

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT W. WAYNE CLOUGH
CETL Teaching Fellows Luncheon, April 18, 2000

Even though I've moved into administration, I am still at heart a teacher, and I'm really glad to have this opportunity to commend you for your desire to improve your own teaching, and thank you for the contribution you make to Georgia Tech's reputation for excellence in the classroom.

Last year Georgia Tech received the Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Faculty Development to Enhance Undergraduate Teaching and Learning from TIAA-CREF. It is the nation's top award for enhancing undergraduate teaching and learning, and GT was only the ninth university and the third research university to receive it.

The Hesburgh Award recognized the excellence of our Teaching Fellows programs and honored the support they receive from our alumni, who know that a good teacher can change your life forever. And I want to recognize and thank George Stewart, who led the Class of 69 in endowing the Teaching Fellows program for junior faculty. The endowment they created is today is worth three-quarters of a million dollars.

An Ivan Allen professor was lecturing a freshmen class in English composition about double negatives the other day. She knew that Georgia Tech students are strong in math, so she emphasized that negatives and positives in English work just like negatives and positives in multiplication. One negative in the sentence results in a negative statement, but two negatives in the same sentence create a positive statement. Then the professor added that just as in multiplication, two positives in the same sentence still make a positive statement. In fact, she said, there is no language anywhere in which using a double positive can result in a negative statement. And a voice from the back of the room said, "Yeah, right."

I have nothing but positive things to say about the CETL Teaching Fellows programs and the dedication of each of you to improving your own teaching skills, and I don't want to hear any voices from the back of the room.

Technophiles are often stereotyped as lacking in interpersonal skills, and some people are surprised to find that Georgia Tech, as a scientific and technological research university, aspires to great teaching. But, as all of us know, real teachers do not teach subjects. They teach students. Even though we have a focus on technology, even though we are tremendous research engine, Georgia Tech still excels at its original mission – to educate "a hell of an engineer." And your initiative and efforts to improve your teaching skills help to make education at Georgia Tech more alive, more interactive, and more intriguing.

In addition to our junior Teaching Fellows, I also want to commend the senior Teaching Fellows. Human beings are creatures of habit. Once we get the drill down, we tend to resist change. So I am very proud that Georgia Tech has senior faculty members who are still learners themselves... and who want to refresh and update their teaching skills, to incorporate technology and to accommodate the different styles in which students learn today – which have been largely shaped by technology.

The heart of the education process is in the classroom, in the relationship between the teacher, the students and the subject matter. The only way to improve education, to raise it to new levels of excellence, is to do something that enhances that relationship. And for your part, you know that there is nothing quite like the thrill of seeing your students' eyes light up as the wheels turn in their minds.

Beyond giving us outstanding teachers at all levels, the Teaching Fellows programs do something else that is very important for Georgia Tech. Coming up with fresh, inventive teaching methods requires you to look critically at the courses you teach, and in the process you invariably find yourselves looking at the curriculum itself.

To be effective, curriculum has to be continually moving and evolving. It ought to be a little like caterpillar tread in motion – most of it firmly on the ground, but a little that is old continually disappearing and a little that is new continually appearing on the forward edge. The Teaching Fellows program is a mechanism that continuously upgrades and updates Georgia Tech's curriculum, helping to weed out what has become dated or obsolete and adding in the latest content and ideas.

As Teaching Fellows, you also make a special contribution to Georgia Tech's growing national prominence. *U.S. News & World Report* recently came out with a new set of rankings, and Georgia Tech had the pleasure of seeing our College of Engineering once again in the top five. Seven of 11 engineering programs were in the top ten of their class, including industrial engineering which was first in the nation for the 10th straight year.

The College of Computing and the College of Architecture both ranked in the top 15. The DuPree College of Management was in the top 50, which might sound low compared to these other numbers, but is still in the top-most tier of the nation's business and management schools.

I don't put a lot of stock in any one number in any given year, but the trend lines can give us a sense of how we are progressing over time. When you look at Georgia Tech's rankings in that light, you can see that we are maintaining our competitive strength and continuing to improve.

You, our faculty, are an important factor in our growing excellence and national prominence. It is a chicken and egg sort of thing. National prominence helps us attract top-drawer faculty, and top-drawer faculty help us achieve national prominence. So another important measure of our excellence is the awards our faculty win and the growing number of award-winning faculty we are able to attract. And an important focus of our capital campaign that is now underway is to endow more chairs for senior faculty and programs that help junior faculty establish their teaching and research careers.

When world-famous violinist Jascha Heifetz left the glamour of an international performing career to become a professor at UCLA, he said that his old violin master in Russia used to tell him that if he worked hard enough, someday he would be good enough to teach. To him, teaching was the highest calling, and he only undertook it after he considered himself good enough.

As teachers, you are responsible for generating the most critical of all products demanded not only by today's economy, but also today's society – the educated citizen. In addition to being a “hell of an engineer,” our students must also become a “hell of a citizen,” a “hell of a leader,” a “hell of a parent,” and a “hell of a civic volunteer. So your mission is to educate the whole person, not just a narrow slice of their intellect.

Your dedication to excellent teaching is what will enable Georgia Tech to produce graduates who are prepared and equipped go beyond simply being managers of technology and become the leaders of the next generation. So I'm glad to have this opportunity to join with CETL in recognizing the value of your work and thanking you for the contribution you make to Georgia Tech.