More budget woes

The Undergraduate House of the Student Government Association (SGA) debated the finer points of student stipends this week, one of many amendments up for discussion before next year’s budget has a hope of being passed.

Undergrad President Nate Watson authored an amendment to the budget that would reduce the amount of money for stipends Student Publications, Student Government and the Student Center Programs Council receive. This amendment was the result of efforts by Watson and Vice President of Campus Affairs Ben Lawder, without meaningful consultation and communication with the organizations being affected by the proposed changes.

While it is clear that deep cuts need to be made in order to balance the budget and student stipends is an area in which changes can be made with minimal impact, the ways in which this amendment was pushed through the House was inappropriate. This situation merely serves to highlight the inadequacies apparent in a budgeting process in which the power of the purse is held in the hands of a few students, who are given the capability to arbitrarily and qualitatively make decisions.

As has become routine for changes made by SGA that affect organizations, the alterations were made without notifying all parties involved, or giving them the adequate opportunity to defend themselves and their monetary needs. Furthermore, it is that much more difficult for organizations to represent themselves fully when it is nearly impossible to find out what numbers, rules and procedures are most up to date and correct. SGA cannot distribute ten slightly different copies of the same document and expect the students and advisors outside of SGA’s executive council to understand what’s going on.

SGA should realize that this should be a time for feeling the negative effects of the budget crunch together, as a body of student organizations. Cuts should be made across the board negative effects of the budget crunch together, as a body of student organizations. Cuts should be made across the board by the same percentage. As it is now, SGA stands to lose a significantly lower percentage of its stipend budget than the other organizations involved.

An impartial, objective method of recommending stipend amounts must be utilized in the future; it is unethical for elected and appointed students to decide the levels of their own and other leaders’ financial incentives. Placing this power in the hands of an arbitrary few seems even more illogical considering that many members of the executive branch of UHR are also representatives in the legislative branch. The democratic ideal of checks and balances has, for all intents and purposes, been ignored.

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Quote of the week:

“Be nice to people on your way up because you meet them on your way down.” —Jimmy Durante

PROSECUTION UNDUE FOR MEDICAL REFUSAL

How do we, as a self-proclaimed moral society, balance the value of human life and the fundamental right to personal privacy given to us by our country’s constitution? Recent changes brought against a woman from Utah have me concerned for the sake of personal freedoms.

The woman, 28-year-old Ann Rowland, refused a C-section after her doctors advised her that without it, her un-born twins would likely die.

One of the twins, a boy, died two days before its delivery as a result of Rowland’s refusal of the procedure. The State of Utah has charged Rowland with murder, a charge that could bring five years to life in prison if she is convicted.

Rowland is being charged under the January Utah Supreme Court ruling which held that unborn children at all stages of development are afforded the constitutional protection of an individual’s life — and the possibility of a scar, which would be out-of-sight in the future.

I believe we, as a nation, have the moral duty to preserve the sanctity of life, even the lives of those who are unborn. But I also believe the government has no place dictating what medical procedures people are to undergo.

I cannot support a state action against Rowland. While I have generally been pro-life for as long as I have possessed coherent moral and political views, I find myself on the other side in this case.

I believe we, as a nation, have the moral duty to preserve the sanctity of life, even the lives of those who are unborn. But I also believe the government has no place dictating what medical procedures people are to undergo.

I cannot support a state action against Rowland for her refusal of treatment. I believe Rowland has the right to refuse medical treatment and procedures, even if it means risking the lives of her un-born children.

How can the state force an individual to undergo a medical procedure, even if it is for the purpose of saving another life? The slippery slope Utah is headed down has constitutional and legal implications for its residents. There is hardly a distinction between this case and a hypothetical one, in which the state forces an individual to sacrifice a kidney in order to save another human life — a demand that I believe must be considered.

Those in favor of Rowland’s prosecution point to her lack of religious reasons for refusing the procedure. Witnesses claim that Rowland’s stated reason for refusal was that she believed it would result from the C-section.

Most of us cannot understand how a mother could let her threat of a scar, which would be out-of-sight for the most part, jeopardize the lives of her children. However, just because we might disagree with Rowland’s reason for refusal was that she believes it would result from the C-section makes them both active and passive death. I disagree completely. A full-term abortion is a specific action (active choice) for the purpose of ending a life. Rowland’s refusal of treatment resulted in the passive death of her child (aside from the choice she made).

In other words, abortion is a direct overruling of the laws of nature, and the refusal of a specific procedure only available due to advances in technology is not.

The United States Supreme Court has held that citizens have the right to refuse medical treatment, even if refusal of such treatment will cause imminent death. Additionally, the Court has held that citizens do not have the right to physician-assisted suicide. Thus, the Court makes the same distinction between the refusal of medical treatment (leading to passive death) and requesting of aid in committing suicide (leading to active death).

