Our Views Consensus Opinion

Reasonably fair tax

Fee increase needed to keep student organizations afloat

The proposed Student Activity Fee (SAF) increase is sensible. The fee has not been increased in two years, nor has there been any adjustments for such aspects as inflation in that time period, leaving the fee unable to cope with increased student org, needs. The fee increase is small enough that it will not be a burden to most, if not all, students. It is important that student organizations are able to continue to function properly during the financial downturn. Student organizations provide an invaluable social and communal outlet to students, without which Tech would lose much of its identity. The recession has drastically decreased the abilities of organizations to fund raise off-campus, increasing the burden placed on SGA.

The slight increase in the SAF will ensure the viability of these organizations going forward. Already cuts have been made to organization budgets, such as JFC and Scuba Tech. While understandable, the cuts in some cases have been substantial.

The Consensus Opinion reflects the majority opinion of the Editorial Board of the Technique, but not the opinions of individual editors.

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Letters should not exceed 400 words and should be submitted by Tuesday at 7 p.m. in order to be printed in the following Friday’s issue. Include your full name, year (1st, 2nd, etc.) and major. We reserve the right to edit for style and length. Only one submission per person will be printed per term.

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Friday, April 2, 2010

Opinions Editor: Matt Hoffman
Nothing takes the taste out of peanut butter like unrequited love.

—Charles M. Schulz

Opinions

Time for boomers to pay for education

Regarding your recent column on student loan interest and the financ- ing of public higher education [“Student debt will hinder future growth,” published March 5], it’s time for taxpaying boomers to grow up. Most of us went to public universities, graduated without graduated without debt. We were free to go to work, grad school, serve in the Peace Corps, get married, and take most any other risk we desired. Unlike students today, we were not indentured servants. We enjoyed this freedom because previous generations sacrificed to build great public institutions of learning and assure access to all willing students.

That has changed.

The last 30 years have seen a steady real disinvestment in public higher education at the state and federal level. Expanding tuition and eroding need-based aid are evidence of that. Sadly, there is little political will in Ga. or the U.S. to pay the taxes needed for broad-based access to affordable education. Mention of tax reform is anathema in today’s political environment.

The Hope Scholarship does help some students, but it is built on the backs of the Georgias poorest, most desperate citizens. It is a wealth transfer from the poor to the more affluent and it doesn’t count as evidence of political virtue or economic wisdom.

Likewise, the idea of a 77 percent tuition increase is shameful; it too is a shift of tax burden from the old to the young. Finally, personnel reductions totaling $600 million in the university system will close the door on thousands of Ga. students at a time when education is most needed. It will further depress Ga.’s economy by reducing consumption.

Why does Ga. have a problem funding education? If we want a vital economy with a high quality of life, everyone is going to have to pull their fair share, especially the privileged at the top of the income and wealth scale. We should no longer finance education through student loans and excessive tuition hikes.

Ga. needs an overhaul of its 1937 vintage tax structure, but in the meantime, a two percent surcharge on income greater than $400,000 ($200,000 for singles) would generate $400 million annually.

And, rolling back 30 years of accumulated tax breaks legislated as favors for a small number of businesses would begin to reduce Ga.’s revenue deficit.

Thirty-one other states have taken a balanced approach to budget adjustments; they have used a combination of cuts and tax increases to maintain critical services, including secondary and higher education. My own state of N.C. has raised income taxes on the wealthy, closed special interest loopholes, and increased excise taxes.

Let’s start to invest in the next generation. Anything else undermines Ga.’s competitiveness and quality of life.

Michael Reynolds
GT Office of Development

Leaders and actions of rally misrepresented

Having just read [“Students rally at Capitol to protest budget” published March 16], I feel that there are a few issues that need to be cleared up. I believe the article mischaracterizes the role of the Young Democrats of Georgia (YDG) and the tone of the Rally. It also completely leaves out the contributions of the organization Georgia Students for Public Higher Education which worked tirelessly to organize the Rally and bring in students from all over the state of Ga.

First, the Rally had been in the planning for weeks. You would have thought that in that time, someone organizing would have obtained a permit. Steve Golden, the current YDG Chief of Staff, only obtained the permit for the Rally, because SGA’s believed they would not need one, and at the time it was uncertain if the SGA leaders were going forward with any action that day.

As for the supposed shift in tone, that is false. While there were outliers whose signs and message were more belligerent and sometimes off topic, these people were in the minority. The article makes it sound as if the YDG Rally was a mob of angry people shouting. It was an organized protest with high profile speakers including State House Minority Leader DuBose Porter and State Senator Vincent Fort. In fact, while one of the speakers was giving their speech, someone attempted via bullhorn to incite a chant and was shouted down by the crowd.

