Admission Staff Host Webinar for Parents of High Schoolers

GRACE WYNER
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

With college application season right around the corner, high school students and their parents are beginning to think about finding the school that's best for them. On Tuesday, July 21, from noon to 1 p.m., Georgia Tech's Office of Undergraduate Admission will host a webinar about "The Basics of College Admission." The informational session is open to members of the Tech community and their high school-aged family members.

Ashley Meyer, director of Academic and College Counseling at Holy Spirit Preparatory School in Atlanta (and former Georgia Tech staff member), will moderate a virtual conversation featuring Mary Tipton
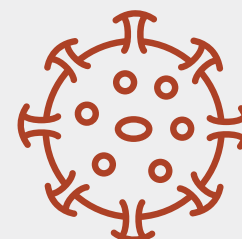
Clark

Woolley

Healthcare Changes Open in Light of Covid-19

As a result of two federal guidelines recently released, Human Resources shared information about healthcare plan changes on July 10.

The Covid-19 Disaster Relief guidance went into effect May 4, 2020, and broadly extends the window of time employees have to process a qualifying life event, elect and pay for COBRA coverage, file a claim or appeal, and request reimbursement from their Healthcare Flexible Spending Account. Additionally, the IRS released Notice 2020-29, which temporarily grants employer health plans greater flexibility to allow midyear changes and extends the window employees have to file FSA claims for 2019 funds.

In response to these guidelines, the University System of Georgia healthcare plan has implemented several changes:

- If you experience a qualifying life event, you have additional time to make midyear changes due to your qualifying life event. You may process a qualifying life event 30 days after the end of the State of National Emergency.

- For the remainder of 2020, you may make changes to your healthcare coverage (i.e. change plans, add coverage, add dependents, or drop coverage), regardless of whether or not you experience a qualifying life event. Note: If you cancel coverage, you must provide written verification that you have or will have other coverage.

- You can continue to file for reimbursement of 2019 expenses through your 2019 Healthcare FSA through December 31, 2020. This includes expenses that occur after March 15, 2020.

For additional information regarding these changes, visit the USG Benefits Covid-19 website at **usg.edu/hr/benefits/coronavirus** or contact the OneUSG Connect - Benefits call center at 1-844-587-4236. Representatives are available Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. EDT.

ICYMI: Campus Leaders Host Academic Restart Town Hall

An event last week focused on modes of course delivery, instructional resources, and other academic questions as Georgia Tech prepares for the fall semester. The event is available for viewing at **c.gatech.edu/jul15-townhall**. All past town halls are available for viewing at **health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/townhalls**.

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Woolley, senior associate director of Undergraduate Admission, and Rick Clark, director of Undergraduate Admission. Participants will discuss the landscape of college admissions, provide tips and insights about the process, and help families consider important questions along the way.

"The college admission experience can at times seem mysterious or daunting. Given all of the questions surrounding Covid-19 and its impacts, families have more questions than ever," said Clark. "This session will be helpful for Tech staff and faculty as they consider visiting, applying, and ultimately selecting a college." Clark also recently coauthored a book about the college admission process that emphasizes keeping a positive family environment during a stressful time of life.

The event will not be specific to Georgia Tech admission, but will cover the college admission process as a whole, no matter where students apply. Registration is required to attend the event; you can do so at **application.gatech. edu/register/admission101**.

Families interested in Tech-specific admission information sessions can view recorded presentations or register for a live session at **admission.gatech.edu/ virtual-visit**.

THE MAIL MUST GO THROUGH

Photo by Rob Felt

As more employees prepare to return to campus, those who have remained working on site will be there to welcome them back. Among them is Gwenda Bryant, postal services manager for the campus Post Office.
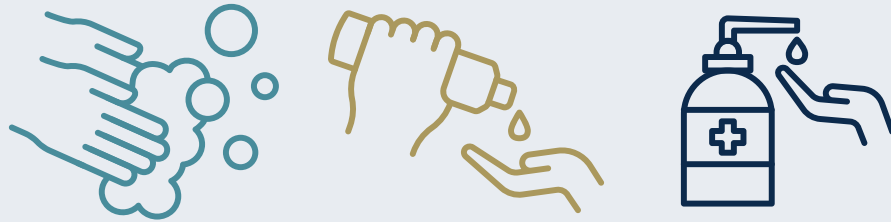
Staff Council Update

Stacy Braukman, senior writer and editor in Institute Communications, will be invited to serve on Staff Council, replacing a member from the Administrative and Professional sector who recently stepped down. That member's three-year term was scheduled to run through December 2020, and Braukman will serve out the remainder of the term. She will also serve on the Staff Council's communications committee. (*Braukman also serves as an editor for this publication.*)

The Staff Council exists to understand perspectives that are representative of the broad population of staff members on campus. The Council communicates those perspectives, along with advice and suggestions, to the Institute president and executive officers at regular intervals.

Learn more about the Council's work and find your representative at **staffcouncil.gatech.edu**.

Sanitizing Your Workspace

The Georgia Tech Environmental Health and Safety team offers the following guidance for sanitizing shared workspaces, but these recommendations can be taken for individual offices as well. Find these tips and more in the Return to Campus Managers Toolkit at **c.gatech.edu/HR-toolkit**.

