

YOU'RE HOW OLD?

Tech has 165 undergrads who are at least 30 years old. And for these students, a couple of years can make a big difference. Page 10

HALO 2 HITS CAMPUS

...and the Two Bits Man has plenty to say about it. His prediction? *Halo 2* may be fun for now, but world collapse is imminent. Page 19



Stalled Learning Center may get new life

By Jody Shaw
Editor Emeritus

Last week, Institute President Wayne Clough approved a proposal by the Office of the Provost to kick-start the stalled Innovative Learning Resource Center (ILRC), a teaching and learning center intended to serve as a central hub for undergraduate activities.

The ILRC was originally conceived as the Undergraduate Learning Center four years ago in 2000. At the time of its proposal, the project garnered support from SGA, others in the administration and the College of Sciences. Modeled after Gates Hall, a multipurpose learning center at the University of Washington, the ILRC was intended to serve as a home for freshman laboratories, incorporating facilities similar to those in the Library West Commons

as well as academic support such as tutoring and advising. (See "From the ULC to the ILRC" for more information.)

Last week's newly-approved plan allows Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Academic Affairs Robert McMath

"I am confident we can raise all of the private funds needed for the original plan."

Wayne Clough
Institute president

to reconvene a group to develop further plans for the facility. Their charge is twofold: to work with a consultant for the ILRC and to simultaneously continue planning

for renovations in the existing library. Though architectural design will not begin until state funding becomes available, this step moves the Institute closer towards that process.

In June 2001, Clough presented the plan for the ILRC to the University System's Board of Regents, noting that no major classroom building had been erected at Tech since the 1960s.

The Board of Regents embraced Clough's proposal and added the building to its five-year capital priority list, agreeing to provide \$29 million of the \$42 million estimate of its total cost. The Institute would raise the rest through private fundraising.

Though making the state list was a "victory" for the Institute, it also explains the reason why the ILRC's design and construction has been at a standstill.

"If you are on the state list, the good news is that you get a lot of money from the state. The bad news is, you do it when they say you do it," McMath said.

Since the ILRC was added to the capital priority list, overall state funding for campus construction has slowed across Georgia.

The ILRC remains 11th on the list, as the economy has put a squeeze on the fiscal flexibility of all state agencies, including the University System.

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FROM THE ULC TO THE ILRC: DIFFERENT NAME, SAME PURPOSE

Originally conceived as the Undergraduate Learning Center, and still informally referred to as the Academic Commons, the Innovative Learning Resource Center emerged from Tech administrators in 2000 and won approval from the University System's Board of Regents in June of 2001.

"It really came directly from Wayne Clough and Bob Thompson and their experience at the University of Washington and a building, Gates Hall, at UW," McMath said. "They were also just aware of this type of facility—a learning center which is not a dedicated chemistry building, math building, English building—and also aware that library space needs are critical."

After visiting Gates and similar buildings at other universities, including the University of Arizona, George Mason University and the University of Michigan, a planning committee worked with a consultant to undertake a "visioning process."

"Rather than designing the building and deciding what to do inside it, we would spend a good deal of time discussing how we wanted to teach and how that process would drive the architectural process that would come in the future," McMath said.

During the process, the role of the facility as a new home for laboratories for introductory sciences emerged. "Every student who comes to Georgia Tech takes eight hours of science, so what better way to ensure that everybody visits the building and has the opportunity to benefit from it," said Kent Barefield, associate dean of the College of Sciences. Of the ILRC's approximately 200,000 square feet, the majority would be assigned to classrooms and laboratories.

The visioning process also produced a mission statement for it, which was included in Clough's June 2001 presentation before the Regents that won the Institute funding. According to the proposal, the ILRC's mission is to "provide a 21st-century learning environment forging critical linkages for undergraduates: experiential, collaborative, technology-enhanced classrooms and labs; electronic access to library, information and instructional resources; hub of academic support for undergraduates; educational innovation and improvement of teaching skills for faculty and teaching assistants."

