OPINIONS
Technique • Friday, April 6, 2007

OUR VIEWS
CONSensus OPINION

Be happy, be healthy

The Board of Regents plans to institute mandatory health insurance for all students beginning in the fall of 2008. They will shop for a new insurance company to replace the current company, Pearce and Pearce. Currently, health insurance is only mandatory for some students, including certain graduate and international students. The move to make insurance mandatory for the entire student population will benefit Tech. Students who already have the required level of insurance will not be affected, as they are not required to buy it through the Institute; this gives students a choice, which is always good.

Often, college-aged people have no insurance, though they need it as much as any other age group. Not all students can keep insurance through their parents, and by getting insurance through the Institute they can get more affordable insurance than going out on their own. The Board of Regents shopping for the new plan with a larger pool of students at an overall lower risk since insurance is now required will provide students with more economically-friendly insurance options.

During the bidding process, the Board could keep several in mind to keep the new plan from being a headache for students, as the current plan often is. For instance, the current plan requires students to pay for their prescriptions at the Health Center and submit claims through tedious paperwork that can take weeks for reimbursement. As new bids are solicited, a company that offers a copay system instead of requiring students to pay up front would be a much better option for students.

On the other hand, students who use their parents’ insurance plans should not be penalized for their choice. The new mandatory insurance program should have an efficient way for students to provide documentation of outside coverage.

Although it initially seems like students will have to pay more because of the new policy, it will actually help students. By making insurance mandatory, the additional cost will be included in the overall cost of attendance each year, which will allow the possibility of applying financial aid or scholarships to the cost of insurance.

With mandatory insurance included in the student fees, Tech may see a marginally higher retention rate. Unexpected, unaffordable medical emergencies will no longer force students to drop out of school for lack of money. Not only that, but the policy may also play a role in relieving another recent problem in the Health Center—lack of available appointments and an influx of walk-ins. If every student has insurance, they may be more likely to choose an off-campus specialist rather than scrambling to get an appointment at the Health Center.

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Quote of the week:
"Three o’clock is always too late or too early for anything you want to do."—Jean-Paul Sartre

Tools create photographic democracy

In the world of amateur photography, images range in quality from well-exposed landscapes and well-timed action images to the worst snapshots, complete with red-eye and motion blur. We have all taken our share of each, and thanks to online sharing services like Flickr and Facebook’s photo sharing, it is easier than ever for others to view and critique our work.

Eventually we wonder how much of this variation comes from the equipment that each person uses and how much can be attributed directly to skill. At this point, most Tech students have probably owned at least one camera, and many of those have since upgraded to digital cameras at least once or twice. Some of us prefer the convenience of digital, while few stick to the nostalgia of film. No one can name a true victor in the interminable war between film and digital, but at this point the relative convenience of digital makes it the choice of the majority. Thus, the digital camera purchasing decision typically comes down to a trade off between cost and quality. With the cheapest point-and-shoots hovering around $100 and the better consumer cameras running upwards of $1000, when I admire the work of professional photographers, I cannot help but wonder how much of their product’s quality is simply the result of their photography equipment. Many of these photographers own expensive digital cameras whose costs rival Tech’s annual in-state tuition.

Pro photo equipment is often capable of very high resolution, greater sensitivity in low light, and capturing many images within a short period of time, which improves the photographer’s ability to catch action at the right moment. When you look at the photos of a professionally-photographed wedding, you are often seeing the result of these camera improvements, as well as the benefits of custom lighting and expensive lenses. So are professional photographers cheating? Are they only getting better results because they can afford more expensive cameras? Consider the opposite situation. Can a rich CEO replace his point-and-shoot with a collection of pro cameras and lenses and see a vast improvement? Likely not.

On the other hand, could a pro photographer travel to Hawaii with a point-and-shoot and achieve the results he normally achieves? Again, probably not.

Good photo equipment simply makes it easier to translate a clear photographic concept into reality; it does not help the user create those concepts. Much like an Atlanta Symphony violinist produces the best quality on a great violin, a good camera can only raise the glass ceiling of a photographer’s potential; it does not turn the second-year violin student into a virtuoso. The beginner photographer should choose a camera like the budding rock musician chooses a guitar. One’s money is wasted on a camera that offers too much power for one’s skill, even more so because digital cameras are always rapidly improving in quality and value. Once a person has improved such that he is bounded by the camera rather than skill, that is the best time to upgrade.

Okay, so we have clarified that the photographer makes the camera work, but the camera cannot make the photo.

Ethan Trehwitt
Online Editor

"...we have clarified that the photographer makes the camera work, but the camera cannot make the photo. What about post processing? This issue is a bit more controversial.

From Google’s Picasa to Adobe Photoshop, software has made it easier than ever to turn a weak photo into a piece of art. With so many built-in enhancement filters and easy adjustments, an absolute beginner can open a photo and automatically make it pop. Software has yet to reach the point where it can improve more subjective attributes like composition, and it can hardly tell you what to photograph in the first place. However, Picasa can easily turn a poorly exposed, out-of-focus, Redeye image into a decent photo.

