Economic slump disheartens grads

Students question the usefulness of career fairs. Hiring freezes and a stunted economy force students to look elsewhere for lucrative employment opportunities.

By Srivani Narasimhan
Contributing Writer

Just a year ago, it was a thriving market place where the student was the successful merchant of his own skills; the company, the eager buyer. In the world of economies, even a short span of a year can teach the job applicant that good times last for only so long.

The annual student-run career fair that was held at the Coliseum on September 10th and 11th may have coincided with the terrorist attacks on the US, but as far as companies were concerned, the economy was already worsening, prompting them to limit the opportunities granted for interviews, and in some extreme cases, refusing to hire from Georgia Tech altogether. This fact led many students to question the usefulness of the fairs, especially in times when they are most needed.

The statistics from past career fairs are staggering. Three years ago, forty companies were on a waiting list to be represented at the career fair. That number had increased to sixty the next year, and by 2000, it had risen to nearly 100. But events over the next twelve months eliminated any such waiting list. Although a number of technology and automobile corporations cancelled their appointments come the fall, there were a number that, upon speaking to the Career Fair Committee, agreed to come but refused to grant interviews. One company confronted by someone with an exceptional resume.

In addition, a number of students who went to past career fairs felt that recruiters were more aggressive, using gimmicks such as free toys to demonstrate the increased energy level and excitement at the time. "It wasn’t easy. Last year, we had people physically grab you to talk. This year, you had to make more effort," said Jonathan Morrissey, who graduated in May. "It wasn’t as fun an atmosphere...it was somber." There was also a decline in enthusiasm by the students this past year, many of whom did not actually go through the entire hiring process.

"Many students don’t find the career fair official. The whole school goes, but a good eighty percent don’t take it seriously," said Archana Gupta, who served as treasurer on the Career Fair Committee. One student, for example, had already gotten a co-op position but went to the career fair simply to collect the free gimmicks. "Only a few are really motivated or desperate for the job. I saw a good percentage that put the career fair on the side and put more focus on graduate school," said Gupta.

Although the career fair is still considered by most students to be a worthwhile starting point for their job search, the majority of the recruitment process is only handled by Career Services, which also advises the committee on approvals and other budgeting matters. Furthermore, potential job applicants found this year that companies also refused to accept resumes altogether, and simply referred them to services such as monstertrak.com and jobtrak.com.

There still remains, however, foreseeable benefits to attending the career fair as well as posting on these online services. "The students don’t realize that it does help because if they have the resume, the company that has it on Monstertrak will recognize the name," said Robert Espinoza, Career Fair Committee Chair.

Still, in lieu of recent events, there will always be a small handful of students who do, in fact, take the career fair seriously and go through the entire hiring process. "In this bad economy, they just don’t want to miss any small chance that comes their way," said Gupta.

Are traditional female stereotypes extinct at Georgia Tech?

Although often unintentional, sexist stereotypes are still quite common at Tech. As women battle for equal footing in traditionally male dominated fields, archaic notions of femininity are broken and sexual equality is slowly obtained.

By Jill Adams
Contributing Writer

Male and female students at Tech constantly struggle to deal with sexist stereotypes. This is not to say that women face a barrage of disparaging remarks upon entering engineering classrooms nor that men go untreated "light-duty," or menial work. Even at a highly progressive Institute, even the secretarial role women have traditionally played in the workforce, produces a false perception that women seek out "light-duty," or menial work. Even at Tech, many women have fallen victim to a secretarial typecast. Women at Tech constantly battle the unconscious assumption that they enroll in the College of Engineering to become high-tech secretaries.

The second stereotype, that of the "inherent dauntlessness" of the female gender, is not overtly offensive, but is still a hurdle that women most overcome in order to achieve equality within the engineering field. The engineering field is often thought of as a physically as well intellectually challenging profession, unfeminine and aggressive in nature—characteristics that would not appeal to a woman. Not so the women at Tech have clearly demonstrated.

