REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
First Anniversary Remembrance, September 11, 2002

A year ago, on September 11, 2001, we watched in horror as airplanes hijacked by terrorists slammed into the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, and a field in Pennsylvania. Three days later, the Georgia Tech community gathered here to express our sorrow and pay tribute to the lives of more than 3,000 people who were killed in those attacks.

The tragedy of that day came home to me several months later when I flew to New York, and as my plane banked over lower Manhattan in preparation for landing, we could clearly see Ground Zero, where crews were still at work, clearing away the wreckage of what had once been the World Trade Center.

Today we gather again to mark the one-year anniversary of those terrorist attacks. We've come back today to remember and pay tribute to those who died, and after a year of grief and mourning, to move forward toward hope and healing. We've come back today to thank and honor the heroes of the homefront – the police and fire fighters who are on the frontlines of homeland security – as well as those who have served or are serving in the armed forces. And we are pleased to have representatives of the Atlanta police and fire fighters with us this afternoon, and to recognize the military personnel from our own Georgia Tech community. Thank you for your service on our behalf.

But we've also come back to say that we have not become bitter, or closed our minds and our hearts against those whose race or religion or nationality is different from ours. We are here again to stand together, shoulder to shoulder with each other, and reaffirm the bonds the hold us together as a community – a Georgia Tech community and a human community.

The attacks of last September gave Americans a heightened sense of patriotism, and we have flown the flag a lot more over the past year. The United States Congress and Georgia Governor Barnes have declared today Patriot Day, and we are flying our flags at half-mast in honor of those who lost their lives a year ago. But it is important that we continue to remember what that flag stands for. We are a nation that is rooted in freedom, a nation that preaches equality, a nation that values human dignity and respect for all people.

Universities developed a similar commitment to freedom over the course of our history as an institution. We are places where openness is valued and where people with differing views and beliefs can sit down together and converse with each other. The challenge is to carry that openness and that respect for human dignity out of the academic classroom and into our daily lives.

A year ago, I asked students, faculty, and staff to rise above resentment and focus on sentiments that unite us and draw us closer together as a campus community. I am proud of the way all of you responded to that call, and I urge your continued participation in creating a community that is enriched by diversity, rather than threatened or divided by it.

Dr. John Marburger, who heads the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy and is an active participant in issues of national security, was here on our campus last May to speak at commencement. And he said that what America needs most in its fight against terrorism is ideas about how to use our technology to protect and create openness and freedom. "What we need now are minutemen of the mind," he said, "a populace skilled not in marksmanship or hand-to-hand combat, but in the skills of science and the tactics of technology."

That's what your education here at Georgia Tech is about – the skills of science and the tactics of technology. The nation and the world are increasingly looking for leaders who understand how to use science and technology to protect and encourage freedom, and to create a better life for everyone everywhere. Your education is preparing you for the opportunity and responsibility of assuming that leadership.

The events of a year ago inflicted a lot of pain, and we still feel it. But the future does not rest on the damage or harm that others do to us. It depends on our willingness use our knowledge and expertise to change the world and make it a better place for everyone. That is the only real way to overcome terrorism and prevent the destruction of 9-11 from ever happening again, and you are the technological leaders of the future who can make it happen.