

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program Groundbreaking
Savannah, Georgia, June 17, 2002

This is a very exciting day for southeast Georgia and Savannah as well as for Georgia Tech, and I am pleased to welcome all of you to this groundbreaking ceremony for the GTREP Collegiate Center – the first building of what will eventually be the campus hub of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program.

We just could not wait until the weather got cooler to get this important project underway, so we scheduled a morning time and we're trying to minimize the impact of the heat with tent, fans, and water. And we are delighted that all of you braved the weather to join us.

What we are about to celebrate required a hands-on partnership of special people with special leadership skills, and I would like to introduce some of the key members of this group. First, David Frost, who has done an exceptional job as director of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program, which allows students from southeast Georgia to earn Georgia Tech engineering degrees without leaving home.

GTREP depends on three partner universities, where students spend their freshman and sophomore years getting the important educational foundation that is essential to their success as engineers. And I'd like to recognize and thank the presidents or representatives of these institutions:

Carlton Brown, president of Savannah State University

Ray Greenlaw, dean of computing at Armstrong-Atlantic State University,
representing President Tom Jones

Gerald Jones, director of engineering education at Georgia Southern University
in Statesboro.

There are a number of leaders from this community in attendance, and I want to introduce them and thank them for their support:

State Senator Eric Johnson

State Representative Ron Stephens

State Representative Ann Purcell

Alderman David Jones, City of Savannah

I also want to recognize Regents Martin NeSmith of Claxton and Eldridge McMillan of Atlanta, representing the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The Regents have helped guide us in the process of developing the concept for the Regional

Engineering Program that today takes a major step forward. We are grateful for their support.

Special recognition goes to Howard Morrison, the “dean” of Georgia Tech alumni in the Savannah area, who has worked tirelessly with us from the very beginning in helping to get this program off the ground. We could not have done all we have done without his vision and dedication. Howard, we are grateful to you for all you have done.

Special recognition is also due Rick Winger, President of the Savannah Economic Development Authority, or SEDA for short. Rick, his predecessor Dick Knowllton, and the SEDA Board have been one of the essential ingredients in making this happen today. Dick was a positive force from the outset in supporting the concept and in creating the circumstances for the gift of land for our campus. When Dick left SEDA for a different professional challenge, Rick stepped in to work with us so we did not miss a beat.

To all of you, I express my appreciation for being with us today.

This morning it feels like we are out in the middle of nowhere, but the day will soon come when this area is bustling with activity, and people will look at us in amazement when we recall the day we were out here in a large dirt field, breaking ground for the first building of the Technology and Engineering Campus.

The vision for the Technology and Engineering Campus, or T-E-C for short, is much bigger than facilities for the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program, although that is a very important part. The vision is to create a technology hub that helps this region to compete and thrive in the knowledge-based economy of the 21st century.

So in addition to a home for GTREP, the Technology and Engineering Campus will also include facilities for Georgia Tech’s Economic Development Office and the new business incubator to be operated by our Advanced Technology Development Center. There will also be room for research and development-oriented industries that want to locate near these education, research, and economic development programs.

Today we take the first step toward realizing that vision of a vibrant technology hub by breaking ground for the GTREP Collegiate Center. As you can see from the architectural rendering on your program, the design of this building says “engineering.” It also makes a connection to this community with an echo of the bridges that span the Savannah River.

The design of the interior is as unique as the exterior. This will not be your father's classroom building. Its innovative design will integrate research and education activities, and its classrooms will allow distance learning and educational technology to be used to its maximum potential.

The Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program is not a traditional engineering education program imported from Atlanta and plunked down in this community. We are using this opportunity to develop a new model to deliver engineering education. And the mission of the GTREP is to leverage the strengths of Georgia Tech and the resources of southeast Georgia offer world-class engineering education through the innovative application of educational partnerships and technology.

The engineering degrees that GTREP offers are a direct response to the workforce needs of southeast Georgia. We began with two undergraduate degrees: Computer engineering, which will make this region a fuller partner in the statewide Yamacraw initiative to make Georgia a leader in broadband design, and civil engineering, which at Georgia Tech is strongly oriented toward environmental sustainability, and that makes our program an especially good fit for the fragile natural environment of coastal Georgia.

Then one of your most important corporate citizens, Gulfstream Aerospace, asked if we could help them out by educating electrical engineers. So we are adding electrical engineering with a slant toward the aerospace industry. Gulfstream is our industry partner in this effort through a University System program called ICAPP – the Intellectual Capital Partnership Program.

Other industries are now asking for mechanical engineers, and we will soon add that degree as well to our undergraduate program.

