ASK AWAY

Why does the whistle blow before football games?

According to Harold Cash, power plant manager for Facilities, the whistle blowing signals that the players have arrived at the stadium for the game. “When the players arrive — about 2.5 hours before game time — we blow the whistle for two minutes in quick, short blasts. During the game, it is blown for each touchdown in short blasts for one minute. After a GT win, the whistle is blown to celebrate for five minutes in short and semi-short blasts.”

Have a Tech-related question that you’d like answered? Email it to editor@comm.gatech.edu.

NEWS BRIEFS

Engineering Ranked No. 1 for Hispanic Graduate Students

For the fourth consecutive year, the College of Engineering has been ranked No. 1 in the United States for Hispanic graduate students by Hispanic Business magazine.

http://tinyurl.com/3mnlb2l

Tech, Gwinnett Tech Receive $1.65 Million for Job Creation

Georgia Tech and Gwinnett Technical College, part of the Atlanta Health Information Technology cluster, have been awarded a $1.65 million grant to enhance the state’s capabilities in this sector. Learn more at http://tinyurl.com/3nqe4bx

Computers, continued on page 2

Study Focuses on Computers, Older Adults

MATT NAGEL
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

The rapid evolution of computers makes it challenging for computer-savvy users to keep up, but what about older Americans? How useful are computers to the aging population?

A team of researchers from Georgia Tech and Florida State University are investigating the perceptions older adults have of the usefulness of computers as a communication tool. This study examined the degree to which demographic variables, technology and computer experience, and the perceived importance of an activity for older adults’ quality of life influenced the older adults’ perceived importance of the computer for communication activities.

“The research will broaden our understanding of technology acceptance for older adults,” said Wendy Rogers, School of Psychology professor and principal investigator. “Our findings will help guide the design of future systems as well as the development of better instruction and training for current computer systems.” Although some findings were anticipated based on previous work, the research did uncover some unexpected results that may lead to future research.

“One of the more surprising findings was that within this sample of older adults, the oldest individuals found a computer more useful for communication activities,” said John Burnett, a graduate student on the research team. “There could be several reasons for this finding, and it deserves more research.” It could be that older computer users are less mobile and therefore more likely to find certain types of communication tools more important to them, Burnett added.

Researchers believe that this type of research is important because it has implications for how products are developed and how the United States designs for an aging population.

“It is not that older adults are afraid of technology, but maybe that technology is not designed in a way that is useful to or usable by older adults,” Burnett said. “It could also be that older adults are not aware of some of the potential benefits of these communication technologies.”

The research showed that those surveyed preferred certain types of computer communication. Email and emailing photos were the most important communication tool for those older adults surveyed, whereas video conferencing and social networking were not as important.

The research revealed that older adults generally strongly preferred specific computer-based communication technologies. For designers, this would suggest a need for making technologies more usable for older adults.

For example, including video conferencing or forums that are difficult to use or poorly understood by the user may only

Planning for ‘X Degree’ Moves Forward

AMELIA PAVLIK
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Finding the right balance of structure and flexibility has been an ongoing challenge for the committee tasked with developing a plan for a Georgia Tech interdisciplinary “X degree.”

“I think some people have concerns about a degree program where students play a major role in designing the curricula, because they think students will be unsupervised and the degree program won’t be as rigorous,” said Richard Barke, chair of the committee. “But what we’re looking to create is a program that offers flexibility within certain constraints and still emphasizes a challenging curriculum.

The logic behind the X degree — which was originally known as the “X-College” — is that it would serve a small group of students interested in a unique educational experience and who would excel in a degree program that didn’t restrict them to one major’s requirements.

“This program would be designed for those few students who have had five different majors and still haven’t found the ‘right’ combination of learning opportunities — not students who are looking for an easy way out of taking certain classes,” Barke said. “The program will seek students who are highly motivated to be creative and ‘unboxable.’”

