THE VIEW FROM HERE

It’s spring semester and life has become strangely calm. Confusion and stress seem to be on the decrease. Though not all HP students got the grades they’d counted on in fall (see Message from the Director, back page), they seem to be taking things in stride and adjusting well to college life’s curve balls. If resilience isn’t the essence of strength, it’s pretty close, so congratulations for making it this far! Believe it or not, the worst is over. There will still be hard classes and other tests of endurance, but you can handle it, and we hope you’ll plan extracurricular fun.

We’re pleased to have had a surge of proposals for the HP Student Challenge Fund. From a North Africa Leadership Development Seminar (Maddie Stoddart and Emily Pecher) to an alternative spring break to help maintain the Appalachian Trail (Will Boyd and Sydney Shaffer), they’re intriguing and more than worthwhile, as is Daniel Soloway’s involvement with the Atlanta Task Force for the Homeless, a local group planning a rooftop garden for the homeless just a couple of blocks from Tech. At the right, Daniel is shown assisting in setup of their entry in the Atlanta Flower Show.

A Look Back at Fall 2006 TAs

It takes a lot to get college students out of bed early in the morning, so the high attendance rate in Nguyen Truong’s HP Calculus II recitation last semester says a lot about his skills as a teaching assistant (TA). The Honors Program is lucky to have had some of the top TAs in its first semester.

Truong, a class of 2005 CS major, now studies math and operations research. What made him decide to try working with the Honors Program? “I needed a good review of linear algebra, and I knew I’d have to learn the material well if I want to impress the honors students. That was my main motivation,” he recalls. Truong has assisted with many math classes,
FEATURED STUDENTS

Beth West

Environmental Engineering major, Beth West, spent most of her childhood in Edmonton, Alberta, but has most recently lived in St. Augustine, Fl. A highly engaged student in every way, she is currently involved with Christian Campus Fellowship, Engineering Students Without Borders, Symphonic Band, and My Sister’s House (a women’s shelter). Beth’s favorite course this semester is Survey of Organic Chemistry. “The lectures are an hour and a half, but it feels like 30 minutes. Professor Marcus Weck makes the material very interesting by adding cool facts and applications. Also, he has a German accent.” Beth hopes to intern with the National Park Service this summer. If not, she might just end up playing (er, um, working) on the beach back home.

Recommended read? “Well, I’m not much into novels, but as far as books go, I would recommend the bible. There are some crazy stories in there and you will definitely be missing out on something if you don’t get a chance to read at least some of them.”

Tim Cahill

Hailing from Pensacola, Florida, Tim Cahill is wild about Tech. “I love being in an environment where everyone’s passion and driving force is to learn. It inspires me to push myself to achieve my dreams and push forward to meet my goals.”

Though majoring in Nuclear and Radiological Engineering, Tim’s favorite class this semester turns out to be Spanish Conversation with Professor Leslie Gordon. “I am excited to be learning and preparing in the class for my study abroad with the Argentina Semester Program in the fall. I can’t wait! 22 weeks in Buenos Aires!” Tim also enjoys playing basketball for Howell Hall council’s intramural team, being the sports coordinator for Brown-Howell hall council, participating in freShGA, and being part of the student chapter of the American Nuclear Society. Tim’s recommended extracurricular reading? “Definitely anything by Ayn Rand … [especially] Anthem or Atlas Shrugged.”

Fall TA’s (cont.)

but noticed a difference in honors. “Honors students ask a lot more questions,” he claims. “You get to re-examine everything you’ve learned, and sometimes understand it from a different angle. But there will be times when you look completely clueless… so much for my goal of impressing these students.” He may joke about looking clueless, but students were consistently impressed with his preparation, skills, and patience.

Truong gained more than just sharpened linear algebra skills. “Whenever I walked into class, I’d be greeted by Sam [Coogan] with ‘How are you doing today, Nguyen?’ Erica [Hocking] came to almost all of my office hours, and many of these were at 8am! One day, I noticed Kaitlyn [Frazier] was running out and coming back to class some three, four times. ‘She must have had bad milk for breakfast,’ I thought. I learned later that she had spilled coffee on her desk. These are the little things that I remember, and I smile when I think of them.”

