Not just a dry spell

With the ongoing rain that has moistened the streets of campus for the first time in months this week, it’s easy to assume that the worst of the drought is over. However, this would be a critical mistake, as we’ve only gotten a few inches of rain in the past few days and water levels remain at their lowest point in decades. Furthermore, there is little evidence that this week’s rain is a sign of more to come—not a good thing when we would need a full-fledged monsoon season to replenish the water supply.

The facilities department is already doing its part, using water recaptured from air conditioner condensation for plants and installing low-flow fixtures, among other measures. But the efforts of the grounds crews and the administration are not sufficient; students need to take up the challenge.

Considering how long the drought has been going on, it’s unfortunate that reactions are only starting to happen at this point. It’s never too late, however; beginning to conserve water now is better than not doing it at all.

There are many strategies for reducing one’s water consumption, many of them obvious (taking shorter showers, for instance). Some of the less obvious yet helpful suggestions include switching to cooking methods that use less water, such as stir-frying or grilling and placing a water-filled container into your toilet tank.

In the end, though, the drought shouldn’t be the primary reason for conserving water; people should conserve it all the time. Atlanta is a growing metropolis with a severely limited water supply, and Tech is one of the largest water users in the city. Students should lead by example on this issue.

Funding follies

The Student Government Association passed several questionable bills this week, allocating $700 to themselves for a laptop and more than $27,000 to Musicians Network for an outdoor performance by the band Copeland. This would not come out of the Student Activity Fee and be useful to all.

There are other strategies for addressing water shortages, such as switching to cooking methods that use less water, such as stir-frying or grilling and placing a water-filled container into your toilet tank.

The point I am getting at is that the spirit of giving has to do more than just send money, it has to be meaningful to those receiving it. Tech isn’t the easiest environment to find time to volunteer, but I have heard that some of us have found free time every once in a while. For fear of sounding like a kindergarten teacher, even giving a little bit can make a difference.

If you can work at a food pantry once a month, great. If you see someone holding a food drive, don’t stop and think what a good idea this person had, make sure you return and at least drop off a can of soup. You don’t even have to do anything to donate blood, and the nurses provide free snacks afterwards. Make sure to remember to donate in the summer, because people tend to forget to donate when snow and Christmas specials are no longer on the TV. Even raising money is still a good idea. Just make sure you’re not looking to get some kind of recognition for it, because that’s not the point. Don’t be so self-serving.

If you do think I’m wrong and have come up with counterpoints to all my examples, try simply helping your parents, or whomever raised you, do chores around the house. Not just because you know it,your responsibility, but because they’re getting older and might need extra help once in a while.

Now I want to end this editorial on a positive note, so I’ll finish off by thanking those who are living up to this spirit of giving. Those of you participating in BOPSOP, Habitat for Humanities, TEAM Buzz and all the other organizations on the community service page of Tech, I want to thank you and hope you keep doing what you’re doing. For all the other organizations that don’t get that kind of publicity and are still fighting the good fight, thank you for your hard work.

However for the rest of us, let’s not let the spirit of charity die with the last words of this editorial. If you’re doing something now, keep at it as long as you are able. If you haven’t quite gotten around to doing anything yet, let today be the day you put some thought into asking what you can do, and perhaps you can put those ideas into motion.
Personal responsibility sorely lacking

Have you heard the one about the woman in New York City who tried to kill herself by diving down on the subway tracks, then won a lawsuit for over nine million dollars for being hit by a train? What about the engineer who accidentally ran over and killed his co-worker, then sued the railroad for his own mental anguish? And who could forget about the guy who pressed charges against a bunch of fast food restaurants for making him obese?

With stuff like this going on, is it any wonder that the term “personal responsibility” has become completely alien to many Americans? Considering that a significant number of people probably don’t even know what personal responsibility means, allow me to clarify. Personal responsibility means that you take responsibility for your own actions and that you accept the consequences of those actions.

I’m not saying that if a doctor accidentally amputates your foot, it just sucks for you. But it seems that nowadays when people do something that turns out bad for them, or if life just doesn’t go their way, instead of accepting it as their fault or the way life works, they turn to the courts to solve their problems and try to put the blame on someone else—not to mention score a couple million bucks. Looking back over my years, I am deeply troubled at the vast number of potential lawsuits I could have taken advantage of that might have left me set for life.

For example, when I was in fifth grade, one of my classmates brought chocolate bunnies to school and distributed them to almost everyone in the class, except for about four kids, myself included. Clearly, I should have seized the opportunity to sue the girl for all she was worth, on the charges of emotional distress and mental anguish. Heck, I also could have sued my teacher, the school, the county and even the company that made the chocolate!

And why stop there? To think that all of my student loans could already be paid off if I had just thought like so many other Americans.

