

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Dedication, Food Processing Technology Building, May 19, 2005

I am pleased to welcome the Governor, the Chancellor, and the many representatives of food processing industry to Georgia Tech to join us in officially dedicating the Food Processing Technology Building.

Some may be surprised to find a facility like this at Georgia Tech since we do not have a school of agriculture. But Georgia Tech is the place where the value-added component resides. Ever since this Institute was created in 1885, our mission has been to add value to the state's economy through technology. Of course, we do that by running out on the leading edge in the development of new technology in emerging fields like biotechnology, advanced communications, and nanotechnology. But we also develop new technology for the bedrock industries on which our state was founded – improving their competitiveness and adding value to their products.

In today's economy, there are no low-tech industries – they have either embraced advanced technology to stay competitive or they have gone out of business. And in many cases, it is new technology that enables them to add value to their products. Food processing is a good example. The agribusiness sector of Georgia's economy is as old as the state, and we naturally think of it as one of our traditional industries. But it is also as new as the 21st century, and food processing is at the leading edge. As the pace of life has become more hectic, consumers are increasingly looking for processed foods that make life easier. Forty years ago, for example, Georgia's poultry industry was selling 83 percent of its broilers whole and processing 17 percent. Today, more than 85 percent of Georgia's broilers are processed and less than 15 percent are sold whole.

Agribusiness has always been the largest sector of our state economy, and the growing demand for processed foods has opened doors of economic opportunity for many Georgia communities. Over the past 20 years, Georgia's food processing industry has grown faster than the national average, both in employment and in the value of its shipments.

Georgia Tech supports the food processing industry through the Georgia Tech Research Institute, which is our non-profit applied research arm. GTRI researchers look across the wide array of technologies being developed here at Tech and sort out the ones that might prove useful in food processing. Then they work to adapt and apply those technologies for industry use. For example, biosensors can be adapted to detect e-coli bacteria in meat. Digital video and computer vision technologies can be utilized to do sizing, grading, and quality inspection of food products – speeding up the process while reducing the need for humans to handle the food. Robotic techniques developed for manufacturing plants can be adapted to poultry processing.

These are just a few examples of how the work that will take place in this new facility can serve Georgia's food processors and give Georgia a higher profile as the place where people turn to learn about the latest technology in food processing.

The construction of the Food Processing Technology Building was a public-private effort. The core funding was provided by the state of Georgia, represented here today by Governor Perdue

and Chancellor Meredith. And I want to thank both of them for taking time from their busy schedules to celebrate with us.

The state funding was supplemented by gifts from 17 corporate donors, and I would like to ask the representations of these 17 companies to stand and be recognized.

I also want to recognize and thank two key advocates from the industry:

- Abit Massey, president of the Georgia Poultry Federation, who will speak on behalf of the industry in just a few minutes.
- Gary Black, president of the Georgia Agribusiness Council, who chairs the Food Processing Advisory Council for Georgia's Traditional Industries Program.

These industries and organizations are our partners, not only in the construction of this new facility, but also in advising us and helping to shape our endeavors. And we are grateful for their help and support.

This 36,000 square foot facility includes labs for automation, information, and environmental technology development as well as a 4,300 square foot high-bay prototyping area, and we hope that all of you will take a time for a tour after this program concludes. We are excited about the new opportunities the Food Processing Technology Building offers, and we look forward to putting this new facility to good use in broadening the ongoing service we provide to Georgia's food processing industry.