When stealing only one just won’t do

“Like anyone, I appreciate the ingenuity it takes to remove the ‘T’... To those who might think my concern is alarmist, I point to the young woman whose life ended tragically only a few months ago when she tried to climb one of our campus buildings. This unfortunate event serves as a vivid wake-up call to the risks associated with attempting to steal the ‘T’."

—President Wayne Clough, October, 1999

By Madhu Adiga and Sreem Narasimhan

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Interview with Stephanie Ray

On Tech, diversity and Black History

By Jennifer Lee

When Stephanie Ray has something important to say, she leans forward on the edge of her chair, plants both feet on the ground, and by golly, she means business. Her words are carefully chosen and eloquent, but at the same time, she seems totally genuine, and above all, the thing you carry away from an interview with Stephanie Ray is her passion and enthusiasm for what she does.

Stephanie Ray is the Associate Dean of Students and Director of Diversity Issues and Programs. She earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees at Western Kentucky University, with undergraduate degrees in history, government, and speech communication, and a graduate degree in Student Personnel Services in Higher Education.

After graduating, she worked for several institutions (her alma mater, Mississippi State, and Georgia Southern, to name a few) in a variety of areas such as residence life, women’s issues, student activities, and organizations, counseling, and multicultural affairs, before she finally coming in 1997 to Head Dean’s arrival, there was no Office of Diversity Issues and Programs, which may come as a surprise to many. Another surprise is that Dean Ray had a hand in creating not one, but two diversity programs: in 1994, Georgia Southern decided to create an Office of Multicultural Affairs, and Ray, who had previous diversity workshops and speaking at different colleges and universities in the region, was hired as their first director. When she arrived at Tech in March 1997, she was again asked to head Tech’s First Office of Diversity Issues and Programs. She is proud of both.

“I have the distinct privilege and honor of having created two diverse offices from scratch. That is a unique opportunity, and I feel so blessed and honored to be able to do that, because that’s the apex of a person’s career, to be able to do something new. And I’ve been able to do it twice, at only 40 years old,” a sentiment she echoes at the end of our interview that reminded me of her humility and respect for the students and her work.

Ray also gives much of the credit to the students. “It would not have been possible without the students,” she said. “It was the students that requested there be a Director of Diversity; they asked, ‘Other college have them, why don’t we?’ One of the most unique things about Tech and what I love the most is that students are very involved in making decisions that pertain to them. And so Georgia Tech listened to the students, and hired me and started this office.”

“And,” she said, smiling, “that is or Tech I don’t think that could have happened elsewhere.

Her job as Director of Diversity Issues involves closely working with students to relay messages to the administration, as well as providing diversity training and educato
email: focus@technique.gatech.edu
Winner will be selected randomly from correct entries and receives a Technique T-shirt and free Papa John’s pizza.

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
The eye of a stone carving by Brittain Hall

Last week’s winner:
Michael Verba
ed pillaging Tech for all the little 'T's.

A total of 32 ‘T’s were stolen from sixteen different buildings on campus over a time period of two nights and one day. The first incident occurred when the group stole both ‘T’s from the back of Fitten residence hall. The second building was Woodruff North.

“We had attempted to steal a frat letter, but we realized that they would find out who it was and kill the incident revealed that the issue of safety was still a concern, despite the smaller scale of the prank. According to the Office of the Dean of Students, the degree of danger involved in committing such an offense is a major contributing factor in taking disciplinary action.

“The sealing of the Tech ‘T’ is an issue of damage and external physical dangers,” said Karen Boyd, Senior Associate Dean of Students.

The only reason we would become involved is because of the perception of it being a tradition and the danger that is associated with it,” said Boyd.

In addition, the magnitude of the financial cost associated with the crime would have to be assessed in order to make accurate judgments on the nature of the sanction on the student. In the case of the sealing of the smaller ‘T’s, around campus however, the cost has been estimated by the Department of Facilities as being approximately 15 to 20 dollars per letter.

