

OUR VIEWS CONSENSUS OPINION

## Writing woes

That the writing curriculum at Tech is weak is not news, but when a student brought up the question at this week's State of the Institute Address, Interim President Gary Schuster's response suggested a lack of direction. After taking ENGL 1101 and 1102, students are handed over to their major departments, where they expect to be taught the technical communications skills they will need to compete upon graduation, only to be severely disappointed.

Most engineering departments just hand their students right back to the School of Literature, Communication and Culture, where they are required to take LCC 3401 (Technical Communication Practices). This class has consistently been known for its low level of rigor and for covering basic topics that should have been taught in GT 1000. Being told how to appropriately address a superior in e-mails leaves students feeling like they gained no practical skills to aid them in their classes, senior projects or in the workplace.

The School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, however, has creatively taken the matter into its own hands. To ensure that its students are equipped with the necessary writing and communications skills, it has worked in conjunction with the School of Literature, Communication and Culture to create a demanding curriculum that holds students to a higher writing standard while offering appropriate support.

Required lab courses, which include several writing assignments, begin with meetings with the professor and a writing consultant from the School of Literature, Communication and Culture to ensure students understand what is required of their technical writing. Students also meet with graduate teaching assistants and are allowed to revise their reports based on constructive personal feedback. Finally, there is even a staffed writing lab that students can take advantage of if they need additional help.

This model has innovatively combined the theory and applications of engineering with the communication skills required in the business world, and should be implemented at other schools across Tech. This in-sourced approach would better succeed at teaching technical communication skills than the class currently tasked to do so. LCC 3401 is not serving its intended purpose and should be eliminated.

Tech engineers increasingly need to compete with highly trained colleagues from countries like India and China. What will set us apart will be our ability to effectively write, communicate and present in interdisciplinary and international settings. Tech's writing curriculum is failing to prepare students for this challenge.

*Consensus editorials reflect the majority opinion of the Editorial Board of the Technique, but not necessarily the opinions of individual editors.*

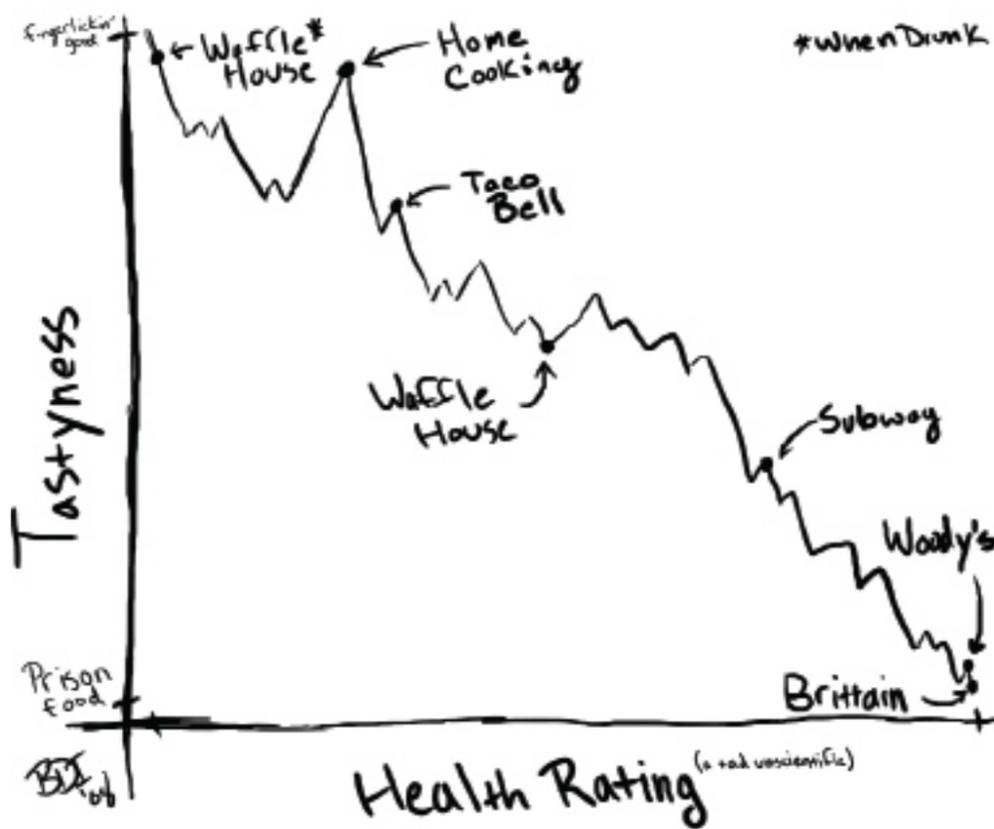
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By Blake Israel / Student Publications