This is how the insane lawsuit process seems to work. First, the “victim” hires a lawyer and presses charges against anyone in any way related to the bad thing. Then, he presses some more charges against anyone in any way related to the first group. The idea is to sue as many people as possible so as to increase your chances of getting money from someone.

Sometimes the plaintiff doesn’t even care about the money—they say they’re just suing “to prove a point.” “I need to make these crusading spirits just happen to be suing for millions, though. And you can bet your bottom dollar that their lawyers aren’t interested in proving anything—they’re much more interested in paying for their vacation houses in Majorca.”

It’s no wonder that people hate lawyers so much, as, unfortunately, a number of them are in some ways responsible for this phenomenon. What if the first lawyer approached about a stupid lawsuit should have done was laugh the potential clients out of the building?

Unfortunately, lawyers are human, so when people come up to them with an idea for some “fun and/or frivolous suit,” they recognize that it might just help pay for their retirement (seeing as in most cases, they get paid whether they win or lose the case). I’m not saying that the lawyers are entirely to blame. It’s really more of this attitude that people seem to have nowadays—“nothing’s ever my fault.”

And if they sell you a million dollar idea, they will—and do—go to ridiculous lengths to avoid accepting the blame for the consequences of their actions. A couple in New York tried to sue a health club for “loss of consortium” and “emotional distress” because (I’m not making this up) the man supposedly cut his hand on a towel dispenser in the bathroom, leading to a temporary affair with a woman he met online while he was forced to stay home recovering.

I think this “nothing’s ever my fault” state of mind comes from the predominantly American belief that we’re more powerful, hence, better, than all the other countries. People seem to have taken this belief to the

BUZZ

Around the Campus

What is your biggest T-Square frustration?

Peony Park
Second-year IAMC

“‘The fact that some of my professors use it and some don’t.’”

Mohamed Elgeneney
Third-year ECON

“Why do they always have to change it?”

Roland Krystian Alberciak
Graduate CS

“I can depend on it.”

Deborah Ortiz
Graduate CHEM

“I don’t get emails on time.”

OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, October 26, 2007 • 9

BOOYAH!

Notable and only moderately crazy stock market expert Jim Cramer came to Tech last week to tape an episode of his popular Mad Money TV show for the College of Management, which has developed an increasingly good reputation in recent years. Students were also able to benefit from his useful yet occasionally good reputation in recent years.

Festivities for all

Homecoming’s festivities got more inclusive this year, with traditionally separately dominated events like the Mini 500 and the Tournament of Champions starting to appeal to groups like Housing. Homecoming should be a celebration for all of us, and it’s good to see more people involved.

OUR VIEWS

HOT or NOT

No’ Generation

The Atlanta City Council’s passage of an ordinance that will prohibit drinking under the drinking age from entering clubs and bars in the city is yet another misguided attempt to protect teenagers from themselves. The ordinance is apparently motivated by concerns over youngsters consuming alcohol at these places—which, by the way, is already illegal. The council’s message to under 21-year olds? Just drink at home.

Random fencing

The College of Management’s outer courtyard has been completely fenced off, and construction equipment now occupies the area. The fencing is ugly and blocks nearly all the other entrances into the building. The Facilities department should let students know that they are trying to accomplish at the site.

YOUR VIEWS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SGA should back policy

Unfortunately, recent years have been marked by litigious attacks upon the ability of student representatives to debate funding decisions freely and to act independently. While no one can control the frivolous actions of others, we can control our response to the concerns generated by them. Over the past several years, such concerns have led to substantial revision of the policies by which SGA allocates the Student Activity Fee (SAF).

While frequent consideration of the rules set by SGA is warranted, ensuring that students are treated fairly, the motivation for review must not be fear of lawsuits.

The Institute stands as a center of education, debate, and the refinement of ideas and ideals. Norweyne in SGA, and perhaps on this campus, is the potential for debate over the SAF, funding decisions, and the value to the student body of the events for which funding is requested greater than in the Undergraduate House of Representatives (UHR). The strength of SGA, a source of pride for the Institute, has long been that its members were free to act in what they believed to be the best interests of the study body, unconstrained by undue administrative influence. With the advance of legal threats, however, that era is ending.

The members of SGA are elected to represent the student body—who those who pay the SAF, and in whose sole interests decisions regarding these policies must be made. It was with tremendous disappointment, but little surprise, that I read that the Student Activities Committee may continue a disconcerting pattern of the application of administrative influence over decisions regarding the policies of the Joint Finance Committee and the SGA bylaws.