I would also like to point out that this Rally did accomplish something. Representatives from YDG and the Georgia Students for Public Higher Education met with legislators on March 18. According to one of the representatives, the meetings went very well.

Josh Koch
Ex. V.P., College Democrats
College should be treated as journey

I decided this week to postpone my graduation date another semester and graduate next spring instead of this coming fall. After taking several days to consider the pros and cons of my decision, I finally came to the realization that graduating a semester later than I originally planned and taking less classes each semester is going to be much more beneficial to my overall well-being. I don’t want to rush and graduate in Dec.

Quite frankly, I’m not entirely sure why so many students want to rush through Tech. I understand wholeheartedly the plan of this school completely breaks you down. Trust me, I’ve been there. But there is no shame in taking five (or more) years to graduate instead of four years. It makes life a whole lot easier. It also means you will most likely have a lot more enjoyable. I’m pretty sure we can all stand getting any extra enjoyment we can get our hands on.

How is it possible to enjoy any of it when taking 12-hour semesters? I can barely manage to enjoy much of anything while taking 12-hour semesters. I can’t imagine taking over 18 hours and still trying to do well in my classes with out totally losing my mind. It often feels like Tech’s goal is to make life miserable, so there is no need for students to actually try their way to help us out with that. I think most of us already have enough on our plates without adding eight extra hours to a semester.

I completely understand the position that I’ve heard countless times: “I just want to get out.” Whether or not one is taking classes during the summer. Even though it doesn’t give you a break from Tech and not be able to think of more than two things about my time here that I sincerely enjoyed.

Instead of being miserable with over-packaged, push some of it off until the summer semester. Over the years I have come to realize the large number of classes during the summer. Even though it doesn’t give you a “break” in the sense that you aren’t taking classes for a few months, it does give you a break from the over-crowded classroom, class hours and sidewalks.

I’ve found the summer semesters are much more laid back with respect to class pace and intensity. Some of my favorite classes at Tech are ones I have taken during a summer semester. The smaller class size also means more individual attention from professors, which can lead to research opportunities or someone of importance in your field of study to write you a recommendation. I’ve also made a lot more friends during summer classes due to smaller class size and the fact that there is actually enough time to socialize with other people.

Another plus about not rushing into graduation is that there is more time for you to figure out what your interests are instead of your major’s. Even if you go to Tech and end up laying out for your what your interests are, say a Mechanical Engineering, should be. Branch out. Take classes outside of your major.

Take classes besides the electives that are required. You might not always find a topic that you really enjoy. It’s possible some of you CS majors out there would thoroughly enjoy learning about different Media texts or Public Policy. The only way to find that is to branch out and take classes besides ones that are required for graduation. Maybe you’ll even find a minor in the process.

Challenges, once upon a time, used to be intended to create individuals who were proficient in many areas of study. Instead of graduating detailed knowledge in one area of study, you would graduate as a “Jack of all trades” if you will. There are many benefits to having a vast array of skills and interests that can be applied.

So before you decide to over-schedule and over-work yourself next semester with 20 hours of course-work, take a step back and consider what happiness before you decide you want to rush into graduation. Enjoy your time at Tech and learn everything you can about as many topics as you can. Happily, less stressed students means a better environment for all of us. If people didn’t seem so miserable, I would definitely be less stressed out.

Whether or not you take the advice, at least take it to heart and do what you think will be more beneficial to your well-being during your brief time in college.

College basketball has lost its moral fiber

Despite the exciting NCAA tournament and the successful Tech season, it is obvious to me that the state of college basketball is at a low point. It has descended into a pseudo minor league system for the NCAA and one that states the importance of education and integrity while negotiating multi billion dollar contracts and selling a blind eye to many indiscretions.

The coaches have shifted away from clean living athletes to one that only emphasize results. Bobby Knight, NCAA Division I wrestling coach, was revered because he tried to run teams with high academic standards and opposed prospective players to tell him why they wanted to go to his program, not the other way around. And yet now, most schools are uninterested in high school players to his own interest to put his team in coaching jobs.

Now, coaches like John Calipari have entered the hot products. Calipari has produced outstanding results everywhere he has coached at the college level, leading both Massachusetts and Memphis to NCAA Final Four runs. He left both programs for what he believed to be a more lucrative job. Calipari is sure to succeed with his team on both for major infractions and vacated wins. Yet, he was welcomed with open arms by Kentucky last year, one of the most storied programs in history. At the top schools, results trump everything else.

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“The NCAA is complicit in provid- ing the professional leagues with a minor league system.”