The statement reflects the idea that, in addition to being a new home for the lab sciences, the ILRC would have expanded library and information facilities, a central resource center for tutoring and advising, as well as an area to be used by faculty members and teaching assistants to improve their abilities. A flexible open space for exhibitions, meetings and general study would be included as well.

When built, the ILRC would stand between the library and Yellow Jacket Park and across from the Skiles Building, where the current E42 parking lot sits.



Proposed
Innovative
Learning
Resource
Center

Library

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Robert McMath

Vice provost for undergraduate studies and academic affairs

Being 30 and an undergrad has its pros and cons



By Joshua Cuneo
Senior Staff Writer

If you notice the wedding band around the finger of Frank Graffanino, a third-year Mechanical Engineering major, you might be prompted to ask him how long he's been married.

"Nine years," he'd tell you.
Nine?

Then he'd explain that, despite

(Clockwise from top) Kathy Silver, Frank Graffagnino, Melanie Snow and Justin Ruiz are all undergraduates who are 30 years old or more. For some older students, it's easy to blend in; for others, their age makes for interesting experiences.



Photos by Andrew Saulters / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS



his twenty-something appearance, he's actually 34 years old and living in family housing with his wife and three kids.

Graffanino is one of 165 undergraduates at Tech who make up the almost invisible "30 years old and over" crowd.

These are Tech's older students whose college careers were delayed or interrupted for a variety of reasons, and who have now returned to finish up their education.

In Graffanino's case, he stayed home after his first year of college to nurse his father back to health after a heart attack. During that time, he took a job in law enforcement and met and married his wife.

Others, such as Sasha Jones, a 30-year-old third-year Electrical Engineering major, and Justin Ruiz, a 30-year-old fifth-year Aerospace Engineering major, opted for a military career after high school. After their release from service, they resumed their education at community colleges before switching to Tech.

"I ended up transferring to Tech because I wanted an engineering degree doing kind of what I was doing in the military and in the corporate sector," Jones said.

At a university where most of the student body follows the traditional college route, older undergraduate students are in the minority, and they sometimes deal with interesting assumptions from other students.

"The first day...my husband helped me move in, and we got hungry, [so] we decided to go to a dining hall. We walked in, [and] they

asked us if we were parents," Jones said. "Every time I look around, everyone looks so much younger than me, and you kind of feel like you don't fit in."

Other students have the opposite problem: they pass for 10 years younger and are sometimes treated that way, especially in the classroom.

"[Professors] tend to treat me like an irresponsible 18-year-old instead of a grown adult," said Melanie Snow, a third-year Earth and Atmospheric Sciences major who is 32 years old.

But Snow, who failed out of college and moved directly into the corporate world, said, "I really want to be here, I work really hard to stay here."

On the social scene, however, other students readily accept these older un-

dergraduates, despite the age difference.

Kathy Silver, a 39-year-old third-year Materials Science and Engineering major, feared she would alienate classmates by acting too motherly.

However, "they immediately accepted me as their classmate," she said. "I probably seek as much advice from them as far as dealing with my kids, because they're so close in age to my kids."

Snow said she has friends who take her out to eat, study, and even attend the occasional party. "That's a lot of fun," she laughed.

Other students like Graffanino feel relieved in escaping the social politics of undergraduate school.

"[Professors] tend to treat me like an irresponsible 18-year-old instead of a grown adult."

Melanie Snow
Third-year EAS major

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Rant.
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30+

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“A lot of those issues I do not have to deal with on a daily basis,” he said. “I don’t have to worry about going out with the guys at night or if this girl likes me or, ‘Oh my god, she’s breaking up with me,’ and things like that.”

The trade-off, however, is the commitment these students have to their spouses and families. Often, the time required for these relationships limits their involvement on campus.

