

Georgia Tech a Creative Force in the Heart of Midtown

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What comes to mind when you think of Georgia Tech? Maybe you pass by the campus on your daily commute and you get a glimpse of the Coliseum or dorms that were built for the 1996 Olympics. Perhaps you have had meetings or shopped at Technology Square.

Regardless of what you already know, there are some things about Tech that may surprise you. The fastest growing college at Georgia Tech is the [Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts](#). While music is not required, each year nearly 2,000 students participate in music courses or activities. Forty percent study a [foreign language](#) as an elective. This fall Georgia Tech students made up more than 20 percent of Hands on Atlanta volunteers. Today, one-third of the more than 20,000 Tech students are women, and they lead 42 percent of our more than 400 student groups.

Many people are surprised to learn that Tech's campus actually includes more than 400 acres in the heart of Atlanta. [Georgia Tech is a leader in environmental sustainability](#), and it has been recognized by the National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club and other groups for its sustainability programs. Tech has more than 7 million square feet of sustainable buildings on campus, including numerous LEED-certified buildings. On average, Tech uses only half of the energy per square foot of its peer research universities.

What you won't be surprised about is our strength in engineering. Both graduate and undergraduate engineering programs rank among the nation's top five. Tech is the number one producer of both female and African American engineering graduates in the country. All of these achievements add to the excitement of a year of momentous celebrations for Georgia Tech. In addition to Tech's 125th anniversary, we're celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Rambling Wreck, the 50th anniversary of the integration of black students, and the 30th anniversary of [ATDC](#) in Technology Square, which has incubated more than 120 start-up companies. Last spring [Forbes Magazine](#) named [ATDC](#) to its new list of the "10 technology incubators that are changing the world."

The amazing research being done at Georgia Tech is impacting not only our state, but also our nation and our world. Teams at Georgia Tech are working on solutions for making solar energy economical, improving environmental and economic sustainability, providing access to clean water, improving the urban infrastructure, advancing health informatics, curing diseases and securing cyberspace, to name just a few. We are partnering with other institutions and with industry to develop transdisciplinary solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems.

Through our research and partnership with business and industry, Georgia Tech is an economic engine for Georgia and the Southeast, with an annual impact of more than \$2 billion. In 2008 alone, Georgia Tech programs helped Georgia companies save or create 20,000 jobs. Georgia Tech is attracting industries, helping to create new businesses and preparing students to be entrepreneurs and leaders.

The world is looking to us to provide leadership, creativity and innovation for the future. That's why for the past year, the entire Tech community has been focused on the development of a [25-year strategic vision](#) to position Georgia Tech as the defining technological research university of the 21st century. The process was comprehensive and inclusive, involving faculty, staff, students, advisory groups and business and community leaders. We just launched our new plan this fall, and have already begun to implement some of the goals and strategies.

For example, one of our strategies is to enrich the student experience. As part of that, this fall [we announced a partnership between Tech and the Woodruff Arts Center](#) giving our students unlimited access to the arts in Atlanta at a deeply discounted rate. For just \$20, students can purchase a season pass to all of the exhibitions at the High Museum of Art and all performances at the Alliance Theatre and Atlanta Symphony through May 2011.

Implementing such strategic initiatives will require significant resources, the majority of which we are seeking through private philanthropy. The recent launch of the public phase of Campaign Georgia Tech, Tech's philanthropic effort to raise \$1.5 billion, has coincided with the launch of the strategic plan. Campaign Georgia Tech will provide the resources necessary for the Institute to achieve its greatest aspirations as it "defines the technological research university of the 21st century." The Institute has already secured nearly \$1 billion during the initial quiet phase of the campaign, with hopes of reaching the \$1.5 billion goal by December 2015.

At Georgia Tech, we're in the business of investing in the future of our students, our faculty and our staff, but we're also designing the future. It's part of fulfilling our mission to be leaders in improving the human condition in Georgia, the U.S. and around the globe.

G.P. "Bud" Peterson is the 11th President of the Georgia Institute of Technology.