OUR VIEWS

Consensus Opinion

Safety on Campus

The recent safety issues that have plagued campus are obviously not going to be easily and quickly solved. Despite the complexity of the problem, there are some areas that can be improved that will make a noticeable difference in the feeling of security for students.

First, the meeting that was held this past Friday about safety was not at a time that is convenient for students. No doubt, the administration wanted to get the information out to students as quickly as possible, but the lack of student turnout compared to the amount of campus concern about this issue indicates that students would have attended if they had not been otherwise engaged. A new meeting should be held during the day when students are on campus and more likely to be able to attend.

While the move to hire more police officers is a step in the right direction, changing the way that the police patrol campus is also vital. Besides just patrolling by car, Tech should hire bike cops who can go to more areas on campus. Especially with all of the road closures due to construction, many areas of campus are inaccessible by car. It is essential that police officers have a presence in the areas of campus where crime is occurring.

The Georgia Tech and Georgia State police forces should also collaborate more to protect the areas of campus that are bordered by North Avenue. These areas are among the most dangerous of both our campuses, and anything our two forces combined can do to make students’ lives safer is a good idea.

The final and most important thing that the administration can do to help campus safety is to improve campus transportation. Rather than spending our additional funds on a trolley to the new Bookstore, the Stinger could be improved by running the Stinger till 11 pm on weeknights when students are studying. Additionally, the routes should change at night so that the bus runs closer to areas where students study. While it makes sense for Cherry Street and Atlantic Avenue to be pedestrian only during the day, at night it is much more essential that students studying be able to have safe access to transportation.

Of course, the most important thing that all of us students can do to increase our sense of security is to be aware of our surroundings. This awareness must extend even to daylight hours especially when one is in a less populated area. Beyond that, watch out for the safety of your fellow students. Don’t let people you don’t know into dorms, and be sure to report any suspicious behavior on campus to the police. If students and the administration work together, safety can be improved.

Consensus editorials reflect the majority opinion of the Editorial Board of the Technique, but not necessarily the opinions of individual editors.

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Affirmative action doesn’t help right people

As I sat in my first class at Georgia Tech, I looked around the Old Architecture Building lecture hall. I saw short people, tall people, handsome people and ugly people. I also saw white people, black people, brown people and a couple of mixtures in between. During that first moment at Tech, a small voice also asked me an embarrassing question. Did skin color help any of the people get in here?

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I take 7-5 north to 1-94 and get off at exit 177. The trip takes about 11 hours. Exit 177 on I-94 is about 715 miles from Atlanta and is the first exit to Ann Arbor. This is the University of Michigan and the battle-ground for the biggest challenge to affirmative action since the Regents of the University of California v. Bakke in 1978.

The first shots were fired at Michigan’s acclaimed law school by Barbara Grutter, a law school applicant who was not accepted and who claims her spot was taken by less qualified minorities. Grutter’s argument lies in a simple statistical fact: in applicants with her LSAT and GPA mix were accepted only 9 percent of the time while 100 percent of blacks with the same mix were accepted. Now this case has reached the Supreme Court. Affirmative action in regards to race is doomed to end: 73 percent of whites oppose it and 58 percent of minorities are also against it, according to Newsweek. At Tech, race is not used in the admissions process. More and more colleges are also dropping the race factor from their admissions policies including our neighbor, UGA.

Affirmative action is really only an issue at selective schools like Tech and Michigan. It is at these public schools that systems are created to weed out candidates who may be positioned to succeed, but there is simply no room at the inn. The question of how this affirmative action is applied is where I differ with the system applied at Michigan. I say make it simple; throw out the race factor. If affirmative action is going to be used, look at a candidate’s socio-economic status.

If economic preference were to be substituted for race at the top 146 schools, The Century Foundation reports there would be a drop in black and Hispanic student populations of only two percent. I agree with this method on several fronts. First, I find it hard to argue against someone who says that a person coming from a lower economic state is not able to focus on their studies as well as a middle-class student. Second, from a public relations standpoint this will not be seen as an anti-majority type of action. This is important because it is the majority that writes the laws in this country and to believe that the majority always thinks of the minority first is simply not consistent with American history. Third, this will help end the major opposition to the current system; well-off minorities who have lived in the same conditions as the majority and get admitted only because of their skin color.

