

The WHISTLE

Academic interests shift for incoming freshman class

Change believed to indicate wider reputation as well-rounded institution

*Richard Hermes
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It's not just about engineering anymore. That's what this year's admissions numbers are saying, anyway. For the freshman class entering this fall, significantly more students than last year will enroll in Tech's non-engineering colleges.

Out-of-state interest in these areas was especially strong this year, and officials say that the numbers reflect the evolution of Tech's reputation from a strong regional engineering school to a more well-rounded research university with an international reputation.

To date, Management deposits are up 37 percent; Sciences, 15 percent; and Ivan Allen, 30 percent. Barbara Hall, associate vice president of Enrollment Services, cites rising national rankings in areas such as the College of Management as one reason for the positive



Admissions staff have emphasized the quality of Tech's diverse academic offerings.

change at Georgia Tech, but she also points out a long-term, concerted effort by Tech's admissions staff. In information sessions, special

recruitment programs, publications and one-on-one interactions with prospective students, extra attention was paid to describing everything that Tech had to offer academically — the variety and quality of majors, and what a student could do with them when they graduated.

Over the last 10 years, there's been a slow but steady decline in the number of students interested in pursuing an engineering degree. Nationwide, the number of students who said they planned to major in engineering in college declined 20 percent from 1991 to 1999-2000, according to the College Board, which keeps statistics on high school students' college plans. But Deborah Smith, director of Admissions, said, "We haven't felt the declines the way some other schools have. Our applicant pool continues to grow." She pointed out that since 1991, engineering applications at Tech have risen from 4,622 to 5,172 — more than a 10 percent increase.

Tech is bucking other national trends as well. An April 20 article in the Chronicle of Higher Education reported that many university admissions offices are feeling the effects of the

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University System Coalition discusses domestic partner benefits

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Is it a legal problem or a political problem? That's the question that advocates of same-sex domestic partnership benefits for University System employees have been wrestling with for some time.

That process continued June 16 with a meeting of the University System Domestic Partner Benefits Coalition on the Tech campus. The coalition is advocating the adoption of benefits for domestic partners of University System employees, such as medical insurance and access to campus facilities, which are currently available to the heterosexual spouses of employees.

In addition to Tech employees, faculty and staff from other units of the University System attended the meeting, including the University of Georgia, Georgia State University, Georgia Perimeter

College, Georgia Southern University and the State University of West Georgia. Hosted by OutTech, Tech's gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender employee organization, and GALA (Gay and Lesbian Alliance), a Tech student organization, the keynote speaker was Steve Scarborough, an attorney with the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, a legal advocacy group for issues related to gay and lesbian civil rights and equality.

Scarborough was asked to address the issue of whether there are legitimate legal impediments to a branch of the Georgia state government — namely, the University System — offering benefits to same-sex domestic partners of state employees. Scarborough said that while many administrators within the University System and other branches of state government continue to believe that offering such benefits is illegal under Georgia

law, his research indicates that simply isn't true.

"There is no reason in the world legally that the University System can't offer same-sex domestic partner benefits," Scarborough said. "I've done extensive research on this subject, and I've found nothing that would prevent it."

Scarborough said his interpretations are based on three areas of legal research he has pursued:

- In 1995, the Georgia Supreme Court upheld city of Atlanta ordinances establishing a domestic partner registry and requiring non-discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. The only portion of the city's plan the court struck down was a health insurance benefit, because the ordinance trespassed on state domestic relations law by defining domestic partners with reference to spouses. In a revised ordinance, the city conditioned benefits eligibility on dependence rather than familial

status or sexual intimacy. In 1997 the court upheld the revised ordinance, effectively rejecting the legal argument that domestic partner benefits intrude on the status of marriage.

- In a 1999 ruling, the Fulton County Superior Court rejected an argument by Georgia Insurance Commissioner John Oxendine that domestic partner insurance coverage could not be approved because it fostered unlawful or illicit relationships. This ruling came one year after the Georgia Supreme Court overturned the state's longstanding sodomy law, which sought to regulate the private sexual activity of consenting adults.
- Nothing in the Georgia Constitution, state statutes, or Board of Regents' policy forbids recognition of domestic partners.

"The Regents have extremely broad authority with respect to

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Chemical communication: new research grant links Tech with top marine science institutions

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A \$2.7 million grant awarded to researchers at Tech will help them address a critical shortage of scientists who study chemical signaling in aquatic ecosystems — an important field of inquiry for understanding basic interactions among organisms, especially as human activity continues to dramatically alter global ecosystems.

