

**Dr. Peterson**

**Welcome: 2014 (20th Anniversary) Tower Awards**

5-7:30 p.m. Thursday, April 3, 2014

- Welcome. It is great to see so many of you here. The OMED Tower Awards dinner has become a treasured annual occasion at Georgia Tech, and tonight marks its 20th year. You have worked hard, and this is an evening to celebrate. Whether you're a freshman (and very relieved to have done so well at one of the most challenging universities in the nation!), a transfer, or 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup>, or even a 5<sup>th</sup> year student who started at Tech, we're proud of you, and we join with you to celebrate your academic success.
- We should note that it became more difficult to receive a Tower Award this year. Despite the fact that we raised the bar, requiring a 3.15 GPA instead of a 3.0 to qualify, more than 1,100 students were academically eligible to receive a Tower Award. And we also know that a 3.0 at Georgia Tech is a significant achievement in and of itself.
- Tonight, I want to encourage you to press on. Your education is an investment in your future. Know that when you graduate, you will be highly sought.
- A Georgia Tech education is one of the best investments that you can make. According to [payscale.com](http://payscale.com)'s annual college salary report, Georgia Tech is the best in our state, and among the best in the nation, for giving its graduates top earning potential over a lifetime.
- But it's not all about earning potential. You are preparing to become leaders who will develop solutions to some of society's greatest challenges. You are also preparing to become leaders in the communities where you live and work. I hope during your time at Georgia Tech that you take advantage of the more than 400 student organizations that provide opportunities for growth, leadership, fellowship, volunteer work, and fun.
- And I hope you're getting involved in the Atlanta community. At some point on your life's journey, you were mentored and encouraged by someone who saw

your potential. We encourage you to take the skills and knowledge you have learned here to mentor someone else.

- Georgia Tech's history includes more than 50 years of matriculation of African-American students, and during the past half-century we have become a national leader in a number of areas. We have made great strides toward our commitment to diversity Georgia Tech, but we must go further. Our commitment is reinforced in our Strategic Plan. Dr. Ervin and his Office of Institute Diversity staff, along with thousands of other individuals in the Georgia Tech family, are working together toward a common goal. For our institution to be truly great, our research, our teaching, and our student body must reflect the diversity of thought and culture that exists in the world around us.
- Success in life is seldom a one-person effort. Many of you have family and friends this evening who are standing alongside you, cheering you on. Would the family and friends please stand? Let's give them a round of applause.
- We also have others who are standing alongside you. Would the faculty and staff please stand?
- And there is one more important group. We would like to recognize the corporate supporters who are investing in your futures. Thank you for your ongoing commitment to these students and to Georgia Tech.
- For those of you who will graduate this spring, I look forward to shaking your hand next month or this summer. For the others of you, press on. You're not across the finish line yet. And when you do graduate, it's not so much a finish line as a beginning of limitless opportunities.