Through these products we have given beginners the tools to repair certain mistakes that were previously only solvable through practice and acquired skill. Is this cheating yet? I am sure there are those out there who would love to keep these skills under lock and key, to be accessed only by those who have paid their dues. These are the same people who scoff at digital images, instead choosing to shoot black-and-white film processed in their own darkroom. There is certainly something to be said for the happiness of controlling your photography’s entire workflow, but it does not necessarily make you
College experience prepares students for life

So this is my own song. It came a lot sooner than I thought it would, and it means that I am about to leave campus after a five-year stay. Some people would argue that even five years is not a long time, but my father was in the military, and, while I lived in a variety of dorms and apartments during my tenure at Tech, this will constitute my longest time in one spot.

I debated for a while as to the topic of my final editorial. I thought that it might be used a summary of my message and the culmination of deeper philosophical meaning. On the other hand, I contemplated using this as a sounding board to tell off everyone who had pissed me off during the past year, and believe me, it is a long list. Based on the mood I am currently in, which for those who know me know it changes on a dime, I felt that I should impart some sort of advice to those who are coming up behind me.

When I arrived on campus in August 2002, campus was vastly different from what it is now. For starters, Yellow Jacket Park, the spot of this year’s Slam Dunk Concert, had a building sitting on it. The bookstore was located in the Student Center because Tech Square was still under construction. The CRC was the SAC and in a completely different building that was dwarfed by its successor.

The new Kraus building that was under construction for so long had not even broken ground, and the area housed the Health Center and the School of Psychology.

I say this to draw an analogy and prove a point. In the five years that I have been at Tech, campus has changed a lot, but I have also changed a lot. The knowledge and experience gained while in college is incredible when one has time to look back on it all. However, not all of that knowledge and experience was gained in the classroom. In fact, some of life’s best lessons cannot be learned in a class, but through living and making mistakes.

While I paid my way through most of my schooling, I still had my parents around for a safety net if I screwed up too badly. This is an important concept, because while it is preached that you are out in the real world in college, you are really only a part of the way into that realm.

Another life lesson is how to handle money. In many cases, the stereotype of the broke college student is true, and being that type of broke gives a person a unique perspective about money and the value of money. During my time here, I tried every possible way to make money without actually working but found out that the only thing I could do was get a job to pay the bills.

But the advice I have to give is not the best way to build up an alcohol tolerance or how to balance a checkbook. My advice to everyone is not to get so absorbed in class and graduation that you miss out on the true college experience. A person who goes to class and then simply goes straight home to do homework may have slightly better grades at the end but will have lost out on so much more.

When that person gets out into the real world, he or she will not be equipped to deal with the world and the problems it has to give. The saying is that it is not what you know but who you know is applicable here. Networking on campus is more valuable than the GPA point difference between a C and a B. More importantly, however, the ability to interact with people is a skill that is often lacking from Tech graduates, as noted by many employers.

So before you are in my position, go out and live life and have the college experience. Your time in college will pass far too quickly for your liking and if you don’t seize your opportunity, you won’t get a second chance. The real world is a daunting place that waits for no one.

Where’s George?

George P. Burdell is probably one of our favorite Tech traditions, one that sets us apart from the rest of the collegiate world. Who doesn’t love an imaginary student? Now the infamous Burdell has his own Wiki—fitting for a Tech legend. The website, www.whereisgeorgepburdell.com, is a great addition to the tradition.

Not feeling the love

The men’s tennis team has fallen on some hard times recently losing its sixth straight match to the University of Virginia April 1. However, the 7-0 loss is not quite so embarrassing considering the Cavaliers are ranked No. 2 in the nation. Hopefully, this weekend’s home matches will improve a disappointing 5-12 record.

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OPINIONS

“[L]ife’s best best lessons cannot be learned in a class, but through living and making mistakes.”

James Stephenson
News Editor

OUR VIEWS

HOT or NOT

He shoots, he scores
Tech’s own Mario West won the ACC Men’s College Slam Dunk and 3-Point Championships last week, reminding both students and Tech fans of his impressive athleticism.

Losing the lottery
As the anticipation for former Vice President Al Gore’s homecoming this weekend escalates, many students are feeling nothing but nervous about attending the event.

YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Student Break criticized unfairly

I am disappointed that the Technique would print “Spring Binge” (March 30) when there is an article in the same issue that refutes several, if not all, of the claims made by the editorial. I understand that editorial express opinions, but they should still be researched and not present misleading facts.

As Scott Bancroft, the Concert Chair, said in the article, the Student Center Programs Council (SCPC) recognized that hip-hop artists had been a headliner for several years and attempted to book a rock group. However, the committee has a responsibility to book the highest artist on the poll that they can possibly and I placed sixth in the balloting (the editorial incorrectly states that he wasn’t even on the list). The concerts committee does not vote on who they want but volunteer their time to help bring an artist that the rest of the students wish to see.