## 'Green' marketing dupes buyers

The MacBook Air has a case made from aluminum, one of the most sought-after recyclable metals, and a screen whose production was gentler on the environment.

While I enjoy the environment and appreciate Apple's efforts to preserve it, I feel like there are many other features Apple could use to sell the \$1,799 envelope-sized notebook. I value the environment—I just feel like an environmental image is incompatible with Apple's marketing and product life-cycle.

Every year, many owners of Apple products crave a newer model. For some consumers, their iPod has been destroyed from months of abuse. Others have experienced firsthand the "Death Seed" rumored by YouTube artists to be buried in every iPod. Lastly, and most concerning, some feel that after a year of use and with no flaws, their iPod needs to be replaced because Apple has devised a newer way to integrate album art into the user experience.

iPods are not the only example of expensive, high-class items that are being advertised on the basis of their environmental impact. A similar example exists as close as the restrooms on campus, in the "Paper without Trees" slogan emblazoned on our paper towels.

I support recycling and think our use of 100 percent recycled paper towels is excellent, but find the guilt-free nature of this slogan unfortunate. Paper is not a closed-loop recyclable; though the grade of paper used in our restrooms can only make paper towels, it started as a tree and will end up in a landfill.

There are hundreds of examples of situations where products that are inherently not environmentally friendly are marketed as being "green." More concerning than products and companies holding false environmental reputations



"Product presentation and pricing often suggest environmental products as a status symbol—only a fad."

**Ben Keyserling**  
Assistant Photography Editor

is that environmentalism may become a trend. I feel like product presentation and pricing often suggest environmental products as a status symbol—only a fad.

Arguably, the largest example of products differentiated because of environmental features are cars. A Honda Insight or Toyota Prius could not possibly be mistaken for any other car. This is intentional, and may be why celebrities everywhere have bought their own Prius to show that they care.

Cars, because of their nature, typically have a longer product life-cycle than MP3 players. Because of the substantial investment in a car, if a driver decides to get rid of a car that still moves, their most profitable alternative is to sell it. If a car is green, this means the world gets several more years of low emissions. Still, buying a Prius as a secondary car or replacing it every two years will likely cancel any emissions savings.

Buying a Prius is not a problem on its own. I think it is a favorable approach to environmentalism compared to setting a parking lot full of Hummers on fire. Economically and ecologically, however, there is a debate over whether the initial cost of replacing a vehicle with a hybrid car is recovered through savings. Depending on your driving habits, a Prius may be a very good choice for you—or you may do less damage by putting more miles on an aging Explorer.

Incrementally, a mile driven in a 2008 Prius may be lighter than that of a 2007 model, and I believe that an LED-backlit screen with arsenic-free glass will, down the road, be beneficial for the environment. Unfortunately, marketers are attempting to rationalize the purchase of a new product on environmental friendliness. No matter how environmentally friendly a product is to manufacture, it would be friendlier to manufacture one fewer.

Any situation involving purchasing things will involve the use of raw materials. If you like to own stuff, that's all right—I own things too. I don't feel our campus would benefit if everyone started walking around campus barefoot and wearing homespun fabrics. I support hygiene and am not particularly bothered by large corporations. I just want to apply a healthy dose of skepticism to purchases of theoretically environmentally friendly products.

If you are buying an iPod, buy it because it looks good, has a lot of space or because it has a large screen that you can use to share photos with friends—not because it has a recyclable case. A computer should be purchased with excitement over small size, light weight and high power.

