

Wasting the time away

Students find inventive ways to keep eyes open during class

Story by Susan Overcash • Graphics by Michael Wagener

Imagine: water is lapping at golden beaches, sun-drenched and steamy. The sky is clear and crystal blue, and a cool drink being brought down by the

of our work on Maple, on the computer," Fiurito said. "I would watch the World Cup over the Internet instead."

Rangel said she most often daydreams through boring lectures. The question might arise, why are students turning their nose up at academics, when tuition and fees average over \$100 per class hour.

mation systems major, said a professor's ineffective presentation style also contributes to a short attention span.

Ferris Beuller's Day Off every professor should see that," Knight said. "Professors need to vary what they're doing, in chunks of five to ten minutes."

son's should extend material covered in the book through examples and anecdotes.

He leans down to whisper in your ear. "What is the second derivative of secant squared by the time of yz?" The last piece of my daydream remembered is a professor shouting, "pay attention!"

Many modern classrooms are equipped with laptop computers, most of which have Internet access and e-mail.

Fiurito is not the only student who passes class time on the Internet.

"Most classes, the teachers just have Power Point notes," Cardon said. "There's no point in paying attention; the notes are available on the Web. I mean, I can read."

"Vary voice tone, movement and content and interject activities that allow students to be active physically and mentally. Also, allow questions and know student's names. I think a good sense of humor also helps."

On the student side, Knight said students should try to develop better note-taking skills and get involved in class by asking questions.

Daydreams, drawing and delving through the Internet are all pastimes of students during class, time that is spent listening to a professor or learning a new material.

Larry Lumpkin, a junior chemical engineering major, said Internet games, such as "Home Run Rally," keep him awake in interminable classes.

Stephanie Knight, an associate professor in the Department of Educational Psychology and Director for the Center of Collaborating Learning Communities, said many professors, especially in large lectures, try to present students with too much information.

"Recent learning theory suggests that people listen to what they think is relevant," she said. "The professor needs to know their students and maintain relevance."

Rangel said she agrees that professors who focus on student needs, as well as academics, help her pay attention.

"Use various kinds of note-taking strategies, changing the information format when writing it down," Knight said.

"Last summer, I was taking differential equations, and we did all

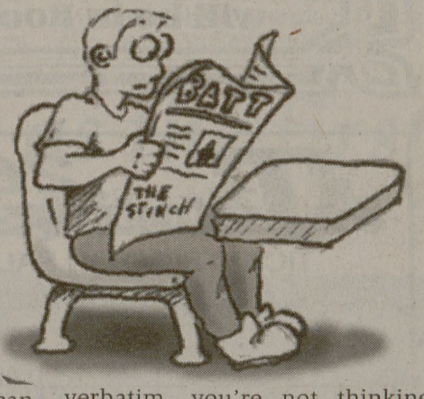
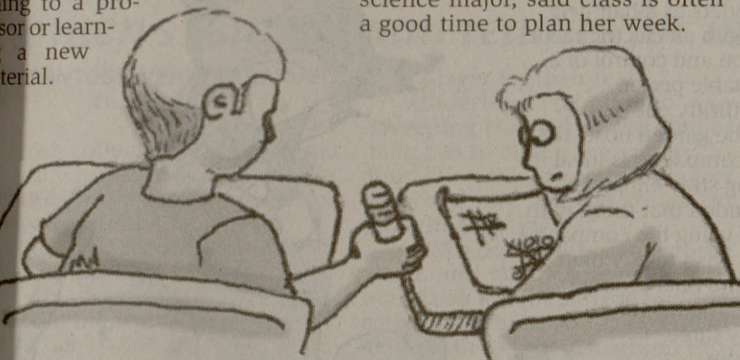
"I usually pull out my planner and start scheduling," Rangel said. "My roommate is also in a couple of my classes, and we'll write back and forth to one another."

White said, "In most classes, the teacher's not worth listening to anyway."

White said, "If they're overloaded, they can't retain what they've learned. Students tune out like a machine that is overloaded."

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"The more you transform information, the better you remember it later. If you're writing notes



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