

# OPINIONS

Technique • Friday, November 6, 1998

## OUR VIEWS Consensus Opinion

### The Merit of Buzz

Let's play a word association game. When we say "Buzz," what first comes to mind? The annoying sound of a vibrating pager? Do you think of the deformed insectile symbol of the now-infamous Salt Lake City minor league baseball team? Hopefully, an image of Georgia Tech's long-revered mascot pops into your imagination. Perhaps you should first think of money.

Through Buzz mascot licensing revenues, the BuzzFund has provided scores of Tech students with merit-based scholarships. This year, however, BuzzFund money will be channeled into the multi-million dollar licensing lawsuits to protect our Buzz from those nefarious imitators. Sorry, no BuzzFund scholarships this year.

Without doubt, funding for these lawsuits should be derived from other financial sources. A great need exists at Tech for these merit scholarships. Now, the Presidential Scholar program is the only publicized merit-based scholarship remaining. The PS program is not a bad program for what it is, which is an unabashed recruitment tool. The program represents a money-making opportunity for in-state students; It effectively says, "come to Tech with your HOPE grant and full PS scholarship, and you can make in excess of \$1,500 per year!"

That's great for PS recipients, but bad for everyone else. Even with BuzzFund money, Tech's merit-based scholarship supply is seriously deficient. If the PS program were filling the need, the number of PS scholarship retainees would definitely be higher than it is. Of last year's incoming scholars, 16 percent have already lost the scholarship. That's a pitiful number.

Certainly, the excess PS money that is currently being used

#### Quote of the week:

"The best audience is intelligent, well-educated, and a little drunk"  
-Alben W. Barkley

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to pay students to attend Tech should be used for the creation of additional scholarships. Now what do you think of when we say "unfair"?

### Our thoughts are with you

Our thoughts are with the family, friends, Zeta Tau Alpha sorority sisters, and Cheerleading teammates of Leanna Piver. Leanna was driving southbound on I-85 Monday morning when she was involved in a car accident.

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

### A Question of **HONOR** Honor Advisors respond to recent Code uproar

We, the Honor Advisory Council, are pleased that issues of honor, integrity, and ethics are reemerging as important topics of discussion among all members of the Georgia Tech community. We remain deeply concerned and committed to the ideals vested in our Academic Honor Code.

Since January, the Council has held faculty roundtables, a student town hall meeting, and sponsored an academic ethics discussion based on a popular film. The Honor Advisory Council will soon host a town hall meeting for students to voice their opinions on the Honor Code. In the upcoming weeks, we will also be sponsoring an essay contest and our annual Honor Awareness Week.

It is important to remember that the Academic Honor Code is in its infancy and is still weaving itself into the fabric of the Institute. Now, two years after its implementation, a renewed

dialogue on the Code is evident. This current atmosphere of reflection and discussion affords all of us the opportunity to focus upon the Code, its purpose, and its role in the daily lives of the Tech family.

The success of the Honor Code lies in the personal commitment of every individual at Georgia Tech—every student, member of the faculty, staff member, and administrator. We encourage each person to take positive action and make our Code more than a mere piece of paper, rather a living document that truly embodies honor and integrity for our entire community.

If you are interested in sharing your ideas about the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code or have any questions regarding the Code or the Honor Advisory Council, please e-mail us at [honor411@smash](mailto:honor411@smash).

*The Honor Advisory Council*

#### VIEWS ON HONOR Letters to the Editor

### Problem lies with people, not with Honor Code

What is wrong with the honor code that we have here at Tech? After all, it was formulated in response to the need for integrity in today's students. It was carefully written, but still left room for individual professor's preferences, and it is being kept up to date by an Honor Advisory Council.

Yet the honor code has not done its job. Dean Boyd has heard around 100 violations since only July, and I know of no instances where a student was intending to cheat in some form on a test or assignment and then realized that this would violate the honor code and held themselves back.

The problem is not with the code, but with a simple fact of human nature we don't follow the rules. No matter who we are, we can never really do what is right. If we are all honest with ourselves, we will realize that we never really act how we should. Rules with associated punishments may deter us from certain behaviors, but rules never change our hearts and intentions. In fact, rules such as the honor

code may even make the problem worse.

Consider the child told not to touch the expensive vase. He may not have even considered touching the vase, but when presented with the rule he will grab at the vase as soon as the adult turns around. It is the same with the honor code. Now that we have the honor code, there is controversy across campus about the present state of honor.

