

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH  
Alumni Association Phoenix Dinner, September 5, 2003

It is a pleasure to spend this special evening with you at our annual Phoenix Dinner, which gives us a chance to express our great appreciation to all of you who have made significant contributions to Roll Call during the past year.

According to legend, the phoenix was a unique bird with a lifespan of 500 years. Only one phoenix was alive at a time, and at the end of its 500 years, the dying bird would build a nest to serve as a funeral pyre, and set itself and the nest on fire. From the ashes of this fire, a new phoenix would rise. The ancient Egyptians adopted the phoenix as a religious symbol for the sun, which, according to their view of the world, died each night and rose again each morning.

At Georgia Tech, the cycle of stewardship falls in between those two extremes – much shorter than 500 years, but much longer than a day. Once a year the Alumni Association calls the roll, and the faithful rise up once again to give their gifts. Tonight we thank each one of you for answering that call and renewing your commitment to Georgia Tech each year.

Some may wonder why we need the strong support of our alumni. After all, we are a public institution, a member of the University System of Georgia. But state funds comprise less than 30 percent of Georgia Tech's budget, and state funding covers only 53 percent of the cost of a Georgia Tech education. The gifts of donors like each of you are what has enabled Tech to continue our forward momentum even as the state budget has been cut repeatedly. Your gifts are positioning Tech to run out ahead of the curve as the economy begins to recover.

Many gifts to Georgia Tech are one-time contributions designated for particular purposes. They represent pure philanthropy, and we are deeply grateful for each one of them. But Roll Call is a very important complement to those designated gifts, and your Roll Call contributions represent something more. Roll Call signifies stewardship. It involves an ongoing commitment. Like the phoenix it is continually renewed, returning again and again on schedule to provide the consistent level of support that is so essential to nurturing the ongoing health and well-being of the Institute.

Roll Call also enables Georgia Tech to be a good steward of our operations and opportunities. It is the largest source of unrestricted funds we have, and as such it is the key to our institutional flexibility. Roll Call provides the resources that keep Georgia Tech on an even keel as we move forward – filling in the gaps between designated gifts, and providing the resources to address unexpected issues and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.

*U.S. News* just released its undergraduate rankings a week or so ago, and for the fifth consecutive year, Georgia Tech was up there among the top ten public universities in the nation. The undergraduate engineering program was ranked in the top five, mirroring our graduate rankings. Our greatest strengths that lift us up into that top tier are the excellence of our students and our faculty and our academic reputation. And your gifts help us to provide scholarships and financial aid to exceptional students and support the recruiting and retention of outstanding faculty.

Roll Call funding also has helped to begin new academic programs and purchase equipment for our classrooms and teaching labs. These are things that contribute to the educational experience at Georgia Tech, helping us better serve some of the brightest minds in Georgia and the nation. Your assistance is contributing to better retention rates. More than 90 percent of our freshmen are back again the next year. Your support has enabled us to broaden out our curriculum to better serve a wider range of students while continuing to maintain our traditional excellence in engineering. You have helped us develop new programs in exciting interdisciplinary fields like biomedical engineering and human-computer interaction.

Our goal is to define the technological university of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, providing unprecedented technological leadership in a world that increasingly relies on technology. Your Roll Call gifts make you our partners in that quest for excellence and leadership.

Even though Roll Call adheres to a regular schedule, we realize that you do not give to Roll Call out of compulsion. Every dollar that you have given us is a dollar given freely, spurred by a desire to see Georgia Tech continue to serve its students and the state and nation for generations to come. We are deeply grateful for your faithful support, which is so essential to the mission and progress of the Institute. And in turn, we will keep the faith with you by using the resources you provide to preserve the heritage of Georgia Tech even as we move the Institute forward to new levels of excellence.