A recently released proposal made by the HOPE Scholarship Joint Study Commission offers a temporary solution to the woes of the scholarship fund created by large state budget cuts. If the proposal is approved in January, then students will no longer receive the $300 textbook stipend to pay, and HOPE will no longer cover school fees. This would translate into approximately $1,168 more per year on average that students would have to pay on their own. Thus far, reactions to the proposed ideas have been positive; even the governor has spoken affirmatively about the proposed changes.

Although these cuts in what the scholarship will pay for are a step in the right direction and an excellent idea for solving problems in the short term, a bigger and more wide-sweeping plan must be instated for HOPE to be salvaged, and remain fiscally operable, in the long term.

In order to map out new rules regarding the way HOPE is assigned, the goal of the scholarship must be examined. Two obvious aims are to keep intellectually achieving students in state and to help reward outstanding students. A secondary point of the program is to give people who might not otherwise be able to afford tuition the opportunity to go to college.

If, however, nearly 60 percent of Georgia’s high school graduates qualify for HOPE, then clearly the scholarship is not singling out the most outstanding students for reward. Some possible long term solutions for reforming the policy to recognize highly achieving students while maintaining some of the other goals of the program include raising the qualification standards and instituting an index. This index would rank students based on a score comprised of their GPA and SAT score, each of which would be weighted accordingly.

Another aspect of the current HOPE system that needs to be reevaluated in figuring out how to increase the program’s successful longevity is the way the scholarship funds students who attend private schools in Georgia. Something that should not change, however, is the awarding of the scholarship based on merit.

Looking to the future, almost any alterations in the way the HOPE scholarship is doled out will have a greater effect on smaller, community colleges than on schools like Tech. This is mostly due to the fact that Tech’s admission standards are already higher than even raised HOPE standards would be.

The bottom line is that unless the state can raise a large amount of money within the next few years, the HOPE scholarship is going to be forced to undergo major changes; raising qualification standards seems to be the obvious choice.

Consensus Opinion

HOPE doesn’t float

By Matt Norris / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

“With three DJs there will be plenty of music to dance to. If that’s not enough to attract you, I’ll be there too.”

Julia Trapold
Advertising Manager
The other day I came across an article from a San Francisco newspaper. “Caucasian Club founder decides to leave school,” the headline read. “Oakley fresh- men decline to transfer, cites bias.” The story was about a 15-year-old high school stu- dent named Lisa McClelland, who recently pushed to start a Caucasian Club, as she called it, at her primarily white high school. The negative response she re- ceived from students caused her to stopped attending her school, even though McClelland, who is of Scottish, German, Ameri- can Indian, Latino and Irish de- scent—stated that her intent for the article, to be “a kind of comfort- able place” where students of all backgrounds could talk about race. The article, though somewhat biased in McClelland’s favor, did present views from both sides of the argument. Some students argued with McClelland, saying that in a school where there were plenty of ethnic clubs for Afri- can Americans, Asians, Hispan- ics and any other minority you can think of, it made “only sense” for there to be a Caucasian Club as well. Other organizations, in- cluding the county’s branch of the NAACP, said it was “cultural en- vironment.”

The most interesting part of the article, however, was the ac- 
companying poll. It asked, “Do the idea of a high school Caucasian Club of- fend you?” With 78 percent an- swered yes, an overwhelming 78 percent chose the answer, “Other race groups get clubs, so should Caucasians.”

In addition, it seemed as though McClelland’s own in- tent was far from racist. Accord- ing to the article, she was a member of the Gay Straight Ali- ance at her high school, and her proposed club format—open to students of all backgrounds, non-ethnic-centric—implied that she was well aware of diversity issues. At the same time, however, the article reminded me of a prob- lem I’ve always had with any ethnic social organizations, which is that by their very name and nature, they are exclusive. And while the purpose of many eth- nic organizations may not ex- plicitly be to promote diversity, that’s an issue that undeniably comes along with the package.

That’s not to say that these organizations are pointless. There is value to having a group of people who share the same cul- ture as you, who can understand “where you’re coming from.”

But more often than not, these organization don’t really pro- mote a campus-wide under- standing of their respective cultures. For example, what if a white guy is interested in Asian culture? While not excluded from a meet- ing of the Chinese Students As- sociation, I’m sure he’d feel very strange if he did attend one, and he would probably get some strange looks, too. And this doesn’t just go for Caucasian students. I’d probably feel kind of strange showing up at a meeting of the India Club, for example.