“The minute you have children, you become a responsible, authoritative person,” Graffanino said. “Whereas some students just have to govern themselves...I have to make sure that at the same time that I’m studying and taking care of my schoolwork... my children and wife are taken care of also.”

Even married students who don’t have children face a similar time crunch.

“All that extra time I have goes into being married,” Jones said. “I’m not there, so I have to go home on the weekends, and [though] I want

to study, I feel like I have to devote more time to our relationship.”

Older undergraduates also sometimes have different priorities from the rest of the student body. Ruiz said he concerns himself more with property taxes, neighborhood safety and other issues than campus-related matters handled by the Student Government Association.

“I come here, take my classes, and I leave,” he said. “I’m not familiar with names or the places here...[A] class said, ‘We’re going to meet at the Burger Bowl.’ I really had to have someone point it out on the map for me.”

These students do have the advantage of longer life experience, however, which helps them focus better in their academics. Many draw on their real-world skills to be more productive.

“When you work for a corporation, you pick up certain people skills and time management skills and organizational skills that you

don’t necessarily get fresh out of high school,” Snow said. “I think that lends me to be a little bit more responsible with my studies.”

Family commitments also affect post-graduation plans. Whereas many college students may move directly into graduate school, those with families often plan to move straight into the workforce to earn an income. This adds pressure for these students to graduate with good grades in a timely fashion.

“[Some students had] an opportunity to study abroad, and they were debating whether or not they wanted to delay their graduation another semester...and I just wanted to scream...[because] you get all that incredible experience,” Silver said. “When you get to be 38 and you don’t have that degree yet, then you can start toying with whether

“When you get to be 38 and you don’t have that degree yet, then you can start toying with whether or not you want to wait another semester.”

Kathy Silver
Third-year MSE major

or not you want to wait another semester,” she laughed.

Fortunately, many older students who have returned to school receive plenty of support from their family and the community at large.

“Usually, most people are really supportive about it,” Snow said. “Because

it is something that’s really hard to do...because I’ve already had a life established. I know what its like in the real world. I actually made money, and then to give all that up and then come back to school and be a student [is hard].”

Ruiz said that others sometimes even gawk at their decision to attend Tech instead of a more traditional liberal arts institution. He’s often labeled a “geek” and a “brainiac,” and he sees that reputation for intelligence reflected in the student body.

“I’m very encouraged by how knowledgeable they are, not only in these technical fields but also in world affairs,” Ruiz said. “When I was that same age, I wasn’t nearly as involved.”

He also had some advice for the rest of the student body.

“Don’t sweat the small things here at Georgia Tech, because soon you’ll be out of here and on to bigger and better things,” Ruiz said.

Worried about the GRE? Don't fret

By **Marcela Musgrove**
Staff Writer

When applying to college, high school students all have to take the SAT or ACT. College students wishing to go to grad school have to take

- A) GRE General Test
- B) GMAT
- C) GRE Subject Test
- D) A and C
- E) It depends!

The best answer is E. Students going on to medical, business or law school take specialized entrance exams (MCAT, GMAT or LSAT respectively).

Students going on to other graduate programs are generally expected to at least take the general GRE, but in some cases it may only be optional or may be substituted by another exam such as the GMAT. Some programs may require students to take the subject test as well, while international students often have to take the TOEFL.

With the test fees running over \$100, the best thing to do is to narrow down the list of institutions and make sure which tests are required or recommended.

For many students on the verge of graduation, the GRE is either a

Department	GRE admissions requirement
Biology	Requires General GRE, Biology Subject GRE is optional
Physics	Requires General and Physics Subject GRE
Computer Science	Requires General GRE for all master's and PhD programs; requires Computer Science Subject GRE for master's, recommended for Ph.D.
Industrial Engineering	Requires General GRE
Electrical and Computer Engineering	Requires General GRE
International Affairs	Requires General GRE

mystery, a stress, or an annoyance.

The latter was the case with Matthew McKeon, a master's student in Human-Computer Interaction, the exam was “just another hoop I had to jump through, and I was determined to do it right and get it out of the way so I could get my real goals accomplished,” he said.