X DEGREE, continued on page 3

Game Day Recycling Gets Off to Strong Start

Since 2008, Georgia Tech’s Office of Solid Waste and Recycling has been leading a program that helps divert some of the waste generated through pre-game celebrations — glass, aluminum and food waste — away from area landfills. In three games, the team has helped divert 8.5 tons of waste and hopes to break last year’s record of 21 tons. For more about Game Day Recycling and how to volunteer, visit www.recycle.gatech.edu/programs/gdr.php

www.whistle.gatech.edu
Students to Provide Prosthetics at New Clinic

JASON MADEBER
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

It’s a win-win situation for students in Tech’s Master of Science in Prosthetics and Orthotics (MSPO) program and the patients they will serve at a new clinic.

Atlanta’s Good Samaritan Health Center (GSHC) and Prosthetic Hope International, in cooperation with the MSPO program, are opening the Prosthetic and Orthotic (P&O) Community Clinic at Good Samaritan. The new P&O lab will be primarily operated by second-year MSPO students who will be supervised by Georgia Tech Research Scientist Rob Kistenberg and licensed prosthetists and orthotists.

“The students will be able to combine their didactic education with their clinical and technical skills, in a supervised setting, to provide prostheses and orthoses to underserved people in Atlanta,” Kistenberg said.

The clinic is being equipped and stocked through a grant from the St. Luke’s Episcopal Outreach Program. Students will start seeing patients in October.

Dr. Bill Warren founded the GSHC in 1998 in downtown Atlanta with the mission of providing quality health care to those unable to afford it. The center is a full-time health care home that provides care to uninsured and underserved individuals and families in metro Atlanta with medical, dental, mental health and health education services. Now in its 13th year of operation, GSHC has affiliate locations in Cobb and Gwinnett counties.

In 2010, more than 500 volunteers donated 10,000 hours of service and, together with the center’s full-time staff, provided more than 23,700 patient visits. Roughly 65 percent of those treated were uninsured, working poor. Patients pay for services based on a greatly reduced sliding fee scale. Those who are unable to pay receive care at no charge.

Kistenberg is Georgia Tech’s coordinator of prosthetics and MSPO program. His research focus areas include the development of novel upper extremity prostheses and controls, functional aesthetic restoration, and evaluation and enhancement of prosthetic and orthotic rehabilitation services in developing nations.

www.ap.gatech.edu/mspo
In 1998, Tech alumna Shannon Scott received a flyer advertising what was the first Georgia Tech Women’s Leadership Conference (WLC), and she was intrigued.

“Between the time I sent in my registration and the conference, I found a job at Georgia Tech,” said the training specialist in Diversity Management and Compliance.

“The first conference turned out to be my first week working at Tech, and I felt like I had returned home. After that, I looked for a way to get involved and have been on the WLC Advisory Board ever since.”

The WLC was created to bring women on and off campus together and promote leadership. It is open to anyone interested in attending — whether male or female — from Tech, the Atlanta area and beyond. The event is planned by Tech students who are advised by the Women’s Resource Center.

This year’s conference will open on Nov. 4 at 5 p.m. with a networking reception; dinner, keynote from Annie Eaton, director of the CSC Policy Compliance Initiative and professor in the Department of Computer Science, College of Engineering, North Carolina State University, and co-metalist of the 2011 Women of Distinction Awards. The awards go to an outstanding faculty and staff member, alumna, and graduate and undergraduate student.

The conference continues on Nov. 5 with breakfast and lunch keynote addresses from Gail Evans, author of “Play Like a Man, Win Like a Woman,” and Laura Finney, CEO of We Can Do That and Laura Finney Enterprises sessions. There will also be a selection of breakout sessions to attend, which in years past have ranged from a Zumba dance fitness class to a session on using LinkedIn for networking purposes.

“This conference is an outstanding source of professional development that is right in our own backyard,” Scott said. “I have heard life-changing speakers and workshop presenters at this conference.”

Take advantage of the early registration rates of $10 for students and $23 for non-students until Oct. 14. After that date, the rates are $15 and $30 for each group until Oct. 21.