Hahnmee Lee Business Manager

The NCAA is complicit in providing the professional leagues with a minor league system. Europe, most still think the NBA’s arbitrary age rule is because they believe the product is “better” and more entertaining when they allow these phenomenons to go to school for at least one year. Imagine LeBron James, Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant playing for some college team. The assumption is that allowing these one-and-dones in would raise the level of the NBA. For many, the logical plan is just to go to college for one year and then drop out. While Brandon Jennings and others have devoted by going abroad or even dropping out of high school to go to professional leagues in Europe, most still think the only solution is to go to a rando campus for one year. The NCAA is complicit in provid- ing the professional leagues with a minor league system so that they can earn billions of dollars. They make a farce of the concept of “education.”

One of the reasons I suspect the college teams really do this is because they believe the product is “better” and more entertaining when they allow these phenomenons to go to school for at least one year. Imagine LeBron James, Kevin Garnett and Kobe Bryant playing for some college team. The assumption is that allowing these one-and-dones in would raise the level of the NBA. For many, the logical plan is just to go to college for one year and then drop out. While Brandon Jennings and others have devoted

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Some players defend these rules by saying that the NBA forces these kids to mature and that these kids are given an education they otherwise would not have ever pursued. I would answer that many only go to school for a semester and a quarter, dropping out during the second semester. If the kids are not mature enough, the one year in college will likely not solve the problem.

I think the solution is to create a separate minor league system where players are paid to play and have to work their way up, similar to what professional baseball has in its current system. These players whose sole focus is the NBA could go and play basketball. Much of the blame is to be placed on the fans. We want teams to succeed at any cost. That means making a mockery of education and college basketball, so be it. As long as it is entertaining, even for just one year.
Legendary women of Tech shape the Institute in invaluable ways

This past week Val and I attended the 11th Annual Women in Engineering Excellence Award Banquet, where we were overwhelmed by all of the amazing young women we talked to and met. Reflecting on that experience, it is hard to believe that for the first 67 years, Tech did not admit women into its full-time programs. Thanks to the bold leadership of Blake Van Leer, Tech’s fifth president, they are today a vital and important part of Tech.

For Van Leer, the quest was highly personal. His wife, Ella Wall Van Leer, earned a degree in Architecture from the U. of California. However, because of Tech’s restrictions on the admission of women, his daughter, Maryly, had to attend Vanderbilt in order to pursue her degree in chemical engineering.

In 1947, President Van Leer proposed a change in this policy to the Board of Regents. The concept was very controversial: arguments against it included the need to rearrange dorms and classes and to modify speech, conduct, and appearance. Others claimed that girls at Tech were an “academic distraction” or that it would mean poorer seats at football games.

The regents rejected President Van Leer’s co-ed proposal. But Tech and the women of Atlanta persisted. Van Leer enlisted Tech’s librarian, Dorothy Cooland, to help his wife, Ella, mobilize local women’s groups. The Atlanta Women’s Chamber of Commerce formally petitioned the regents, a petition that was supported by a resolution from Tech’s undergraduate student council.

On April 9, 1952, the regents voted 7-5 to admit women on a full-time basis, but limited admission to programs not offered at other units within the University System of Georgia, such as engineering or architecture. That limited admission policy continued until it was abolished in 1968.

Tech’s first two female graduates, Diane Michel and Shirley Clements, graduated in 1956. Responding to a frequently asked questions, Clements said that, no, the reason she came to Tech was not to find a husband.

“Any girl who does is getting one the hard way,” said Clements. “...This is such a tough school, and the girls who come here for a lark don’t last long enough to get married.”

In 2000, Shirley Clements Mewborn retired as vice president and treasurer of Southern Engineering, capping a 41-year career. For her leadership and inspiration to Tech, our softball complex is named in her memory.

Today, Tech is the number one producer of women engineers in the country. Thirty percent of our 20,000 students are women. And I’m proud to say women now occupy 42 percent of the leadership positions in our 400 student organizations, including positions as president of both the undergraduate and graduate student body.

Today, there are 18 female Tech graduates working at NASA. In 1992, Tech’s first alumna to become an astronaut boarded the Shuttle Endeavour. Today, Jan Davis (Bio ’75) is a veteran of three space shuttle flights, and serves as deputy director of the Flight Project Directorate at the Marshall Space Center. Susan Still Kirlairn (MS, AE ’85) made astronaut history in 1997 as a member of the first shuttle crew to fly back-to-back missions and was the second woman to pilot the space shuttle.

As underscored by these handfuls of examples, it is clear that here at Tech we are not just preparing our graduates for jobs, we are preparing them for careers and for leadership in a changing world.

Thanks to the leadership of President Van Leer and our rigorous academic programs with their strong focus on leadership, today all of our students, both men and women, have the potential and opportunity to help shape our world and make it a better place.

President Van Leer had the pleasure of seeing his daughter Maryly enroll at Tech as its first female PhD student. Unfortunately, President Van Leer did not live to see the first woman graduate from Tech. But, being the visionary he was, I have no doubt that he would have been as proud to be there and to witness the success of the women of Tech as Val and I were.