

**What:** Co-op Reunion Luncheon

**When:** Friday, May 17

**Who:** The group you are speaking to is fairly unique. They are members of the classes beginning in 1939 and 1940. Due to the war most did not graduate when expected or with the classmates they started out with. However, they feel closest to their fellow graduates who also began in '39 and '40, so the reunion will include these two classes.

Good afternoon. It is a pleasure to speak to the members of the 1939 and 1940 freshmen co-op reunion.

You are a unique group. I don't know of any other classes that measure themselves both by the year they graduated and the year they began.

Your college experience was interrupted by the great war, and many of you fought for your country overseas. Others did what was needed at home. You lived in a period of great history for this nation, and you are now ready to set sail into the next millennium. It was an age that would provide the leadership that took this nation from a regional power to a superpower.

You grew up listening to the big band sounds of Glenn Miller and Tommy Dorsey and saw the spread of the sounds of the south, jazz, bluegrass, and dixieland, across the land. Like all good Tech grads, I know you can adapt to change, but I am not sure if you made it to be fans of today's heavy metal and rap.

While at Tech, you had some things in common with me. Like you, I was a co-op. Like you, I lived in Harrison dorm. Like you as a freshman, I wore a rat hat and endured the arrogance of the sophomores. We both recorded the scores of football games on our rat hats, rightside up for wins, upside down for losses.

Since you and I left Tech, much has changed, and mostly for the better. The physical changes are obvious. Since the early 1940s, the campus has virtually tripled in size—both in acres and the number of students. The campus has improved over its old asphalt jungle appearance. Whereas before we existed on the edge of Atlanta—we are now near the center of this great city, which now is home to 3.5 million people.

In addition, we now have a diverse student body, with almost 30% women students. Tech has grown into a full-fledged research university, and its national reputation has burgeoned. For example, today, 16 of our schools and programs are ranked within the top 20. Overall, Georgia Tech is ranked among the top 50 universities in the country, one of only 15 publics so recognized.

The co-op program is yet another example of change on the campus. In 1939 and 1940, approximately 150 from each class participated in the program. Today, more than 3,500 undergraduate and graduate students are co-ops, approximately a third of the entire campus. We have the largest voluntary co-op program in the nation.

The campus infrastructure has also changed. First of all, there's a lot more of it. More than 300 buildings comprise the campus. Although the outside of the buildings you studied and slept in is much the same, you would probably have a hard time recognizing the inside of our old home, Harrison. It has been renovated to prepare for the upcoming Olympic Games. In addition, to prepare for these Olympics, seven new residence halls have been built—with dorm rooms containing dishwashers, private bedrooms, refrigerators, microwaves, and stoves.

I guess I shouldn't list all of their amenities. The air conditioning alone is worthy of the envy of those of us who came before and remember the alternative.

While much has changed, the good news is that much of the values and principles that make Georgia Tech have stayed the same. Today—just as in 1888 when we opened our doors—we are committed to excellence in education, service to the state of Georgia and the nation, and practical, results-oriented research.

For example, our students are clearly among the best and the brightest in the nation. Yet we also still have room for the student from the State of Georgia who gets by more on heart and hard work than by test-taking ability.

Likewise, our curriculum is still very rigorous (with exception of drownproofing). Although we no longer have a dean that stands up and tells our students to “Look to the left. Look to the right. Only one of you will graduate,” our students still work hard to earn their diploma and the reputation associated with being a graduate of the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Our faculty still are practical and have strong connections to industry. While they are top notch researchers, we are also taking serious steps to see that teaching, particularly for undergraduates, is not neglected.

Today, we are even seeing some changes come full circle. All of you began school under the semester system. Most of you probably finished under the quarter system. Today, our students work within the quarter systems. In less than two years, we will once again return to the semester system.

As you can see, we have a proud past and present. The question becomes: How are we planning for the future?

I am reminded of a story of the seaman who had just been promoted to captain. Late one night he was steering his ship when he saw ahead of him what looked like the lights of another ship coming straight for him. He immediately wired to the other ship the instructions: "Change your course 10 degrees!" The reply came back: "Change your course 10 degrees!" Angry, the new captain signaled: "I'm a captain, change your course to the south." The reply came back: "I'm a seaman first class, change your course to the north." Now enraged, then new captain signaled back: "I'm on a battleship...change your course or else."

The reply came back: "And I say change your course north, I'm in a lighthouse."

Recent changes in higher education have put some universities on a collision course with the shore—much like that poor captain. Unwilling in some cases and unable in others, many universities have refused to acknowledge a new course for the university within higher education. Instead they trudge along citing tradition—and missing the boat for further opportunity.

At Georgia Tech, we intend to be a winner in this brave new world. Although we do not intend to forego the traditions and values that have made us who we are today, as we stand on the threshold of a new era, we are committed to forging ahead to an even brighter future.

As a result we have developed a vision and strategic plan to guide the Institute as we move forward. And, through strategic planning for our new \$400 Campaign, we have defined six areas where improvement is needed in order to further enhance our reputation and strength. Those six areas are:

### 1. Superior Knowledge

By increasing the number of endowed chairs and professorships and the faculty leaders as well as leaders-to-be, the Institute can enrich our reservoir of knowledge, strengthen the curriculum, and multiply our human and financial resources. We can also lower the student-to-faculty ratio, one of our strategic goals.

### 2. Students

The next area involves the other key element of human capital, students. To continue to attract high-quality students—especially in the face of lowered scholarship expectations from Washington as well as the decision by the Georgia Board of Regents to increase tuition levels for out-of-state students, we must have competitive scholarship funding.

### 3. Educational Technology

Educational technology is already having a significant impact on how we educate students, and it will become even more important in the future.

### 4. The Learning Environment

The college experience is more than books and study. Therefore a college campus should contain an environment that helps instill curiosity and the desire to learn—and should offer access to knowledge from the world-over.

### 5. Endowments

A strong, stable endowment is the hallmark of a maturing and prestigious institution. To help Georgia Tech take advantage of fast-breaking opportunities and future needs we cannot foresee today, endowment growth is another area we hope to enhance.

### 6. Facilities

While we are adding facilities as a result of the Olympics, our academic infrastructure has not been part of this upgrading process. Forty-nine of our buildings are over 50 years old, and more than 100 are over 25 years old. In fact, our deferred maintenance backlog is estimated at \$100 million.

## 7. Athletics

Last, of the leading technological universities, only Georgia Tech competes at the highest athletic levels in various sports. Maintaining such high academic and athletic standards is a challenge few universities even attempt and the Campaign will help provide funds to allow us to continue to compete with and defeat the other universities we face.

As you can see, we have a lot of work ahead of us—but I think you'll agree that the end result will more than make up for the efforts we'll face.

In conclusion, I'd like to say thank you. Classes like yours are the backbone of the Institute. Your support and your participation have allowed us to ascend to our current level of excellence. And, as we move even higher, we will continue to honor and remember those who have made our journey possible.

Thank you.