

## Notes from the President

Georgia Institute of Technology

G.P. "Bud" Peterson, President

2017 Georgia Tour Blog Day Two – June 20

06/20/17

We started off early, leaving the hotel at 6:45 am and heading inland. By 9:30 a.m. we had reached Douglas, Georgia, the hometown of President Emeritus G. Wayne Clough. President Clough's roots are deep in this Coffee County city, as he wrote in the ***Smithsonian Magazine*** while he was still Secretary of the Smithsonian. His father and great grandfather both served as mayors of Douglas, and their pictures are in the local museum there.

Our first stop in Douglas was at the Optima Chemical Group, which produces specialty chemicals and offers custom and specialty manufacturing to a wide range of markets in the chemical processing industry. Optima's president, Gene Williams, a Georgia Tech alum, showed us around the facility and gave us a great tour, somewhat dampened by the rain but nonetheless very impressive.

Optima is one of 11 companies in Georgia Tech's Lean Manufacturing Consortium in south Georgia, and Gene talked with Georgia Rep. Dominic LaRiccia, who joined us for the tour, about the impact Georgia Tech has had on their company and their industry. The Lean Manufacturing Consortium helps companies benchmark their efforts against the industry's best practices and learn from each other through facility tours, training, and other methods. It is very gratifying to visit these types of businesses and industries across the state, all of which can benefit from the shared experiences of the local Georgia businesses and learn about the impact firsthand that we here at Georgia Tech are having on these Georgia businesses.

Following our stop in Douglas at the Optima Chemical Group, we toured the Heritage Station Museum in Douglas, where President Emeritus Clough gave us a personal tour. Housed in the old Georgia & Florida Railway train depot and built in 1905, it encompasses the history of the region. After the depot closed for passenger transportation in the mid-1980s, some civic-minded local folks raised the funds to renovate the building, and it reopened in 1999. It is a great example of the impact of the many individuals and communities around the state that have contributed so much to the historical preservation, and growth and success of our state.

After the museum tour, it was on to an alumni lunch with the local Lions Club at The Atrium in downtown Douglas. With more than 200 Lions and Yellow Jackets present, all agreed that this was perhaps the best-attended meeting in the club's history, largely due to the hard work and efforts of Georgia Tech President Emeritus Wayne Clough and alumnus Francis Lott, ARCH 1959, who introduced me before my turn at the podium. Francis preceded that introduction with a nice tribute to Dr. Clough. Francis and his wife, Diane, have been steadfast supporters of Georgia Tech. Their Francis and Diane Lott Scholarship Endowment is part of the **G. Wayne Clough Tech Promise program** that helps students from financially-challenged backgrounds graduate debt-free with a world-class education!

Some 700 Georgia students have benefited from the Clough Tech Promise program since it was started 10 years ago, and one of the other special treats on this visit was to be able to meet with Noah Wolfert, a Coffee County High graduate who is both a Tech Promise recipient and an aerospace engineering major.

Next up was Tifton, where we visited the Georgia Peanut Commission. Georgia Tech is deeply engaged with Georgia's agricultural community, a fact that's not widely known. Last year, our Georgia Tech Research Institute and one of its units, the Agricultural Technology Research Program, collaborated with the University of Florida on a project to assess the stress condition of peanut plants under different growing conditions. Don Koehler, executive director of the Peanut Commission, hosted a wonderful visit, and I was able to drive an autonomous tractor (which means that I did not have to drive at all) and planted some peanuts, which should be ready for harvest in about 134 days. This is an amazing place, supported entirely by the farmers and others in the peanut industry. Don and his team were very gracious hosts, and we were able to hear about how Georgia Tech is engaged and involved in helping the farmers and the state's peanut industry improve operations and efficiency. We were also treated to a great assortment of peanut-based treats prepared by his outstanding staff.

From there, we visited the Georgia Chamber of Commerce's regional office, a converted Georgia Power office that was acquired by the chamber for its use, thanks to the able assistance of Regent Paul Bowers. The facility has been completely remodeled and opened last month in Tifton as the first Georgia Chamber office outside Atlanta in the organization's 102-year history. We are working with them to see if we can locate one of our regional Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI<sub>2</sub>) offices there in their facility.

From there, we headed for Valdosta, also known as "Winnersville" for its long tradition of outstanding high school football teams, where we attended an alumni reception with about 75 diehard Yellow Jackets at the Valdosta Country Club. We were hosted by Clinton and Jeana Beeland from CJB Industries, both Tech alums, as is their daughter. In attendance were many special guests from local, state, and federal government, and I was honored to share with them an update on how Georgia Tech is impacting their local community in Lowndes County.

From there it was back to the hotel for a quick night's sleep. We are off again tomorrow for an early-morning meeting with Board of Regents member Rusty Griffin, who lives in Valdosta, and another exciting day.

***G.P. "Bud" Peterson***

**Photos from Day Two:**



*Optima Chemical Group President Gene Williams, a Georgia Tech alum, showed the group around the facility. Optima is one of 11 companies in Georgia Tech's Lean Manufacturing Consortium in south Georgia.*





*From left, Georgia Sen. Tyler Harper, Georgia Tech Government & Community Relations Manager of State Relations Casey Aultman, and Georgia Chamber of Commerce official Molly Giddens converse with President Peterson at the 2017 Georgia Tour alumni gathering in Douglas.*



*Georgia Rep. Clay Pirkle, a Tech alumnus, greets President Peterson in Douglas.*



*Georgia Tech President Emeritus G. Wayne Clough met up with G. Wayne Clough Tech Promise Scholar Noah Wolfert, a Coffee County High graduate and current aerospace engineering major, at the Georgia Tour's Lions Club meeting in Douglas on June 20.*



*President Emeritus Clough points out family members' photos to President Peterson at the Heritage Station Museum in Douglas. Both Clough's father and grandfather served as mayor of the Coffee County city.*





*Flanked (left) by President Emeritus Clough and President Peterson, Georgia Tech alums Keisha Tanner and Francis Lott shared a visit at the Heritage Station Museum in Douglas.*



*President Peterson plants his very own peanuts under the guidance of Don Koehler, Georgia Peanut Commission executive director. Crop due for harvest in 134 days!*



*From left, Georgia Rep. Clay Pirkle, a Georgia Tech alumnus, visited in Tifton with President Peterson, Georgia Peanut Commission Chairman Armond Harris, and Georgia Peanut Commission Executive Director Don Koehler.*



*President Peterson, suit and all, climbs into an autonomous tractor for a ride during his Georgia Peanut Commission visit in Tifton.*





*Georgia Peanut Commission officials provided an interesting tour and valuable information about how important the peanut is to Georgia's economy.*



*President Peterson enjoys a conversation with Georgia Tech supporters and former state senator and current Georgia DOT State Transportation Board member Tim Golden (center, dark coat) at the 2017 Georgia Tour evening alumni event in Valdosta.*





*Valdosta Mayor Pro Tem Alvin Payton Jr. (right, tan coat) and friends share a moment with President Peterson during the 2017 Georgia Tour evening alumni event in Valdosta.*



*From left, Georgia Tech alumnus Clinton Beeland, Regent Rusty Griffin, and alumnus Blake Ellis socialize with President Peterson in Valdosta.*



*From left at Valdosta alumni gathering, Georgia Rep. John Corbett, Georgia Tech Government & Community Relations Manager of State Relations Casey Aultman, and former state Sen. Tim Golden, a current Georgia Dept. of Transportation board member*