Village helps Tech

It seems as if Tech has finally made a move toward rectifying escalating problems with student housing that have accompanied increasing enrollment. As of July 1, Tech will be the new owner of what is now the Georgia State University Village.

After years of the Institute saying that it was not interested in the property, the four residence halls will be filled with Tech students next year as the campus expands further across North Avenue. The transfer deal is a win-win for both schools. Georgia State University has been trying to sell the property for some time and Tech’s acquisition will allow Georgia State to expand housing options closer to its campus.

The deal will also potentially free up much needed land on the interior of Tech’s campus as older dorms become no longer needed. Already Housing has announced that Perry, Matheson, Hanson, Hopkins and Field Halls will not be used after this summer and that ultimately the halls and land will be given back to the Institute.

All of this is possible because the Village, which is tentatively renamed the North Avenue Apartments (NAA), will give Housing 2,000 additional beds. Although the Institute only aims to fill half of those beds in the fall semester, the acquisition will allow for future growth in enrollment without forcing students to live off campus. The most noticeable benefit for many students in the fall will be the lack of the infamous “triples” and flex housing. Not only that, but all seniors and juniors, as well as most sophomores, will be able to live on campus apartments if they so choose, and returning students are guaranteed to be able to live with their friends. This is great news for students, and the measure will improve overall quality of student life at Tech.

Housing wisely extended the Fall 2007 application deadline so that students could request NAA, however a longer extension would have been preferable, as it would give students more time to actually hear about the new housing and evaluate their choices. Students off campus should have received an email about the change and opportunity as well as current Housing residents as some may want to return now that more apartments will be available.

This new addition will affect many aspects of campus besides Housing and there is no doubt that it will cause changes in many departments. Though the addition of NAA may pose organizational problems for the Stinger service, the Georgia Tech Police Department and other campus services, we are confident that even if the transition is bumpy that in the long run Tech students will benefit from the new housing option.

FCC settlement will revitalize radio

I have not listened to commercial radio in nearly four years. I’m not alone, either. A study released by Edison Media Research in 2006 found that radio listenership for the 18-to-24-year-old demographic has dropped nearly 21 percent in the past 10 years. The study cites the rise of portable music players and downloadable music as a large contributing factor as well as the growing competition for media consumers’ attention. However, the study failed to significantly address a reason that people of all ages have drifted away from commercial radio in the past decade—the decrease in diversity and localism of the broadcast content over the same time period.

Broadcasting has become increasingly consolidated, and most radio stations are controlled by one of a small number of broadcasting companies. As a result, a rock station in Los Angeles and a rock station in Boston will sound pretty much alike—they play the same songs by the same artists and often play the same syndicated programming. There is no local flavor, and a band could slip on a major record label, you can pretty much forget hearing them on a commercial station. This isn’t to say that there aren’t exceptions to this, but these days, consolidated content is pretty much the rule.

All hope may not be lost, though. Four major broadcasting companies have tentatively agreed to a settlement aimed at combating one of the biggest culprits in the decline of programming diversity—payola. According to the Associated Press (AP), four major broadcasting companies—Clear Channel Communications Inc., CBS Radio, Entercom Communications Corp. and Citadel Broadcasting Corp.—will agree to provide 4,800 half-hour segments of free airtime for local artists and independent record labels and pay $12.5 million to the government as part of a consent decree with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). This settlement is the result of a rare FCC response to allegations of pay-for-play promotion tactics in which independent promoters acted as intermediaries between record labels and radio stations, delivering payment in exchange for airplay or providing expensive prizes intended for listeners that would instead be distributed among station employees. The last action taken against radio stations for payola was in 2000, when the FCC fined two Clear Channel-owned stations $4,000 each.

The fines assessed against these broadcasters who violated anti-payola laws seem relatively insignificant compared to the vast amounts of revenue that they bring in each year. For example, CBS Radio, one of the four participants in the FCC settlement, had nearly $4 billion in sales in 2002, but their portion of the $12.5 million fine is only $3 million.

