

Update from Georgia Tech President Ángel Cabrera  
January 2021



## From the Desk of **THE PRESIDENT**



On the Institute's annual MLK Day of Service, President Cabrera (*second from right*) and his wife Beth (*third from right*) joined the Georgia Tech Trailblazers to help Trees Atlanta keep the Atlanta Beltline clean.

Dear Georgia Tech Friends and Supporters:

When we look back at 2020, there is no doubt we'll remember a dreadful year — a lethal pandemic, a moment of reckoning over enduring racial inequality, and a political crisis that exposed the vulnerabilities of our nation's form of self-government. But I hope we'll also see it as an opportunity for collective self-reflection, renewal, and learning. It is up to all of us to not let these crises go to waste.

The Georgia Tech community spent much of 2020 undergoing our own thorough process of self-reflection as we crafted a new strategic plan. While I didn't see it that way at first, the timing of our planning process couldn't have been better. We asked ourselves profound questions — about our purpose, about the problems science and technology can help solve and the risks they entail, about the kind of leader who can drive progress for all — right as the need for guidance on these issues proved so essential.

As the year unfolded, science helped us understand and combat the deadly virus. Thanks to biotechnology, we were able to roll out everything from massive testing and new treatments to data models and a novel vaccine that was developed in record time using a method never before employed (mRNA). Meanwhile, information technology kept us connected and productive. Many of us could keep working and learning, and we could shop, play, and be entertained as we stayed safely away from each other to avoid infection.

At the same time, too many people lost lives and livelihoods to this disease, social and economic inequities were exacerbated, and the very communication tools that kept us connected and informed also became instruments of division and misinformation. Quite notably, the same social media platforms hailed as tools of social liberation during the Arab Spring a decade ago — now completely ubiquitous and powered by artificial intelligence — turned into superspreaders of conspiracy theory and anti-scientific rhetoric.

As I try to digest and process the past few months, I keep coming back to the same idea: that it is the responsibility of leading institutions like Georgia Tech to advance science and technology, to find solutions to the most consequential issues of our time, to understand and mitigate the risks posed by those solutions, to inform the public, and to educate leaders who can make technology deliver on its promise. And this is precisely the core idea of our new strategic plan.

Our plan talks about building an inclusive community of world-class learning, discovery, and creation. Championing innovation with real human impact. Empowering more people from diverse backgrounds to drive progress. And leading by example by creating a culture of inclusion, well-being, diversity, freedom of thought, and professionalism where we can all challenge our thinking and help one another grow and succeed.

These are more than just objectives. They're incredible things that we get to do together. And we are already seeing some early outcomes on which to build. I invite you to read more about the progress we are making, and to engage in any way you can.

As we continue into 2021, I send you my thanks for your support and wish you and your loved ones safety and prosperity for the year ahead.

In Progress and Service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keefe". The signature is stylized with a large, looped "K" and a long horizontal stroke extending to the left. Below the signature is a solid horizontal line.



## Raheem Beyah Named New Engineering Dean

A Georgia Tech alumnus and native Atlantan, Raheem Beyah has been appointed the new dean and Southern Company Chair of the College of Engineering. Beyah, the former vice president for Interdisciplinary Research and Motorola Foundation Professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, began serving as dean on Jan. 15.

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## Pressley Harvin III Wins Ray Guy Award

After setting Georgia Tech and Atlantic Coast Conference records with a 48-yard punting average in 2020, senior Pressley Harvin III was named the winner of the 2020 Ray Guy Award. College football's top punter last season, Harvin is Tech's second Ray Guy Award winner in the 21-year history of the award.

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## Nikole Hannah-Jones Leads Annual MLK Lecture

As part of Georgia Tech's annual Martin Luther King Jr. celebration, Nikole Hannah-Jones, the Pulitzer Prize winning *New York Times* journalist and creator of "The 1619 Project" delivered the Institute's 10th annual Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture.

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## The Aerodynamics of Drone Racing

Professor Marilyn Smith in the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aerospace Engineering first developed her unsteady aerodynamics code to simulate wind tunnel tests. Then the Army started using it to train helicopter pilots to fly while carrying cargo beneath their aircraft. And now, her groundbreaking work has helped create what *Xbox News* calls the most immersive video game of its kind, the Drone Racing League Simulator.

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## Scheller MBA Ranked Among Top 25 in the U.S.

*Poets&Quants* ranked the Scheller College of Business' full-time MBA among this year's top 25 U.S. programs. Among public institutions, it made the top 10.

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## The Meaning of Progress and Service

Maria Saporta of *Saporta Report* sat down with President Cabrera for a candid conversation about his vision for Georgia Tech, the relationship between science and humanity, and the indispensable value of diversity.

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## Tech Selected to Help Manage Savannah River National Laboratory

The U.S. Department of Energy has selected the Battelle Savannah River Alliance, which includes Georgia Tech and four other regional universities, to manage the Savannah River National Laboratory, one of the nation's premier environmental, energy, and national security research facilities.

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Georgia Tech Office of the President  
Institute Communications, 177 North Ave. NW  
Atlanta, GA, 30313, United States  
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