Another TA that received high acclaim is Chip Humphries, responsible for honors chemistry labs and recitations. One of his strongest points was his accessibility. Humphries was “always available to help his students, whether it was through email, office hours or even instant messenger,” Alina Staskevicius recalls, and he was “as passionate about chemistry as he was about Georgia Tech football.”

Often, the quality of the TA can make or break a student’s experience in a class. In a few semesters, those of us who want a unique and rewarding job are eager to apply for the challenge.
Review: DanceBrazil
By Nicole Leonard

On Friday, January 19th DanceBrazil came to the Ferst Center with a sensuously hypnotic performance that held the crowd enthralled. The opening number, Desafio, featured a mix of capoeira - a form of Brazilian martial arts - and folk/tribal dance to explore personal conflict and the stresses of conforming to society. Using costumes that showcase the body, muscles became tools of artistic expression as performers flipped, kicked, jerked, and swayed to the driving rhymes of the percussion band. In the second act, The Ritual, performers celebrated their Bahian culture in a fun and colorful manner. Every up-tempo movement was designed to show pride and joy the company had for their shared heritage. All in all the performance by DanceBrazil was an eye opening treat that I highly recommend viewing.

(Not Just For) High School Musical
By Sarah Gilbreath

Disney’s High School Musical, one of the most successful Disney Channel movies ever, is currently on tour with two different faces. The stars of the movie – minus Zac Efron – are in the middle of an arena tour with the songs from the movie. Mr. Efron is replaced by Drew Seeley, who not only co-wrote some of the songs, but also recorded approximately half of the vocals in the movie for Zac’s character, Troy. At the same time, The Theater of the Stars is on tour performing the movie’s stage adaptation. High School Musical: The Musical, ridiculously titled though it may be, recently came to Atlanta’s Fabulous Fox Theater, much to the delight of every 12-year-old girl within a 100-mile radius. As the stage version of such a wildly popular movie (its soundtrack is reportedly the best-selling album of 2006 in the US), High School Musical: The Musical had an awful lot to live up to. Yet even with such large shoes to fill, the play completely surpassed my expectations. Instead of mimicking the movie’s acting styles, each actor in the play put his or her own spin on the character. The script was also different – several scenes were radically changed, and extra humor was added by inserting hilarious one-liners in the middle of already well-known scenes. There were also new songs, though they did not necessarily add anything to the show. In fact, one was so short that, when some audience members noticed it on their programs after the first act, they could not even remember hearing it. Another was an originally upbeat song called “I Can’t Take My Eyes Off Of You” from the movie soundtrack. Not only did the play change the singers involved, but the song’s tempo was slowed almost beyond recognition. Despite the few song changes, the show remained a delight for all ages… not just for high school students.

Heard in Howell (or thereabouts)

“Between classes and CounterStrike, there’s really no time for girls.”

Do you have an “absolutely fabulous, spectacular, amazing” Heard quote? Send it to monica.halka@gatech.edu. Include “Heard in Howell” in the subject line.
# February 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese New Year</td>
<td>President’s Day</td>
<td>Fat Tuesday</td>
<td>Ash Wednesday</td>
<td>Energy &amp; SustLec ES&amp;T L1255</td>
<td>8pm BalletTroc.-FerstCtr</td>
<td>Nicole’s Birthday</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🐻</td>
<td>🤖</td>
<td>5pm NASA Info - SSC</td>
<td>4pm Slavery &amp; Justice Prs.Rm-SSC</td>
<td>8pm Bball-GTvsWkFrist</td>
<td>8pm Fleck &amp; Corea-Ferst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🍹</td>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>🎉</td>
<td>🎉</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5pm PkngAcrobts-Ferst</td>
<td>GTWF scholrshp deadline</td>
<td>6-8pm JPL Info Session SSC</td>
<td>5pm IntrvwngTipsSem. SSC</td>
<td>7:30 CmpsMovieFest All.Symph.Hall</td>
<td>8pm UmbilicalBros FerstCtr</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

