OUR VIEWS

CONSENSUS OPINION

Teaching TAs

CETL’s graduate training program is a welcome option at Tech, where students often complain about the quality of their TAs, especially graduate TAs. While a TA training course won’t be able to aid graduate students in crucial areas like language skills and pronunciation, it is good that TAs will have the option of taking a course to improve their ability to deal with students and relay information.

However, this course is not likely to help all TAs and could turn potentially excellent students, who do not have the time to take an additional class on top of existing commitments; furthermore, not all TAs need the training. As such, the class should not be mandatory. Rather, taking the class should be something TAs can take voluntarily to gain confidence or improve skills. It could also be used to help struggling TAs that get poor student feedback make changes to their teaching style.

While it isn’t a magic bullet to solve all of students’ TA woes, it is good to see the administration looking at the problem.

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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OPINIONS

Technique - Friday, March 10, 2006

Quote of the week:

“All human actions have one or more of these seven causes: chance, nature, compulsion, habit, reason, passion and desire.”

— Aristotle

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TECHNIQUE

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Dear Democratic Party,

Guys, first off, let’s get a few things out of the way. I like you, I like what you stand for. I think you are on the whole swell people who stand for an America that I’d really like to be a part of, an America of pluralism and individual liberty. An America where nobody gets left behind and everyone gets a fair shake in life, not just in the campaign.

That said, I really am sick of all your crap lately, and by lately, I mean the past six to 10 years.

Yes, I understand that you’re the minority party, and as such, your voice in government is limited.

I also get that if you want to get anything done you’ve got to work with the majority and not just be obstructionists, but do you think you could maybe, maybe grow a little bit of a spine for you, your old pal, Evan? Please?

I mean, nobody even knows what you guys stand for these days, other than “not being Republicans” that is, and really that’s just not going to cut it anymore—not to imply that it ever actually did.

You need to assert yourselves and act like freaking grown-ups who have some sort of honest-to-God plan for how they want the country to be run. It’s time to take some issues and make your damned voices heard.

Let’s start with an easy one: torture and extraordinary rendition. You can pretty much just say “We’re not for that,” and it constitutes a valid counter-position. In fact, “I’m against torture in all its forms,” makes for a very workable plank in a campaign, plus the anti-fetus bumper sticker. Bonus points.

However, I certainly don’t mean to imply that I don’t sympathize with the situation in which you regularly find yourself. It’s really hard to counter an absolutist position with a nuanced one. It’s stupidly easy for someone to say something painfully jingoistic like, “I support defending our borders,” and act like that completely sums up and validates the entirety of their political opinion.

Then you have to sit there and argue that, while of course you also support defending our borders (that’s a ridiculous and meaningless platitud, by the way), the situation is complicated and maybe being hostile involves a little something more than just being unreasonably hateful at every turn in the hope that, by way of some Cro-Magnon-esque chest thumping, all of America’s enemies can be made to cover in fear before our awesome might.

Of course, then you get painted as a whacko who lacks the courage of his convictions, a very difficult label to break, but that doesn’t mean you should just run away from your own position. It just means you’ve got to get in there and actually explain why you believe what you do, despite the sad reality that very often the world is just too complicated to fit into a sound bite on Fox News, and that may be we ought to approach it as such.

And above all, you’ve got to stick to your freaking guns. How do you think the Republicans got something so patently absurd as an “abstinence works” to become the basis for our nation’s approach to Sex Ed? It certainly wasn’t on the strength of the argument.

I know the deck’s stacked against you, youngster. You guys have been defining the terms of the debate for a long time now (way to not get on the ball in any way, shape or form to try to remedy that situation, by the way), but the time has come to step up and act like the opposition you’re actually supposed to be.

Oh, and one more little thing. You really need to think about the difference between dropping the ball on that whole Iraq War thing. Sure, sure, you acted in good faith on the intelligence that was presented to you, but the time has come for all good men to swallow a little pride, admit we were wrong, and try think of some way to begin de-crapping the bed.

But then again, what do I know? I’m just a college kid who needed an editorial topic at the last minute.
government; it’s everywhere. People no longer wish to take responsibility, and would rather, as Two-Bits Man said, complain about the way things are, then shirk action by saying “what can one man do?”

Our generation is one of apathy. We need to stand up for what we believe in and do something about what we feel is wrong in the world. I’ve often felt that my parents sent me to the United States to study; get a good degree, a good job, a good wife and a good life, which is what most parents want for us. But is there more to life? Is it worth sacrificing life for something bigger and better?