Second, Fennell criticizes those who assume that the students’ parents went to college are less capable than whites because they might have been accepted under lower standards. But this is putting the cart before the horse. The reason people make this assumption—is an assumption that is sometimes true and sometimes false—is because of affirmative action in the first place. If hiring standards were color-blind, there would be no justification for such an assumption.

Micha Ghettern
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OUR VIEWS Hot or Not

Call me number one

When I was a young lad, still dreaming of Technique glory, my mother always told me never to give out my social security number. Then I came to college, and now all my professors wanted me to yell it across the classroom and tattoo it on my forehead. Thank-you for making the ACC tournament, Georgia Tech administrators made the decision several years ago to move the bookstore away from central campus with very little student input. Now we’re being asked to pay more to have a bus to take us there, as Tech students. We would greatly appreciate a transportation fee to pay for expanded Stinger routes to the Technology Square area. Here’s to being taken for a ride—twice. Don’t worry, there’ll be more.

Conferece calls

The Women’s Leadership Conference and the Georgia Tech Leadership Conference take place on back-to-back weekends in February. Such scheduling emphasizes the need for collaboration between these groups. Pooled resources would equal bigger and better gatherings and not take up two weekends of time to learn similar information. There are only so many leather/planners we can use at once.

Letter Submission Policy

The Technique welcomes all letters to the editor and will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Letters may not exceed 500 words in length. Letters may be edited for space and appearance. Letters must include the name of a major point: the students’ parents went to college aren’t any dumber, they are stuck in a cycle. Very few of the students’ parents went to college and most are trying to make ends meet; college isn’t on the minds of both the parents and the kids.

When I put a younger version of myself in their situation, I guarantee that I wouldn’t have attended Tech. To say my grades and test scores would equal the ones I have now would be like saying George W. Bush would have gotten into Yale without his family’s legacy. If he was black, white, Hispanic or Asian, the results wouldn’t have been different.

My arguments for economic preference hinge on one point: there is not an underrepresented minority whose economic status is so different that the majority faces no greater challenge to succeed in college.

Give the students at Camp Creek a push; don’t give the advantage a crunch.

Meet the Campus What do you think of the Bookstore plans?

Philip Knowles
ME Junior

“More meeting space and a mini theater would be cool.”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letter makes mistakes

In her letter to the editor in the January 24, 2003 issue of the Technique, Eboni Fennell commits a few logical fallacies. She claims that if we artificially increase diversity, we do not necessarily decrease the quality of hiring standards. If our goal is to maximize the aggregate ability of the professorship, then the most efficient way to reach this goal is by limiting decision-making factors to only those things that directly relate to ability: academic transcripts, work experience, etc. Once we have used these decision-making factors to maximize ability, any change in the decision-making factors must necessarily lower ability.

To include race as a factor in the hiring process is to choose an ability-inefficient outcome. One might respond that in a situation where two candidates are equal in all other factors other than race, we should give a preference to the person who is a minority. But how often do we encounter this situation? In practice, racial preferences are not limited only to these rare, if nonexistent, situations, but are used to choose less qualified candidates over more qualified candidates based solely on the color of their skin.

Second, Fennell criticizes those who assume that color-blind standards are less capable than whites because they might have been accepted under lower standards. But this is putting the cart before the horse. The reason people make this assumption—an assumption that is sometimes true and sometimes false—is because of affirmative action in the first place. If hiring standards were color-blind, there would be no justification for such an assumption.

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Photos by Andrew Sauls.
Extracurricular transcript rewards commitment

Everyone knows that their résumé would be incomplete without a list of extracurricular activities. School or community involvement can highlight the skills and interests developed outside of class, whether you fed the homeless, played in the band, or wrote for the Technique. I was rather disappointed when I found that the application to my first choice grad school didn’t have a space for extracurricular activities. While a transcript and essay can say much, they don’t show whether a person developed her leadership skills or committed his efforts to community service.

