Panelists Discuss Online Education at Tech

AMELIA PAVLIK
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Making education more accessible — that’s what motivated Tucker Balch, an associate professor in the School of Interactive Computing, to teach a course through Coursera.

“In designing this course, I recognize that I’m not teaching an accredited Georgia Tech course,” said Balch, who will be teaching a six-week course titled “Computational Investing, Part I” that begins in late October. “Instead, I’m trying to take a portion of what I usually teach and make it accessible to a broad group.”

During the Sept. 13 Town Hall on Online Education, Balch’s sentiments were echoed by each of four faculty panelists who shared their experiences in developing courses for Coursera, which recently partnered with Tech and other prestigious universities to offer free courses for the general public. Since the partnership was announced in July, about 70,000 people have enrolled in Tech’s Coursera courses.

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Bras was joined by Nelson Baker, dean of Professional Education, Donna Llewellyn, associate vice provost of Technology Services, and Claire Jackson, dean of the College of Computing.

The event, hosted by the Office of the Provost, offered a forum for members of the campus community to discuss the future of online education at the Institute. “We’re pursuing opportunities such as Coursera because we want to ensure that Tech has input into the online learning revolution that is occurring,” said Rafael L. Bras, provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs.

Panelists discussed the potential of online education, noting that Coursera’s potential extends beyond the current offerings. “We’re pursuing opportunities such as Coursera because we want to ensure that Tech has input into the online learning revolution that is occurring,” Bras said.

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Tool Allows for At-Home Ear Infection Diagnosis

LIZ KLIFFP
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

A new pediatric medical device being developed by Georgia Tech and Emory University could make life easier for every parent who has rushed to the doctor with a child screaming from an ear infection.

Parents may soon be able to skip the doctor’s visit and receive a diagnosis without leaving home by using Remotoscope, a clip-on attachment and software app that turns an iPhone into an otoscope.

Pediatricians currently diagnose ear infections using the standard otoscope to examine the ear. With Remotoscope, parents would be able to take a picture or video of their child’s eardrum using the iPhone and send the images digitally to a physician for diagnostic review.

“Ultimately, we think parents could receive a diagnosis at home and forgo the late-night trips to the emergency room,” said Lam, who is also a physician at Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and an assistant professor of pediatrics at Emory University’s School of Medicine. “It’s known that kids who get ear infections early in life are at risk for recurrent ear infections. It can be a very big deal and really affect their families’ quality of life.”

Remotoscope’s clip-on attachment uses the iPhone’s camera and flash as the light source. It also relies on a custom software app — enhanced by Brian Parise, a research scientist with Georgia Tech Research Institute’s Landmark Research Center — that provides automatic zoom and crop, image preview, and auto calibration. The iPhone’s data transmission capabilities seamlessly send images and video to a doctor’s inbox or to the patient’s electronic medical record.

The device has the potential to save money for both families and healthcare systems, Lam said. Ear infections, or otitis media, affect 73 percent of children by age 6, making it the most common diagnosis for preschoolers. They result in more than 15 million office visits per year in the United States and thousands of prescriptions for antibiotics, which are sometimes not needed.

At the initial visit with a patient, physicians say it is difficult to differentiate between ear infections caused by viruses, which resolve on their own, and those caused by bacteria, which would require antibiotics.

“As pediatricians will likely see the child once, they often err on the side of giving antibiotics for viral infections rather than risk not giving antibiotics for a bacterial infection, which can lead to complications,” Lam said. “So, we are currently over-treating ear infections with antibiotics and consequently causing antibiotic resistance.”

Lam said Remotoscope may be able to change physicians’ prescription patterns of antibiotics for ear infections. Receiving serial images of a child’s ear over several days via the Remotoscope could allow physicians to wait and see if a child’s infection improves or whether antibiotics are warranted. For the full article, visit tinyurl.com/9oby6t

Coursera FAQs

Have questions about Coursera? The Center for 21st Century Universities is ready to answer them. The center has created an FAQ site (http://c21u.gatech.edu/coursera/coursera-faq) devoted to the topic. Here are a few of the featured Q&As:

• What kinds of courses are best for Coursera?

The actual selection of courses is determined by faculty members. Our objective is to showcase Georgia Tech’s unique and innovative courses. That doesn’t mean that a course in biostatistics isn’t a good course to offer, but in general, standard courses or general education courses are low on the priority list.

• Who owns Coursera course content?

The Coursera agreement does nothing to modify employment agreements with Tech, so the exact answer depends on how and for what purpose the course was created. There’s more information related to this in the intellectual property (IP) definition of the faculty handbook.

• How much communication is there among instructors and Coursera students?

Direct communication will be on a limited basis due to the nature of enrollments in these courses. The individual faculty member will determine the degree of interaction. Some faculty members plan on having end of the week chats or using summary questions as a means of reaching out to students.