The fine will probably be divided among its approximately 180 radio stations in the U.S., coming to a fine of just under $77,000 for each radio station—admittedly a more significant blow than the $4,000 fines assessed for payola scandals in 2000, but still probably not enough to deter many larger stations which are often the most regular offenders in these pay-for-play operations.

On the bright side, the portion of the settlement that mandates free airtime be given to music not affiliated with one of the four major record labels (Warner, Universal, Sony BMG and EMI) is a major victory for independent labels and artists as well as listeners who long for more localism and less homogenization in their radio programming.

Although the late 1950s and early 1960s were the heyday of the original pay-for-play scandals that made payola illegal, this time period was also a heyday for relatively unknown musicians who could practically gain national popularity overnight if a single local DJ liked what they heard. With the conditions of this FCC settlement, we could easily see a revival of that radio heyday. Arguably, the internet renders any need for such a revival obsolete, or for that matter, renders radio obsolete altogether as bands can just as easily make a website and MySpace page and self-market themselves to death in the realm of cyberspace. If they get lucky, some kid with too much time on his hands will use the band’s music in the background of some lame yet insanely popular video on YouTube, making the band a million times more popular than they could have ever made themselves, if just for that one song.

However, under the terms of the FCC settlement, it could be just as likely that a DJ happens to come across a track on a band’s website.
**Freshman year makes best memories**

Remember your first semester at Tech? For those who aren’t first-years, this may be an

unplanned and chaotic the old days were.

For me, that entire year holds special place in my heart. As a first-year, I spent a lot of time studying and working on projects. I also joined a few clubs and volunteered for different events. I was excited to be on my own and exploring a new environment.

End of the reel

Even before students could get seven HBO channels on campus, GTM 21 included a lot of the best shows. Even if the broadcast quality was questionable, we still loved watching movies for free before we came out on DVD. While it is understandable that RHA can no longer afford this service, that doesn’t mean we won’t miss our grumpy GTM 21 movies.

**YOU'RE VIEWS • LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

**Professors must find better teaching methods**

One trend that I have noticed in my two plus years at Tech is that professors who do not effectively “teach” in lecture often end up complaining about low test averages and lazy, incompetent students. But when professors just interpret/discuss PowerPoint slides directly from the text, students tend to stop paying attention and attending class.

Instructors justify the use of PowerPoint by arguing that they reduce “information transfer.” While this seems logical, PowerPoint slides rarely work. For professors who insist on PowerPoint, I suggest that they use incomplete slides containing only definitions and figures and then hand write all of the concepts and analysis on the slide or board.

The most effective teachers simply use a blackboard and chalk. This definitely requires more effort by the professor and is only effective if the professor is organized. Professors who use this method inspire their students to not only take good notes but to also keep up daily. For example, my Organic I professor used PowerPoint slides and would go back to the classroom to review the material because I was oblivious to what specifically confused me.

For Organic I lecture, I would go back to my dorm and try to figure out things that confused me in class. After Hilletrude, I did not immediately go back to my dorm and study the material because I was oblivious to what specifically confused me. Eventually, I quit going to class and used the text and (Google) to avoid wasting 150 minutes weekly.

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Letters from page 7

Professors who are good know they are good, but the bad teachers are surprisingly clueless and often blame the students for being lazy. An even better indicator than surveys for professors engage whether they need to improve their teaching is class attendance. I have never had a good teacher/TA with poor class attendance. In fact, my Diff Eq TA was so good that 10-35 students from other sections (in addition to all of her students) regularly attended her recitations.

I am convinced that if professors put a little more effort into refining their teaching abilities, then they would save a lot of time/stress dealing with griping students and failing averages.

Andrew Brown
Third-year BIO
gtpi80x@mail.gatech.edu

Radio from page 6

Students can have fun while involved in politics

Many scientists and engineers I know would prefer to stay away from politics. It just seems so dirty—all those backroom deals, campaigns built around character assassination, and long debates about whether to open debate and so on. Democrats and Republicans are two intertwined cousins of the same dysfunctional family, and it has been often said: But politics has inertia like anything else—if you don’t push on it, it keeps on the same way.

