

What: Women's Leadership Conference Awards
Ceremony Notes: You are to give the welcome.

The basic program is as follows:

- 6:00 PM Reception
- 6:50 PM Overview of Conference
- 6:55 PM Jennifer Stokes, Chair, WLC
- 7:00 PM Introduction of Speaker, LeKhessa Doctor
- 7:05 PM Beverly Harvard, Speaker
- 7:25 PM Chief Beverly Harvard Awards Ceremony
Kirstin Young, presiding
- 8:05 PM Closing, Dean DiSabatino

Good evening. It is my pleasure to welcome you to Georgia Tech's first Women's Leadership Conference Awards Ceremony.

Tonight, and throughout the weekend, we will celebrate the outstanding contributions of women to Georgia Tech. A number of those here will be singled out for their special contributions.

Knowing the caliber of the women on this campus, I feel fortunate that I was not asked to be among those judging the nominations; I have no doubt that this was not an easy task. I am pleased that seventeen campus organizations--organizations as diverse as the Student Government Association, the Technique, the Georgia Tech Ambassadors, and the Alumni Association—join with us to celebrate the leadership women provide to the Institute.

It is a fact that in the insect world, the yellow jacket female is stronger than her male counterparts and is the one that leads the swarm. I am not sure how this translates to the genus homo sapiens that is found on the Georgia Tech campus, but that buzzing sound I often hear informs me that women are increasingly assuming leadership roles in our midst. And we are glad of it.

The history of women at Tech is a remarkable story. While women worked on the staff of the Institute from the beginning, they were not able to be on the faculty or enroll as students. There actually was a caveat on this policy in the early days of the Institute since, as odd as it may seem today, women could attend night classes, which in the early 1900's were business offerings. Ms. Annie Teitelbaum Wise was the first recorded female graduate of Tech's evening degree program in 1919, and she became Georgia Tech's first female faculty member shortly thereafter. Tech's record after this was rather spotty, and it was not until 1952

that women officially enrolled in the day program. In 1956, two women graduated, one of whom is with us this evening, Ms. Shirley Mewborn.

By the time yours truly arrived on campus in the fall of 1959, there were about twenty women enrolled – I actually had two women lab partners during my time as an undergraduate, one in a physics class and one in a civil engineering class! A remarkable coincidence considering the numbers. Today the number of women at Georgia Tech has reached over 3,500--an all-time high. All indications are that our entering freshman class for the next year will at 30% female for the first time. leadership as part of the qualifications to attend Georgia Tech.

While we are pleased about the numbers of women students coming to Tech as students, they still are below what they should be. Even so, we are a national leader in the professions that our curricula represent and we consistently graduate among the largest

numbers of female engineers in the country. Importantly, a recent opinion survey we conducted of state and national leaders showed that this accomplishment was perceived as one of the keys to our growing national reputation. Let me say that again.....

In addition to the growing numbers of women students at Georgia Tech, we also benefit from the quality they bring to us. On the average women graduate at a higher rate than men (see, they are tougher) and they have higher GPA's. Women were also instrumental leaders in the development of the Honor Code and the Team Buzz Community Service Day. The careers of our female alumni also bear testament to the quality of our students. This past year, one of our alumni, Susan Still, became the first female to pilot a space shuttle (she actually did it twice). Other alumnae include presidents of companies, chief financial officers, and even a former Undersecretary of Defense. Our women alumni are increasingly taking positions on our advisory boards at Tech and we are working to see this happen. Our female employees are

equally outstanding--and growing in number. While only 14 percent of the academic faculty today are women, in recent years about 30% of the new hires have been women. At the executive, managerial, and professional levels, women now account for forty percent of employees in such positions today--compared to ten percent in 1978. Progress is being made at Tech, but we still have a long way to go. This weekend is a statement about both ends of this spectrum – celebrating our progress and laying the groundwork for the future.

Let me offer my thanks to the conference organizers for all of their hard work and to all of the participants in this excellent event.

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