OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, February 9, 2007

OUR VIEWS

Consensus Opinion

Income matters

For some time, the Tech community has been aware of the Athletic Association (AA)’s dire financial situation. The AA has been accruing debt at the tune of $3 million a year, and Director of Athletics Dan Radakovich has started to take steps to remedy the situation. Starting next year, season ticket holders will have to make a donation to the Tech Fund under the AA. Just as the flat fee increase was the better solution for the mandatory student athletic fee, this choice is better for season ticket holders than a flat ticket price increase would be, as the donation is tax-deductible.

While this decision may upset season ticket holders, it will be good for Tech in the long run as it helps keep the AA financially afloat. Currently, long-term donors keep prime season ticket seats without further donations, and it is difficult for the AA to get additional income through them. This way, the AA will have a constant source of annual income. At the same time, the AA should be careful to not alienate the alumni fan-base, as it may keep them from purchasing season tickets in the future.

After all, there is a fine line between maintaining financial stability and keeping fans happy. While the student fans may not be happy with their recent fee increase, at least this move will leave them feeling reassured that the students are not the only fans the AA is asking for money. The AA is sending a clear message that raising the student fee was not a quick fix but rather part of a larger, long-term solution.

Increasing costs for alumni and student fans is not the only solution the AA is investigating, however. They have brought up the possibility of finding a new sponsor for the Alexander Memorial Coliseum. Retaining the Coliseum’s name as a tribute to the great coach of the 1920s to ’40s is important. Still, the AA needs the money badly enough to seriously consider adding a new sponsor’s name to the Coliseum. If the AA could find such a sponsor, they would have to donate much more than the previous $5.5 million McDonalds donated over 10 years, because the AA is obviously desperate to add a new sponsor’s name to the Coliseum.

Grade skipping has drawbacks

Public education is a bureaucracy known for its red tape. Between entrance requirements, student records, standardized testing, curriculum guidelines, assessment standards and much more, today’s public education policies seem to be built on a foundation of paper—and lots of it. That is why it was so surprising to find out Georgia’s third largest school system, Dekalb County, has just started to flush out procedures for students to skip a grade—or accelerate, as educators call it.

Not that Dekalb has not allowed students to accelerate in the past; it was just a difficult process that had to be parents initiated. Dekalb should be commended for fleshing out a grade skipping policy that is fair across all of its schools, but they and other educators need to consider whether they are advocating acceleration because it is the best thing for bright students or because it is the easiest, cheapest option for school administrators.

Currently Georgia education policy is governed by the national “No Child Left Behind Act,” (a policy that has certainly added to that paperwork nightmare), which requires school systems to develop standards for core subjects and to test how well students meet these standards. Public schools have gone to great lengths because of this law to improve the services they offer to at-risk and low-performing students, but in return services to high-achieving and gifted students are sometimes lost. To be fair, with a limited budget it is hard to justify funding a robotics team over a tutoring program for students who can’t read. Still, should schools allocate more or different resources to gifted students than they currently provide?

Proponents of gifted education argue that although it is important for no child to be left behind, reaching the needs of the top students is just as important. Of the 1,553,437 students enrolled in grades K-12 in the state of Georgia for the 2005 school year, almost 1 percent were enrolled in some type of gifted education. However, of the $34,365,970,000 dollars allocated for education in Georgia that same year, less than one percent went toward gifted education. Like grade skipping, not all gifted services have to cost a lot of money, but some options certainly do.

According to the Georgia Department of Education, the type of programs that are provided to meet the needs of gifted students in Georgia range from completely separate schools to pullout enrichment activities for as little as an hour a week. Obviously, a separate school going to be expensive, but even enrichment programs, which help foster creativity, are expensive compared to just moving a student forward in school. At the high school levels, most other gifted education programs are dropped completely by the eleventh grade with Advanced Placement (AP) courses or college courses being the only services offered, both of which are examples of single subject acceleration.

