Opinions Editor: Zheng Zheng
Cowardice is almost always simply a lack of ability to suspend functioning of the imagination.
—Ernest Hemingway

Violations present key lessons
Tech must learn and improve from NCAA penalties

Without question, the Institute deserves its share of blame for the penalties handed down by the NCAA last week. The Tech officials directly involved in the situation should have been more cautious and aware of the guidelines, especially given that Tech was still subject to repeat offender status following major NCAA violations in 2005. Athletic Director Dan Radakovich is experienced enough to know that when there is even somewhat plausible evidence of a player being ineligible, the player needs to be pulled from the games. The players should be aware of the implications of their actions, but at the same time, the onus is on Tech’s athletic department to properly educate them in such matters.

However, despite the fact that the NCAA held legitimate claims on certain issues, many of their allegations were based on conclusions drawn from inferences, rather than hard information. Also, though the NCAA insisted that inferences, rather than hard information, were based on conclusions drawn from certain issues, many of their allegations NCAA held legitimate claims on athletic department to properly educate but at the same time, the onus is on Tech’s from the games. The players should be ineligible, the player needs to be pulled plausible evidence of a player being knowing that when there is even somewhat Radakovich is experienced enough to situation should have been more cautious and back up their views that Tech will enact measures to ensure that any future situations are handled properly.

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

Google+ establishes new social media standards

By John Davis
The Crimson White

(UWire) — Facebook and I have fallen into a “married with children” type relationship. We’ve been at it for so long and invested so much time and effort into another that, despite any real flaws, we’re pretty much content.

Privacy-wise aside, Facebook performs all the necessary functions I could ever want, and even some useful ones that I didn’t know I would use until they were presented to me. It’s a cloud of its own, where all my pictures and even my thoughts are saved. All my friends are on Facebook, as is most of my extended family – for better or worse.

Still, in Internet years, Facebook continues to grow longer in the tooth with each passing year, and I suppose it was inevitable that at some point our KNOWATELLENEREDEZHERCHALLENGER would appear in the guise of colorful letters and a slick, minimalistic interface. Enter Google+. As Xanga and LiveJournal gave way to MySpace, and MySpace eventually gave way to Facebook, it’s time for social media to reach its logical conclusion: Google+.

At first glance, it’s easy to brush off Google+ as nothing but a Facebook clone along with an impressive brand name. After all, there is a “Friends” list of sorts, though those people are listed as “in your circles.” The stream looks very familiar, and you can share thoughts and videos and pictures and anything else your heart desires. So why switch?

A friend put it into perspective best: “In...the space of a day, Google+ has made me feel like one of those ape people at the beginning of 2001: A Space Odyssey. If Google+ is life and civilization, everything I have been using feels like hitting rocks with other rocks. That’s pretty a powerful thought considering the ubiquity of Facebook.

There are a few key features that separate Google+ from Facebook and even Twitter, for that matter. Chief among them is the concept of “circles.”

Essentially, it works the same way your social circles work in real life: when you befriend someone, you place them into a circle, or a type of category.

So if you have inside jokes with your college friends that your high school friends won’t get, simply specify that your post be only seen by your “College Friends” circle. Alternatively, if you’re the type of person who likes to get drunk and swear a lot on Facebook, Google+ can make sure your parents never see it.

Another key feature specific to the mobile app (an app that is Android-only at the moment) is the Huddle. The Huddle is basically a text message chat room: choose a circle, send a message and everyone in the circle gets the message. When one person replies, every-
Grade inflations discredit earned merits

An A and a 4.0 GPA mean less today than they did 50 years ago. Many students, high in hubris and low in moderacy, wear their high GPAs on their sleeves proudly, while many of their As were given rather than earned.

The relative percentage of As given out has been on the rise in college classrooms for decades. One recent study puts the total percentage of the As thousand at the U.S. university system at 43 percent, making it the most devalued letter of the grading alphabet.

Half a century ago, grades were distributed on a fairer, more centrally balanced scale. As made up 15 percent of grades, while Bs and Cs each accounted for 35 percent of the pie, respectively.

As current students, it would be convenient to conclude that Tech is smarter than past graduates. Unfortunately, that’s no more than wishful thinking according to pre-requisite material, expecting the entire class to recite the answer as easily as the Pledge of Allegiance, only to find a crowded room of furrowed brows and uncomfortable silence.

This is a byproduct of grade inflation and the fact that we as students are spending less and less time studying and completing assignments.

The whole situation is a bit of a Catch-22. Students’ (and their parents’) wallers are fortunate for the curve, especially with the HOPE Scholarship creating nostalgia, and thus grading floor that many students can’t go under. Surely, it and similar scholarships have had some hand in the recent inflation rates.

The intellectual integrity of Tech and other four-year institutions is in a precarious state and suffering. Students are used to the higher grades, even if they aren’t always earned. And teachers are getting used to giving students the grades they want, not the ones they deserve.