The Founders’ ideals of public life included the drunken wrangling of ideas in the local pub (an ideal I'm sure many college students may enjoy) by all the citizens. If one wanted to be heard, one would have to step up and deliver a part of the debate. Setting back in the corner only bought the right to be ignored. And so it is today. There are a lot of important issues out there, many of them dealing with technology. Many of them are better answered by us than a U(sic)GA lawyer that can’t even spell derivative. How do we keep families healthy? How do we achieve all the benefits of industrial society without worrying about having to buy your first home near a toxic pit? How do we make it so you don’t have to run down to the Capitol on your own or change careers to start being heard. There are smaller steps available. Here on campus, we have had a chapter of the College Democrats for several years. You can mingle with people that have been in this bizarre world of politics before. It’s also not just about politics-like any club, we do social events, community service and the occasional public service announcement (we know at least someone used those condoms we gave out for Valentine’s Day). And yes, if you are not a Democrat (or even if you want to go hang out with those crazy CR kids), it can be worth it to join a political club. Taking on City Hall all alone is a pretty tough job. But if you are with friends, it is a lot easier. It’s even kind of fun.

Bjorn Cole
AE grad student
gtj724n@mail.gatech.edu

SGA wisely decides to delay bylaw amendments

I’ve been a member of SGA’s Undergraduate House of Representatives for the past two years. This year I’ve been a member of both the Joint Finance Committee Policy conference committee and the ad hoc UHR bylaws committee. I fully support the inclusion of JFC policy into UHR bylaws. However, I believe last week’s consensus opinion was written too hastily and did not show good faith to the majority of UHR who support adding the JFC policy into our bylaws.

Admittedly, the delayed vote on the bylaws was not ideal. Nevertheless, the postponement was dictated by political realities. UHR’s bylaws do not allow for failed bylaw amendments to be reintroduced: thus if the bill had failed the amendments could not be brought before the House again, and this would not have been in the best interests of students and student organizations. Our constitution requires that for a bylaw amendment to pass, two thirds of UHR’s membership must vote yes, not just two thirds of members present at any one meeting. There were only 32 of 44 members present Tuesday. A two thirds majority of all members is 29. This means that had a vote been taken then, three members would have veto power over the entire house. As three representatives I know of were on being failed the bill that is exactly what would have happened. Ultimately, UHR would have been unable to place JFC policy into its bylaws.

Say the Mars Society asks UHR to fund a mission to Pluto. UHR’s policy only allows us to fund space travel at $5 per light year. Under this policy we have to fund $5 for every light year it takes to get to Mars. Perhaps JFC decides that spacesuits are not vital to the mission, but the AE members of UHR convince the House that spacesuits are necessary to protect the club from Mars’ atmospheric pressure. Under this circumstance the UHR can waive the bylaws by majority vote and fund the spacesuits. Then UHR must clearly document why the reps disagreed with JFC’s recommendations. This way when “the Pluto really is a planet club” asks UHR to fund a mission to Pluto they know that they will be funded at $5 per light year. They also know spacesuits will be funded. Thus, UHR has set a precedent for subsequent JFC space travel recommendations. These policies ensure that UHR funds Mars Society and Pluto Club at the same rate regardless of which celestial bodies UHR prefers most.

Following the sound advice of Georgia Tech Legal by placing the JFC policy in the SGA bylaws will ensure that student activity fee is allocated fairly and consistently to student organizations. Following GT Legal’s advice will protect the UHR who support adding the JFC policy in the SGA bylaws. Following the sound advice of Georgia Tech Legal by placing the JFC policy in the SGA bylaws will ensure that student activity fee is allocated fairly and consistently to student organizations. Following GT Legal’s advice will protect the Institute from further lawsuits filed on behalf of a student or student organization. Following GT Legal’s advice will protect the Institute from further lawsuits filed on behalf of a student or student organization.

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And if the FCC settlement weren’t enough of a boon for independent music, a separate agreement made between record companies and radio station programmers. The combination of these two agreements is something that those in the independent music community have described as “historic” and “unprecedented.” If everyone sticks to their part of the bargain, these developments could have a very positive effect on music and radio, from the broadened exposure of good music to resurgence in radio listenership.

Heck, I might even start listening to the radio again.