

OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, March 23, 2001

OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

Shaft 1 or shaft 2?

During SGA elections this coming Monday through Wednesday, students will also vote on options concerning graduation for this fall and future semesters. This referendum may be the beginning of an encouraging trend of cooperation between SGA and the President's Office. Even more incredibly, the President's Office promises to respect the collective decision of the students; the winning option will be policy for years to come. This year, students have one more reason to vote than in years past, as this policy will directly affect all students graduating after Fall 2001. Regardless of whether or not students like either of the two options, seeking input in a referendum is a good way to resolve the issue.

Don't forget basics

A recent step in the School of LCC will create a new undergraduate track within the STaC major that focuses on film and media studies. While expanded course offerings can benefit students, the School must carefully ensure that the opportunity to take such classes does not distract from learning strong writing and communication skills that the new courses may not emphasize. Too many students come to the Student Publications office to improve their writing skills and learn how to string sentences together; these skills should be learned in English 1001 and 1002. The School must focus on teaching core communication skills while broadening to include classes that may not share a similar emphasis.

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

Give liberal arts classes the respect they deserve

This past week's article on the Ivan Allen College's ten year anniversary brings home a point which needs to be addressed. While Tech struggles to give its liberal arts program respect, the Tech student community does not give their fellow peers any respect. Tech students, specifically engineers and science majors, suffer from arrogance.

The Tech engineer believes that they are one of the best engineers because they are. However, these engineers and scientists, and even some ex-Ivan Allen College members, the Dupree folks, assume that Ivan Allen majors are "worthless" or "don't teach you anything". During my classes, I have watched countless engineers and scientists bring their opinions and arrogance to bear on such things as modern political theory, ethics, or any number of literary courses. All areas where they don't have a clue. Another common response to the knowledge of my major is, oh you're one of them. In their own minds, they think that they have mastered this liberal arts field like all the others. In reality, they have only confirmed they are fools.

I suggest two things. Firstly, The students must realize that experts in these fields are worthwhile and do make significant impacts, then these majors will no longer be considered second-class citizens, the "fun" classes

for the engineering "gods" on campus. Until Tech students go into a liberal arts class to learn, rather than show off their arrogance, the Ivan Allen College will garner no internal respect. This second-class attitude has to change with the students.

Secondly, funding and interest must be increased. Interest in the Ivan Allen College has grown especially among those brave individuals who recognize the merits of a liberal arts education. Outside interest by professionals and prospective students will only help these departments. Funding must accompany this new interest, allowing these departments, and the Tech community to grow in numbers and intellectual sophistication. While Tech builds new bio and environmental buildings for great profit to the engineering departments, the areas of real value are overlooked. The students, University Board of Regents, and the higher ups in the Tech administration can achieve a new goal: a renowned liberal arts college based at a highly renowned state technical institution that earns funding on its own merits. Until Tech students and the university system realize this, Tech will ultimately be a second-class university, with a great engineering program.

Jason Heasley
gt1796a@prism.gatech.edu

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Quote of the week:

"I'm living so far beyond my income that we may almost be said to be living apart."
— ee cummings



YOUR VIEWS Letters to the Editor

GSG "inefficiency" is actually sour grapes

As the Graduate Executive, we cannot ignore the false and ignorant charges made by Ms. Melissa Matassa of Women's Awareness Month about the Graduate Student Government (GSG).

First, the Graduate Student Senate (GSS) is organized as a legislature, and we are a deliberative body. We comply with Robert's Rules, and our meetings follow parliamentary procedure. Every group that comes before us is given time to present their request. The Women's Awareness Month representatives had ample opportunity to present their case, and also to an-

swer the Senate's questions.

As part of our so-called "inefficiency," Matassa's supporters asked for a waiver of our Bylaws to consider their bill out of turn, which seriously inconvenienced other groups that had been waiting longer. It seems that she expects special treatment, and she got it. It is surprising she would complain after jumping to the head of the line, but we believe her specious charges resulted from a failure to convince the Senate that the request was meritorious.

Matassa failed to mention the legislation that generated this con-

trovery, money for Women's Awareness Month that included \$4000 for an obscure speaker. With an optimistic projection of 200 Tech attendees, the GSS was asked to fund \$20 a person for an event with limited campus-wide appeal. As a body, the GSG has repeatedly denied excessive speaker's fees that do not serve a wide audience.

Further, the GSG has repeatedly fought to cap outrageous speaker's fees, and in turn support programming that benefits the entire Tech community, not just an

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By Matt Norris / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

“Organizational ego” discourages campus involvement

Simpler and more direct application processes, inclusiveness, and diversity could help Tech organizations continue to grow and improve instead of becoming inbred cliques

In the past several years, a grassroots movement began here at Georgia Tech. Administrators and faculty decided they wanted to encourage students to excel not only in the classroom, but also in leadership endeavors. The result of this brainstorm is the Georgia Tech Leadership Initiative—a proposal that is partly in place and partly in the planning stages. This plan would develop strategies and training for Tech students that would allow them to hone their leadership skills.