One could argue that the very nature of the decision in both of these case, however, is a choice. I agree with the Supreme Court’s decisions upholding the right to refuse medical treatment or procedures. Unwanted and unscheduled medical treatment is a form of assault in my opinion, even if performed to save human lives. I would be very concerned if the government could legally assume the authority to impose such an infringement in our private lives.

Even if convicted in a Utah court, I doubt that Rowland’s conviction would withstand the appeal process. I believe our country’s legal system still values our personal freedom and right to personal privacy and will continue to uphold them in rulings of this nature.

As for Ann Rowland, hopefully one day she will wake up and realize the incredible loss her vanity has caused her. I just hope she doesn’t have to wake up in prison.
It’s housing time! Let the complaints begin! The housing signup process has bitten me again. This time around, one person who was going to be in my block didn’t make the lottery but is at the beginning of the wait list. This leaves the other three of us in a bind: we know he’s going to be able to live on campus, so we grab someone else and leave him to his own devices or try for a random roommate who would (hopefully) be willing to change rooms with our friend. We’re not looking for the latter, as we don’t know anybody who is signed up for housing and at the same time not looking to room with someone else.

When something doesn’t go right, someone has to take the blame, and this I lay at the feet of the Department of Housing for having a broken system. I do sympathize with the planners, as the problem of too many students and not enough dorms is a difficult one. There are no good solutions, so Housing should strive for the one that is most beneficial to students. Housing seems to be doing this but at the snails pace so common in bureaucratic procedures. It is my hope that next year’s process will be better, even though I won’t be around to take advantage of it.

The biggest problem with the system is that roommate blocks are formed AFTER you have pre-paid the (ridiculous) $600 pre-payment and then gone through the lottery. This is the result of a fundamentally flawed model of how students choose housing. In my experience, you figure out your roommate two weeks before you plan on rooming with for the next year sometime in February/March. Then you decide whether to live on or off campus and, in either case, put off deciding exactly where until school is almost out. Under the current housing system, this standard student thought process of figuring where to live is wholly broken. Under the current housing system, this standard student thought process of figuring where to live is wholly broken. Under the current housing system, this standard student thought process of figuring where to live is wholly broken.

I’ve tried to sign up for blocks for three years and the lottery process has split my block every year, and I know a number of people who have gone through the same experience. This is not an uncommon occurrence and it sucks for two reasons. The first is obvious: the people who wanted to room together didn’t get to do so and the entire concept of block housing is undermined. The second is that it is much easier to find an off-campus apartment as part of a group rather than as a single person. The simple solution is to swap the current “choose your own change buildings/roommate” phase to be immediately after the lottery instead of immediately after. Students would be able to group by pairs and blocks, with students picking pairs within blocks.

To keep things easy, students would also select whether they’re staying. The lottery would then be run as normal. Groups would be placed by the average ranking of the individuals’ numbers. If a block doesn’t make the cutoff, the pairs within the block would be split and handled as the rest of the pairs are. This gives the students in groups a better chance to get housing, which is fair because groups are less likely to speculate on signing up for housing than individuals.

Moreover, it is highly unlikely that a student would be unable to meet one person in two years that they want as a roommate. This is an easy solution to implement, it costs nothing and more or less fits into the system as it currently exists. In an ideal world, housing signup would work like class sign-up. You dig your time slot based on your lottery draw and be able to choose your room completely online. As with classes, you could periodically peek to see what is available as your time slot approaches and discuss options with your roommate.

I imagine the room selection would be graphical and directly taken from the floorplans of the buildings. This would enable students to figure out where in the building their room is located and, if detailed enough, could be used to get exact room measurements, something that is currently difficult to do. Of course, in the real world this costs money and there aren’t any commercial solutions. My suggestion is to get a team of students to implement the site, either as a senior design project or as a fixed-cost project to be paid on delivery. We did away with the paper/wait in line system years ago for classes, why are we still stuck doing it for housing?

Letter Submission Policy
All letters are subject to the editor’s discretion. Letters must not exceed 150 words and should address the issue at hand. Letters must be original work and not exceed 500 words, and be typed (double-spaced) on one side of 8 1/2" x 11" white bond paper. Letters must be submitted in PDF format. Letters should not exceed 500 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.

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Opinions
Your Views
Letters to the Editor
Congratulations to the men’s basketball team for making it to the Final Four!
This is such an exciting time to be a Ramblin’ Wreck. We are achieving unparalleled academic recognition. Our men’s basketball team is enjoying great success and we should support them in their endeavors. I can’t wait to them help celebrate their victory in the coming week! I hope you will join your fellow students to watch the game on Relay for Life this Saturday on SAC Fields—what a great way to come together to support our team and fight cancer!
My bracker has us in the championship game on Monday and should that turn out to be true, that game will be shown in the Coliseum.
As we celebrate our team’s success we all have an important choice to make. We have the chance to show the nation that we are a mature, sensible and sophisticated student body. By celebrating responsibly we will illustrate our ability to handle success.
I encourage you to support our men’s basketball team by having a good time but not at the expense of others. After the games, please be careful and show respect to our neighbors and peers as the eyes of the nation will be upon us. This is our Institution, so let’s show the world an excited but responsible face after the games.
Nate Watson
president@sa.gatech.edu

Letter of the Week
“Get drunk!”
Nisha Chopre
CompE Junior
“Drink, drink, drink and cheer the team when they get back.”

