**CONSENSUS OPINION**

**Be heard—vote**

This week, approximately 4,300 undergraduate students voted in the Student Government Association (SGA) undergraduate elections. This number is an impressive increase from last year’s voter turnout, which was 900 fewer.

The elections have resulted in the need for a runoff election for the two highest offices, president and executive vice president. Voting in the runoff elections is just as important as voting in the initial elections. In fact, it may be more important; with the pool narrowed down to only two candidates, every vote counts that much more.

Undergraduates should vote in the runoff this Monday through Wednesday. This additional election time should give students a chance to learn more about the candidates and their platforms.

Throughout the campaigning process, most of the candidates have been vocal about wanting student feedback to ensure that SGA is truly representative of the student body. However, there is no reason that students should wait until after the elections to give feedback. If students tell SGA members what they want now, it will keep SGA from having to guess later.

While preparing to vote again, students should keep some important things in mind. For instance, candidates’ platforms can often be overly idealistic and unrealistic. Candidates should not promise to walk on water, and voters should not expect them to.

Though it may seem like an obvious consideration, voters should also take candidate experience into account when voting in the runoff. For example, if a position requires running a meeting or working extensively with an executive board, a candidate with experience in a similar capacity would greatly benefit SGA. A competent SGA is a productive SGA.

To truly be productive, whoever is elected to serve next year should also remember that their responsibility is to the students, not the administration. SGA members should convey students’ opinions to the administration rather than just relaying messages from the administration to the students.

The graduate elections will also occur at the same time as the undergraduate runoff elections. Graduate students, who are generally less active in SGA than undergraduates, should also vote, especially since one of the candidates is only able to receive write-in votes. Even for uncontested positions, grad students would do well to educate themselves about their future leaders.

In any case, undergraduates and graduates alike need to let their voices be heard by voting between April 16 and 18.

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Tech boasts student body of cool nerds

It amazes me that I’ve made it this far, but here I am three weeks from graduation writing my last ever editorial for the Technique. Actually, my subject is something very familiar to those of us who work for the South’s Liveliest—nerds.

As a general rule, we all spend four or more years complaining about the workload at Tech, or the sheer pointlessness of half of our assignments or the lack of student socialization on campus. But deep down inside, we all wish for that social bubble.

You don’t believe me, do you? I can sense the raised eyebrows and shaking heads of readers as I write this. However, we all choose the path we’ve taken. We spent our younger years studying more than our peers or making those bad grades to capitalize on our intelligence, but we didn’t.

And in American society, that just makes us nerds. It also makes Tech the perfect place for us. I started thinking about this recently when I read an article online entitled “Why Nerds are Unpopular” (www.paulsgraham.com/nerds.html). It was written in 2003 by Paul Graham, a programmer and essayist who claims to have experienced both ends of the social spectrum.

He explores the seemingly inescapable correlation between unpopularity and intelligence in American schools. Why do the more intelligent young students always seem to band together as outcasts from the popular crowd? Graham argues that it’s because they’re too willing to sacrifice their intelligence for popularity.

It’s not that he’s calling all popular kids dumb. Popularity is just something that takes a lot of work, and nerds can’t put in enough effort to be popular when they’re more driven to do all the more you work at something, the better you get; that’s why popular kids become more popular and smart kids learn more.

So these poor little nerds grow into adulthood as the unpopular demographic because the popular ones need people to pick on. After all, nothing builds group unity like ostracizing the “others” and drawing a clear line between “us” and “them.”

However, once all those kids escape the fishbowl of middle and high school and get into the real world, nerds suddenly become less unpopular, something Graham attributes to the sheer size of the real world. He goes on to describe the effect this trend has on society, but what I want to focus on is the move away from the impermeable dividing lines between the homogeneous campus and the Math Club president.

It seems to me that Tech has a lot of students who fit Graham’s theories (I wish I knew the pun). Many Tech students were probably the “nerds,” “losers” or “geeks” in their secondary school days, but upon entering college they quickly left those labels behind. How does that happen so quickly?

While it may seem like its own little bubble sometimes, Tech really is a step toward the real world—and away from the sheltered days when parents supervised their children. Too closely, Tech draws the nerdy crowd because, as Graham indicates, it’s the smart kids who get that “nerd” label.

But here, in a community full of “nerds,” we have opportunities that we never would have had five or 10 years ago. For instance, it’s the students who are involved in many activities and maintain a good GPA who are most likely to be nominated for Mr. and Mrs. Georgia Tech.

And not every nerd who comes to Tech stays a nerd for very long, at least in the stereotypical sense of the word. Sure, a lot of us have some unusual interests compared to other students our age, but those interests (from computer programming to watching sci-fi incessantly to building robots and any other odd hobbies that I’m not familiar with) are more “normal” here.