At the same time Georgia Tech was developing these undergraduate GTREP degrees, we were also preparing to offer several master's degrees over the Internet, including mechanical engineering, electrical and computer engineering, and civil engineering. These online degrees parallel the bachelor's degrees in our GTREP program, and the fact that we have Georgia Tech faculty based in southeast Georgia in these disciplines, enabled us to quickly begin offering GTREP master's degrees that enrich the online offerings with onsite faculty advising, classes, and research opportunities.

We began GTREP in the fall of 1999 with 100 students, which was more than we expected, and the program has grown quickly. This coming fall we will have more than 300 students, and as we add more degrees, that number will continue its rapid rise. We

began with a handful of Georgia Tech faculty based here in southeast Georgia, and this fall we will have 18 onsite faculty. This means that we can offer a healthy balance of onsite, in-person teaching and distance learning courses.

Parallel with the coursework, we have also developed related research programs which our faculty and students engage in together. Some of the research projects are directly related to this community, such as the study of the nearshore impacts of offshore dredging and the development of innovative education technology. Other projects take GTREP students into the broader world, such as using new digital technology to survey the structural damage to buildings around the World Trade Towers after the September 11th attack.

Skidaway Institute of Oceanography is also a partner in GTREP and will increasingly come into play in the educational and research opportunities we offer our students and faculty.

The reason GTREP could hit the ground running is because the first two years of the engineering curriculum are offered by our three partner institutions from the University System of Georgia – Georgia Southern, Savannah State, and Armstrong Atlantic. Then students officially transfer to the Georgia Tech College of Engineering as juniors. This unique partnership means we have worked closely with the Board of Regents in developing this program and they have provided valuable guidance and assistance.

Dr. Thomas Meredith just became chancellor of the university system in January, but he is already up to speed on this program and we appreciate his enthusiasm and support. He is here with us this morning, and I would like to ask him to say a few words on behalf of the University System of Georgia.

(MEREDITH SPEAKS)

Thank you, Dr. Meredith. We are grateful for your support, and we look forward to your continued involvement as GTREP expands and grows.

The very first students to graduate from GTREP traveled to Atlanta last December to walk in the Georgia Tech commencement ceremony, and we are privileged to have one of them here with us this morning. Fairlight Fehrenbacher earned her bachelor's degree in civil engineering without ever leaving home and is now working on her master's degree through the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program. I am pleased to introduce her to you at this time to tell you more about GTREP from a student's perspective.

(FAIRLIGHT SPEAKS)

Thank you, Fairlight. As you can see, the students in our GTREP program are very bright and articulate. We are extremely proud of them, and we are privileged to have an opportunity to help them prepare to be the next generation of leaders for this community.

In addition to the partners I have already mentioned who work with us in the education and research programs of GTREP, we also have two important partners who have made this new building possible.

The land for this Technology and Engineering Campus, which we call T-E-C, has been provided by the Savannah Economic Development Authority, and is part of a larger business park they are developing. So this groundbreaking ceremony belongs to SEDA as well as to Georgia Tech. Cliff McCurry is president of Hilb, Rogal and Hamilton Company of Savannah and chairman of the SEDA board, and he is going to speak on behalf of SEDA and the local community.

(CLIFF McCURRY SPEAKS)

Thank you, Cliff. Georgia Tech has much has the same mission today as when it was founded nearly 120 years ago – to help move the state’s economy to the next level. And we are pleased to have SEDA as our partner in that effort here in this region.

Making this facility a reality involves yet another partner without which we would not be here today, and that is the state of Georgia. The Georgia General Assembly appropriated the funding for the construction of this building, and to speak on behalf of the state I am pleased to introduce State Senate Jack Hill from Reidsville, just to the west of here in Tattnall County. He chairs the Senate Higher Education Committee, and we appreciate all of his efforts at the Capitol on behalf of higher education. Senator Hill...

(JACK HILL SPEAKS)

Thank you, Senator Hill, for those kind words and for the leadership you provide for GTREP and higher education in the Georgia Senate.

I would also like to thank Tammy Tuley and her colleagues from Georgia Tech’s Institute Communications, Jill and Rebecca of the GTREP staff, and Christian and Jeremy of the SEDA staff, who all worked very hard to coordinate this event.

At this time we are going to stop talking and get on with the business of shoveling dirt. We are going to do it in three stages to allow the many people who have a role in this project to participate. We are going to begin with the speakers who are here with me on the platform, joined by GTREP Director David Frost and the presidents or official representatives of our three partner universities. Second, I am going to ask the 3 partner universities to join David Frost, myself, and the chancellor if he can stay, for the next group of shovelers. Then I would like Regents Nesmith and McMillan to join us, and we will conclude with groups representing our community partners.

So if everyone on the platform will join me, let's move some dirt!