Letter Submission Policy

The Technique welcomes all letters to the editor and will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Letters must be signed and must not exceed 400 words. All letters must be typed, double-spaced and must not exceed one printed page. Letters must not include anonymous署名. 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 5 p.m. Thursday in order to be printed in the following Friday’s edition. Letters must not exceed one printed page and must not be considered by the Editorial Board of the Technique if a valid address is not included. Letters printed will be proof-read. Editors reserve the right to edit for style, context and length. Only one submission per person will be printed each week.

Advertising Information

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Coverage Requests

Press releases and requests for coverage may be made to the Editors-in-Chief or to individual section editors. For more information, email editor@technique.gatech.edu.

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SEE FAULT, PAGE 10

SEE POLICY, PAGE 10
Policy from page 9

As a former longtime member of the UHR, I disagree vehemently with the approved policy, and believe that it muzzles student representation in the interest of maintaining overly expansive legal cover for the Tech administration. I recognize, however, that this is the policy adopted by the representatives of the student body. The possibility that SAC will refuse to accept this decision is indicative of a disregard for the importance of effective student representation and self-determination.

I would suggest to any administrator for whom the heat of standing for a truly independent student government is too much to take that they get out of the kitchen. There is certainly value to administrators advising students, as long as advice and coercion do not simply go by the same name.

William Welch
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Sixth-year IE

Sly tree removal upsets absent tree huggers

In case Tech had any tree huggers, the school ensured they’d be away on Fall Break while they removed one of the campus’s largest trees. Bartlett Tree Experts cut down the four-foot diameter tree that used to shade the north end of Yellow Jacket Park.

Cutting down this apparently healthy tree is contradictory to Tech’s stance on environmental leadership. I hope it makes a nice table.

James Norman
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ChBE Grad student

Fault from page 9

individual level, at which they think, ‘I’m better than everyone else.’ and if I’m better than everyone else, then there’s no way that anything bad is my fault.” Well, it’s time for a lesson in humility, folks, because the consequences of our actions are our fault.

It is the responsibility of the individual to be aware of the risks inherent in performing certain actions (such as, oh, say, lying down on train tracks), using certain products, etc. While it is true that corporations do tracks), using certain products, etc.

have some responsibility to provide

While it is true that corporations do

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YOUR VIEWS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Christianity viewed differently

Bill Hamilton’s essay last week is a glimpse into a greater problem with America. The “homosexicism” crowd is part of a larger group of American Christians who demand that we continue to deprive homosexual individuals of equal rights based solely upon their religious beliefs. I do not see any need to analyze the specifics of the argument that homosexuality is a sin according to religious beliefs. I do not see anyone needing to analyze the different religious beliefs that have sprung up around the particular book. The greater problem is that America is being held hostage by a segment of the population that demands we bow to their opinions. America has long been a country that holds to the principle of personal liberty and separation of church and state. However, the Christian Right demands that we deny individuals freedom based upon their beliefs.

The first problem with this is, of course, that they have no proof for their religion. Indeed, science has disproven various tenets taught by Christianity over the years. Yet, they demand that America enshrine their religious morality into law and spread the lie that America is a “Christian Nation” despite the massive amount of evidence to the contrary.

There is not one practical iota of difference between a person that believes in Christianity and a person that believes in astrology. Both are unscientific beliefs based on absurd principles, but individuals may choose to believe what they will.

The problem comes with the demand that everyone else follow the principles of their religion. Why should the Jews, Muslims, Hindus or atheists in America have to obey Christian doctrine? Throughout U.S. history, Christians have repeatedly pushed to deny individual freedom. I can point at a dizzying array of examples: Prohibition, women’s suffrage, the denial of equal rights for homosexuals and the attempts to force scientific theories such as evolution out of the schools. It is clear that Christianity is the single greatest threat to American freedom.

Joshua Justice
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Third-year CS

Evangelist misrepresents “God’s word” in letter

This past week the Technique published a letter to the editor by evangelist Bill Hamilton, who attempted to interpret God’s word for the campus. The only problem is his interpretation is wrong.

His most egregious claim is that God hates sinners, which is effective to everyone considered to be the godliest. Preachers. In fact, it was the pious Pharisees and Sadducees whom Jesus considered to be the godliest men whom everyone considered to be the godliest. But Jesus knew they acted this way for their own glory, not for the glory of God, and he called them on it.

If you want to reach college students you should spend some time getting to know us and loving us, like Jesus did. Telling us we’re going to hell if we don’t believe anything anyone would like to invite anyone curious about the true nature of God to open the Bible and begin to read.

Jonathan Elmer
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Fifth-year MGT

And Don’t Forget the Rest of the Season:

Variety Tech
November 30 and December 1, 2007

What Happened to Mr. Sugarlumpkins?
June 27, 28, July 2, 3, 5, 9, 10, 11, and 12, 2008

Urinetown
April 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, and 19, 2008