AP classes are a great option, but they do not meet all the needs of gifted students. Single subject acceleration does recognize that a student may be advanced in one or several subject areas, but not all. Dekalb administrators should remember that being gifted doesn’t mean being gifted at everything as they put the finishing touches on grade skipping policies. Because grade skipping is cheap (all the school has to do is move the student up to the next set of teachers), it could be easy for money- and time-crunching educators to push acceleration as the method to help gifted students, even though it may not be the best option to provide them academic challenge and continuous progress in their talent area, as well as foster creativity.

The reason I am concerned about Dekalb and other school systems standardizing grade skipping is not that the policy itself is bad but that the policy might be overused. Georgia currently has a few gifted education services programs. Rankings to identify gifted students and provide educational services for them are required in 24 states; however only six states, including Georgia, fully fund gifted programming at the state level.

This state has had a gifted education program since 1958 and defines “gifted” based on multiple criteria besides achievement on intelligence tests, as has historically been the case in the United States. Though things seem to be improving, the state is still near or at the bottom for most education rankings. It would be a shame to progress quickly and broadly with grade skipping programs that may jeopardize one of the few areas of education where we are recognized as the cream of the crop.

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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Quote of the week:

“Have patience awhile; slanderers are not long-lived. Truth is the child of time; erelong she will appear to vindicate thee.”

—Immanuel Kant
Joy of joys, I realize that that pink, red and white day is fast approaching—Valentine’s Day, which annually manages to inspire more anxiety, plotting and division around the country than the average political campaign does.

Those without significant others either dread around scheduling dates with the hopes of an unacceptably now-suddenly-interesting guy or girl or stage solitary sit-ins and strikes with friends in varying shades of despondent prayer and self-pity. The devil-may-care bravado. Even those with significant others are not without their own share of worries.

The purported day of romance has the dismayingly side effect of bringing up uncomfortable questions a couple may not be ready for, all of which revolve around that plain little four-letter word: love.

Are we in love? Do I have to say it? What if I am and he or she is not? What if I don’t know how I feel yet? What is he or she expecting?

And of course, the ever-popular "crap, what is this going to cost me?" When hearts are on the line, the cost could be far more than the price of roses and chocolate.

All of this interpersonal stress and conflict is a far cry from the original intent of Valentine’s Day, which has its beginnings in both Roman and Catholic traditions. This day’s direct historical connection is to a mysterious patron saint named Valentine or Valentinus, who, according to one story, was a priest during the third century in Rome. Legend goes that Emperor Claudius II outlawed marriage for young men, believing that single men would make better soldiers than wedded men. Acting against the injustice of this decree, Valentine performed marriages for young lovers in secret. He was discovered and put to death, reportedly on the day Feb. 14.

The Catholic Church later canonized Valentine to saint-hood for his heroism and commemorated a feast day in his name. Somehow, this evolved into the circus of pastel candy hearts entangled with sugary terms of endearment and all the inescapable worry and/or bitterness associated with that.

Maybe it is time to put away whatever sniping and griping we may have about Valentine’s Day and remember why we celebrate it in the first place, most notably by following St. Valentine’s example. Valentine lived a life of love, putting himself on the line and making the ultimate sacrifice for the good of others.

His love did not take the form of heart-shaped balloons or generic messages such as “Be mine” but embodied the true spirit of love that Valentine’s Day is meant to celebrate.—selfless love that is practiced through service instead of whispered in thoughtless sweet nothings.

The world could probably use more of this spirit of love instead of the narrow, rancorous ones. I don’t have a date or he/she didn’t take me someplace nice.

Let’s not forget we live in a world that doesn’t think and act in the ways of the Middle Ages, where the concept of love and passion was an abstract, spiritual ideal. If my unborn child’s rights trump my own, who makes the medical decisions regarding my pregnancy?

It so happens that Georgia is one of about 25 states that does not have a licensing system in place for direct entry midwives (these midwives attend home births).

There is currently a bill floating around in the Georgia legislature addressing this, and during the committee meetings, I listened to several over-zealous doctors talk about how women should be forced to birth in hospitals.

Obstetricians do not like babies to be born at home (they can’t make money if they don’t have patients). Obstetricians have more political power than midwives.