While proofreading my Tech application, my mother turned to me and said, "Why do you want to be an ME? It’s such a dirty profession. And you’d have to keep your nails short." Thankfully, she is moving away from associating mechanical engineers with mechanics.

The final stigma deals not with vanity but with the "sex-object stereotype." This is perhaps the most disdaining stereotype, defined as the scrutiny of women in terms of her sex and not her intellect. The most obvious example of this phenomenon occurs when men make either phallic references or sexually degrading remarks to women. Although most often these comments are made in jest, men don’t realize that they are perpetuating a system that is demeaning and unimpressive.

By Rob Hill / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Women’s Awareness Month has become popular at Tech attracting both men and women alike interested in sex education.
The importance of revitalizing the inner city

By Benjamin Small
Columnist

Atlanta is a bustling metropolis occupied by nearly 3.5 million people, more than 40 percent of whom belong to a minority ethnicity. Clearly our city is diverse, which is cool, and it’s the place of economists to analyze the financial and social implications of our diversity.

Professor Thomas D. Boston of the School of Economics studies minority-owned business development and inner-city economic revitalization. The analysis of these companies and their relation to the rest of the economy is extremely useful and can be used to make decisions about financial and monetary policies.

Atlanta is perhaps the best case study in the nation for analyzing these issues with the fastest rate of growth for black-owned businesses. Blacks in this city own 35,000 businesses and 900,000 employees. More than 40 percent of these people, more than 40 percent of whom belong to a minority ethnicity, are employed.

This amazing growth rate is not fundamentally about dilapidated buildings and worn-out infrastructure. It is about conditions that deprive individuals of the capacity to fulfill their human potential. If government officials develop American businesses, clearly there is social interest in the growth of inner-city businesses.

Professor Boston distributes surveys and analyzes financial reports in order to follow the economic trends of minority-owned enterprises. Suggestions can then be made to government offices on how to progressively modify fiscal and monetary policy in order to improve the economy as a whole— which tax break or loan programs would most effectively enhance the particular market sector. When executed effectively, the economy is diversified and strengthened.

This is good. We all benefit from a strong and well-diversified macroeconomy. Inner-city businesses contribute substantially to employing people and to improving the financial robustness of the local economy. Atlanta, especially, benefits from its diversity of business ownership and entrepreneurship.

Professor Boston has donated a copy to the Technique during his interview. The President’s Initiative on Race was a progressive program interested in doing just that. Professor Boston has even taught a course where students had the opportunity to be involved with some of the statistics and case study research for the executive initiative. (Now wouldn’t that be cool! Doing research for the President in one of your classes.)

Furthermore, he has also had the opportunity to serve as a senior economist for the Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress and has testified about the state of the economy. The U.S. Small Business Administration is also concerned with the development of minority-owned businesses. In other words, everyone in Washington is interested in helping develop American businesses.

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Professor Boston has edited an anthology of pieces discussing urban poverty and economic development entitled The Inner City (Transaction Publishers, 1998). He donated a copy to the Technique during his interview.
Operate in style: Tech students take Linux to the limit

By Jon Kaye
Staff Writer

Citing a growing dissatisfaction with Microsoft products and a desire for change, many students at Tech have made the switch to Linux, a free, UNIX-like operating system. Tracing its humble roots back to 1991, when Linus Torvalds, a Finnish computer scientist decided that he needed a version of UNIX that would work on his 80386, Linux has since exploded into a complete revolution in modern computing. While just a few years ago, Linux was seen as a hobby OS, only for the true geek, it is now a highly viable alternative to Windows and MacOS.

One of the fundamental things that sets Linux apart from other popular systems is that it is completely free. As CS major, Jarrod Hyder noted, “it is free, both as in beer, and as in speech.” In other words, one can install Linux on his or her computer without any need to pay licensing fees or to even buy the CD; in fact, disc images are commonly available on the Internet, so that anyone with a CD burner can have Linux install discs. Regarding Jacobson’s comment about free speech, Linux is open-source, which means that anyone has the opportunity to view and modify the source code.

