**Our Views**

**Consensus Opinion**

**Binding policies**

An Undergraduate House of Representatives (UHR) committee has finally finished drafting proposals to amend the UHR bylaws. Although the proposals should not have taken this long to create, the Student Government Association (SGA) is in dire need of updated bylaws; this is a step in the right direction, no matter how late it is.

The most important proposal for the student body at large is to write Joint Finance Committee (JFC) policies into the UHR bylaws. Making JFC’s policies binding would prevent UHR from arbitrarily passing and failing bills while ignoring JFC recommendations. Overriding JFC would require a two-thirds vote, which is highly preferable to a simple majority. Since the general idea of SGA’s Student Activity Fee allocations is equity and fairness to all students, it makes sense that any deviation from JFC policy, whether it be to give an organization more or less money than recommended, would require a two-thirds vote. In fact, SGA should have to follow JFC recommendations to fail bills as well so that all groups are given equity.

Having guidelines to follow written in the bylaws will make the policy a binding document and save much of the debate during the SGA meetings as to whether or not to amend the bills to comply with the policy. It is also important that it is still possible to get around JFC policy if an organization has a legitimate need.

**Exploring expansion**

While female enrollment has continued to increase at Tech over the last few years, the number of sororities on campus has remained the same. However, several national sororities are looking to redress that matter and are interested in starting new chapters at Tech, and the Collegiate Panhellenic Council (CPC) is seriously looking into the possibility of expanding.

A new sorority would be a great move for the Greek community. Sororities have to increase each of the current chapter’s membership quota significantly in a short period of time, and many members feel this prevents them from getting to know all of their sisters. Additionally, for the past two years a large number of girls who participated in rush did not receive a bid. A new sorority could help both of these problems, decreasing sorority size while at the same time enabling more girls that are interested to receive bids.

It is important that Tech attract a quality national name if they decide to expand, to uphold the standards currently held by the Greek community. We look forward to further diversification of Tech’s Greek population.

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**Language education benefits all**

"In an ideal world, every American baby would...learn an additional language when they were still preverbal."

Kristin Noell

Opinions Editor

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"Hadès reparti? Or perhaps parlez français? According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2005 Community Survey, 80.6% of the population over the age of five speaks only English. That’s bad...considering that a majority of the other 19.4% are foreign-born. Language is an important skill in an increasingly global world, and assuming that the rest of the world will speak English is just plain lazy. After all, only 4.84% of the world’s people speak English as their first language. In Europe, kids are learning foreign languages at the same time as their times tables. In fact, the European Commission has said that "upon completing initial training, everyone should be proficient in two Community foreign languages." At the lower secondary level, 75% of EU students learn English, 33% learn French and 13% learn German. An even greater percentage of schoolchildren learn English and German in the upper secondary level. So what makes American children exempt from an equivalent multi-lingual education?

According to Francois Thibaud, who runs the Language Workshop for Children in New York, children learn foreign languages best when they are preverbal. "Understanding comes long before speaking, and speaking before reading and writing," he said. "That’s the way you learn your own language."

In an ideal world, every American baby would have a bilingual language teacher or baby-sitter or perhaps access to a program like Thibaud’s in order to learn an additional language when they were still preverbal. However, this is not that ideal world, and language instruction rarely starts at that age.

I hate to say it, but the alternative for foreign language education is the public school system, which rarely offers language courses before high school, when students are (hopefully) long past the preverbal state of babbyhood. High schools usually require two years, if that, of language education to graduate, and students pursuing a college preparatory degree are the only students forced to meet this requirement. Besides, two years is hardly enough time to achieve language proficiency. Imagine my surprise to discover that President Bush, though arguably less proficient in English, launched the impressive National Security Language Initiative last year. The initiative has three main goals: to increase the number of foreign language speakers, to increase the number and resources of foreign language teachers and, most importantly, to begin instruction at an earlier age. These goals will require a lot of money from the budget, a proposed $34 million for FY 2007, and I’ll believe our government is truly supporting this agenda when I see the results.

Still, it’s a great idea, and though it may take awhile for this program to take hold, if it does it will mean a country of multilingual citizens through early language education. In the long term, it could help the government find suitable translators, health workers and to engage with foreign peoples, a skill that the Secretary of State office calls an "essential component of U.S. national security in the post-9/11 world."

There are other personal advantages for those raised with a multicultural education. Studying a language enables children to practice key skills they will use daily in the real world—speaking, listening, reading and writing. Developing these skills at a young age could be key to the future success of these young scholars, the future of our global world.

