Our Views Consensus Opinion

SGA results

Congratulations to Alison Graab on her newly-acquired presidency and Paul Byrne on becoming executive vice president of the house. (It is also safe to congratulate Mitch Keller and Ryan Bechtel, who are running unopposed for the same positions in GSS.)

This past year we have strong leadership in both the graduate and undergraduate portions of SGA. David Andersen has been a particularly visible figure on campus. In the past Vice Presidential candidates have had strong platforms but have not made themselves as visible during their terms in office. Graab and Byrne both have great ideas and should work together to achieve their goals. Also, they should strive to focus on specific objectives that are feasible for a one-year term rather than naming broad, impractical goals.

Graduate and undergraduate executives have collaborated well this year, but understanding between the two chambers needs improvement. Both houses have specialized issues to address, such as graduate health care or grade forgiveness for undergraduates. However joint issues such as campus life affect both graduates and undergraduates and require the collaboration of both chambers.

An uncivil action

Recent national press coverage has once again cast Tech in a negative light due to actions of a few members of the community. The coverage does not seem reflective of the Institute as a whole, and offsets the positive strides the Institute has taken.

The American Defense Fund lawsuit filed against the Institute claims that, thanks to the Student Code of Conduct’s policies against harassment, conservative students on campus are not allowed to exercise their right to free speech.

The lawsuit claims that the code and other Tech policies limit the free speech of conservative students because they fear being labeled intolerant. However, the College Republicans’ recent resolution in support of the lawsuit shows that they are, in fact, not hesitant to make their position known.

As a media outlet, there is nothing we like less than frivolous lawsuits and limitations on freedom of speech. The suit traps the Institute in a lose-lose situation because of the high costs involved in fighting the lawsuit and the negative publicity garnered. The plaintiffs could have handled the matter internally and more maturely. However, we are confident that the legal system will do its job in determining the validity of the suit’s claims.

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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Open minded takes on new meaning

“I was driving back to Tech Sunday for a football game. Due to Spring Break traffic, the drive had taken unusually long and after five and a half hours (normally a four hour trip), I was more than a little tired and irritated.

I was almost back to my apartment when I saw this bumper sticker on the car in front of me: “Minds are like parachutes—they work best when open.”

Now this isn’t particularly objectionable in the world of bumper stickers. I’ve seen everything from “Keep honking, I’m reloading” to “If the President on the back of our car. In light of those intellectual gems, a slogan encouraging the opening of minds might actually seem like a welcome departure. However, the more I thought about it, the more it bothered me. What does it mean to have an “open mind”? In my opinion, there are two very different definitions of this phrase floating around.

The first definition goes something like this: someone presents you with an idea then you evaluate this idea based on the facts presented to you and your own logic and reason. You might even do some research on your own. After you have evaluated the idea with all of the resources available to you, you either accept the idea as valid or reject it as invalid.

Now, the key here is that it is completely irrelevant if you accept the idea or not. The point is that you considered the person’s idea, fully evaluated it based on your own logic and reason and you have made a decision about it.

The other definition, and sadly the one that is most often used, goes like this: “open-minded” means that you “open” up your mind and let whomever pour into it whatever they feel like. “Open-minded” means that your mind is an open gate, accepting anything that comes its way and rejecting nothing. For if you reject anything—especially something considered progressive by modern thinkers—you are instantly branded as “closed-minded.”

From my experience with modern thinking you forget how to say “no.” Some people are just evil, some actions are just wrong and some ideas are just plain bad. That has been the reality of things since humans began roaming the Earth and I don’t expect it to change anytime soon.

Another flaw in the contemporary use of the phrase “open-mindedness” is the tendency to lump people of the same opinion together as either open or closed-minded.

One’s opinion is almost completely irrelevant in determining whether or not they are open minded. The sole determinant of that is how they arrived at that opinion.

If someone worked through a logical series of steps and analysis in deciding whether or not an idea was valid, then they are open minded in that regard. If that person did not (which often results from group think or popular opinion), then they are closed-minded in that regard.

Two people could very well have the exact same opinion on a certain matter, but one be open minded and the other be closed-minded.

On the other hand, two people could have vastly different opinions on the same matter, but still be open minded (or vice versa).

Present-day usage of open and closed mindedness has become less about defining a virtuous way of thinking and more about being a bludgeoning tool to hammer your opponents into accepting your idea.

Here in the year 2006, being closed-minded is about as cool as going to the senior prom with your Aunt Ethel.

Faced with that proposition, you would think it would be in one’s best interest to come across as open-minded as possible. In actuality, what usually results from accusations of closed-mindedness is barriers being built between the two parties. Standoff lines are drawn and productive discourse suffers or stops altogether.