I hope that anyone who is opening a laptop for the first time has more exciting things to consider than how its components will be handled in the waste stream.

# Braves need to get serious in off-season

The Atlanta Braves have now gone three years without making the playoffs. Before 1991, that was the norm. But ever since Bobby Cox and John Schuerholz started the unprecedented string of 14 division titles in 15 years, fans have expected to win every year. Never mind the fact that Atlantans can barely sell out their playoff games. In order for the fans to be energized, we need big names and big spending.



**“It’s been a long time since the Braves have had the energizing move of signing a big-name free agent.”**

**Akshay Amaraneni**  
Assistant Sports Editor

Despite their success, it’s hard for fans (including me) to realize how the Braves go about their business. It has been a long time since the Braves have had the energizing move of signing a big-name free agent. In 1991, we signed Terry Pendleton away from the St. Louis Cardinals. Pendleton became a fixture at third base over the next four seasons.

The year he started with the Braves was Pendleton’s best, but more importantly, he helped the Braves go from worst to first in the middle of the season and became a game changer with his gold glove defense and timely hitting. Pendleton would go on to win the MVP award that year and come in second in 1992, only to lose late in the World Series both years.

In 1993, the Braves signed ace pitcher Greg Maddux to

a contract. The weird thing about the signing was that Maddux, a Scott Boras client, actually took less money to sign with the Braves than what the Yankees were offering. Every Braves fan knows the rest is history.

While the Braves had won on the homegrown talent of Tom Glavine, Steve Avery and a minor league trade that brought them John Smoltz, that was not enough. Once the Braves signed Maddux, they cemented themselves as the best in the west.

1993 was an epic year for the Braves. It featured one of the closest division races and one of the most absurd runs to the title any team had ever made. The Braves would end up coming from behind to beat Barry Bonds and the San Francisco Giants 104 games to 103. The team did not do it alone.

Around the trade deadline, Schuerholz made a big move

by trading three prospects to San Diego for Fred McGriff, the spark Atlanta needed to overtake the Giants.

Sure, the team still has one of the best farm systems around, which has created enough depth to last them the next decade, but the last three years have proved otherwise. Pitching depth is suspect at the least and there is little to no power in the minors in the next one to two seasons.

The Braves have publicly talked about their willingness to go outside of the organization this fall and I think that the fan base will likely wait until the off-season to see what happens. The team will likely have anywhere between \$35 to \$45 million coming off the books before arbitration. That kind of money will make the Braves huge players in this year’s free agent market.

I am sure the front office already has their eyes on several

targets, including C. C. Sabathia and Ben Sheets among pitchers, and Manny Ramirez, Rafael Furcal and Pat Burrell among hitters. The Braves will also try to gain some talent via their usual path of trading for a younger number two or three pitcher like Matt Cain in San Francisco.

2008 was filled with injuries for a team many thought could win the World Series. It started with John Smoltz and Peter Moylan a few weeks into the season and ended with ace Tim Hudson and Tom Glavine later on. Would the Braves have made the playoffs with those guys? It was definitely a likely scenario, but obviously it did not happen, so the team must now look to the future.

One thing fans know for sure is that this will not be a quiet off-season. With the way the Braves performed last year (the Braves won just 72 games this year, their worst performance since 1990) and the opportunity for the new ownership and second year General Manager Frank Wren to shine, the Braves will make a splash on the open market.

Going into the next year, the fan base fully expects the Braves to target pitching first and hitting second. If that happens, the Braves will have a great year.