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Counseling Resources Available to Students

KRISTEN BAILEY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

It’s no secret that the college years can be a challenging time.

Students take on academics, internships, activities, co-ops and jobs all while trying to adjust to living on their own, with strangers, away from family and friends. Sometimes, these factors can take a toll on mental health.

“This age, during college, is the prime age for emotional or mental health concerns to emerge,” said Ruperto Perez, director of the Counseling Center. “We see students who may have had a predisposition for certain issues, maybe in their family, but they are coming in for the first time because they notice signs in themselves or someone notices it in them.”

If faculty or staff members become concerned about a student, Perez encourages them to first address it with the person. Express your concern and explain what you’re seeing, and ask if there is anything you can do to help. The Counseling Center is available for confidential consultation with anyone who is concerned about someone and may want tips on how to deal with the situation. Students with issues that warrant involvement beyond their existing community should visit the Counseling Center or Office of the Dean of Students.

Some signs that might indicate that inter-

In comparing Tech students who have visited the Counseling Center to those at universities around the country, Tech students report more academic distress than their peers.

issues such as depression and anxiety, the top two consistently present issues observed by Counseling Center staff.

“We try to emphasize that now is a good time to start to develop a plan for how to manage and cope with stress,” Perez said.

“Whether it’s going to the Campus Recreation Center on a regular basis, or getting involved socially and developing a support system, it’s important to try to be proactive in making those plans to avert and cope with stress. The center is open for appointments and consultations Monday–Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., with a counselor on call 24/7 at 404-894-2575. 

http://counseling.gatech.edu

CANCER, continued from page 1

Bayer, who developed the breath sampler and analytical method used for both studies, has conducted air research for more than 30 years.

The team found 73 unique breath volatile organic compounds (BVOCs) that differed between patients with NSCLC and those without cancer.

Very little research has been done when it comes to using breath tests to diagnose breast cancer. So after meeting Winship Researcher Sheryl Gabram, Bayer and Gabram decided to also compare the breath compounds of lung cancer patients with those of patients with breast cancer.

More than 300 BVOCs in breath samples of 20 healthy women over the age of 40 and 20 women recently diagnosed with stage II-IV breast cancer who had not received treatment were analyzed. The results showed that the breath analysis could determine that the sample came from a cancer patient or a healthy subject 78 percent of the time.

The breathalyzer works by trapping chemical compounds and examining them with an analyzer as a patient breathes into it. The researchers’ analysis methodology combines gas chromatography — a technique for separating complex compounds — with mass spectrometry, which identifies the chemical makeup of a substance. Specific patterns in the compounds are then found and used to determine whether or not cancer is present.

One of the primary challenges associated with developing a breathalyzer for this purpose is making the technology as simple as possible.

“It needs to be something that can be mass produced, like a syringe,” Bayer said. “The technology needs to be simple enough so that someone drops the breathalyzer, it won’t have to be recalibrated.”

Future plans for this research include testing the technology on larger populations and analyzing whether the genetic signatures of the 73 differing BVOCs varies based on the stage of the disease. In addition to using the breath tests to diagnose lung and breast cancer, Bayer would eventually like to look into using the breathalyzers to diagnose other cancers.

For more information about this research, contact Bayer at charlene.bayer@gtri.gatech.edu.

BENEFITS, continued from page 1

related to choices of in-network pharmacies. Walgreens is once again an in-network pharmacy for the Blue Choice HMO and the HSA Open Access plans. For more details, visit http://ohr.gatech.edu/news/walgreens20120911.

Also, beginning in 2013, the Institute will introduce a new dental plan provider — Delta Dental — and will provide employees with access to a larger network of dentists and higher coverage levels in many instances. A new PPO plan will be offered at the same premium as the current PPO plan, while the HMO plan will be offered at a lower premium than the existing Humana Access plan. The Delta Dental PPO and HMO will replace plans previously provided by Humana.

Tech will also offer a new voluntary legal plan through ARAG. This benefit is designed to provide employees with legal protection for a variety of legal matters at an affordable price. In addition to in-office services with experienced network attorneys, members will have access to online resources and telephonic legal advice.

To learn more about these and other benefits options, faculty and staff are encouraged to attend the annual Benefits Fair on Oct. 24 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the student Center Ballroom. The event will feature more than 30 vendors, and the Tech benefits team will be available to assist employees with any questions.

Other benefits news to be aware of:

• If you are participating in a flexible spending account (FSA), you must submit your 2012 claims by March 31, 2013 to our plan administrator, US Bank. Your claims must be incurred on or before December 31, 2012 to be eligible for reimbursement.