Instead of such silliness as that, how about we actually try to understand the other person before we start calling them names. In the days of idiotic one-liner bumper stickers, it’s definitely a step in the right direction.”

“Open mindedness is considered progressive by modern thinkers, then you are instantly branded as “closed-minded.””

Jamie Howell
Photo Editor

Quote of the week:
“In mathematics you don’t understand things. You just get used to them.”
—Johann von Neumann

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This is not the typical college experience

“I am writing this swan song from deep within the bowels of the College of Computing...a second home to me.”

Evan Zasowski
Entertainment Editor

I am writing this swan song from deep within the bowels of the College of Computing, a building, and an institution which has, in many ways, been like a second home to me these past four years.

Granted, the home in question uses its children as slave labor, regularly pushes them beyond all reasonable physical and mental limits and tends to develop kind of a B.O. sort of smell as the semester progresses. (I imagine there’s some sort of intensive, perhaps industrial in nature, cleaning regimen that goes on during extended breaks to prevent the ungodly stank from becoming overpowering,) but a home nonetheless.

You see, in a collegiate world, where grades are regularly thought of as being some sort of currency which is bought rather than earned and a mandatory minimum number of As to be distributed by professors is fast becoming the norm, I—all of us, as a matter of fact—have been raised by fire. We have been forged in the flames of that institute that cares little for coddling and a great deal for making the best damned engineers (or computer scientists) we can possibly be.

If there is anyone out there who is still undecided about whether or not they want to come to Tech in the fall, and just happen to pick up this particular issue of the Technique allow me to enlighten you as to the true nature of our beloved Institution. Tech does not provide what one would call the “typical college experience.” There will be little time for the antics of one typically associates with college life. I could probably count the number of parties I’ve been too on my hands...in binary.

Tech is the sort of place that one runs out of one honestly and truly loves one’s chosen field, because that field will be what one does on an almost fault-inducing number of Friday nights. So, you’d better be able to run on the fact that provides you when you do well in it. Otherwise, it will be a very long four/five/six years.

One could make a great many arguments about the overall worth of Tech’s approach to its students’ well-being. Views on the subject range from Tech being interpreted as a batch of sadistic harpies, bent on suffering the every last student that can get their awful, hell-forged claws upon something of a “tough love” style father figure. He hurts you, but only because he loves you, baby. I’ve found that the more time I spend here, the more Stockholm Syndrome sets in and the more I begin to sympathize with my abusers (read: the Institute). I’ve become convinced that I am stronger for my suffering, and that no man can hurt me because, dammit, I survived the Georgia Institute of Technology and that counts for something.

At least that’s what I tell myself. However, acheckmate... and I’m still no closer to figuring how the hell to write an O(!) scheduler for the Linux kernel. I find myself increasingly of the following opinion: “Screw this hells hole, I’m graduating in May and I’m not looking back.”

“For those of you non-CS types out there, that joke was pretty funny. Not great, but it would have elicited a chuckle.

OPINIONS
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BUZZ
Around the Campus
What do you think about the proposed advising changes?

Parker Baxter
First-year ME

“Sounds like it’ll make for a more successful freshman class.”

Melissa Freedenberg
Fourth-year BME

“I think they’re great and needed.”

Steven Weaver
Fourth-year ECE

“Following up on unsatisfactory is good.”

Linda Pelcastre
Third-year BME

“My idea is that they’re addressing the issues.”

Our Views • HOT or NOT

Can you hear me now?

By next year even students without cell phones, assuming such people exist, will be able to have voicemail! The new phone system will give every phone on campus voicemail capabilities. One day, the phones will be able to integrate with wireless networks, and this new-fangled technology will save the Institute money.

But how will the squirrels get around if we go wireless?

Klaus delayed

The partially-constructed Klaus Computing Building will remain partially constructed for a few months longer than expected. Although it was originally set to be completed by the end of the new class, the delay means the building will remain partially constructed. The leaves students stuck in crowded or older classrooms one more semester than should be necessary.

Sting Break

Sting Break was warmer than hot this year, but still ranks on the Hot side. The thought behind Student Appreciation Day is great; we like being appreciated. But the cost of the ticket and the disappointing Big Boy performance combined to put a damper on the excitement of the event that was anything but so fresh and so clean. Well, you can’t have your Cake and eat it too.

Low turnout

Voter turnout for the SGA elections showed a disappointing dip this year, after last year’s near-record levels. You’d think with online elections, obsessive email-checking Tech students could manage to vote in greater numbers. It’s quite sad that even Tech students can’t even exercise their civil duty when it’s delivered to their inbox. Next year SGA candidates will have to work harder to attract votes.