And in the past several years, the students have expressed a desire to see a hip-hop artist.

The article also fails to mention that in two of the past four years that rap artists have been a headliner, there has been a rock band headlining with them. Fuel and Bubba Sparx played together and last year, Cake and Big Boi were dual headliners. The committee has already rejected the several, smaller band approach, using four opening acts for Lu
cas, but student pressure has their disapproval by not showing up until Lucas’s play. The editorial committee should not use their disapproval for not using Yellow Jacket Park even though that is the venue for this year’s concert.

I think that the SCPC has been doing a great job bringing events to Tech’s campus and I wish the Technique would use their editorial space to praise the students for their work.

Letter Submission Policy

The Technique welcomes letters from the editor and will print letters to a timely and space available basis. Letters may be mailed to Georgia Tech Campus Mail Code 0290, mailed to editor@technique.gatech.edu, or hand-delivered to room 137 of the Student Services Building. Letters should be addressed to Amanda Dagan, Editor-in-Chief. All letters must be signed and must include a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 400 words and should be submitted by 7 p.m. Tuesday 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 for the official internet will be printed. Editor reserves the right to edit for style, content and length. Only one submission per person will be printed each term.

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Fahim Kabir
Second-year BEO

“It’s bad.”

Photos by Sam Morgan

“Al Gore is full of crap.”

Andrew Rodrigues
Third-year PUB

“No, I know that it’s true.”

Tara Esbeck
First-year BIO

“I’ll watch it if there’s nothing else on.”

Matt McGinley
Third-year AE

What are your thoughts on global warming?

Andrew Rodrigues
Third-year PUB

“Al Gore is full of crap.”

Tara Esbeck
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“I’ll watch it if there’s nothing else on.”

Matt McGinley
Third-year AE

What are your thoughts on global warming?
Freshman year needs new course to welcome students

In just a few weeks, my life as a Tech undergraduate will come to an end—hopefully at graduation. I am still avoiding the real world; law school is the next destination in my life; however, it seems like it is not possible that it has been four years since I first moved into the exceptionally unrenovated Folk Hall.

But this is not a story about an air conditioning system that was broken for the hottest months of the spring. Nor is it a tale about life with an entourage and having a single working shower that never produced hot water after 6:45 a.m. Luckily, neither of those are representative of the rest of my time here.

Tech has given me a multitude of great opportunities and as I inch closer to graduation, I cannot think of too much more I could wish for from the last few years, but as I think back to the days when I first arrived on the Flats, I really think there is a little more that could be done to get freshmen off to a quicker start. I know, this might sound crazy, but I think it could have been accomplished through a single, required class.

Before my advocacy for this newfangled, required freshman class begins, there are a couple of things I should make clear. The first is that my suggestion shares little in common with the actual implementation of GT 1000, a class that seems to have a noble goal but produces few results other than a resume from what I can tell. However, it is similar in the fact that it is another freshman seminar (although this is one that would be a regular class—one that counts for three hours of credit).

The second is that I know that putting a new, required class into the core curriculum is not an easy thing. It is not something that can be done right away, and because of the massive number of students that must be accommodated it must be a result of a vastly more intricate plan than what I am about to propose to deal with a bevy of factors from finding qualified and interested faculty to logistical matters.

Putting those things aside, I feel like there are four essential skills that every Tech student could use from the start of their career instead of trying to piece them together as they go along that could be combined in a single class.

1. Reading and researching. Yes, I know that students that enter Tech can read, for the most part. Moreover, most of us can run around the library and figure out the system of where they hide all of their books (Hint: not on the First Floor). However, most high schoolers are not exposed to academic journals or reading books that actually relate to subjects in school.

A segment of a class devoted to using databases such as JSTOR and utilizing journals and relevant books for research is a skill that is too often not acquired until late in a student’s career and is usually not picked up until a day or two before a big paper is due.

2. Writing. Research is great, but being able to look at several sources and come to independent conclusions and evaluations is another important skill Tech students need. We go to high schools where we are often taught that if it is in a textbook or an article that it has to be right. Learning to bring ideas together and write about them coherently and sometimes critically is a skill that students need to develop. Communicating ideas effectively in writing is something nearly all employers or professional schools want, and it is something that should be stressed from the start.

3. Speaking. Many of my classmates are horrified when they have to speak in public. A portion of a class devoted to public speaking—without the crunch of reading from a PowerPoint or avoiding questions from the audience—is a skill that would greatly enhance the marketability of tech graduates and go a long way toward pushing the Institute away from the stereotype of having a lot of smart kids that are somewhat awkward when speaking.

4. Resume. Everyone needs one. It is the best part of GT 1000. You need one for a job, I needed one for law school applications, it is a big deal. And it is much better to have one saved well before the night your first application must be mailed.

Free weeks of reading and researching, five weeks of writing, five more of speaking. The resume could be an ongoing final project. One teacher for all segments or a different instructor for each would work. I think the result would be a more prepared, well-rounded student.

Lessons from page 11

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Rishad Patel
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