Tech currently has a “co-curricular transcript” program called GT EDGE. If you sign up for the program, and attend extra classes, lectures, or events that are approved by the program, you can get some kind of nifty certificate to show your proficiency in various areas such as “career development” or “appreciation of diversity.” While this program may encourage some students to expand their horizons, it falls very short of providing a good way to document a student’s involvement.

Last semester, I heard the suggestion that extracurricular activities should go on some sort of “extracurricular transcript.” If this second transcript could be attached to a student’s academic transcript, it would be a great tool for showing a student’s interests and commitments outside of the classroom. While creating such a system would mean more work in terms of documenting group membership and participation, it would be an invaluable tool for students. Developing an involvement transcript is essential to Tech for two main reasons. First, at many universities, students actually earn course credit for participating in the newspaper, SGA, musical groups, club sports, dance classes, religious lectures, and the like. At Tech, where such activities are not offered as elective credits, students get no official acknowledgment of their participation.

Even if an activity does earn course credit, you’ll usually spend ten hours working (think marching band) for one or two hours of credit. Instincts such as this do not serve to boost someone’s transcript. Instead, they minimize a student’s actual time commitment. Without an extracurricular transcript, the picture of a student’s involvement can either disappear or become distorted.

Secondly, Tech students often have lower GPAs than their competitors in graduate school or job markets. Tech does not subscribe to grade inflation, and while a 2.8 from Tech is pretty darn good, it still can’t look as good as a hyper-inflated Harvard 4.0.

Therefore, Tech students must have a transcript that recognizes their abilities in leadership, service, athletics and scholarship outside of the classroom. We can’t pad our GPAs by taking swing dancing classes or writing for the newspaper—we do these things because, even in our cramped Tech schedules, we love to do them. For those with slightly lower GPAs, a robust record of involvement and commitment can outshine a few bad grades or repeated classes. Serious commitment needs to be accredited in an official Institute manner, and an extracurricular transcript would be a perfect solution. I suggest a transcript that lists achievement in four to six main areas, including leadership, service and athletics.

This transcript would list a student’s involvements for every year, including a short description of the organization. Depending on a student’s involvement or the type of organization, various “credits” for leadership or service could be earned. Organizations could also list skills in which their members become proficient—for example, Technique editors have writing, editing, management, and desktop publishing skills. The extracurricular transcript would also be a valuable tool for students creating résumés and cover letters, as it would help identify their marketable skills and abilities.

Such a piece of paper would be one of the single best things the administration could develop to help undergraduates. It would not only recognize the well-roundedness of many students but would also encourage more student involvement and leadership as its value becomes known.

A second transcript has the ability to show all of the things we wish we could tell our prospective employers, postgrad admissions officers and fellowship awards committees. It could show passion, commitment, dedication, involvement, service and leadership like no other piece of paper.

The extracurricular transcript would be a wonderful way to make all Tech students more commendable and marketable without grade inflation or a puffed-up résumé. Students need the opportunity to have all of their achievements, not just in the classroom, but also across campus, officially recognized by Georgia Tech.

Jennifer Hinkle
Technique Columnist

“[This transcript] would be one of the best things the administration could develop to help undergraduates.”

Summer
SAC II fees, closure unfair

The SAC improvements may indeed be necessary to improve student life at Georgia Tech, but they are also an example of Tech punishing current students to help improve its marketability to future students. Now, not only do most current students get the honor of paying for a facility they will never use, but they get to pay for a facility that they won’t be allowed to use over the summer.

I, for one, can’t wait to pay the same fee that I pay to use the on-campus facilities to use a pool that I have to take a half-hour bus ride to use. The problem will be compounded when students want to do more than one type of recreational activity, such as swim and lift weights.

Each student currently pays $54 a semester for SAC II (cleverly referred to as a Recreation/Facility Fee on Oscar), then pays a $78 student activity fee, and a $53 athletic fee. The replacement facilities are certainly not going to be equal to current conditions, and the students certainly should not have to bear the burden of the Tech administration’s mismanagement.

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For official updates about SAC’s summer closure, see www.sac.gatech.edu