How important is the GRE in the application process? Again, it depends on the institution. However, it is only one part of the judging criteria that includes grades, recommendations and a written statement.

Luca Dieci, a professor in the School of Mathematics and who serves as the department's acting graduate coordinator, expressed her personal opinion about the GRE.

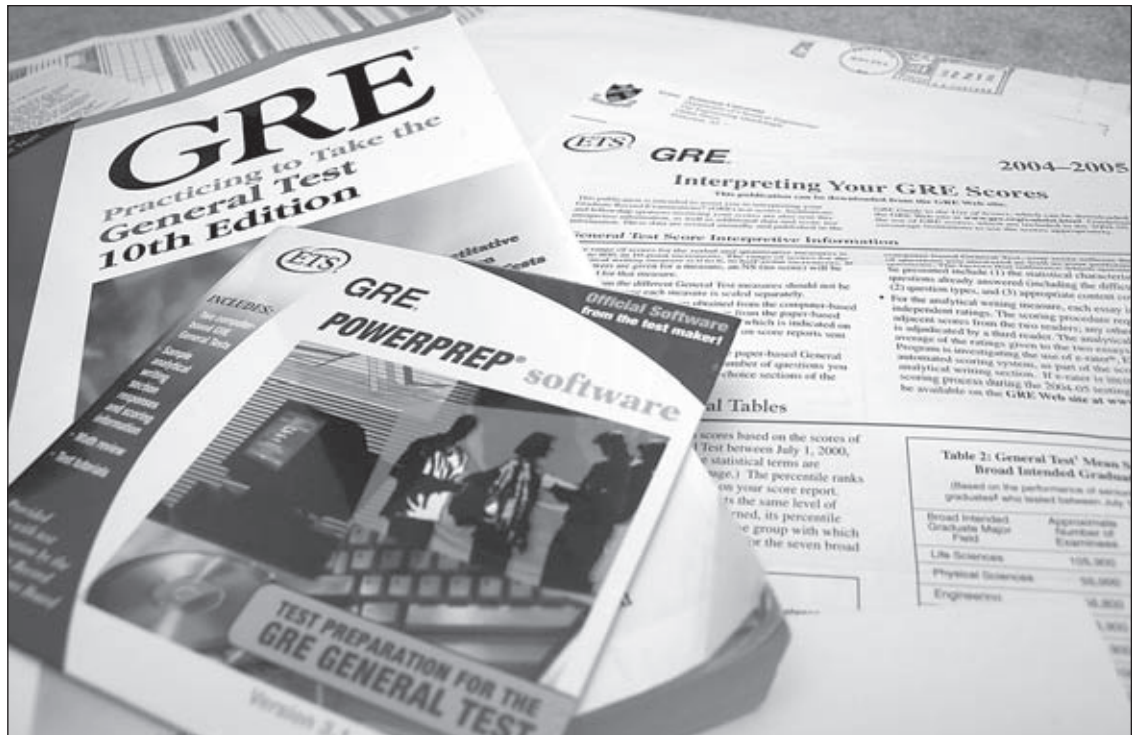
“GRE scores are just one piece of information by which we evaluate applicants,” Dieci said. “They can be faulty, in the sense that high scores do

not necessarily reflect into superior performance in future academic life. For example, GRE scores are not designed to measure creativity potential. On the other hand, a low GRE score more often than not reflects poor preparation.”

The GRE General Test consists of an analytical writing section, a verbal section, and a quantitative section, which may sound familiar to veterans of the SAT. But unlike the SAT, a paper test, the GRE a computerized test, and is administered at a computer.

Instead, students sign up for an appointment at a Prometric Testing Center through the GRE website (www.gre.com), by mail or by phone. Appointments are scheduled on a first-come, first-serve basis, so students are advised to make the ap-

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By Stephen Marek / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

When you register for the GRE, you receive free software that includes tutorials, practice questions and two sample tests. Veterans of the exam recommend various other test-taking strategies as well.