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A humorous look at lore of Tech's April Fool's past

Unbeknownst to many Georgia Tech students, April’s Fool day has spanned the generations here at Georgia Tech and actually goes back quite a bit further. Variations on our April Fool’s celebrations began with the flying rocks of early civilizations, but proved so lethal that they were restricted to one day per year. Medieval April Fool’s celebrations mostly consisted of a comedian’s tourneé led by the court jester; these exhibitions were promptly halted on April 1, 1564, when two Catholic bishops summarily excommunicated and hung Jacob Fowell for his skit involving two unnamed men and a young barnyard animal.

Then the Seventeenth Century brought about a popular French gag involving dead fish. Jacques Euclair and an accomplice began a contest to see who could slip a small fish inside someone’s trousers and run off without being caught. One day, Euclair’s accomplice* took his turn to make the diversion, and played his own joke on Euclair—the target was the king’s not-so-beautiful daughter. Needless to say, the palace guard introduced Euclair to the guillotine and laid out a warrant for all living relatives.

This finally brings us to April Fool’s day at Georgia Tech: when Georgia Tech was founded in 1885, the only known prank was greasing the seats with horse apples. The practice was ended, without any culprits apprehended, when Dean Myopia lost his rocker in 1888. Since those early days, practical jokes have blossomed—including below a brief timeline of the most interesting, and offensive, recorded escapades.

1894: A student by the name of George Percival Burdell enrols in Georgia Tech as a freshman. Forced to leave by a family illness, George quit after only one term, but was long remembered by his prankster roommate.

1913: First chain letter mailed from GT Station post office. “Ye that breaks the chain, shall die a miserable, fiery death or be mauled by a bulldog. Forward to ten others to keep the chain alive.”

1924: Zeke the dog was a lovely campus mascot until he lost playing chicken with Dean Dull’s rambling wreck. Zeke was renamed Sideways and Dull donated the car to Georgia Tech out of shame.

1933: In the midst of the depression, Tech administrators decide to open a pub in the middle of campus, despite many prohibition laws. As soon as the financial woes of the campus were abated, alcohol was permitted to be sold only by the Alumni Association.

1957: Jacob Calhoun started the practice of lacey food with laxatives, animal parts and other substances after eating Helloise Brittain’s cooking. Sources claim that Helloise tried her best to prepare Jacob a delicious meal, but her cooking skills were not helped by her 42-square foot dorm room.

1962: Unknown sophomores G.W. Clough scores the winning field goal to take the Tech basketball team to the national championship. After that shot, young Clough was promised the Presidency by alumni, but turned it down to train actively with the Crocodile Hunter.

1968: The Tau Gamma Phi house was expelled from campus after baking special brownies for each of their professors. The music department did not press charges and further offered to discard of the evidence.

1976: House pet at Lambda Chi, a 150-pound St. Bernard, was surreptitiously fed copious amounts of controlled substances by another fraternity and urged to pee on the Dean’s car. Instead, Chi chewed the tire directly off the car, so the offending house decided to memorialize the event in their 1974 yearbook photo.

2005: All four T’s mysteriously disappear from the Tech Tower. No buildings are damaged, and nobody is caught.

Sources

*Louise Cheaum’s name withheld to protect any remaining descendants.

Dupree not failure

I just wanted to tell that I was horrified and appalled by your choice of subject matter that was printed in the “Hot-or-Not” feature in the Technique issue dated March 19. Tony DuPree has been, and hopefully will continue to be, a generous donor; $5.7 million has already been donated according to the Atlanta Business Chronicle. DuPree has been a great friend of Georgia Tech.

On top of his financial generosity, he has also been generous with his time and talents. He helped organize the $712 million capital campaign in 1996. He loves his alma mater, and wants to see all facets of the institute improve.

Gifts like his make Georgia Tech great. They support the students and faculty engaged in research, they fund the development of nice, comfortable buildings where we can study, and they attract the highest quality faculty to teach here.

Without the generous support of our donors, the quality of the education and student life at Tech would decline significantly. We owe nothing but gratitude to the generous people who give so much to Tech to make it a great place for us.

Therefore your attack on him was absolutely unnecessary. The last place anyone deserves to be attacked for their business mistakes is from the alma mater they love.

Mark Iannucci

gg/g3h