

Notes from the President

Georgia Institute of Technology

G.P. "Bud" Peterson, President

A Word of Appreciation for Teachers

05/09/17

On May 5-6, we held 2017 Spring Commencement in McCamish Pavilion, where I had the opportunity in three different sessions to shake the hands of about 3,500 Yellow Jackets who were receiving bachelor's, master's, or Ph.D. degrees. On these occasions, I like to remind the recipients success in life is seldom a one-person effort. Georgia Tech has more than 1,900 academic faculty, research faculty, and staff who have guided and mentored students this past year, sharing with them their time, wisdom, and expertise in order to help them reach their fullest potential.

Georgia Tech is privileged to draw some of the world's most promising students. But before they became Yellow Jackets, their character and academic potential were shaped in large part by the teachers they had from an early age and on through high school. We, and the amazing students who come to Tech, benefit from the great work done by countless teachers before they arrive on our campus. Val and I both taught high school along the way, and also as parents we share a deep appreciation for the impact a teacher can have on a young person's life.

As the **National Education Association celebrates National Teacher Day** this May 9, 2017, in the midst of **PTA Teacher Appreciation Week** (May 8-12), it seems especially appropriate to acknowledge their contributions. From the caliber of students that come to Georgia Tech from all over the world, it's obvious that they have been mentored and challenged by caring, committed professionals well before they become Yellow Jackets. More than 90 countries have a similar day of recognition.

Everyone should have a teacher like New Manchester High School's **Casey Bethel**, Georgia's 2017 Teacher of the Year and Douglas County's 2015-16 Teacher of the Year. A passionate educator, accomplished scientist, and mentor to students of all ages, Mr. Bethel is a recipient of the **Georgia Intern Fellowship for Teachers (GIFT)**. GIFT is a paid summer STEM internship provided through Georgia Tech's Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing (CEISM). CEISM works vigorously to enhance pre-K through grade 12 STEM education.

Since its founding in 1991, GIFT has placed teachers in more than 2,000 positions statewide. K-12 science, mathematics, and technology teachers spend four to seven weeks in industry workplaces and university laboratories, experiencing firsthand how industrial scientists and researchers approach problems, design experiments, interpret data, communicate findings, and develop and implement workplace solutions. They then take this real-world experience to their classrooms.

Teaching excellence has long been a core value at Georgia Tech. In 2014, we dedicated our **Teaching Excellence Award Wall**, which recognizes honorees as far back as the 1960s for their contributions. Georgia Tech Provost Rafael Bras at the time said something that poignantly reflects the ongoing value a talented teacher brings: "Great teachers are immortal. They live on through the students that they inspire, who in turn go on to inspire others."

That sentiment was on display at all three of our Commencement services, but particularly so at the Ph.D. Hooding Ceremony on the morning of May 5, when recipients received their doctoral hood from their major professor in a symbolic passing on of knowledge. As one who has been fortunate enough to stand in both positions, the ceremony is a humbling reminder of how much we owe to others, many long in our past, who helped us reach that moment.

A popular bumper sticker says, "If you can read this, thank a teacher." At Georgia Tech, we might expand the message a bit, maybe something like "If you can read this, analyze it, and create the next by turning it into a business or an invention that makes the world better, then thank a teacher!"

- G.P. "*Bud*" Peterson