Letter Submission Policy

The Technique welcomes all letters to the editor and will print letters in a timely and space-available fashion. Letters may be mailed to Georgia Tech, Campustown, Alumni Center, Drawer T, Atlanta, GA 30332-0290. Electronic mail may be sent to editor@technique.gatech.edu. All letters must be typed and must include a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 400 words and should be submitted by 5 p.m. on the Tuesday following the Friday on which they are to be printed in the following Friday’s issue. Any letters not meeting these criteria or not considered by the Editorial Board of the Technique to be of valid interest will be printed. Editors reserve the right to edit for style, content and length. Only one submission per person will be published each term.

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Coverage Requests

Press releases and requests for coverage may be mailed to editor@technique.gatech.edu. For more information, contact our editor, email editor@technique.gatech.edu.

Against the policy that could mean being fired or losing a job...
Bed monster phenomenon threatens college students

Many of today’s college students and 20-somethings who are otherwise confident and mature are showing increasing fear of a phantom: the ubiquitous monster under the bed.

Yoga instructors, psychologists and best friends believe this fear stems from the ignorance to the monster’s true nature. This experience has been termed “Monster Under My Bed Syndrome” (MUMBS).

In a recent interview adolescent psychologist and know-it-all Dr. Karl Schlitzersaid, “This experience of a free-floating, full torso apparition is usually rooted in childhood experience. But most individuals outgrow the monster-under-the-bed phenomenon by the age of five.” He added, “This is something psychometric analyses never predicted.”

The young person experiencing MUMBS has an experience that fits into one of the following categories. Category 1: the monster whispers menacing words through the mattress and sheets, taunting the individual. Category 2: the monster emerges from under the bed in the form of that individual’s greatest fear.

I recently received several emails from students across the country confiding to me the form of their monsters. With their permission, I have published the most common forms of monster.

An ongoing fear among college students is squirrels. From nut boarding to tree jumping to traffic interference, squirrels cause a significant amount of fear in 10 percent of college students. In the appearance of the apparition, the monster emerges as a giant squirrel blocking the pathway from the bed to the bathroom. The giant squirrel often wears a top hat and in rare cases, a pith helmet.

More commonly, the monster emerges from under the bed in the form of regret. The monster may take the form of a bully the individual never stood up to, or worse, the bullied individual the individual never defended in front of the bully. Other regret forms the monster may assume include incomplete science projects, the second prom ticket the individual never bought, cigarettes, and other long, thin, cylindrical objects intended for oral use.

The most common form of the MUMBS monster is that of a lost love one. Your deceased uncle who always saved cold Pepsi for you on summer afternoons, your playground friend who drifted away with the turning dunes of the years, your parent you saw for the first time with complete clarity, a former lover—these provoke the most fear. Often the monster appears in the form of these people. Oddly, in this form of monster sighting, the individual experiencing the monster phenomenon threatens college students

“Many of today’s college students and 20-somethings who are otherwise confident and mature are showing increasing fear of a phantom: the ubiquitous monster under the bed.”

Alexandra Pajak
Columnist

Mark Youngblood
SGA Math Representative
mark.youngblood@prism.gatech.edu

Negative writings paint wrong picture of Tech

There are many students at Tech who absolutely love this fine institution to which we belong and who actually enjoy our time here. I am one of those students and do not appreciate the disparaging comments made in last week’s ‘Hot or Not.’ The “Hot” section: “students may even have a chance to…avoid the shaft…but wait, it’s still Tech.” And also, “it was nice, if not a bit startling, to see people actually out and having fun in the middle of Yellow Jacket Park on a school day.”

Only a few times this week have I walked past Yellow Jacket Park on my way to and from class without seeing several students enjoying themselves with a game of Frisbee or other activities.

These negative comments further the stereotypic view that Tech students hate their lives and that this school is no fun. This attitude influences other students to feel the same way. Furthermore, this attitude significantly affects the impressions of visiting high school students and (I know from personal experience) influences many to not attend. This, in turn, brings down the quality of the institution.

I have no problem if you want to be negative and hate your academic and overall experience at Tech, but please refrain from putting unfounded, biased, inflammatory comments in the newspaper that could have an effect on those students who genuinely love this amazing institution. Thank you.

Derek DeRaps
Second-year CS
deraps@gatech.edu

Letters from page 9

While I believe that the committee took unprecedented leeway in enforcing an unintelligible election code, I openly admit that I made a mistake. I would like to thank everyone who supported my campaign, in particular those who donated their time and efforts to promote my candidacy. I promise you’ll hear me again next year.

Mark Youngblood
SGA Math Representative
gy1933@prism.gatech.edu

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