation that has never truly relied on the mom-and-pop stores run by the “little man.” It’s tough to imagine having to go to different specialty stores to pick up the 20 items I can get from a big box retailer like Wal-Mart or Target.

But I think that if I don’t pay taxes foringular children to get state healthcare to keep my cell phone bill lower, I sure should not be subsidizing Wal-Mart to give them everyday lower prices.

Even Wal-Mart spokesperson Mona Williams admitted in the Los Angeles Times, “If you are the sole provider for your family and do not have the time or the skills to move up the ladder, them maybe [Wal-Mart]’s not the right place for you.” If Wal-Mart can even consistently provide employees healthcare benefits for their kids, I figured it must be the case that they skimp when it comes to giving back to the community, pay ridiculously low wages and have such a poor reputation that no one would want to work for them. However, it turns out that they don’t cut every corner.

According to wal-mart.com, last year, “Wal-Mart contributed and raised a total grand of $9,367,363 [for the community] as a result of its presence in Georgia.” That’s nearly enough to redistribute the 10 million bucks consumers shelled out to subsidize the company’s health insurance plan.

Even more surprising, the average salary of a regular, full-time associate in Georgia is $10,33—twice the minimum wage and certainly a few bucks more than your local fast food restaurant. And they certainly don’t have to pay that kind of cash because there are no applicants; according to chicagobusiness.com, Wal-Mart received 25,000 applications for the 325 positions available in its Evergreen Park Store that opened in January in Chicago.

Wal-Mart’s tricky like that; every time you think there’s every reason to hate them, there seem to be just as many to like them. At the end of the day, it’s still a fight between the poor college student in me that wants cheap goods and the socially conscious side of me that thinks the world could do without one more Wal-Mart.

Either way, I’ll probably have to go check out the new Wal-Mart down the street.

How did people ever have the time to do that? I probably would have liked the days of the “little man,” but I can’t bring myself to say that I never knew.

In fact, I can appreciate a lot about the economics of Wal-Mart—between its streamlined supply chain that cuts unnecessary middlemen and the use of its power in the market to get products to consumers at a low cost, there’s a lot to like. However, one thing I cannot appreciate is the fact that they cut some of their costs by simply passing them on to taxpayers.

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A study in a New York Times story in November 2004 notes that in the state of Georgia, 10,000 children of Wal-Mart employees were in the state’s healthcare program; this amounted to a cost to taxpayers of $10 million a year to keep Georgia’s 119 Wal-Marts open.

That’s a lot of money. Ten million dollars would have paid in-state tuition and fees for 3,060 students at Tech this year.

Don’t get me wrong, I think that all children should have healthcare. I even think they should be required to have annual physicals that are paid for by the government—that sort of preventative healthcare would be invaluable, but that’s another story.

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