So while I’m not opposed to the idea of having a Caucasian club, I think the danger—and what opponents are so wor- ried about—is that it may, like existing ethnic organizations, be- come exclusive.

But I also think that of all other ethnicities, a Caucasian Club would probably be the least prone to exclusiveness, because of the diversity of ethnicities that are included in the label “Cau- casian,” and, maybe, perhaps sim- ply because of the stigma of being the majority.

In the end, I think a multi- cultural organization is the only way to truly promote diversity. McClelland’s Caucasian Club should at least have been given a chance before her opponents started criticizing it, for their re- action only served to acerbate ethnic divisions even more.
Face your ogres the first time, say “no” to forgiveness

I would like to address the grade forgiveness issue mentioned in last week’s Technique. I would fall in the category of students extremely opposed to a grade forgiveness policy. I believe that the doctoring of a GPA through grade replacement would seriously devalue the degree I recently completed at Georgia Tech. For four years, I worked extremely hard to maintain my GPA, knowing that if I made a single mistake, I would never be able to get those grade points back. I’m very proud that I worked so hard and pushed myself to get the grades I wanted. If you are working hard in a class and have a borderline grade a grade forgiveness policy gives you an “out.” It’s like a cheat code in a video game: You were killed by a level five ogre. Would you like to try again? I fought against many level five ogres as I made my way through Tech, and I respect every other student who sticks it up and works as hard as they can. At Tech, you’re not graded on how well you do, you’re graded on how well you do based on your peers. If some of us are allowed to repeat classes from the past to forgive our mistakes, it’s like cheat- ing to compete with those who did not repeat the classes. The excuse of saying that a student “would be able to keep his HOPE scholarship” is not a valid one. Keeping your HOPE scholarship or winning it back is an uphill battle. Those who have done it are worthy of respect. By “forgiveness” you mean the mathematical removal of something that you earned. What really means is searching around for an easier professor and giving up mid-semester because you can beg for forgiveness. As a recent alum, I can look back at my GPA and hold it up as a badge of the work I did, the struggles I encountered and the grades I earned. Patrick Bilgten patb@asdl.gatech.edu

“Engineered peace” is possible

Dr. Lubinsky’s mathematical skills may have failed him in his response to Jody Shaw’s column, “Engineering World Peace.” In his response he inaccurately states that Israel’s former prime minister offered Palestinians “97 percent of the West Bank and part of Jerusalem.” Quite frequently this excuse is used as a justification of Israel’s military occupation of Palestine and its human rights abuses. What portions of Palestine does 97 percent represent? The original United Nations partition granted Israel 54 percent of the former area of Palestine. By force of arms Israel has continued to enlarge the area under its control and now controls 100 percent of Palestine. Palestinians and Palestinian expatriates all over the world have claims to property in Israel and the occupied territories. Also, consider the division of natural resources, especially the water aquifer, which lies beneath Palestine, not Israel. Israel does not want to withdraw from the occupied territories because that would place Palestine in control of the aquifer. Since the occupation, water access has been controlled solely by Israel. The Israeli Hebrew newspaper has reported that 80 percent of the water goes to Israelis while 20 percent is left for the majority of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza. A 1999 study by the World Bank showed that the Palestinians have become the thirstiest consumers of water in the Middle East. Annual per capita use is 375 cubic meters for Israelis and 115 cubic meters for residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Israeli military has been a harsh occupying force insisting that the Palestinians cease to resist this dehumanizing confiscation and oc- cupation of their territory.

However, recent developments like the Geneva Accord (a grass- roots effort of Israelis and Palestinians) takes real steps forward towards refusing the tensions rather than merely condemning the resistance of one side or the other. The accord asserts the principle of a full Israeli withdrawal from the Palestinian ter- ritories and the dismantling of the Israeli colonies there. We can hope that the Geneva Accord will be a first step towards an “Engineered Peace,” one with justice and free- dom for all.

Rani El-Hajjar gte157x@mail.gatech.edu

Christian from page 9

lo sneer at supernatural gifts are not as great as I first thought. Maybe he was just succumbing to the common mistake of projecting his own be- liefs onto a larger population. How- ever, I think maybe I will give this Christian mind reading thing a shot. Here is the message I am channeling from Christians all over the world: “Hey, speak for yourself and let us do the same.”

Micah Wedemeyer micah@cc.gatech.edu