## BUZZ Around the Campus

**How is the economic crisis affecting you?**



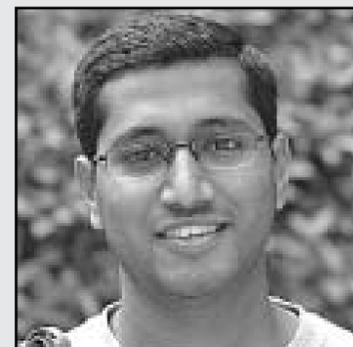
**Chanin Tolson**  
Second-year BMED

**“I have no disposable income and my parents took my car.”**



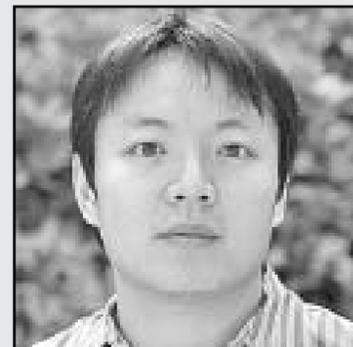
**Becca Donovan**  
Second-year IE

**“It makes it more difficult for me to get financial aid.”**



**Praveen Krishnaiah**  
Grad CS

**“I’m more worried about the future than the present...”**



**Yanto Yanto**  
Grad CHE

**“I spend less on gas and walk more.”**

Photos by Joey Cerone

### OUR VIEWS HOT OR NOT

## HOT-or-NOT



#### Searching students

Darryl Richard, defensive tackle for the Yellow Jackets and the only student on the presidential search committee, has tried to get student input by attending meetings of various organizations. He recently met with the Ramblin’ Wreck Club, where he spoke of the committee’s approach to the search and asked for students’ opinions to take back. These laudable efforts help combat students’ current silence.

#### Campus apathy

Interim president Gary Schuster held this year’s State of the Institute Address to a small crowd of under 50. This number pales in comparison to last year’s attendance, which was more than double. While the event’s new location in Tech Square may have kept some from attending, the Tech community should show more interest in the direction that the Institute is taking in a time of changing leadership.



#### Green report card

Tech’s grade on the 2009 College Sustainability Report Card went up one letter grade from last year to a B, adding a gold star to one of the Institute’s growing trademarks. Over 26 sustainable buildings and an 11 percent fall in energy use from last year add up to the improved grade.

#### Ongoing vandalism

The Buzz Around Campus statues have continued to be vandalized over the past week, with more antennas, ties and other decorations being ripped off, further frustrating student organizations who invested their time and money in starting a new tradition that would benefit the Tech community.

### YOUR VIEWS LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Gun rights on campus

In response to the gun rights article [“Gun Rights Play Role in Election,” Oct. 3], I would like to add some relevant information and share my views on the matter.

Neither Tech nor any other university in Georgia is truly a “gun-free” zone. True, there are legal prohibitions against bringing firearms onto campus, but they are merely words—and as shown by the numerous robberies and assaults at gunpoint that happen on campus every year, criminals obviously pay them no heed. Frankly, no matter how many laws and rules, the only way to truly prevent guns from coming on campus is to search every single person and thing entering campus.

Many Tech students and alumni have firearms licenses. Every one of them has undergone thorough state and federal background checks.

All have proven themselves safe by carrying in stores, gas stations, parks, MARTA and restaurants every day without incident.

It is well past time that these same people be able to do so on campus as well. The threat of a [Virginia Tech]-style shooting might be very low, but the chances of being a victim of “ordinary” violent crime around campus are much higher. The student or faculty member who must walk around late at night deserves an effective means to defend him or herself should the unthinkable happen.

If we truly want to end violence, we have to attack the root of the problem. We must put violent criminals behind bars and keep them there doing hard time. We must catch young offenders early and get

See **Voters**, page 10

#### Letter Submission Policy

The *Technique* welcomes all letters to the editor in response to *Technique* content as well as general topics relevant to campus. We will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Send your letter to [letters@nique.net](mailto:letters@nique.net) and please use your official Georgia Tech account if possible. Make sure to include your full name, year (1st, 2nd, etc.), and major.

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* to be of valid intent will not be printed. We reserve the right to edit for style and length. Only one submission per person will be printed each term.

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#### Coverage Requests

Requests for coverage may be made to the Editor-in-Chief or to individual section editors. For more information, email [editor@nique.net](mailto:editor@nique.net)

# America should embrace hostel culture found abroad

This fall I plan on spending a fair amount of time traveling around Europe. In order to do this I am going to rely on a few key amenities.

