

Notes from the President

My First 100 Days at Georgia Tech

07/09/2009

To the Georgia Tech Community:

It's hard to believe, but July 9 marks my 100th day at Georgia Tech. The first three months have been enormously exciting and productive, and I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the things I have had the privilege to be a part of and give you a glance at what lies ahead.

In my first 100 days, I have tried to focus on learning as much about every aspect of Georgia Tech as possible and reaching out to the many people here at Georgia Tech; government, business and industry leaders, and those in the many communities we serve. In these meetings, I quickly learned that Tech is a truly incredible place, one that is making a tremendous impact, on the lives of our students, on the state's economy, and on the larger global community. One of the important aspects of my role as president is to share our story with numerous groups and individuals in an effort to communicate the many ways in which Georgia Tech enriches the lives of our various constituencies and to strengthen strategic partnerships, while at the same time, listening to their valuable feedback.

Day one set the pace when Val and I were invited to the state legislature, where I was given the opportunity to address both the House and the Senate. Since then I have met with students, faculty and staff from Georgia Tech; alumni here in Atlanta and across the country; and legislators, regents, and other city, state, and national leaders. As a continuation of this effort, this month we began traveling throughout the state to meet with current and prospective students, alumni, and local community and government leaders. As part of this process, this week we will make thirteen stops in seven cities in three days.

Without question, Tech's biggest fans and supporters, and one of our greatest strengths, are our alumni, here in Georgia and throughout the world. Over the course of the past three months, Val and I have met hundreds of them at various events. I have held individual meetings with more than 100 government and community leaders and more than 100 of our principal donors and supporters throughout the country - and more are scheduled. Last month we met members of the Georgia Tech Black Alumni Organization to communicate to them the importance of diversity. We have a lot to be proud about with Georgia Tech, particularly things related to diversity and underrepresented minorities. We have in the past ten years gone from 30 percent of our graduates who were students of color (i.e. Asian, Black/African American, Hispanic, and Native American) to 40 percent. As you may know, we are the second largest producer of African American engineers in the country. With our global focus, we can also boast that we have more international students than any university in Georgia. We will build on the good work that has already been done. In addition to gender and ethnicity, there is also intellectual and geographic diversity. At Tech we are bringing together the best and the brightest from throughout the world.

We are very proud of the contributions Tech alumni are making in their communities, and are especially grateful for their long-standing tradition of giving back to the Institute. In this challenging economic environment, we are fortunate to have the support of alumni and other friends from business and industry to partner with us for vital projects, programs, and facilities. Since my arrival the first of April, I have participated in the formal opening of the Marcus Nanotechnology Building that will allow us to expand important research in that field, and the groundbreaking for the Zelnak Basketball Practice Facility that will provide much needed practice space for both the men's and women's teams. Construction is now under way for the G. Wayne

Clough Undergraduate Learning Center. All of these are visible reminders of the wonderful resources ahead for Tech students, faculty, and staff. In addition to supporting facilities, our alumni and other friends are helping to make a dream come true for students participating in the Tech Promise program. Through their generosity, we are able to offer qualified in-state students – whose families meet the income requirements – a debt-free Georgia Tech education.

While the summer months have provided an opportunity to focus on external meetings and speaking engagements, there is much happening on campus as well. I have met with the deans of all six colleges, and visited with people from numerous faculty, staff, and student groups. I have also visited our faculty, staff, and students at our Georgia Tech-Savannah campus, and look forward to going to our other locations in the future.

One of the most rewarding parts of my job is being with students, cheering them on at recognition events or athletic competition, or just talking with them on campus. This fall we will welcome the largest, best qualified, and most diverse freshman class in Tech's history. Freshman applications are up 15 percent from last year. We had 11,000 applications for 2,400 slots. Just last week we welcomed more than 60 new President's Scholars from 20 states and their parents in our annual signing ceremony. These scholars excel not only academically, but also in a myriad of other areas including sports, music, and community service. Some have already done research. They have barely stepped foot on campus and they are already innovators. We will know we have done our job when we prepare these and other students to use their gifts and talents to make a difference in an ever-changing world.

As a top-ten research university, Georgia Tech is poised to play an even greater role in our society. We have already begun our work to develop a university-wide strategic plan to envision what the Institute should look like in 25 years at the 150th anniversary of its founding. The process will be inclusive and comprehensive, and in fact, we plan to invite the entire campus community to join in a series of directed discussions on Sept. 3 as part of the inaugural activities. I am looking forward to the inauguration as an opportunity for us to showcase Georgia Tech to the community, and as a celebration of good things to come.

Val and I would like to thank the entire Georgia Tech campus community for your warm welcome and the many ways you have helped us get to know you, your work, and this fine institution. It is an honor and a humbling experience for me to serve you as the 11th president of Georgia Tech, and I am looking forward to working with all of you in the months and years to come.

Regards,
G. P. "Bud" Peterson
President, Georgia Tech