I know of multiple students who have broken down into tears in front of teachers for a letter grade adjustment, convincing professors that there is some family emergency or medical crisis when there isn’t—and then gloating about it afterwards with glazing smiles as if they pulled off some sort of magic trick.

These professors and students are doing a disservice to the part of the student body who accept what they have earned. As or Fs. Not only are they cheapening the Tech degree, they’re cheapening the meaning of a high GPA at Tech.

It’s hard to blame the professors either. They have huge incentives to pad their students’ grades. Good reviews can in turn lead to faster promotions and better pay.

The authors of the study call the overall effect of higher grades “consumer-based,” by which professors alter higher grades to improve their students’ customer experiences.

The effect is clearly more prevalent at private universities, but is also present in public universities like Tech.

But while paying to go to school does make students consumers, grades aren’t and shouldn’t be a negotiation.

They are a measurement of not only knowledge, but student character. Even a bad grade says something about a student. A real grade shows the true character of its earner. An inflated one, like most things filled with hot air, will either pop or deflate given enough time in the real world.

Interestingly enough, the inflation effect is severely restricted or even nonexistent at non-selective public schools (those with rejection rates of about 15 percent or less and GPAs at or below 2.8) and community colleges.

It’s hard to imagine the trend reversing, or in fact growing down, as long as it persists at other schools.

It seems that Tech, a school traditionally known for its challenging grading curves, is only following the paths of its peer institutions in an effort to recruit the best students. All students should get second opportunities, but not free passes.

As the study shows, Tech is hardly the worst in class where inflation is concerned. And not all of its academic shifts have been for the worse. After all, downtown-proofing no longer exists. So while we can’t hold our grades (after adjusted for inflation) over their heads, at least we don’t have to worry about getting an F in downtown-proofing, or what Tech students used to call “Drowning 101.”

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Tech students should actively seek participation in government roles

I have spent the past two months in Washington, D.C., feeling like something was missing from the city. I only realized what was missing when I told one of my co-workers about an energy bar my friends and I use for hiking, which is so effective that we call it "Lembas bread." She stared back at me, blankly, not getting the reference.

D.C. suffers from an acute lack of nerds. That’s not to say that we don’t exist in Washington. I virtually rounded up as many people from Tech as I could find to figure out why we had collectively come here.

Some of us came to pursue an interest in politics, while others found straight engineering jobs. All of us, engineers and engineers-at-heart, wanted to get right to the center of organizations which weigh in on the policies that affect us all.

“I was able to not only see members of Congress in action, but I was able to talk to them and question them on issues like the debt ceiling, legislative strategy, the political party system and more,” said Hunter Hammond, an East Commons. 

Some felt mildly interested in the political scene and have managed to find their way into it, as well. “I’m interning with CNN, largely studying the intersection between science and journalism and the extent to which news coverage impacts what people care about and ultimately how they vote,” Foreman said.

It’s time for Washington and other centers of government to get more people like Foreman, Hammond and the rest of the students from Tech spending the summer in D.C. who want to jump into the thick of the policy arena. Our world is defined by science and technology—thus it only makes sense that our leaders have solid backdrops in those fields and be able to think in the ways that only Tech can make them think.

Aмира Choueiki, a fifth-year EIA major, shares the sentiment. “Working in D.C. at a think tank, my boss told me that he was sick of people that came to D.C. and didn’t know how to solve—with today’s problems we need people that aren’t afraid of the technical world and working with those people collaboratively,” Choueiki said.

Thankfully, the Institute has begun enacting programs that will give Tech students the tools and inspiration necessary for them to begin entering this crazy world of politics and policy. The Office of Government and Community Relations’ new scholarship fund aims with those people collaboratively,” Choueiki said.

Successfully, the Institute has begun enacting programs that will give Tech students the tools and inspiration necessary for them to begin entering this crazy world of politics and policy. The Office of Government and Community Relations’ new scholarship fund aims to begin changing the world.

Most importantly, it’s time for more of the student body to passionately strive to become leaders in government. Those who are interested in that path need to take the excitement stoked during our summers abroad and translate them into the beginnings of real political action. They need to make sure the efforts they begin this fall last throughout the year and beyond by building robust or- ganizations and initiatives.

“Tech makes us unafraid,” Choueiki said about Tech students’ place in D.C. “We’re excited by the complex issues we face today, we’re used to working with different types of people, we know how to get our hands dirty and we know how to work hard.”

As we return to Atlanta for the fall, those of us interested in policy and politics have a chance to help awesome people do awesome things through sound policy and passionate advocacy. Immediately and confidently, we have no choice but to seize that chance and begin changing the world.

“Our world is defined by science and technology – it only makes sense that our leaders have solid backdrops in those fields.”

Mike Donohue
Columnist