

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Alumni Association Phoenix Dinner, October 4, 2001

Anne and I are pleased to welcome you to this special evening as an expression of our appreciation to the Phoenix Club. There are many things that separate Georgia Tech from the typical public university, but one of the most significant is our outstanding alumni and the strong contributions you make year after year.

Each one of you has realized the promise and potential that lay within you when you were students at Georgia Tech. You are our ambassadors and our best advertisement of what attending Georgia Tech can do for a person. In addition to demonstrating the value of a Georgia Tech education in your own lives, you have also been perceptive in recognizing the promise in each new generation of students that has come along behind you, and you have been generous in supporting them. Tonight we honor and thank you for giving back to Georgia Tech. And I especially want to recognize and thank this year's Burdell Society members. There are 18 of you this year – up from 11 last year.

If you read *U.S. News & World Report*, you know that Georgia Tech is ranked among the top 50 universities in the United States and among the top 10 public universities. Our College of Engineering is ranked fifth in the nation for its graduate programs and sixth for its undergraduate programs. And you may wonder what is left for us to do.

The answer is plenty. Our class size is the largest among the top 50 universities, we need to improve our retention and graduation rates, and we need more high-quality faculty. Our buildings are old and inadequate for the growth we are experiencing. We lag behind the rest of the ACC in the intercollegiate teams we field. When you look at individual measures like this, it is amazing that we are able to get and hold the rankings we have.

But the magic ingredient is our outstanding students, faculty, staff and alumni. Georgia Tech is known for our ability to solve real-world problems in novel and creative ways, to adjust quickly and gracefully to rapidly changing circumstances, and to use knowledge and technology to improve lives. And you have been the key to giving us that reputation.

The tragic events of September 11th have to some measure undermined the confidence our nation felt entering the 21st century and led Americans to wonder what the future holds for us. But Eric Hoffer, who was a long-shoreman philosopher back in the days when I was in graduate school at Berkeley, pointed out, "The only way to predict the future is to have the power to shape the future."

Georgia Tech's challenge today is the same as it was when you were students: to shape futures through innovation – to imagine the skills and the knowledge our students will need to become leaders in the world into which they graduate, and prepare them for that role. To imagine the technology that our society needs to be safe and to prosper, and then to create it and get it to market.

Your faithful and steadfast participation in Roll Call helps us rise to that challenge to shape the future even as the world around us grows more complex and changes more quickly. And tonight we are glad to have a chance to show our appreciation for your help and support.