“I’d put this conference up against any professional conference you might attend,” said Stephanie Ray, associate dean of students and advisory board member. “Attending or volunteering is worth your time and energy. This is a Tech signature program, and no one can do it better.”

To register or learn more about the conference or volunteering, visit the following website:

www.gtwl.com

Biology Prof Leads Underwater Research Mission

JOHN TOON
RESEARCH NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

A team of researchers led by Biology Professor Mark Hay recently spent 10 days underwater to study how the diversity of seaweed-eating fish affects endangered coral reefs off the coast of Florida.

Hay, two PhD students and a postdoctoral researcher lived 50 feet below the surface in the underwater lab Aquarius.

The team is studying how seaweed and fish affect the health of coral reefs in the Pacific Ocean and Caribbean Sea. They’ve shown that the natural defenses of seaweed can harm the coral and that plant-eating fish can control the growth of the noxious seaweed.

“Our mission to Aquarius will allow us to study experimentally how herbivore diversity may be managed to conserve and even restore reefs,” said Hay, the Harry and Linda Teasely Chair in the School of Biology, prior to the mission. “In previous studies, we have demonstrated that herbivore diversity affected the function and structure of the coral reefs. We plan to build on that research in this new study through Aquarius.”

For the full story, go to http://tinyurl.com/6aayq3o

X DEGREE, continued from page 1

The committee is focusing on the following design principles, which will serve as the foundation for the degree:

• It will be flexible. Students will have a hand in designing their own curricula but will be supervised every step of the way by faculty members.

• It will encourage greater faculty-student interaction and require students to share their ideas and innovations with other students and external communities.

• It will be rigorous. “We want employers and graduate schools to continue seeing Georgia Tech graduates as some of the top in the nation,” Barke said. “But our definition of what constitutes a ‘rigorous’ program may need to evolve.”

• It will be assessment-friendly. The program will rely on constant feedback from students and faculty members, and eventually employers, regarding which aspects of the program are working and which aren’t, so it needs to have assessable objectives.

• It will be innovative. “This program needs to be agile,” Barke said. “It should regularly evolve based on creative ideas from students and faculty, and even employers.”

For some time, our students have asked the administration to offer some kind of self-directed learning options,” said Provost Rafael L. Bras. “The X degree concept will complement existing degree programs to reflect the rigor of a Georgia Tech education while preparing students for creative careers.”

In the weeks to come, the committee will be submitting a draft proposal to Tech’s colleges and schools and encourages each unit to share ideas and feedback.

For more information, contact Barbie at richard.barke@pugholicy.gatech.edu.

www.gatech.edu/vision

Article Ideas?
If you have an article idea for an upcoming Whistle, we want to hear it. Email us at editor@comm.gatech.edu.

www.whistle.gatech.edu
Marcantel’s Career Was Risk that Paid Off

AMELIA PAVLIK
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Nothing is scarier than spending years preparing for a career only to realize it might not be the right fit — just ask Tanner Marcantel.

“I’m not a risk taker, but I would have to say that the biggest risk I ever took was choosing to leave behind all of the work I’d invested in learning foreign languages from middle school through college to give working in student affairs a shot,” said the assistant dean of students and director of Greek Affairs. “But it paid off.”

It was during his senior year at Louisiana State University (LSU) that Marcantel became interested in student affairs. He had a part-time job working in the Office of the Dean of Students, and it was Dean James Trot who encouraged Marcantel to consider making the switch.

Marcantel’s experience as a member of the Theta Xi fraternity at LSU made him a good fit for Greek Affairs. Prior to arriving at Tech about a year ago, Marcantel spent four years at Vanderbilt overseeing the area.

“I’m really passionate about my job, because my Greek experience was amazing,” he said. “When a fraternity is done right, it can be an amazing opportunity to develop lifelong skills.”

Recently, the Whistle had an opportunity to learn more about Marcantel and his time at Tech.