While this Initiative is an important one, it should not be necessary. With hundreds of student organizations already on campus, the doors of opportunity should already be open for students who are willing to step in and do the work. Unfortunately, many campus organizations require applications processes that are so painstaking and contrived that they actually discourage involvement—especially students who are trying to get involved for the first time. I call this syndrome organizational ego, and too many Tech student groups suffer from this illness.

Organizational ego can show itself through a variety of symptoms, but the most distinctive sign is an extensive multi-step application and interview process. Any organization that requires an application, followed by group interview, and supplemented with an application suffers from organizational ego. ‘Why make such a claim,’ you ask. ‘Maybe these organizations just want to select their members carefully,’ you contend. Well, allow me to make a compar-

“The organizational ego virus has detrimental effects for aspiring leaders as well as the organization itself.”

Jody Shaw
Managing Editor



son. Georgia Tech’s President’s Scholarship Program requires only one application—the same one every Tech student fills out, an individual interview that takes approximately thirty minutes, and a group interview that is about an hour in length. Using data from those sources, as well as teacher recommendations and SAT scores, the PSP is able to adequately and fairly allocate thousands of dollars to individual students. If an elaborate five-hour long group interview, such as the one used by FASET orientation, is not required to earn a four-year scholarship worth thousands of dollars, then no Tech student group can justify such a requirement. Last time I checked, no student group was awarding stipends for membership.

Other signs of organizational ego can include, but are not limited to, those groups that require attendance at socials and other similar activities to gain membership. This requirement is all too familiar to fraternity and sorority rush. Individuals who are interested in finding a social group of people with whom they get along and fit in should go through rush; student organizations serve purposes

on the Tech campus and the greater community. They should not merely be social organizations that provide more benefits for members than for others.

While requiring prospective members to attend a social or other similar event may be a good way to observe the manner in which an individual interacts with others, it also provides an opportunity for current members to railroad their friends into membership. Once membership in a group is based more on ‘who you know’ than merit, a group compromises its integrity and esteem within the Tech community. In addition to harming the group’s standing in the Tech community, organization ego can also result in a collection of individuals that is homogenous. Tech’s organizations should look like Tech—they should be composed of diverse individuals with a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and ideas that they bring to the table.

When student organizations become exclusive and homogenous, they fail to enhance the overall student life of the Tech community. When student organizations fail to serve the greater good, they are re-

duced to nothing more than elitist cliques. All of Tech’s organizations have the potential to play amazing roles on the campus, but the current trend of artificial exclusivity on campus threatens this ideal.

It is important for leaders to recognize these trends within their organizations and correct them. My own organization, the *Technique*, comes dangerously close to crossing the line from community servant to elitist clique. Each week we provide you with news and features of interest to the greater campus community, as well as the consensus opinion of the editorial board on major campus issues. At the same time, we sometimes become too eager to live up to our reputation as “The South’s Liveliest College Newspaper,” and we mistakenly undermine our own mission. Some have called our PSAs and sliver boxes divisive intrusions in an otherwise respectable publication. I can’t say I disagree.

The organizational ego virus, which has the potential to become a case of full-blown clique, has detrimental effects for aspiring leaders as well as the organization itself. Many students leave Tech not because they can’t make it academically, but because they don’t feel like they are part of community. Some student organizations and their leaders contribute to this problem of retention by building the barriers to involvement even higher.

A student without a lot of previous leadership who desires to be

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Atlanta must improve to reach true world class status

Atlanta bills itself as a world class metropolis. Past host of the Olympics and the Super Bowl, home of Coca-Cola, and arguably one of the most rapidly expanding cities in the US, Atlanta’s fame is not entirely unfounded. Unfortunately, Atlanta has a long way to go and many problems to fix before it can achieve the status it boasts of. It’s a nice city to visit, but I wouldn’t want to live here.

A few days ago, I visited London, truly a “world class” city, for the first time. After visiting there, how can one bear life in a concrete jungle like this one? London may have a few thousand years on Atlanta, but time can’t account for the better conveniences and culture of a world capital such as London.

From the start, I was impressed by the quality of public transportation in the city. Unlike Atlanta’s two MARTA lines, London sports an underground rail system, nicknamed “the Tube,” that goes virtually everywhere in and around the city on over 6 different lines. MARTA looks more than sad in comparison.

Stuck in Atlanta without a car, one can travel to Buckhead, Lenox and Perimeter Malls, and Hartsfield International Airport. Without a car in London, I went everywhere I wanted to go with minimal walking and no taxi rides; if I lived in London, I doubt I would even want to own a car. With the huge population of metro Atlanta and the impossibility of inexpen-

“Unless the city starts to focus on a more cosmopolitan experience, we will never attract the cultural and artistic ‘greats.’”