“Insurance doesn’t cut in until you have a damage value of $5000, so in terms of making repairs, incidents like this are minor compared to the Tech Tower vandalism,” said Warren Page, Director of Operations and Maintenance.

When vandalism and external damage occur, the type of building involved determines who is in charge of repairs. The Department of Facilities handles cases involving administrative and academic buildings, such as the College of Computing and the Rich Building, but the Department of Housing handles any damage to the residence halls.

“We seal buildings like the Health Center and the Bookstore, the staff would have to notify us and put in a request for a replacement. In this case, the cost of replacement would be split up over the whole campus, not even in freshman dorms,” Burdell said.

The former CLA feels a sense of accomplishment for having thought of such a creative prank and hope that it may become a tradition for them. However, according to Dean Boyd, this may be yet another reason to charge the students if caught.

“We evaluate each incident individually,” Boyd said. “However, if the student was successful in their actions [sic], it doesn’t mean that the next student who follows their tradition will be too. We assess the element of danger to future students potently,” said Boyd.

Wondering where the missing letters are now? You won’t find them. According to the former CLA, some were given away as party favors last semester. Then, at the semester’s close, the remaining letters were taken to various out-of-state residences.

Friendships are fading because we are now split up all over the place and not even in freshman dorms,” Burdell said.

The former CLA did consider this issue when they undertook their mission, but they still stand by their decision. “We feel bad that we stole them, but...because we didn’t have our freshman experience, we are not surrendering the ‘T’s back,” said Burdell. Why are they so bitter? The fact that these students were forced to move out of Caldwell is actually one of the reasons they stole the ‘T’s. According to Burdell, all of the group members felt extremely dissatisfied with their Freshman Experience.

“With no more Caldwell, our

“If the student[s were] successful in their actions, it doesn’t mean that the next student...will be too.” Karen Boyd
Sr. Associate Dean of Students

will never understand the complexity of reality as a whole.

Once I began to recognize this nature of reality for myself, I realized that any need I might have to fit into social convention was insignificant by comparison, and I became less afraid of asserting my own attitude and beliefs, regardless of how radical and incomprehensible they may be. The true geniuses of the world, then, are those who have fully comprehended reality in this fashion. They have become skilled in accumulating a wide berth of information and then manipulating it to enhance their outlook on reality and uncover deeper truths about life. This insight keeps them intelligent and modest, and they succeed in making discoveries and developing philosophies that benefit the entire human race by assisting in its intellectual evolution.

The direct polar contrast to the true genius is, of course, the arrogant and egotistical blockhead who practices style over substance in order to incite the admiration and envy of his peers, perhaps eliminating his private insecurities at the same time. Whenever I hear someone brand a true genius, I stop and carefully consider if that individual has met the criteria for authentic ingenuity. I believe that each person must be analyzed for the qualities of the true genius before he is called such.

Now, I’m not stating that those who are not geniuses lack intelligence. I go to school and I’m surrounded by hundreds of intelligent people every day. Nor do I believe that those who are not geniuses lack individuality. I simply mean that the true geniuses of the world are the epitome of social individuality, analytical insight, and educational development. I am not a true genius, but I aspire to this model, and I encourage everybody, for the sake of their own self-improvement and that of the human race, to seek every opportunity to improve their own mind in the same manner.
Technique
Tuesday nights at 7:00
Student Services room 137
Ray

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diversity as an important issue for Tech, not just the students. So you always have work to do.”

What kind of work? Ray immediately lists some specifics.

“I would love to have some money set aside for diversity programming, for ethnic student organizations to have the opportunity to present programs to the public,” said Ray. She also wants to create a Web-based way for students to report incidents of discrimination and harassment. She also mentions the need for better access for students with disabilities, citing the frequent breakdown of the elevators in Skiles as an example.