Is there a solution to this problem of honor and of our misbehaving in general? Fortunately there is. Jesus said that everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin, and indeed we are trapped in our inability to act as we really should. In Romans, however, Paul writes the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection not only frees us from sin, but also gives us power over death through life in Him.

*Mark Birney*

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### Honor Code just "words on a page," says student

Last year I was an incoming freshman to Georgia Tech who was incredibly surprised that I was made to sign the Honor Code before being allowed to register for classes. I had assumed that any such policies regarding cheating and/or plagiarism would have been included in the student handbook. To be honest, I am not sure what people expected the Honor Code to accomplish. As the editor of the North Avenue Review put it, "It's now official; cheating is bad." The truth is that the Honor Code is nothing more than this letter. That is, words on a page.

Do you really expect those words to jump off the page and physically stop a student from cheating? No, it is not going to happen. The truth is one really can't require integrity. You can however, help to teach it. The only way

the Honor Code is going to have any effect is if it is publicly used. It may be difficult to catch people cheating, but if and when people are caught, it needs to be a big deal for people to truly understand what's going on. In addition it may be a good idea to propose sanctions toward students who are aware of Honor Code violations yet refuse to turn them in, that is, if such sanctions don't already exist.

In short, the only way to institute honesty and integrity is to take action. Words on a page are incapable of performing any action, but the Georgia Tech administrators certainly are.

*Ricky Anderson*

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*For more student views on the Honor Code situation, please see page 10*

EDITOR'S VIEWS Staff Editorials

# Political commercials pointless, annoying, scary

I hate discussing politics. Besides religion and computer operating system preference, there is no other topic of conversation that offers so many opportunities to lose old friends and make new enemies without any compensatory benefits whatever. It's not that I have no political opinions; I do. But I also have common sense, and realize that any political argument I engage in will have one of three end results:

1. I will be dissatisfied, because I was unable to convince my opponent that my opinions are correct.

2. I will be dissatisfied, because my opponent got carried away and caused me grievous bodily harm.

3. I will be satisfied, because I started the whole thing on purpose to yank someone's chain.

You notice that the only time I am happy with the outcome of a political argument is when I started it on purpose to engage in what Dogbert calls "tweaking brittle people." Sadly, though, most people who engage in political argument do so because they are sincerely devoted to their opinions, and convinced that, if they could only make you see, you would come to their side and everything in the garden would be lovely.

What these poor souls do not realize is that, much like the aforementioned examples of religion and OS, a person's political affiliation is only changeable under certain circumstances—for example, Divine revelation or near-death experiences. So, in the vast majority of cases, political argument does nothing except provide entertainment for the political Dogberts of the world.

That said, I would like to propose some new legislation. I can do

this because I am confident that this legislation will have no opposition whatever, thus freeing me from tedious arguments that would absorb the time I have earmarked for playing Monkey Island III. My legislation would ban all political candidates from advertising. Period. No radio ads, no print campaigns, no TV spots, no door-to-door canvassers. Advertising would be grounds for instant disqualification from the election. Instead, each registered voter would receive a flyer containing the candidate's picture and their platform.

This legislation would be incredibly beneficial to the electoral process. Think of how much money the ad ban would free up—millions of dollars now spent on ad campaigns could be used in a productive manner. Politicians wouldn't have to make as many humiliating public appearances begging for money. (Anyone for \$200-a-plate corn dogs?). Poor candidates with good ideas would suddenly be able to run for office without facing a substantial handicap from the first.

Of course, these benefits are merely bonuses; the real advantage would be that the voting public would not have to be harassed by political advertising. My TV time is precious to me, and I resent having it intruded upon by the rantings of adolescent crybabies who somehow expect to convince me to vote for them. I only watch two shows a week: *ER*, which, sad to say, is the social highlight of my week, and *The Pretender*. (Oh, okay, I admit it, I do usually watch *Profiler* too, but only because it's set in Atlanta. I take a perverse pleasure in lines like, "Uh-oh. Looks like another serial homicide in

"As anyone who has ever watched C-SPAN knows, being in Congress is one of the most boring occupations in the free world, second only to proofreading calculus books."

**Kim Wilson**  
Managing Editor



Peachtree City." If that show is correct, Atlanta must have the highest number of serial killers per capita of any city in the known universe.) Last week, during these shows, I viewed approximately 27,843,822 political ads. About 25,824,247 of these ads were the EXACT SAME AD, shown over and over again, sometimes twice in one commercial break. This does not make me want to vote. It makes me want to commit serial homicide. (maybe that's why there are so many in Atlanta!)