The key amenity permitting me to budget my four-country tour this fall is the hostel. Hostels could be roughly described as a hotel without walls, private bathrooms or buffets in the morning. They are the bread and butter of the student abroad experience, and I have found myself frequently staying in rooms of 10 to 18 people, from all over the world, my bags checked into a locker.

Don't let the description fool you. Hostels are an amazing experience. Despite the public nature of communal bedrooms and

bathrooms, I have never once felt unsafe. The only people let into hostels are other traveling youngsters like myself.

Hostel owners range from motherly characters to young business men, and they have always been more than willing to help out even the poorest of travelers, language barriers aside. I have even stayed at a woman's own home, which she happily opened up to 25 or so students every night.

The hostel culture is one based on mutual trust, in which the owners don't charge much for the bed, trusting that the students won't break anything, and in exchange the students don't demand much of the owners, trusting that their things and their person will



**"In order for the hostel culture to work in America, students would have to move past spring break style binging..."**

**Emily Chambers**  
Columnist

remain safe throughout the night (or early morning, depending on the bar scene), even if they aren't provided a TV and continental breakfast upon waking.

Unfortunately, we don't have this kind of a travel-friendly culture in the U.S. True, we have Motel 8 and Holiday Inn and other

cheap hotel chains, but they don't run anywhere near as budget and student friendly as hostels do.

While hostels don't always give you private rooms, you often can book one for just a small price increase, and even common rooms in hostels are clean to the point of being immaculate. Hostels can be

found even in the center of town and in my experience have been filled with friendly staff and maps in 60 different languages.

In contrast, my depressingly vast experience with budget hotels has shown that they tend to fall somewhere between the spectrum of unclean and unsanitary. A budget hotel in the U.S. can advertise itself as "in the heart of downtown" by merely sharing an interstate with said town.

Of course, in order for the hostel culture to work in America, students would have to move past spring break style binging, but I have confidence in our ability to do so in exchange for a cockroach-free bed, well-lit bathroom and a good map.

## Letters from page 7

them help before they move on to worse crimes. We must stop glorifying gangs, violence and crime, and we must provide better education and opportunities to our children so that they may have a better alternative.

Robert Gatlin-Martin  
AE 2007

### Obama's views on guns

The writer of the piece entitled "Gun Rights Play Role in Election" [Oct. 3] apparently has not

studied the gun stances of the Presidential candidates, specifically Barack Obama, to an appropriate degree to be qualified to write an unbiased article on the subject.

The statement that Sen. Obama has been "moderate" on gun control begs a little discussion on the matter. The assertion that Obama "supports" the Second Amendment and agrees with the recent Supreme Court decision (*Heller v. DC*) is completely false. Prior to the *Heller* case, Sen. Obama expressed his support for the District's near total ban on private handgun ownership. If this is the

kind of "common sense regulation" the author is talking about, I cannot see how the author is presenting an unbiased assessment.

"Common sense regulation" is also a buzzword used by those same Democrats on the "extreme end of the gun control spectrum," such as the Brady Campaign (which has issued statements proclaiming the end of all private gun ownership as a long-term goal). Is it not odd that a "moderate" would say the same things as an "extremist?"

The author then goes on to say that Sen. Obama fights the "gun society" at every turn. However,

the author does not say which gun society. Is the author referring to a father teaching his sons the finer points of target shooting on the family farm? Or is the author referring to the guy I saw selling pistols out of a backpack several weeks ago? Which does Sen. Obama oppose?

It seems that if Sen. Obama were a true moderate, he would oppose one and not the other. And yet, he has made statements and voted for bills opposing private firearm ownership, even of the mundane .22 sitting in granddad's gun safe.

He uses the same phrases, and

supported the same causes lauded by the extremist Brady Campaign, Handgun Control, Inc. and Million Mom March. Is he really a "moderate" in his gun control stance? Is he really looking out for the proud, law-abiding, gun-owning American citizen?

Gun policy aside, I would urge readers to do their own research into the true intentions and goals of all candidates for public office, and not rely on biased or misinformed literature published in the public forum.

J. Lucas Richardson  
Fourth-year ME

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