Disinfecting Work Areas and Breakrooms

Clean and disinfect the following surfaces and items on a daily basis:

- Desks and tabletops.
- Chairs/armrests.
- Computer monitors.
- Keyboards.
- Computer mouse.
- Mobile phones and tablets.
- Doorknobs.
- Printers.
- Commonly touched surfaces and handles (such as a microwave, refrigerator, or coffee pot).
- Packages you receive.

Proximity Spaces

- Disinfect all surfaces, including door knobs, light switches, desks, and countertops, on a daily basis.
- Keep spaces stocked with disinfecting wipes, hand sanitizer, hand soap, and tissues.
- Provide paper towels in the bathroom.
- Stock kitchens with disposable cups, utensils, and plates.
- Remind staff and clients to wash hands regularly.
- Place waste bins in restrooms near the door so that people can avoid direct contact with doorknobs and handles.
- Suspend shared snack programs and remove shared candy dishes.

Practice Social Distancing

Shifts for employees who share workspaces will continue to be encouraged to promote social distancing.

The following distancing actions should be observed:

- Spread out desks and chairs to at least 6 feet between each station.
- Use social distancing floor signs.
- If necessary, use large meeting rooms to make up for lost desk space.
- If your building has an elevator, encourage people to wait to allow distancing in each ride.
- Cancel or postpone events or activities (such as networking happy hours or lunch-and-learns) or host them virtually.

From Talk to Action

Honest conversations about race and creating real change

STACY BRAUKMAN
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

"Ten years after my arrival at Tech, we're having the first substantial, and substantive, conversation around issues of race," Archie Ervin, vice president for Institute Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (IDEI), said.

That conversation took place on July 16, online, hosted by IDEI. Tia Jackson-Truitt, director of Diversity and Inclusion Education and Training within IDEI, moderated "Race at Georgia Tech: A Call to Action." The event drew more than 1,000 unique viewers during 90 minutes of candid reflections on Black experiences at Tech — and talking about what comes next, as the Institute and the nation come to terms with the reality of systemic racism at a moment in which change feels both possible and palpable.

It was the first in a series of events that seeks to shine the light on painful racial truths and inspire the action required to bring about change. It featured students, faculty, and staff who, each in their own way, have worked to make Georgia Tech more inclusive. They were tasked with being open, honest, and vulnerable about their lived experiences, and they did that and more.

Mechanical engineering undergraduate Mykala Sinclair began by observing that Black students, and especially Black student organizations, are usually asked to partici-

pate in wider campus events when they involve a "Black" issue. "It's almost a silo," she said. "The Institute, by not showing care and interest in communicating consistently with the Black community at Georgia Tech, has created that narrative."

Nettie Brown, third-year Ph.D. student in biomedical engineering, first visited the Tech campus as part of the Focus program, which encourages the brightest underrepresented minority students from around the country to pursue graduate studies at Georgia Tech. When she returned as a doctoral student, one of the first things she noticed was that "people stare a lot. And there's a difference between an admiration stare and a 'What are they doing here?' stare." She described wearing her BuzzCard everywhere she goes on campus, "not just for the quick access, but so people will know, that's a student, faculty, staff, she's a something — she belongs here."

Associate Professor Manu Platt in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering recalled his first day in a Tech classroom. For the Morehouse College graduate, it was his first experience teaching white students. He was 29. "The challenges I got as a young faculty member from 18- to 20-year-olds in class were about my intelligence, where I got my degrees, did I deserve to be here, why did I get hired — it shocked me in

my early days."

Since then, he has taken an active role in making sure that Black students in biomedical engineering feel like they belong there. "If I hear of something being said to or about one of our students, my job is to go in and correct it. I don't want to drive our students away from science and engineering" because of a hostile environment.

Where to start, then? Change the environment. Participants agreed on the necessity of creating and nurturing a pipeline and networks for Black students at Tech, and for white faculty — and students — to be intentional, persistent allies who will take the lead in solving problems that are the result of deeply entrenched racism.

Sonia Alvarez-Robinson, executive director of Georgia Tech Strategic Consulting, concluded the session, noting that the work being done to improve equity and inclusion represents a "great beginning. But we've got to accelerate the momentum. We have to take courageous action to address the things that we know are real. Racism is a societal cancer. I don't know that we have gone as far to be

as fierce as we need to really address it at the root."

Other panelists included Seth Marder, Regents Professor and Georgia Power Chair in Energy Efficiency in Chemistry; Kaye Husbands Fealing, dean and Ivan Allen Jr. Chair in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts; and President Ángel Cabrera.

Cabrera wrapped up the event by identifying steps that Tech is taking to move beyond words to action. First, Tech's executive leadership team will engage in anti-racist training this summer. Next, the Institute will set up a community police council made up of a cross-section of students, faculty, and staff to meet regularly with the Georgia Tech Police Department, ask questions, and share concerns. There are also plans to launch an Institute-wide diversity and inclusion council, to develop new implicit bias training with greater attention to racial biases, and to highlight diversity and inclusion in the new strategic plan currently under development.

"We have to act today," Cabrera urged. Before signing off, he turned to the camera and said, "At Georgia Tech, Black lives matter."