Now, I can already hear the dull roar of indignant idealists crying, "But if the candidates aren't allowed to advertise, how will voters be able to make an informed decision?" The simple answer is, they won't. In the real world, the voters are divided something like this:

- 56 percent will vote along party lines. Party affiliation is like OS choice; almost immutable. No advertising will change this.
- 25 percent will vote for the candidate that "looks like a nice person."
- 13 percent will vote for the candidate for the coolest name or best hair.

• 4 percent will write in votes for cartoon characters, professional wrestlers, and Xena, Warrior Princess.

• 1.5 percent will vote for the underdog candidate, because they feel sorry for losers.

• 0.4999999999 percent will vote using "eenie meenie miney moe"

• 0.0000000001 percent will thoughtfully research each candidate's platform and make an informed choice.

You may be saying, "That's not right! I know that WAY more people than that vote using 'eenie meenie miney moe!'" However, these statistics were carefully prepared by the same advanced statistical method used by political pollsters for decades: making thoughtful observations, and then inventing all the numbers.

So, you see, voters almost never make informed decisions anyway. And even if they wanted to, commercials wouldn't help. Political ads fall into two genres: a) "My opponent is a cheater/liar/scumbag/neo-Nazi/conservative/liberal/serial killer" and b) "I am such a nice

See *Commercials*, page 10

# Tech students just not breaking the mold anymore

*Are Georgia Tech students getting educations or learning job skills during their careers here? We need to examine this distinction and so something to enrich our existences.*

Hey. I've got a question for you to ask yourself — one you might have asked yourself before, maybe about four o'clock in the morning while pulling yet another all-nighter: What am I doing here?

That's right — what are you doing here, at Tech, taking classes, reading this paper? Ask your average Tech student this question, and I've found that you usually get the following answer: "So I can get a good job when I graduate."

Which is a pretty good answer, I must admit, and the one I probably would respond with had I not been asked another pointed question about a year ago: "Are you here for an education or are you here for job training?"

The question came from a guest lecturer in a biology class, and it forced me not only to consciously differentiate between the two, but also to ask myself which I was pursuing. The answers I came up with have led me in interesting directions, so I thought I'd pose the same question to you and hope that you might start to ask questions about why you're here as well.

Although part of our task during our time here at Tech is to prepare ourselves for whatever we have planned in our respective futures, I think we should be doing more than

"I think we should be doing more than just learning how to do whatever job we see ourselves doing in five years. After all, anyone can be trained to do a specific job well."

**Holland Alday**  
Copy Editor



just learning how to do whatever job we see ourselves doing in five years. After all, anyone can be trained to do a specific job well. Take insects, for example — most of them spend their entire lives completely absorbed in one or two little tasks, incapable of considering anything outside them. Granted, they do what they do well, but that's about all you can say for them.

So, how does this tie in to the previous question of our existence at Tech? I guess the point of all this is that the four or five years we spend here should be used to learn more than just "how to be an engineer" or whatever you happen to be studying.

In short, get out. Do strange and novel things just because they're different. Don't be a bug, despite the

fact that there seems to be forces at Tech that seem to be dedicated to turning out legions of bugs. In all fairness, there are a great number of people on this campus who are working to help students broaden their horizons. However, I feel that there are a number of obstacles that seem to

For example, it doesn't help when the College of Engineering decides to practically ax free electives from its degree programs under semesters. That's right — in case you haven't heard, you will probably have somewhere between zero and six hours of free electives under semesters if you are in engineering. I guess someone decided that students really didn't need to take any classes outside their majors.

# TECHNIQUE

"The South's Liveliest College Newspaper"  
Established in 1911

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The *Technique* welcome all letters to the editor and will print letters on a timely and space-available basis. Letters should be hand-delivered, mailed to Georgia Tech Campus Mail Code 0290, or E-mailed to [editor@technique.gatech.edu](mailto:editor@technique.gatech.edu). Letters should be addressed to Greg Scherrer, Editor. All letters must be signed and must include a campus box number or other valid mailing address for verification purposes. Letters should not exceed 350 words and should be submitted by 8 a.m. Wednesday in order 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 intent will not be printed. Editors reserves the right to edit for style, content, and length. Only one submission per person will be printed each quarter.