While Linux fans at Tech all have their own reasons for switching from their previous operating system, the prevailing reasons for Linux use are its reliability and configurability as compared to the mainstream alternatives. Commenting on this issue, Junior ME major, Jarrod Hyder noted that he uses Linux “because of its superb stability, security, and flexibility.” Sharing Hyder’s views on Linux’s stability, fifth year EE major, Daniel Forrester observed that he once had a system running for 253 days without a reboot. “The only reason I shut it down was because I had to move. Try that with a Windows machine,” said Forrester.

In addition to the popular belief that Linux is more stable than its commercial counterparts, students who favor the free alternative agree that Linux offers a higher degree of flexibility than Windows or MacOS. Specifically, Hyder commented on the highly configurable graphical user interface. He noted that “instead of just changing a few icons, the user can change how different windows behave [and] where menus should go.” This differs from the commercial operating systems, which offer a comparatively limited ability to modify the GUI.

Students who favor Linux agree that the operating system offers a higher degree of flexibility than Windows or MacOS. The configurable graphical user interface is easy to personalize. One of the things that is allowing Linux to grow in popularity is that it operates on a wide array of hardware. As third-year CS major, John Hall puts it, Linux “provides a compatible platform, and there are a lot of them out there.” remarked Hall.

In addition to its portability, Linux also comes in varied distributions to meet the needs of its users. While there are scores of esoteric specialty distributions out there, four really stand out as popular choices. By and large, Linux users at Tech stick with Slackware, Red Hat, Debian, or Mandrake. Generally speaking, there is no best distribution, as they each offer specific features that computer users would favor. Nonetheless, arguments over which distro is superior is one of the most polarizing debates in Linux culture.

Those who use Slackware argue that its uncomplicated system of package management is one of its best features. Unlike the other three distros, Slackware has no dependency checking, so a Slackware user can install any package (collection of software and its associated documentation) without the system do some dependency checking to ensure that all of the necessary files are properly installed. Furthermore, Slackware users argue that it is a superior distribution because it offers a great deal of configurability. As Forrester notes, “It’s simple, which helps newbies and gurus alike.” However, this complete freedom with configuration can be a bit challenging for some. He cautions that he “wouldn’t advise Slackware to someone new to Linux unless they are ready to learn and get into the nuts and bolts of things.”

Red Hat, on the other hand, offers a com-
Tech Up Close

Seeing is believing
email: focus@technique.gatech.edu

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
Dean Griffin’s pocket

By Daniel Uhlig / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS
Halloween Fun 2001

Costume Shops
A few places where you can go to get your masquerade on

Atlanta Costume
The creme de la creme of costume shops. If money’s no object, you’ll be the most authentic character at the party.
3089 Monroe Dr NE, Atlanta
(404) 874-7511

A Costume Ball
Where the crowd plays dress up. 3101 Roswell Rd NE, Marietta
(770) 565-5558

Costumes, Etc...
Sell your soul to the devil for this. 318 Pharr Rd NE, Atlanta
(404) 239-9422

Eddie’s Trick & Novelty Shop
Magic tricks and off-color gags don’t get much better. 2347 Peachtree Rd NE, Atlanta
(404) 237-1412

Haunted Happenings
Places where you can scare your pants off this Halloween

Netherworld Haunted House
Willingly submit yourself to ravenous, flesh hungry zombies just for the fun of it.
Oct 1-Nov 4.
Sun-Thur 7pm-11pm, Fri, Sat, Halloween 7pm-12am
@ GAAntique Ctr & Mkt, Norcross
$13. Both houses $20

Nightmare Haunted House
Cemeteries, crypts and deadly dungeons: These are a few of my favorite dreams.
Oct 4-31, 7pm
$3 per person includes haunted attractions.
Star 94 Halloween Bash
Don’t RIP this Halloween weekend; party in Midtown with the folks from Star 94.
7pm Sunday, Oct. 28
@ Riviera Club, Atlanta
$15

Dr. Evil’s
Triple Terror
Haunted Houses in 3D
A one-stop shop for Halloween thrills. Pick out a pumpkin then scare yourself silly with three 3D haunted houses and a 3D maze.
Oct 1-Oct 31
Call (404) 634-009 for more details.