Students give thanks for Tech, instead of turkey

By Patricia Breed
Contributing Writer

Turkey, football, and pumpkin pie: who isn't ready for a break from Tech to enjoy the beginning of the holiday season?

Thanksgiving is a time to pause and reflect on the relationships and gifts we're blessed with every day.

Believe it or not, we Techies have a lot to be thankful for right here on campus. When asked what they were thankful for, students, faculty and staff gave varied—but equally heartfelt—responses.



"I'm thankful for GT Intramurals."

Cody Spencer, second-year Computer Science major

"I am thankful for the 18 students who work for me and make my job much easier than it should be."
Brett Hulst, Residence Life Coordinator

"I am thankful for an extra week-long Christmas break, an awesome basketball team, [being] a Management major and living in the South, especially in the winter, and of course my family and friends!"

Ashley Hightower, fourth-year Management major

"I am thankful for all of the students who make my job so rewarding. They keep me inspired even after 20 years in academe!"

Deborah Turner, Associate Professor, College of Management

"I'm thankful for the [upcoming] UGA football game and the fact that we'll be one week from the UGA basketball whooping!"

Michael Phillips, fourth-year Industrial Engineering major

"I am thankful that I graduated."
Rachel Kovacs, BS INTA, May 2004

"I am truly thankful for all of my friends at Tech who have made it their mission to keep me as stress free as possible by reminding me of life's simplest pleasures."

Amy Phuong, fourth-year International Affairs major

"I am thankful that I've been able to spend the last few years with amazing people at Tech, and for an SGA who does an amazing job of helping Tech students."

Stephanie Bent, third-year Applied Mathematics major

"I am thankful that I have 26 days 'til graduation!"

Jim Sinclair, fifth-year Materials Science and Engineering major



"I am thankful for...my [sorority] sisters that love me for who I am and who are always there for me."

Shannon Cohen, second-year Earth and Atmospheric Sciences major



By Raymond Chafin / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Students celebrate Thanksgiving with an early dinner. Aside from the food, though, Tech students say they have a lot to be thankful for.

"I'm thankful for Coors Light and friends."

Brantley Beard, third-year Biomedical Engineering major

"I am thankful that on a rainy Thanksgiving Day, 17 years ago, I moved to Atlanta and made Georgia Tech my HOME—thankful that I have a job that causes me to bound out of bed every day with the anticipation of working with fabulous faculty and superb students...thankful that my 'chosen family' is made up of the most loving, caring people on the planet: some absolutely awe-inspiring alumni and sincerely stellar students."

Billiee Pendleton-Parker, Assistant Director, CETL

"I'm thankful for all the friends I've made here. Even if I couldn't go home [for Thanksgiving], I know I'd have another family to join."

Angela Muhlberger, fourth-year Industrial Design major



"I am thankful for the *Technique* kids [that] give me something to read during my Friday morning lectures in the Management building."

Tony Le, fifth-year Electrical Engineering major

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"[The capital priority list] is a list of schools to be funded by bonds," McMath said. "With the economy being soft for the last four years, the list has just not moved."

Privately-funded construction has continued on campus, meaning that projects conceived after the ILRC have already been built. The Technology Square complex, the Student Center Commons, the Ford ES&T building and the Bobby Dodd Stadium expansion serve as examples of campus additions funded completely or predominantly by private funds raised from alumni and other donors.

Though Tech had the option to pursue greater private funding options for the ILRC, administrators continued to wait on the promised state monies in order to leave private resources untapped and available for other future projects.

Despite the recent trends in public funding, Clough expressed optimism that funding for the ILRC could appear in the near future. The administration has received notification from the University System that the coming year's capital request will be higher than in the past.

"If this is the case, it heightens our chances of getting funding for the [ILRC] in [Fiscal Year] 07 (July 2006)," Clough said.

