

WELCOME BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH  
**FOCUS Dinner, Friday, January 12, 2007**

On behalf of Georgia Tech, I'm pleased to welcome all of you to Atlanta. We are glad you've joined us for the 16<sup>th</sup> annual FOCUS weekend to celebrate the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to explore the opportunities for the next stage of your education. We hope this will be a weekend of making new friends and gaining new insight into the opportunities that lie before you for further study.

I am also delighted to welcome Frank Matthews of *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* and Jim Stallings of IBM to Georgia Tech. Frank keeps a close eye on our efforts to lead the nation in graduating minority engineers, and we are grateful for the attention he has given to Georgia Tech's achievements in this endeavor. And, of course, IBM is a partner with us in a number of endeavors, including joint software research projects that recently got a lot of positive attention because the results will be shared openly. The goal is to improve the quality, security, and techniques of software designed to solve complex problems that affect daily life, from traffic management to medical monitoring of patients in their homes. So it is very exciting to have both Frank and Jim here this evening.

A half-century ago, when Martin Luther King, Jr. was a young college student, he wrote, "The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically." It was a lesson he learned well. He prepared for leadership with a divinity degree from Crozer Seminary and a Ph.D. from Boston University. His vision for the future was inspired by his studies, and his civil rights career was grounded in academic scholarship.

Dr. King combined his ability to think intensively and critically, with courage to translate his ideas into action. He was only 34 years old when he led the march on Washington, delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech and won the Nobel Peace Prize. He never lived to see his 40<sup>th</sup> birthday. But he launched the most sweeping social reform movement America had ever seen, and in the process he changed this nation and the world forever. His words and his example continue to inspire us today, more than three decades after his death.

I was a student here at Georgia Tech during the civil rights movement, and Dr. King's speeches and accomplishments had a profound effect on me, as they did on many others around me. I watched with pride as Georgia Tech became the first public university in the South to admit African-American students without a court order. It was an early step in what has become a Georgia Tech tradition of promoting diversity and encouraging minority students.

As our society becomes ever more technological, it will increasingly turn to those with a technological education to provide leadership. If minorities are to be fully represented among the technological leaders of tomorrow, it is very important – for you personally and for our society – that each one of you continues your education.

You may have read Tom Friedman's book, *The World is Flat*, which describes the leveling of the global economic playing field. In the global economy that is emerging all around us, economic competitiveness is increasingly being driven by innovation that is grounded in science and engineering. And we are seeing nations like China and India, which are much larger than the United States, develop world-class research universities and invest heavily in research in science and engineering.

In this new world, the "hot spots" of innovation that drive the economy will increasingly be centered around the universities that emerge as global leaders. Georgia Tech aspires to be one of the few truly global research universities that are on the leading edge of innovation. And we are very proud that in his new, expanded edition of *The World is Flat*, Tom Friedman cites Georgia Tech as an example of a university that understands how to operate in the flat world. That means we are not only ramping up our own work at the leading edge of science and technology, but we are also reaching out to outstanding technological universities around the world and collaborating with them.

We have campuses in France and Singapore. We offer dual degree programs together with universities ranging from the Technical University of Munich, Germany, to Jiao Tong University in China. We want to educate our students to be citizens of the world, prepared to function in the global economy that increasingly surrounds us and to embrace and value the diversity and new perspectives it brings.

You are among the brightest and the best this nation has to offer. You have excelled and earned honors at your respective schools, and I urge each one of you to prepare yourself for leadership in the global economy with an advanced degree. Graduate school can help you further refine your leadership skills, further develop your potential, and further discover the vision that will shape your future and the future of those you lead.

Of course, I urge you to consider Georgia Tech's graduate programs. We are committed to creating an environment where minorities are welcome and diversity is valued. If you choose to come to Georgia Tech, you will find yourself among friends at an institution that is dedicated to providing the help and the services you need to succeed. The people you meet and the friends you make this weekend will get you started on that journey.

But if you decide that Georgia Tech is not a good fit for you, we urge you to pursue further education at another university. Because no matter what university is right for you, our nation needs your talents and ideas and endeavors as scientists and engineers, working to make the world a better place.

Again, welcome. We are glad you're here. And we hope you are having a wonderful weekend learning about Georgia Tech, planning for your future in higher education, and celebrating the life and vision of Martin Luther King, Jr. here in the city of his birth.