Americans have grown up with stories of the Civil War and the American Revolution, but it’s more relevant to most Indians; our grandparents all have firsthand accounts. Some, like mine, knew freedom fighters and had personally seen those men who had taken initiative, and put something bigger ahead of themselves. Sometimes I wonder if they were right, and if all of us today, stuck in the trappings of consumerism and apathy, are wrong.

But a generation can change. A group of university students have formed a political party in India and will be contesting the next general elections. Apathy isn’t everywhere yet, and that gives me some hope. Who knows, maybe I’ll go back to India and join that party.

Abhishek Banerjee
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Terrorist subversion masked as accident

Last week’s edition of the ‘News reported that some parts of the fourth floor of the CRC suffered water damage after a student dislodged a ceiling-mounted sprinkler head by accidentally drop-kicking a basketball into it.

If you raised an eyebrow as you read that story, you’re not alone. (To be completely fair, it should be noted that those of you who either did not raise an eyebrow or raised both eyebrows are also not alone, but are siamitically insignificant.)

Doesn’t that explanation for the damage seem a little...unlikely? Let’s think about this. How exactly does one accidentally punt not a dodge ball, not even a volleyball, but a basketball (regulation weight 1.25 lb. and, you’ll note, known in street vernacular as a “rock”) into the rafters of a professional-grade sporting complex?

I could understand if we were talking about Mighty Mouse here. But this feat was allegedly performed by your run-of-the-mill Tech student, who had presumably been sapped by maddness of all energy except that needed to sleep, eat and play Counterstrike.

Add in the fact that the ball just happened to hit a sprinkler head the size of a half-dollar, and that no one could shut off the water until the fire department arrived a half hour later—and you’ve got yourself a pretty unfortunate and implausible story.

It’s easy to write off the whole event as another case of stonks on a plane. But, for the sake of America and the sanctity of our precious bodily fluids, that’s something I’m just not willing to do. We’ve got to face facts. It’s time to wake up, folks. This wasn’t some random accident. Oh, no. It was obviously Terrorism, plain and simple.

I’m not saying the student acted maliciously. I doubt there even was a student. Last week’s story seems like it was put out to keep the populace calm in the face of what, if given the facts, they would have identified as the croun face of Terrorism.

Here’s my take. It seems likely that the job was executed by an international team of technologists armed with custom-built basketball-launching devices, repelling gear and lasers. Lots of lasers. Because nothing is quite as terrifying as dudes with accents and lasers.

Their mission? Who knows? But you can bet that what they accomplished—the sudden closing of the CRC, the damage to its fourth floor, the disorientation of the student body following the closing—adds up to only one thing: TERROR.

Terrorists strike in the darkness of unsuspecting night from the shadowy bowels of fear, whatever that means. They’re amorphous, they’re ambiguous, they may even be amphibious and ambidextrous. If possessing only those traits attributable to adjectives beginning with ‘am’ creeps you out, they’ll do it. Anything to bring on the fear.

Mark these words, America: terrorists are out to get you and everything that you hold dear. We used to understand that. (Remember in Nov. 2001 when the Atlanta airport shut down because one hurried UGA alumnus decided to go down an escalator? Those were the days.)

But now we’ve forgotten that the potential for Terrorism is all around us. Gone are the days of gas mask buy-outs and duct-tape hinges. I mean, we’re even down to a “elevated” alert these days.

You should know that no matter the magnitude of our complacency toward Terror, the Department of Homeland Security is on the case. Why, just last month two uniformed officers of Montgomery County’s Homeland Security Department randomly dumped into the computer cluster of the Little Falls library in Bethesda, Md., and announced to all present that the viewing of internet pornography was forbidden. A computer user and the library staff argued this issue with the officers, but they were undoubtedly Terrorists.

Two accolades are in order. The first goes to the state of Maryland, for being one of the few states allowing an individual county to run its own homeland security department. The second goes to the above-mentioned officers for taking it upon themselves to enforce an obscenity law that doesn’t apply to libraries and doesn’t lie within the jurisdiction of the Montgomery County Homeland Security Department.

Unfortunately, those officers were later reassigned to other jobs within the department. We can only hope they are now training the new recruits, because that kind of spunk and initiative is what we need to keep us safe.

We need to get back to the golden days of fear of Terror. I’m talking about banning books, people. I’m talking about evil villains behind every light pole and around every street corner. I’m talking about making people disappear for carelessly (but not malevolently) leaving bottle bombs out where others might find them. I’m talking about swift and merciless Justice for breaking even the small rules. Because if all we have to fear is fear itself, then we need to get on the ball and scare ourselves to death before the Terrorists do.

Andrew Saulters
Columnist

“it’s time to wake up folks. This wasn’t some random accident. Oh, no. It was obviously Terrorism...”

Abhishek Banerjee from page 11

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