If the law makes it illegal to abort a fetus, that law is effectively mind-set. No civilized empires have outlawed marriage, but there are still grave injustices and wrongs everywhere you look.

Violence and drug-related homicides have increased due to the hurricane-devastated and increasingly neglected city of New Orleans, dubbed by the New York Times as “the nation’s per capita murder capital.”

Codes of silence reign in neighborhoods where murderers run free in the streets, taking the lives of teen-agers and youth in a relentless cycle of fear, hate and violence.

The ill-equipped police are helpless to stop. According to the Metropolitan Crime Commission, as little as 12 percent of homicide arrest end in jail sentences there.

In war-ravaged Lebanon, an estimated one million unexplored sub-munitions, or cluster bombs, left over from the summer’s conflict between Israel and Hezbollah continue to kill and maim hapless civilians who have found the innocent-looking objects in their gardens, houses, streets and orchards.

Despite restrictions requiring warring states to refrain from endangering civilians in their munitions usage (translation: people, don’t bomb innocents), at least 30 people have died and...
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giving the fetiche rights, which will effectively give obstetricians all the decision-making power during a woman’s pregnancy.

I believe it is imperative that women retain their right to control their bodies. If some women use that right to have an abortion, that is better than the alternative: taking away the rights of all other pregnant women to make their own decisions regarding their pregnancies.

Please consider the external ramifications of making abortion illegal before supporting it just because you agree that morally, fetuses should not be aborted. Mixing morals, especially those regarding personal freedoms, with the law, can be dangerous.

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Alcohol bill will not benefit all Georgians

Though I can understand the opinion of the editor not wanting Governor Perdue making decisions on his behalf (“Perdue misuses Sonny’s editorial board,” Feb. 5, 2007), I challenge that if one were to look at Senate Bill 26 in its entirety, SB26 is not in the best interest of all Georgians.

This bill only includes beer and wine sales, not all alcohol, which on any other day of the week is legal to sell. In the state of Georgia, grocery stores are only allowed to sell beer and wine, and they are not allowed to sell liquor. Most liquor stores are mom-and-pop shops that already have trouble competing with larger grocery store conglomerates.

If SB26 were to pass as is written now, it would negatively affect these independent stores. The sale of beer and wine alone would not be enough business to warrant these stores being open on Sunday. SB26 leans heavily in favor of big businesses here in Georgia.

Furthermore, regardless of Sonny’s opinion on the bill, the Legislature can override an executive veto; therefore, if SB26 manages to make its way out of both Chambers, Sonny cannot single-handedly make the decision on behalf of the citizens of Georgia, as Mr. Clarke seems to believe.

I urge the students of Tech not to take everything they read from local newspapers to heart and do some research of their own before blindly forming their opinion, especially in the case of the article written by Mr. Clarke.

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Love from page 9

In lieu of all this, I would like to commend the GTCR for their class in handling this situation. Most other student organizations would fight and be tickle and demand retribution, taking it too far.

I am sorry that such a situation has happened, and I hope that we, as a collected body of students, can make sure this is the last incident like this we will ever see.

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Technique should run terrorism advertisement

It has come to my attention that the Technique’s editorial board recently refused to print an advertisement from the Terrorism Awareness Project, a national organization dedicated to educating college students about the terrorist threats we face (http://www.terrorismawareness.org). I have reviewed the ad and concluded that it contains many important facts and allows readers to arrive at their own conclusions.

Tech students are wise enough to be able to review the information included in the ad and make their own judgments about its content, without the need for someone to censor any material that is viewed as objectionable by a select few.

Furthermore, the ad is very relevant as it relates to a vital issue in modern America. Violent Islamic extremists present a real threat to the American way of life, and Tech students are not immune to this threat.

The Technique’s action of censoring this ad exhibits a lack of commitment to free speech and, worse, an implicit defense of Islamic Jihad and their goals and methods. The ad is not hateful, and the only individuals that would take offense to the ad are violent extremists.

This ad presents significant information that will allow students to discuss the salient challenges of our world. I urge the Technique to reconsider its decision and allow the ad to run for the sake of free speech and open expression.

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