The president also noted that the Institute has already obtained 75 percent of the \$13 million worth of private funds projected to be necessary for the project's completion.

"I am confident we can raise all

of the private funds needed for the original plan, and some additional amount within reason," Clough said.

Administrators in the Library, College of Sciences and other stakeholders involved in the ILRC have continued innovation in their departments.

The Library West Commons (LWC), which opened in 2002, is a joint effort between the Library and the Office of Information Technology. It is an example of a "collabora-

"This building is a powerful statement by Georgia Tech that undergraduate education is an important priority."

Robert McMath
Vice provost for undergrad studies

tive project" that the ILRC aims to emulate on a larger scale.

"Often it is difficult to see beyond our respective silos, but through the Commons project, we learned the importance of collaboration," said the library's Associate Director for Public Services Crit Stuart.

The LWC's success with students sparked further discussions related to renovations throughout the library. Stuart and other library administrators have been working to gather initial information about

what those renovations should look like, much of it through student focus groups.

According to Stuart, however, this process has occurred "in ignorance of the new building." For library officials, the limbo in which the ILRC remains makes it difficult to consider it in relation to plans for the existing library.

In the College of Sciences, Associate Dean Kent Barefield hopes to develop more new laboratory techniques to match the future laboratory facilities in the ILRC, such as the "discovery labs" instituted this semester in the introductory biology sequence.

"What is happening in biology is certainly what we want to happen across the board," Barefield said.

He also believes that new facilities will provide the opportunity to employ collaborative learning and educational technologies. Theme coordination across the introductory labs could also be possible: with all the basic laboratories in the same physical location, studying the same phenomenon or organism from the different perspectives of the various disciplines might provide an interesting twist on science education.

With possible funding in the future, attention toward the ILRC has been refocused, even if the design and construction of the facility remain nearly two years away. When completed, all expect the building to dramatically impact the undergraduate experience.

"This building is a powerful statement by Georgia Tech that undergraduate education is an important priority," McMath said.

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pointment early to get the date they want, since there is a crunch around the end of the semester as application deadlines approach.

The GRE is a computer-adaptive test, which means that instead of predetermined questions, the test adapts itself according to whether you are answering the questions correctly. Questions start out easy and get harder if you get them right or easier if you get one wrong.

According to Computer Science Ph.D. student Jose Zagal, "Messing up on an early question is more detrimental than messing up on a later one since the first five are usually considered the 'crucial' ones," he said. "Generally speaking, if you are taking the exam and start to run into really hard questions, that is a good sign."

As David Roberts, a Computer Science Ph.D. student points out, the computer test changes the strategies that students usually use for standardized tests. "You can't skip questions that you are not completely sure of...and return to them after finishing the ones you know," he said. "Additionally, if you realize later on that you made a mistake, you can't go back either."

Luckily, there are various resources to learn what strategies do work for the GRE. Upon registering for the exam, students are sent free software which includes test tutorials, practice questions and two actual computer-adaptive tests. Companies such as Kaplan and Princeton Review offer expensive prep classes and occasional free practice sessions, as well as books and CD-ROMs.

Although the test has gone through many changes in the past few years, some old-fashioned strategies can still be applied to studying for it.

Shan Huang, a Computer Science Ph.D. student, said, "I have two boxes of roughly 3,500 index cards total with GRE words on them."

On a similar but less extreme note, Amanda Nance, a master's student in

Human-Computer Interaction, said, "I learned 70 new words before I took the GRE the second time, and my verbal score improved significantly."

Lex Spoon, a Computer Science Ph.D. student, gave more lighthearted advice. "Don't tie yourself in knots worrying, but do give the test some respect," he said. "Study every day for months, eat well the day before, eat a good breakfast, get plenty of rest beforehand, and it's a cinch."

"You can't skip questions that you are not completely sure of...and return to them after finishing the ones you know."

David Roberts
Ph.D. student, CS