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## Commercials

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person. See, I have a puppy dog! I love my puppy dog. And my mom. And I eat apple pie every day. If you don't vote for me, you are saying you hate apple pie. And moms. And puppy dogs." In most campaigns, the ads are briefly of type B, but quickly degenerate into type A. Occasionally, there are transitional forms, like "I love kittens. My opponent HATES kittens. He voted "yes" for Bill 380147.2984-J to make kittens ILLEGAL!!" However, these types of advertisements are fleeting.

Political ads offer no useful information at all. They try to hide this by quoting "facts" like "In 1987, Joe Smith voted NO on House Bill 2031! This means that he wants to ABOLISH EDUCATION!!!" The people who make these ads know that they can say things like that whenever they want to, because a) no one is going to look it up, and b) Joe Smith can't deny it, because he doesn't remember if it is true or not. As anyone who has ever watched C-SPAN (well, flipped past C-SPAN while channel surfing) knows, being in Congress is one of the most boring occupations in the free world,

second only to proofreading calculus books. Being in Congress is like sitting in lecture all day, every day. We shouldn't be surprised that members of Congress fall asleep; we should be surprised they show up at all. And most of the bills they vote on are so confusing not even the people who wrote them can figure them out. The result is, many politicians have a nagging suspicion every time they hear one of these accusations that they may actually have done whatever it is, totally by accident. So they retaliate the only way they can: by making up accusations of their own.

As you can see, both the candidates and the voters would be well served by abolishing all political ads. No rational person can overlook the overwhelming evidence I have presented here.

And if you don't agree with me, I'd like to talk to you about your operating system.

*Kim Wilson, the Technique's new Managing Editor, has a dog named Chica, a little porcelain angel, and a proclivity for writing long editorials.*

### Feedback: Letters to the Editor

Are you happy?

Are you sad?

Are you indifferent?

Whatever...send letters to [editor@technique.gatech.edu](mailto:editor@technique.gatech.edu)

## Students harmed by Flannery's actions

*Former Flannery student speaks out about his class experiences*

I was enrolled in Professor Flannery's PHYS 2121 class in the Spring Quarter of 1997. [Editor's note: *this was not the same quarter as the incident previously reported in the Technique*]. Shortly after the first test, I realized that he had basically taught us the questions that would be on it during the review session the day before. Others did, too, and word got around to be sure to attend his next review session.

Again Professor Flannery gave us "possible questions" on the day before the second test. Students who had neither attended a lecture nor done a single problem since the last test had all they needed to know to make an "A" on test two.

This pattern continued through the quarter. The regular lectures were dry and theoretical, and the class on the day prior to tests was packed with students eager to be spoon fed the test questions. The most appalling performance of this nature occurred on the day of the final exam review session. I vividly recall him giving us exactly twenty kinds of problems that could be on the final. He would say, "You might see a problem like this," drawing the diagram on the board. Then he would solve it, without numbers, to get an express for the final answer in terms of the other variables. At the end of that class, I had twenty separate problems in my notes. Coincidentally, every one and not a problem more

appeared on the final.

Despite my final grade of 198/200 in the class, I learned only how to memorize formulas. Or better yet, some students learned only how to program their calculators with potential problems. For proof of this fact, one need only look and the next quarter in e-mag, when I was called upon to apply those skills "learned" in Particle Dynamics. From the first day of e-mag, we were throwing vectors around. I barely knew what they were. After bombing the first test, I spent hours with the tutors, trying to learn the fundamentals I should have mastered in PHYS 2121.

What if my e-mag class had been taught by Professor Flannery as well? I surely would have had another easy "A" under my belt. Why not

take him or someone with his teaching style for optics too? Then I would be able to get out of learning vectors altogether, right? If other professors in this school adopted his teaching methods, students would undoubtedly overload their class because "it's an easy 'A.'" Too bad our degrees would be worthless upon graduation.

For that reason, and for compromising Georgia Tech's reputation of providing only the finest education, this teaching style should not be allowed here.

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*For more student perspectives and information on the current Honor Code situation, see page 1.*

### SHORT LETTER Not About Honor Code

## Thank you, Red Acura

We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to the beautiful passengers of the Red Acura. They made our journey on Sunday a pleasant and very memorable one. If you remember us, we would like to thank you ourselves. We hope you do, because we would like to get together again some day.

*The White Nissan*  
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