In view of Black History Month, Ray, who considers herself “African-American with French and English ancestry,” affirms that “Black History Month is important to me because I have a degree in history, and from a historian’s point of view, history has always been taught from a Eurocentric perspective. And while I’m very comfortable with my European ancestry, at the same time, I’m also aware of how my African-American ancestry has been so left out.” That’s why, she says, Carter G. Woodson, a historian himself, started Black History Month. “It’s all about finding awareness.”

“That’s not to say that I don’t think that Hispanic American Month, Native American Month, etc., aren’t equally as important,” she continued, growing more passionate with every word.

“Diversity often focuses too much on differences and not enough on the similarities... and the similarities are what bring people together.”

Stephanie Ray
Associate Dean of Students

a program called Hearing for Healing, that she wants Georgia Tech to host, hopefully sometime in April. And she mentioned that she had a meeting at 9:00 a.m. the next morning to talk about bringing speakers to Tech to help faculty, staff, and administrators address the needs of the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered community. The range of the projects she’s working on demonstrates the broad definition Ray has of the word diversity.

“Diversity often focuses too much on differences and not enough on the similarities... and the similarities are what bring people together,” said Ray.

Most people don’t think about diversity on a daily basis, maybe because Tech is such a diverse campus, with international and out-of-state students of all different ethnicities. When asked how this affects diversity at Tech, Ray replied, “I do think that students come to Tech with a broader understanding of just how valuable diversity is in their lives. But Tech is a microcosm of society, and just like anywhere else, we have diversity dilemmas that we have addressed and that we still need to address. I also think that each part of the university has to play a role in making

You should capitalize on these diverse experiences that you get at Tech because ultimately, diversity will give you the competitive edge in life and in the business world. When asked whether she worries about being politically correct when it comes to diversity, she laughed and shook her head.

“PC—That is a taboo word for me. For the record, I am not into PC’s,” she said with emphasis. “When being PC is all we’re thinking about, it prevents us from asking questions, and if you’re too scared to ask questions, that keeps me from getting to know you. I’m so afraid that I might call you the wrong thing, step on your toes, that it’s easier just to avoid you than to address you. "But, you know," she says, drawing from her seemingly endless well of memorable quotes, "I cannot tell you how many times I have been called out of my name. But the names that I have been called—they don’t bother me; they just run like water off me. Because the most important thing is not what you are called, but what you choose to answer to.”
If you enjoy being in the car for long hours at a time, then a trip to the Four Corners would be an interesting experience for any road trippers. Four Corners is where Arizona, Utah, Colorado and New Mexico meet. One of the sites there is Monument Valley Tribal Park. Admission is $2.50 for those 8-59. The advantage with going there is that camping costs only $10 a night. The Monument Valley formations include Elephant Butte, Three Sisters, the Totem Pole and the Mittens, two buttes that in Navajo legend, represent the hands of the gods. Another site to see is Natural Bridges National Monument where three bridges formed when water flowed under them. Four Corners is several thousand miles away.

A more off-the-wall place for a road trip would be to travel to Cullowhee, North Carolina. There, you can go whitewater rafting on the nearby Nantahala River. Other attractions include the Smoky Mountain Railroad, Harrah’s Casino, horseback riding, tubing and other outdoor activities. For more information on popular spring break trips, including those to Florida destinations, check out the Web sites listed below. Keywestattractions.org has information about places to go once you’re in Key West. A site that has information on clubs across the USA, wherever your final destination, is clubplanet.com. To find out more about the Outer Banks, check out outer-banks.com. Information on places for $25 or less in NYC can be found at nycparentsdeals.com. For information on Cullowhee, and places to stay and visit in that area, try visiting nc-mountains.com. If none of the aforementioned ideas, or sites appeal to your tastes, another useful place to visit on the Web is yourwayroadtrips.com. In addition, the American Automobile Association (AAA) has information about accommodations, and restaurants all over the U.S. at their site, aaa.com. For driving directions, try expedia.com or mapquest.com.

If you are planning a road trip, a membership with the American Automobile Association might be useful in case you need roadside assistance during your travels. They also offer free maps for most US destinations, and discounts at various attractions.