Not do the advantages stop at effective communication skills? Research shows that multilingual students may do better than their peers on standardized tests and possess superior math skills. Apparently, knowing multiple words for one object can cause the speaker to treat the object as a symbol, and language becomes mathematical. This mathematically-oriented brain seems like a great reason for engineers, computer scientists and others—not just liberal arts majors—to learn a foreign language.

That being said, it seems like American engineers, at least the ones graduating from Tech, are seriously lacking in the language department. Although Tech offers courses in eight languages—Spanish, French, German, Russian, Korean, Japanese, Chinese and Arabic—only a few I know even Allen majors require language electives in their degree requirements. Perhaps this is why the resources of Tech’s School of Modern Languages seem insufficient. Many of the teachers are part-time instructors rather than professors, indicating
Media investigates celebrities, not politics

Say it ain’t so! It sounds like Brit Brit has been dumped by her latest beau, Isaac Cohen, K-Fed would be celebrating, but he’s too busy firing up his Grammy-prospective music career.

Each time I wrap up my bi-weekly trip to Pulte, standing in line to add my frozen dinner to the checkout conveyor, innumerable tabloids scream in my direction with the latest happenings of the Hollywood universe. “Norah Jones: I Was Told to Lose Weight for Movie,” says People magazine, and “Kris Jenner and the Go-Wordrobe Change.”

Rarely do I fail to chuckle at the absurdity of the bold, capitalized text, but not because the content itself is humorous. Instead, I ponder why people lend that sort of “investigative journalism” any value.

While some people may find it fascinating that Liechtenstein was caught wearing conflicting colors while filling up her car, I can only wonder how there was no other news of greater importance. Why do people trouble themselves with the intimate details of complete strangers? Perhaps they do not consider such celebrities to be strangers; after watching Geraldo Rivera’s E! True Hollywood Story, I would probably know more about past and present than I know about my lab partner.

I would guess that this in-fatuation is not the fault of the general populace. With such a huge media machine covering the news of the rich and famous, it takes an active effort not to keep up with the latest status of Brangelina’s relationship. When Anna Nicole Smith’s death was covered in excruciating detail nonstop this past weekend, Congress could have declared war on Switzerland and we would all be none the wiser.

Sometimes I wonder if celebrities deserve the sort of treatment they get from the press. Most actors and musicians make an active decision to enter a world that has no secrets. They must know to expect a bit of stalking and candid photography once they reach a certain level of fame. It seems that the most extensively covered celebrities actively pursue their place in the news, either by bringing attention to themselves or by associating with other people who do. In that case, they must realize that there is no off/on switch within the press.

I’d add that not all celebrity news is worthless. It matters when music artists announce a tour schedule, or when a new movie trailer is released. This is information that has the potential to affect me directly, whether it means avoiding the search for concert tickets or making movie-watching plans. On the other hand, if Scarlett Johansson stars dating Justin Timberlake, does that mean I should change some aspect of my life? Should I start dressing differently to get her to notice me? Perhaps we lend more credence to this sort of news because it truly does represent some of our media’s best efforts to produce investigative journalism. While many bash the media (and “Britney Spears’ On-the-Go Fatuation is not the fault of the content itself is humorous.

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Language from page 8

The department has a shortage of professors that is being addressed with a temporary solution. On the other hand, the fact that we require so many instructors means that students are taking the classes, and that is an encouraging sign, as it can put into the recently renovated Swann as a state-of-the-art language education facility.

I took Spanish in high school, and I enjoyed it more than most of my classes. It always came fairly easily to me, and I liked it. Looking back, of course, I realize that's probably because I was taking elementary Spanish and advanced levels of everything else, but let's ignore that small detail.

I take Spanish again at Tech partially because it was a degree requirement and partially because I really wanted to be a proficient Spanish-speaker, since it's essentially the second language of the United States. However, I was sorely disappointed with the instruction I received, though my professors were not at fault.

Though I skipped the 1001 and 1002 courses, I spent the 1101 and 1102 courses reviewing material I had learned in my first year of high school. For Spanish, not until 2001 did I get into material that I learned in my third year of high school, and only at the very end of the semester did I learn anything new. Spanish was still the easy A that had expected it to be, but for all the wrong reasons.

Even if the classes remained on the same level, it would be easy to fix the repetitiveness of the classes. In each course, we used a textbook from a different line of books, which resulted in an overlap of grammar and vocabulary from year to year.

By simply standardizing the textbook used, the Spanish classes would be improved infinitely and students, already behind the rest of the world in language education, could learn so much more.

As for me, I gave up on learning a new language in school. I feel inadequate compared to those like my mother, an American-Canadian and a native Russian-speaker who are both as fluent as English as I am. I guess that's the price I pay for being American-born. Maybe someday I'll learn another language—hopefully through complete immersion—but until then, I'll keep hoping for a bilingual or multicultural education for America's children.