99X Festive Ale
The treat! A great time. The trick! You’re actually doing a good deed.
Oct 27
6pm-10pm General Admission.
@ Lenox Square Mall, Atlanta
$25 ($20 for 99X Freeloaders)

Freaker’s Ball
Rehab headlines the Masquerade’s annual Halloween party.
8pm Saturday, Oct. 27
@ Masquerade, Atlanta

Spiralworld 2001
Costumes and dancing are not optional at this Halloween scene.
9pm-3am Sunday, Oct. 27
@ Dekalb Atlantic Center, Atlanta
$30-$60.
Call (404) 355-6949 for details.

A Tour of Southern Ghosts
It begs the question: Are Southern ghosts more hospitable than their Northern counterparts?
7pm-9:30pm Wednesday, Oct. 24
@ Stone Mountain Park
$8 adults, $5 children.
Call (770) 521-0228 for details.

Halloween Hayrides and Storytelling:
The ghosts of millions of blades of dead grass come back to haunt you.
Red Top Mountain, Cartersville
7pm-9:30pm Wednesday, Oct. 24

A one-stop-shop for Halloween. First off, it uses strong dependency checking, so when a user tries to install a package, the system will object if other necessary software is not installed first. Nonetheless, finding appropriate packages for Red Hat is generally easy, because it is an extremely popular distribution. Also, Red Hat differs from Slackware in that it ships with a number of features to allow the user easy menu configuration. As Hall notes, “Red Hat is widely supported, and has excellent out-of-the-box hardware support, so I selected it when I needed a working Linux installation on my laptop immediately.”

Like Red Hat, Debian uses a system of dependency checking, yet Debian packages take a different approach. Debian offers a utility called APT, which allows quick installation and configuration, yet he further asserts that “after a while, you won’t want to use any other OS.” Hall suggests that new users begin by learning the utilities necessary for their day to day computing use before learning advanced administration techniques which will aid in the beginning.

Linux users at Tech are in good company. The Linux Users Group (LUG@GT) meets every Wednesday night at 7pm in Room 359 of the Student Center. Jacobson, an active member of the group, notes that each week, a presentation is given on a subject that would be helpful in regular Linux use. While Linux may take a little practice to truly appreciate, it does provide a quite powerful alternative.

“With Mandrake you get a good working install with a few clicks and...the installer allows for fine tuned control.”
Daniel Forrester
ISyE Senior

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“[With Mandrake] you get a good working install with a few clicks and...the installer allows for fine tuned control.”
Adam Wosotowski
CS Graduate

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Tricks
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Oh yeah, and the movie sucked.

Patriotic themes are totally in, so think again about breaking out that toga and sporting a torch as Old Lady Liberty. Nothing like the protection of civil liberties to snag you a Snickers bar.

But what if you can’t find any parties to go to, what do you do now? You don’t want to be stuck in your dorm eating ramen noodles and watching the special Halloween episode of Dawson’s Creek. After all, you’re in college, and you owe it to yourself to go out on the one day of the year where it’s okay to dress slutty. Lucky for you, you’re in exciting Hotlanta.

Hop on MARTA in your righteous costume (you’ll blend in perfectly with all the other freaks), and head over to the Freaker’s Ball or Spiralween 2001. You can always count on the four million clubs in Buckhead to be hosting a gala.

If you’re in the mood to be scared by something other than your latest CS test grade then venture to the Netherworld Haunted House, one of the largest and scariest horrorfests around.

If you’re not in the mood to drive or pay lots of money for gas, check out the special performances going on at Under the Couch on Halloween night. Oh yeah, and Towers throws down some serious frightfest too, so give it up for East Campus Halloween spirit.

Yet even the brightest of us Techies can go overboard so just remember to be safe. Alcoholic comas and roofies are not cool so check your consumption on both the witch’s brew and the Skittles. Oh yeah, and take care of your friends too. Be wild, be safe, be careful and beware this Halloween season.