That’s one of the reasons—okay, maybe the only one—that I think Tech is so great. It is a haven for other people our age to whom we can relate. So unlike our backwards rivals in Athens—may call us nerds, but we lose that label at Tech, for the most part.

Eventually, our adolescent 

**Tech needs intellectual diversity**

On April 11, the Georgia House Higher Education Committee held a hearing regarding HB 154—the Intellectual Diversification in Higher Education Act. 1. Along with other students from universities around the state, testifying in favor of this legislation, which would hold our institutions accountable for taking concrete steps to implement intellectual diversity on campus.

As a student for the past five years, I have witnessed the politicization of campus far too often and have been forced to fight for academic excellence. In 2002, ex-citing about attending a school with a solid reputation for academic excellence, time-honored traditions and global impact. I looked forward to an intellectually honest environment where scholarly debate and open dialogue flourished both in the classroom and on campus. While I expected to have my abilities and beliefs challenged, I did not expect to be repeatedly censored, interrogated and condemned by those in authority, for expressing a point of view that was not locked in line with their own political agenda.

That’s what I call an education I am too young to—or what I came here for. In fact, it is not education at all. But, unfortunately, it is a part of a toxic environment here in terms of the marketplace of ideas. Worse, this toxic environment is present from the top down and affects virtually every aspect of the Institute—from the senior administrators who refuse to admit (let alone address) any problems, to the unfortunate number of faculty who replace teaching their subjects with

**Letter Submission Policy**

The Technique welcomes all letters from the editor and will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Letters may be submitted to Georgia Tech Campus Mail Code D0637, at the office of the Technique in the Ferst Drive, Atlanta, Georgia 30332-0290. All letters must be signed and may include a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification. There 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 to be valid will not be printed. The Technique reserves the right to edit for content and style. Each submission per person will be printed each term.

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Student voice summons prominent visitors to campus

Tomorrow morning, Senator and presidential candidate Barack Obama will speak in Yellow Jacket Park. Wednesday, Al Gore, former vice president, current top-tier environmentalist and winner of the popular vote in 2000 (but finishing a close second in the race for President, in case you’ve forgotten) arrives on campus.

Politicians are not the only big names that have been placed on the spring schedule. Lewis Black’s recent show on campus and T.I.’s upcoming performance for Sting Break are just a few of the folks that spring to mind.

One of my biggest complaints about Tech over the past few years is that we have rarely hosted top-flight speakers and entertainers. And from a large number of discussions with others at the school, I have not been alone in thinking this.

In fact, I was starting to think that Tech simply could not attract speakers or artists—that they all chose other venues than the Institute speakers or artists—that they all that Tech simply could not attract student body. We simply have to increase will not go down as an anomaly. As Tech students, there are two things we can do to help—show up when people come and keep asking more people to visit.

The first point seems pretty simple, but it is necessary to keep drawing top-flight speakers. People come to speak because of their audience. As one of the top 10 public universities in the country, Tech houses an intelligent audience with great promise for the future in its student body. We simply have to show up.

So, even if that rain the weatherman keeps talking about comes on Saturday or if Sen. Obama is not your choice to come to Tech to visit—is evidenced by the variety of organizations that are bringing people to campus this spring. The Student Center did a fantastic job securing Lewis Black. The IMPACT Series in the College of Management is responsible for Al Gore’s visit. And from what I’ve heard, Sen. Obama’s choice to come to Tech came from the efforts of AASU. Maya Angelou’s appearance came courtesy of Student Government.

There is no central department of bringing people to campus. Anyone can give it a try.

Kyle Thomason
Columnist

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preaching their politics to the students who have issued so many death threats against me that I now need police escorts to go to class.

The Intellectual Diversity in Higher Education Act will help address such campus abuses both within and beyond Tech. It would bring accountability to administrators and professors who operate with impunity now, ignoring both the Constitution and their own professional standards.

Fellow students, we deserve better for our money. And so do Georgia’s taxpayers. That’s why I support HB 154—a measure that would simply require our public universities to issue an annual report on what they’re doing to make certain we can speak our minds.

Ruth Mallora
INTA grad student
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Student voice summons prominent visitors to campus

“There is no central department of bringing people to campus. Anyone can give it a try.”

Kyle Thomason
Columnist

Announcing:

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STING BREAK 07

Yellow Jacket Park, Friday April 20, 8pm

This is a drug and alcohol-free event for GT students only.

Please do not bring: Cameras, bags, backpacks, matches, lighters, umbrellas