What is the biggest misconception about your job?

“A lot of people think that I just babysit children all of the time when really my job is to help students reflect on the choices that they make — good and bad — and learn from them.

So, what do you spend your days doing?

I spend a great deal of my day communicating with students and campus colleagues. This takes the form of student organization meetings and individual conversations with students. These discussions always relate to Greek Life’s relevance to Tech and how students actions affect our contributions to campus. I also spend time supervising and mentoring a professional staff, who work closely with our student leaders.

What is most satisfying about your work?

There’s not a lot of instant gratification in this job. Sometimes it takes years to know that I’ve made a difference. For example, one student from Vanderbuilt called me several years after I’d worked with her. She wanted me to know that a conversation we’d had stuck with her and helped her get through personal and professional situations. Moments like these are really satisfying.

What piece of technology could you not live without personally and professionally?

I have to feel connected, so I use my iPad for everything from Facebook to work email.

Which do you prefer: Facebook, Twitter or a world without all of this social media stuff?

I’d say facebook because it lets me know what’s going on, whether it’s keeping up with friends from high school or getting news about pop culture.

What is your favorite spot on campus?

It would be by the Campanile where you are surrounded by this traditional college environment, but you look up and see the skyline of Atlanta. That’s one of the best things about Tech — you get a college campus feel in the middle of a major city.

What is the best advice you’ve ever received?

A speaker I once heard said, “Figure out what you’re passionate about, learn to do it well and find a way to get paid for it.”

If you could have dinner with one person, dead or alive, who would it be?

I would probably be my grandparent on my dad’s side who passed away before I graduated from college. (I’m the oldest of 17 grandchildren.) I would love to fill him in on everything that has happened.

Tanner Marcantel

Series Provides Venue for Intellectual Discussion

AMELIA PAVLIK
COMMUNICATIONS & MARKETING

Regardless of your education level, everyone on campus is invited to join the discussion at Tech’s weekly Open Forum meetings.

“The best conversations at Open Forum transcend generations, and they transcend faculty, staff and student boundaries,” said Steve Fazenbaker, director of the Wesley Foundation at Georgia Tech and Open Forum board member. “Students offer keen insight about contemporary life and bring fresh and hopeful perspectives to the conversations. Meanwhile, faculty and staff contribute an element of wisdom that only comes through living life.”

Open Forum got its official start in fall of 2010. The Office of Undergraduate Studies created the program to provide students with an opportunity to engage in unbiased intellectual discussions with peers, as well as faculty and staff.

During each session, a facilitator provides a five-minute introduction about the week’s topic, which can range from piracy to religion. Participants break off into groups of about four to six people to discuss. The last 10 to 15 minutes of the one-hour session is spent with each group providing a brief summary of what they discussed.

Facilitators provide groups with a discussion guide that includes anything from questions to quotes to aid the conversation.

“The discussions are never mundane,” said Ameet Doshi, a librarian at the Georgia Tech Library and Open Forum board member. “It is illuminating to hear student opinions on issues of importance directly from them — rather than through a filter.”

Topics are selected during brainstorming sessions held by the board or from suggestions from attendees. Board members not only serve as facilitators for most of the sessions, but they also select featured facilitators for the monthly “This I Believe” edition of Open Forum.

“In these sessions, there’s not really a guiding topic in advance — a theme will develop based on what the person talks about during his or her introduction,” said Matt Leflun, communications specialist for Undergraduate Studies. “Usually, the theme is something that is very personal to the speaker.

Past “This I Believe” speakers have included First Lady Valerie Peterson and Undergraduate Student Government Association President Elle Creel.

Open Forum sessions are held most Thursdays from 11 a.m. to noon in room 205, Clough Commons.

The topic of discussion for the next session, which will be held on Oct. 6, is “Real Life: Does Technology Inhibit Our Ability to Communicate?”

Quick answer for run on three issues in the order in which you receive them. Email submissions to editor@comm.gatech.edu.

http://gtopenforum.gatech.edu