Winning the Tech way

Over the past two years, the Georgia Tech football program has faced an array of difficulties, ranging from the O’Leary fudged resume debacle to the loss of more than 10 players last spring due to academic ineligibility. None of these issues will pose as much of a challenge to the long-term success of Tech’s football program and to Tech athletics in general as the recent changes in NCAA eligibility regulations.

These changes, which increase the percentage of credits towards a player’s degree that must be completed by the beginning of each academic year, present particular problems to our athletic administrators. The Institute requires a significantly larger amount of earned credits to graduate when compared with other Division Universities, including some members of the ACC; compare Tech’s minimum graduation requirement of 120 hours with Duke’s, where some programs require only 90 credit hours. These new changes mean that athletes have to take more classes that count directly towards their major sooner in their academic careers, and they will no longer be able to take lighter loads during their sports’ seasons. They will also have to take these classes while maintaining an even higher GPA to remain eligible.

While these regulations will present new challenges to all Tech’s sports, they are particularly posing difficulties to football. With nearly 100 players on a team at any given time and a practice schedule that better resembles a full-time job than any activity that should be attempted along with a full slate of classes, the matrix of courses is often difficult to reconcile with academics. This reconciliation is even more difficult at an academically-challenging institute like ours, which even struggles with retaining non-athletes.

In order to overcome these challenges, the Athletic Association must do business a little differently. Obviously it must ensure that it provides as much academic support as possible so that its athletes can succeed. A more fundamental change to recruiting, however, must be undertaken. The Athletic Association must spend more on recruiting to ensure it can scour the country to bring in the best student athletes. Choosing better students over better athletes will be required, which means that Tech’s coaching staff must be prepared to focus on player and skill development. They may need to take second-tier players and coach them into big-time players capable of succeeding in an Atlantic Coast Conference that is about to become possibly the most competitive in the country. Such a restructuring will be a decision for the recent spring due to academic ineligibility. None of these issues will be able to take lighter loads during their sports’ seasons. They will also have to take these classes while maintaining an even higher GPA to remain eligible.

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Drop day move would benefit all involved

As of last Friday at 4:30 p.m., all bets were sealed for the rest of fall semester. The fallful day that has now come and gone is known in these parts as drop day.

Drop day always seems to bring about two emotions among the student body at Tech: For those who drop classes before the deadline, there is the sense of relief of a weight being lifted off their shoulders. For those who stay with their original course loads, the feeling of doom can sometimes set in when the realization that the truly tormenting back becomes apparent.

And with the dawn of drop day every semester, the debate over the placement of this date begins once again. It’s a debate that goes back to before seniors had to take finals and dead week was actually dead (don’t get me started on that one).

The debate, of course, centers on the placement of drop day in the semester. Tech’s current policy places drop day at the end of the sixth week of classes. Throughout my three years at Tech, I have heard varied opinions on the issue, from simply leaving it where it is to moving it all the way to the day before final exams. Although I don’t agree with the extremists who believe in a dead week drop day, I do feel that the current policy needs to be examined.

With the introduction of midterm grade reports two years ago, I thought it would be logical at the time to move drop day to a date after these reports became available.

I mean, what better way to determine if you were doing well in a class than a progress report before deadline day? According to Tech legend, professors are required to provide graded assignments for at least 10 percent of the final grade by the time drop day rolls around. However, as most students who have been around longer than a year realize, this often isn’t what happens. In fact, in three of the four classes I’m taking this semester, I have little to no idea how I am doing in the eyes of the professor.

This problem arises from the fact that many professors only give two exams throughout the semester. Thus these tests would have to be dropped and moved to the middle of the semester or the week before fall break, and the last test- available week of the semester (the week before dead week).

Drop day is two weeks before the logical date of the first exam, so either the professor is forced to give a test two weeks early on less material, or the professor ignores the rule (legend) and leaves the student without any true assessment of their performance.

Unfortunately, in many cases the latter proves true.

Now don’t get me wrong, moving drop day to the middle of the semester won’t solve every problem. There will still be those who drop classes before the deadline, there is the sense of relief of a weight being lifted off their shoulders. For those who stay with their original course loads, the feeling of doom can sometimes set in when the realization that the truly tormenting back becomes apparent.

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Through the looking glass

Learn about life, not just math, while at Tech

Viewing college as little more than a measured balance between frivolity and diligence, I must say that the most beneficial experience in my six years here has been opening my mind to the world beyond Georgia Tech. This past weekend, I decided to hit the pause button on my canned PowerPoint lectures and turn in my homework early so that I could spend the weekend in Philadelphia. Fifteen-hundred miles and one cheesesteak later, I had seen the Phillie Phanatic’s final romp in Veteran’s stadium and had a guided tour of Princeton.

Georgia Tech is not only an intellectual preparation ground for engineering, but also a fertile source for learning about our surroundings. I fell asleep in every one of my high school history courses because I had nothing tactile in which to place those facts. Put me on a barge in the middle of the Delaware, and I’ll have no problem understanding the importance of Washington’s moves during the Revolutionary War. Traveling is history as a co-op is to engineering design: the puzzle pieces fit together better once you know what the frame looks like.

But why stop at just the United States? Two years ago, I had the best summer ever! I spent half of it touring through Western Europe ab-so-bloody-lutely. I spent in a cozy little flat in Oxford, England, teaching circuits to a study abroad group. In this time, I learned a lot about European life.

Many places I have gone, Americans act like walking ATM machines with fat wallets and sheer incredulity at anything less than royal treatment. Trudging through the Andean rain forest for three days, I watched, appalled, as a South-west airline pilot bad-mouthed our guide for providing him with the most comfortable accommodations available and the best food of the entire group. He also harassed some of the female assistants to the point that I bet he’d be over a barrel in divorce court if his wife had been around! We all realize that the vast majority of Americans have more tact than this, but the rest of our group and I would have gladly fed him to the first giant anaconda we met.

Despite such rare incidents, my experiences abroad have been extremely good, and largely unexpected. An Iraqi woman in Paris spent ten minutes walking me towards my destination to make sure that I got to the Tour de France finale on time; a random girl on the train in Innsbruck, Austria, helped me explore the quaint little town where she lived. I have hitched close to a dozen rides from local people, once even from a burler while traveling through Scotland. I never imagined I’d be confronted with the intricacies of cutting livestock in an abattoir on my way to see Nessie!

For anyone who has the time and the resources, I would greatly suggest a semester abroad: join a study abroad program, work odd jobs while backpacking through Europe or become a farmhand in the Outback. The experiences will make a study abroad piece of your resume or your transcripts, but when I venture outside of Georgia Tech, I will be better prepared to fit myself into the global puzzle.

One more puzzle piece secured, so it is time to un- pause PowerPoint and get back to work. Currently working on his Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering, Alan Michaels has been involved in teaching, research, student government and other random clubs during his GT tenure that started in 1998.

CoC from page 9

Learn about life, not just math, while at Tech

Assistant

Please do not underplay the magnitude of this crisis for the integrity of our institution and the well-being of its students.

The budget crisis reaches far beyond introductory computer science courses and may significantly lower the value of a College of Computing degree from Georgia Tech.

Jonathan D’Andries
gte498e