Jennifer Hinkel
News Editor



sive parking in this city, is a safe and efficient transportation network too much to ask? Apparently, Atlanta’s city government thinks so.

Far more impressive than the convenience of excellent and accessible public transportation were the ample cultural opportunities I encountered at every turn. More than twenty theatres, featuring everything from *Phantom to The Inspector Calls* and *The Complete Works of Shakespeare, Abridged* could keep one entertained for weeks, even without the multitude of concerts, museums, and exciting nightlife. Atlanta offers the Fox, the High, and Buckhead, but not much else.

Stunning architecture, historical landmarks, and some of the world’s best shopping also delight the traveler or resident of London town. Admittedly, Atlanta won’t be able to compete in the historical category for another two thousand years, but Lenox Mall is no Harrod’s, and shopping in Midtown will never be High Street.

As far as the food, England has certainly been shafted by years of what I think is unfounded criti-

cism. How can someone criticize the home of the famed “Naked Chef,” Jamie Oliver? I can’t name any famous chefs with restaurants in Atlanta, and although we offer a handful of quality fine dining experiences, we will never compare to London’s cadre of Paris trained culinary artists.

A day and a half in London was nowhere near enough time to experience the city’s greatness. Every good city should share such a claim, but one could easily visit Atlanta’s high-lights in less than 48 hours.

This city ahs its benefits, from a booming economy, relatively low living expenses (especially in comparison with London!) and a climate with more sun than snow—Ella Fitzgerald never sang a song about “a foggy day in Atlanta town.” Remarkably, some of Atlanta’s most urban areas are enjoying a renaissance, with a rise in luxury housing and a fall in crime in some parts of the city. In fact, I can name a handful of beautiful neighborhoods I wouldn’t mind inhabiting, such as the vibrant Virginia Highlands. However, a few great neighborhoods

do not a spectacular city make.

Of course, the grass is always greener, and even more so with an ocean in between, but in the case of Atlanta, life here barely borders on bearable at times. On a dull weekend night, when Buckhead feels overdone and one has already seen what’s playing at the Fox (twice), this city offers few alternatives. Even better, a student in London can go everywhere at student prices. I could have spent months seeing London, but after a semester in Atlanta, I can’t wait to get out of here.

Atlanta could fix many of its problems with a few well-aimed initiatives, starting with the MARTA problem. Expanding two lines to six, with stops further into the ‘burbs and more efficient scheduling, could easily send Atlanta on the way to improvement. As far as culture, Atlanta could add a few theaters and begin its own opera company, for starters. The population of this city could certainly support more cultural endeavors. However, unless the city starts to focus on a more cosmopolitan, metropolitan experience, we will never attract the cultural and artistic “greats” that add life to a city. I doubt that anyone has come to Atlanta to write a novel since Margaret Mitchell, and we’re not exactly a hotspot of music or art. Atlanta has potential, but it will never reach it without taking some cues from some truly excellent cities.

Meanwhile, I’ll be spending my vacation time in London. Cheers.

TECHNIQUE

“The South’s Liveliest College Newspaper”
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Contacting Us

editor@technique.gatech.edu

GSG

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handful of students.

Really, Matassa complains because she lost, not because the Graduate Senate is inefficient or inept. We support women at Georgia Tech, but not outlandish requests for limited resources that serve few. Her program lacked merit, and having no logical arguments to support her, she wrongly has attacked the Graduate Student Government. The process worked exactly as it should, insuring all student organizations that come before the GSG are treated fairly.

Grant Jenman, GSG President
gte078r@prism.gatech.edu
Matt Kaufman, GSG VP
gte316s@prism.gatech.edu
Jennifer Jordan, GSG Secretary
gte0595c@prism.gatech.edu

Orgs

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involved in something he or she cares about will be intimidated by an application with multiple essay questions and an interview process that lasts several rounds. Organizations who really want to encourage involvement and community will simplify their application processes and make them less intimidating for first-time applicants. The President's Council Governing Board uses an application process that is not only simple, but also extremely fair. The application's simplicity encourages people to apply, and a brief interview allows the selection committee to narrow its choices.

Other student organizations should follow this example and create simple applications procedures that encourage new students to become involved in leadership endeav-

ors on campus. PCGB's success proves that it is possible to have an application process that both encourages budding and still allows current members to accurately evaluate candidates.

Retention and leadership are serious issues that many individuals at Tech are devoting time and resources to address. The answers to these problems, however, do not require administrators from the ivory halls of Tech tower to wave their magical administrative wands over the problems. It requires a few current leaders to step up and say that the current trend is bad and call for a change. Until organizations make the changes themselves and encourage new leaders to emerge, Tech will always be run a select few members of the leadership elite.

Wanted: Letters to the Editor

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