Accept some substitutes

Grade substitution is a policy that has the potential to beneficially impact many students, if the plan is implemented with the right restrictions and with the right goals in mind.

Last October, when the Student Government Association held an issue meeting to open a forum for discussion of the topic, the details of and motivations for the possible change were fuzzy. At that time, the ‘Nique’s editorial board recommended that grade substitution would be acceptable only if it was implemented to benefit students and not if it was just an attempt to increase Tech’s rankings. The further details available now show grade substitution to be a move in the right direction.

Since grade substitution will apply only to three 1000-level classes for students who have less than 61 hours, the new policy will not have sweeping effects on the Institute’s average GPA, the retention rate or the six-year graduation rate. The proposed policy will, however, help first year students who have trouble adjusting to the rigors of college and the type of studying required.

However, since this appears to be the main benefit of grade substitution, there may be a better way to provide a cushion which allows struggling students time to adjust. Instead of the current restriction to 1000-level classes, the policy could allow that any first semester class, regardless of the level, qualify for grade substitution. Keeping the substitution policy applicable only to first semester classes would ensure that the quality of education a Tech degree represents would not suffer, while aligning our freshmen grading system more closely to our peer institutions such as MIT.

T traditional concern that arises in discussing grade substitution include preventing grade inflation, preserving the quality of a Tech degree and hurting “C” students who aren’t able to retake classes. A possible concern for the currently proposed substitution system in particular is the not uncommon scenario of a junior or senior student taking a 1000-level class, like EAS 1600, for the first time after they have 61 hours. If the older student fails the class, it is unfair for them to be able to retake the class while a younger classmate would be able to retake the course. This is another reason why restructuring the substitution policy so that it applies to just first semester courses makes sense.

As these nuances are figured out, the implementation of a limited grade substitution policy that helps individual students overcome a difficult adjustment to college will prove to be a positive development.

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Quote of the week:
"If increasing the technology fee, we should see a noticeable increase in student usable technology on campus."
Scott Meulemans
Photography Editor
At some point last year, I started evaluating the experience I was having at Tech, both academically and personally. I realized I had overstayed my welcome, and I was ready to move on to the next chapter of my life: graduation. It was a bittersweet moment, as I had been part of this community for four years, and I was ready to leave it behind.

Respect your Elder
Will is the impulsive basketball action displayed by my roommate every weekend ever? I certainly hope not. He usually gets away with it, but I always feel like he's taking a chance with his college career.

Stay out of our bins
The tiny new bins strategically placed around campus to protect valuable institutional assets have been a contentious issue for some time. People have been leaving trash in the new bins, causing a lot of frustration for those who work hard to keep the campus clean.

OUR VIEWS
HOT - or NOT

Fun ‘til four!
The great Buckhead bar move to a bin, trash it!

Tix to Dook?
The ACC basketball ticket distribution policy has reached a new level of absurdity with their plan for how tickets will get into Saturday’s Duke game. To secure a spot in the Coliseum, fans will have to wait in line—once to get a ticket voucher, next to actually get into the gate. The voucher system continues to be a major issue. The ACC is not at fault, but the ACC has been slow to respond to these issues.

Litigation is necessary
While browsing the Technique website, I came across an opinion piece regarding the litigation of technology fee increase. The author argues that the fee increase is a “rip-off” and that the system accomplishes nothing. This is a compelling argument, but the author seems to be overlooking the fact that the technology fee is being used to fund new initiatives such as new computer labs.

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A global trek with view from Tech

Provost’s plan aims to throw Tech into the global game

“Globalization is happening very rapidly, like it or not,” T. Ech Provost Jean-Lou Chameau recently said to members of the faculty. “It’s very important for Georgia Tech to be in the game.”

What exactly that game is, though, remains to be seen in a world where the sort of contrasting stories that struck me as I read the New York Times online Monday evening still exist. The first, entitled “Low Wage Costa Ricans Make Baseballs for Millionaires,” was a feature article about a factory run by Rawlings, the exclusive supplier of balls for Major League Baseball, and the contrast between the $2,750 average salary paid to the Costa Ricans who make baseballs by hand and the $2,377,000 average salary paid to the athletes who play with them for our entertainment. The Rawlings factory operates in a special free-trade zone, where it pays neither taxes nor duty for its products, a duty-free supply chain for textiles, and most importantly, foreign markets for some of its services.

T. Ech also poses mutual political problems; foreign competition can damage domestic industries, which can result in job displacement and angry voters. In the U. S., only one area really needs to look to anti-N A F T A rhetoric or the protectionist steel tariffs implemented by the Bush administration. Poorer countries also face similar public outcry and calls for the protectionism seen by their American counterparts.

Though domestic concerns pose problems for certain domestic constituencies, as members of an international community of consumption, we win when the global economy is more efficient, something that comes by exploiting competitive advantages in international trade. Political scientists and economists have linked open markets and foreign trade in the developing world with other desirable factors—less corruption, economic growth and stronger democracy.

So while the globalization of markets poses potential problems and pitfalls, it also presents possibilities for posterity. The developing world may experience growing pains, but it should ultimately be better with it than without it. And though the U. S. may lose certain types of jobs through foreign competition, opportunities for new ideas and innovations will emerge to replace them. Such innovations are likely to come from our very own Institute. Georgia Tech has prided itself as a place committed to “shaping futures through innovation.”

The international degree designation would be similar to a co-op designation, with foreign language study, work or research abroad and study of international subjects required to obtain it. Though such a designation is years away, it shows the forward-thinking nature of the members of the Tech administration. They see that globalization is not a passing phase, but rather a new reality to which we must all adapt.

Consequently, new technologies lead to ever-growing renewal costs. As an example, computer labs paid for by the fee five years ago are now outdated. The burden of replacing these outdated machines now falls once again to the technology fee.

For the past seven years, the technology fee has not seen a single increase. The cost of replacement rises while available revenue remains the same. The ever-growing cost of upkeep of the Institute’s technological resources is robbing Georgia Tech of technological innovation in the classroom.

Nearly 35 percent of Tech students already have some international experience by the time they graduate. The Provost’s Office will sponsor a faculty retreat this semester to create an operational plan to increase the percentage of Tech students with international experience to 50 percent and discuss the idea of creating an international degree designation.

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OmniMeds are similar to Tech’s current $75 per student technology fee, only no longer enough to ensure that a adequate level of new technologies are available for students. Leaving this unchanged would lead to ever-growing divergence from the technology fee’s stated focus to provide enhanced technology to students and to offer new technologies that enhance education.

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