

## Notes from the President

Georgia Institute of Technology

G.P. “Bud” Peterson, President

Welcome Back – August 21, 2017

08/21/17



(Aug. 21, 2017) While here at the Georgia Institute of Technology we operate year-round, there's a special excitement each August with the beginning of the fall semester. This fall, for the ninth consecutive year, we are welcoming the best-qualified, and one of the largest and most diverse freshman classes in Georgia Tech history.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the admission of women as full-time students at Georgia Tech, and many from years past would be surprised to know that this year's freshman class is 43 percent women. It is fitting that the Naugle Communication Lab was dedicated earlier this month, honoring the innovative work of Dr. Helen H. Naugle, one of only two women on the faculty at Tech in 1962 and a pioneer in the establishment of university writing centers.

Yesterday (Aug. 20), we gathered with nearly 3,000 new students in McCamish Pavilion for our annual New Student Convocation, where I encouraged our freshmen and transfer students to take full advantage of all the resources and opportunities that Georgia Tech has to offer. Whether it is the communication lab, our health and well-being services, the many study abroad or internship opportunities, our living-learning communities, or one of the more than 400 student organizations, every student should **get involved**.

In addition to the RAT Caps and a copy of the T-Book, this year at Convocation we issued Georgia Tech-branded glasses for viewing today's (Aug. 21) solar eclipse, and we have numerous activities and "watch parties" planned at various locations around campus. Our strong focus on the sciences, engineering, and technology makes it even more awe-inspiring for Georgia Tech students. We will celebrate this event — much like we did when our faculty, staff, and students were involved in the groundbreaking discovery of the influence of gravitational waves, which verified Einstein's Theory of Relativity, or when NASA announced the discovery of the strongest evidence yet of water on Mars, based in large part on work by Georgia Tech graduate students.

By design, the eclipse glasses are very dark and completely block the view of the outside world, thereby providing a filter that protects us from harmful rays that could impact the rest of our lives. As I thought about the eclipse, I couldn't help but reflect on the similarities between these glasses and some of the recent events in the news, specifically the horrific events that occurred in Charlottesville last weekend. The people who would seek to impose hatred and violence on others in our society are blinded not by glasses, but rather by intolerance, ignorance, and a false sense of superiority that can also do permanent harm.

Universities have traditionally been a nucleus for open thought and expression, and we will continue to be such a place. We will not, however, be a magnet for hate. Tolerance does not translate into protecting evil. Violence, hatred, and bigotry are not protected by the First Amendment.

While there will always be those who will try to use the university environment as a platform for their own agendas, we have seen this past week how our academic community and society can stand united in opposition to hatred and bigotry and its distorted view of what freedom means in our United States.

At Georgia Tech, we remain steadfast in our commitment to fostering a safe, inclusive, and welcoming environment for the entire community, regardless of race, nationality, ethnicity, gender, beliefs, or perspectives. We are a global university, attracting some of the world's brightest scholars, researchers, and teachers. Students come from all 50 states and 117 countries. They bring with them a broad range of cultural, ethnic, and diverse backgrounds that makes us all better and strengthens and greatly enriches our campus community. This diversity helps each of us grow intellectually and socially as we share different traditions, beliefs, knowledge, and perspectives with one another.

I am enormously proud of the Georgia Tech community for its broad global perspective, its welcoming and inclusive environment, and its ability to come together to address some of the world's biggest challenges and most pressing problems in a positive and constructive manner. The same problem-solving abilities that we exhibit in our classes and research can be translated into how we interact with each other, on campus and in the community. We expect nothing less.

Our goal is to offer students the educational experience of a lifetime. Again, welcome! The year holds much promise for each and every one of us, and the opportunities are boundless. We're glad you're here.

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