• For employees enrolled in the Open Access POS plan, HSA Open Access POS plan or BlueChoice HMO, flu vaccines will be 100 percent covered, regardless of the place of service — including their local pharmacy. To be reimbursed, pay for the service and fax a copy of the receipt and member ID card to Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) of Georgia at 1-877-886-7890. A reimbursement check will be mailed to the employee’s home address. If the employee goes to a doctor to get the flu vaccine, the claim will be filed for them and paid. Flu shots at the local pharmacy will not be covered under the Kaiser HMO plan.

www.ohr.gatech.edu
Institute Celebrates Family Weekend

On Sept. 21-22, the Georgia Tech Parents Program hosted its annual Family Weekend and found it to be as successful as ever in helping parents connect with the Institute. With 37 states and 5 countries represented, Family Weekend 2012 attracted 640 families and 2,386 participants to campus. Events ranged from presentations and panel discussions to art exhibits and some pre-football tailgating. "We are extremely grateful for all the support we received from the staff in the Division of Student Affairs as well as our campus partners in making this an enjoyable event for our families," added Kim Stritt, director of the Parents Program.

Registration for Break Camp Opens Oct. 2

If you're looking for a convenient child care solution when it comes to school year holidays, look no further than the Campus Recreation Center's (CRC) Tech Wreck Break Camp.

This year's camp is open to first through eighth graders, whose parents work at Georgia Tech, Nov. 19-21, Dec. 20-21, Jan. 2-4 and Jan. 22-24. Registration opens on Oct. 2, and there is a limit of 21 campers per day. Each day, campers will play games and participate in arts and crafts and recreation activities, including a afternoon swim in the CRC's pools. Camp runs from 7:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day. The cost is $40 per child, per day, and post-care supervision is available until 5:30 p.m. for a cost of $5 per child.

Questions? Contact Ken Lovic ken.lovic@crc.gatech.edu.

tinyurl.com/bnhj5fb

MISCELLANEOUS

Thomasville bookcase, twin bed and headboard, $50. Email alicia.stryker@spaceplan.gtri.gatech.edu.

Brown leather sofa, love seat, and half moon, $150. Email danieldaniel.a.cook@gmail.com.

Foster mattress and box spring for sale; Queen-size, pillow-top Stearns and Foster, $100. Microwave, $40. Email angela.strong@gtri.gatech.edu.

CAMPUS RECREATION CENTER

The solitute of the shooting range. The careful adjustments to the pistol's sights. The feel of her fingers wrapped around the grip, poised to pull the trigger.

While some read a book or take a yoga class to de-stress, Kara Allen finds relaxation and focus in a visit to the shooting range and the process of setting up the perfect shot.

"When you're shooting, it's you against yourself," said Allen, vice president for events and campus relations for the Alumni Association. "You have to have confidence in yourself to be successful."

Allen, whose mother was a member of both the 1992 and 1996 Olympic shooting teams, began shooting at age 12. She participated in several Junior Olympics, National Championships and even placed third at the U.S. Olympic Festival in St. Louis.

After making it to the World Championships in Barcelona and Atlanta World Cup in 1998, Allen decided it was time to take a break to focus on her studies and start a career.

"But by 2011, I realized that I missed shooting competitively and that I wouldn't have the focus that I have when I shoot," added Allen.

"No matter what happens, I've already learned so much about myself."

Read on to learn more about Allen and her time at Tech.

How did you arrive in your current position?

My dad is a heart surgeon, so when I was little, I wanted to be a doctor — and then I took chemistry in college. So I became a sociology major who fell into event planning.

About eight years ago, I was working as an alumni events manager at Vanderbilt University when a friend suggested that I apply for a similar position at the Institute.

I knew I’d enjoy the events aspect of the job, but I didn’t realize how much I’d enjoy the campus relations component.

During an average day, what does your job entail?

I oversee the coordination of events ranging from the Pi Mile Road Race to Homecoming to Tech’s biggest donor dinner, the President’s Dinner. In terms of campus relations, I’m responsible for ensuring students understand the value of a lifelong relationship with Tech, while they are on campus and once they graduate, which means I work a great deal with the Student Alumni Association.

What is the most satisfying part of your job?

One of my favorite quotes is “Nothing in this world has been accomplished without passion.” And this describes our students to a “T.” Tech students are so driven and dedicated, and I’m always amazed by them.

What is your favorite spot on campus?

For me, it’s more about favorite traditions than a favorite spot. For example, I love walking by the Mickey Mouse clock or seeing students wearing RAT caps.

What is one piece of technology you can’t live without?

My iPhone. It’s a tool that helps me balance work with my dream of getting to the Olympics.

What is your favorite piece of advice?

Keep calm and carry on.

Tell us something about yourself that others might not know.

When my sisters and I turned 14, we each went on a hunting trip with my father. There was one requirement for the trip — that whatever we hunted could hunt us.

I shot a bear on my trip, while one sister shot a mountain lion. The other sister went a slightly different route. The terrain she had to navigate was more life-threatening than the mountain goat that she shot.

CLASSIFIEDS

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