# March 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
<th>Saturday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
<td>🪤</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pm Bball-GTvsBoston</td>
<td>5pm WST Dist. Lec.-SSC</td>
<td>7pm Chinese Film Fest-SSC</td>
<td>4pm WST Dist. Lec.-SSC</td>
<td>8pm UmbilicalBros FerstCtr</td>
<td>Magha Puja Day</td>
<td>St. Patrick’s Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>🐨</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎈</td>
<td>🎈</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daylight Savings</td>
<td>6:30pm HP mtg - Britt Rec</td>
<td>Ides of March</td>
<td>6pm Multidisc. Design Lec. COA Aud.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

"The HyPe"
Dearest HyPatia,

I like this guy, who happens to be my lab partner. How do I get him to notice me as something other than a Bunsen burner lighter?

Needing a valentine,
Amanda Hugginkiss

Dear needy Mandy,

If you want this guy to notice you, give him something to notice. It’s ok to be a loose jeans, free t-shirt kind of girl (you know the ones from Engineer’s and B&N), but don’t do it everyday. Add figure flattering tees and jeans to your wardrobe. Also, sit by him during class and brush his arm occasionally. When writing lab reports, sit next to him and make sure you smell nice. If all else fails, ask him out (it’s the 21st century; you’re allowed to do this.) If this doesn’t work, then honey, I don’t know what else you can do. But keep in mind, if you do make a play for him, it might affect your working relationship. Are you ready to deal with that?

~ HyPatia

Anonymous cartoon from HP office whiteboard
Message from the Director

BY GREG NOBLES, DIRECTOR

When I was in college, art history killed my GPA. I kept getting something on the low side of a C, a disappointing outcome. Something to do with the format of the exams, I’d tell myself, having to sit in a dark room and look at slides of paintings I’d never seen before, trying to identify the artist and say something about style, technique, palette – all in three or four minutes a pop. But I kept coming back for more, three courses in all. I wasn’t a glutton for punishment but for nourishment. I hadn’t grown up in an especially artsy or museum-going family, and my entree into the world of art was literally an eye-opening experience. So I got some C’s – so what?

The good news is that now, thirty-something years later, no one knows how I did in art history, or that those courses (along with one particularly pesky Econ class) did some damage to my GPA. When I go to the Metropolitan Museum of Art or the High Museum here in Atlanta, no one checks the Do Not Admit list at the door and says, “Sorry, pal, no C-minus losers allowed.” When I took my wife to see the frescoes in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, she seemed (momentarily) impressed by my ability to gas on about Giotto as a genius of the Italian trecento. I do know quite a bit about art – really. I just didn’t test well.

So what do my art history courses have to do with your calculus and chemistry? I know some of you occasionally get into trouble on tests and may get freaked out by C’s. I won’t say something as simple (and as simple-minded) as “don’t sweat it,” but suggest you think about the possible connection – or, more importantly, the difference – between grades and learning. Grades aside, are you getting it? Are you liking it? Can you comprehend the elegance and beauty of math, the remarkable ways chemistry helps us understand the complexities of life? If so, you’re in decent shape – again, grades aside.

I confess I’m not a big fan of grades, at least not the way they get used these days. Ideally, a grade should be a form of quick communication between professor and student, a shorthand symbol to summarize the professor’s evaluation, a means of opening a larger conversation about mastering the material. Unfortunately, other people insert themselves into the system, using arbitrary cut-offs to determine who gets (and who gets to keep) scholarships, who gets a job interview or admission into some extracurricular activity. It’s an intellectually lazy and socially skewed means of gate-keeping and a misuse of the professor-student relationship.

I’m not naive enough to think that we can get rid of grades, and I don’t really think we should. I do think that Tech is due for a fresh conversation about the meaning and use of grades and the relationship between grades and learning. Happily, this conversation has already started in the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, and I want to expand and continue it in the Honors Program. There are wonderful opportunities to carry on the discussion in this newsletter, in Howell, in Brittain, in classes – wherever good talk takes place.

In the meantime, does anyone know my overall GPA when I graduated from college? Yeah, me neither.