Producing researchers to study these processes is the goal of Signals in the Sea, a graduate-training project funded by a five-year grant from the National Science Foundation's Integrative Graduate Education and Research Training (IGERT) program. Professor Mark Hay, the Harry and Linda Teasley Chair of Environmental Biology, will direct the project in collaboration with the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography near Savannah.

"This is the first time the Institute has received an NSF IGERT award," College of Sciences Dean Gary B. Schuster said. "The award underscores the importance of multidisciplinary research and graduate training in aquatic chemical ecology and biological oceanography at Georgia Tech."

The Signals in the Sea project begins this fall. It eventually will support 40



The project, directed by Professor Mark Hay, will support 40 graduate students and create a new research center at Tech.

graduate students and could produce more than 25 doctorates. It will also lead to the creation of a permanent center for aquatic signaling at Georgia Tech.

Future researchers produced through the project will fill an important role in scientific investigations that examine the ways in which aquatic ecosystems function and how human activities may cause cascades of direct and indirect effects.

"Many of these cascades are chemically mediated," Hay said. "A better understanding of how chemical and hydromechanical signals are produced, sent and received in aquatic systems will help scientists understand critical interactions in aquatic systems, improving our ability to predict and respond to dynamic alterations of these ecosystems."

In marine and freshwater systems, chemical signals in the environment affect critical processes such as feeding, competition, mate recognition, and habitat choice. These chemical signals also produce indirect effects on population structure, community organization, and ecosystem function.

Hay said the field of chemical signaling in aquatic systems is inadequately studied today. There is a shortage of scientists sufficiently trained in cross-disciplinary fields such as ecology, chemistry, sensory biology, microbiology, physiology,

and small-scale hydrodynamics to conduct the numerous investigations needed to make advances in the field.

Graduate training at Tech will address this with a unique series of integrated core courses that address the biological, chemical, and physical interactions affecting aquatic signaling. An intensive, hands-on class in aquatic signaling will allow interdisciplinary student teams to investigate projects of their own design. In addition, seminars will address scientific ethics, special issues faced by under-represented groups and women in science, and the practical aspects of professional development in sciences and engineering. Students also will participate in internships at government labs, non-government organizations, biotech companies, and other scientific institutions.



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national economic downturn. Some state universities have experienced significant declines in their number of out-of-state applicants, as well as nonresident yield, the admissions term for the percentage of admitted applicants who enroll. At Tech, however, Georgia applications rose 4 percent while non-Georgia applications rose almost 11 percent.

In fact, the most dramatic illustration of Georgia Tech's expanding reputation could be seen among out-of-state applicants this year. Despite an out-of-state tuition increase of \$2,000 over the next two years, non-Georgia deposits in Tech's College of Computing increased 13 percent; Sciences, 35 percent; Ivan Allen, 65 percent; and Management, 75 percent.

"That's phenomenal," said Hall. "[Our] College of Engineering is perennially ranked in the top five nationally. We've worked hard for five years to draw national attention to the other colleges as well, and I think we're starting to see that take hold." Even as these changes occur, Hall notes, Tech has been able to maintain its overall ratio of in-state to out-of-state students at the Institute — 66 percent to 34 percent, respectively.

There's been a "baby boomlet" of sorts, with more students continuing to apply to college, says Beckett Howorth, president of the Southern Association for College Admission Counseling and director of admissions at the University of Mississippi. "But that certainly wouldn't create a 65 percent increase" in out-of-state deposits for the liberal arts at Georgia Tech, he said. Instead, "my first impulse would be

that the penetration you get from a strong engineering reputation would help attract good students in other areas."

"Kids are realizing that they can get a great education at a wonderful university that might not yet be known as well for its other programs," says Mary Beth Kravets, National Association for College Admission Counseling president.

Indeed, Georgia Tech seems to be benefiting from an increasingly savvy applicant pool. Jamie Smith, a graduating senior at Long Beach Polytechnic High School in California, "always wanted to go out of state" for college. She listed her projected major as psychology, but she is also considering

management. Though she doesn't know anyone who's ever applied from her school, she chose Tech. "I know Tech is good at engineering," she said. "That wasn't what I wanted to do, but I could see that the other programs were strong in general. Because I hadn't fully decided, I thought that an overall good school would be a better option than a school that I'm choosing for one reason — a particular department."

According to Georgia Tech

President Wayne Clough, a more well-rounded entering class is good for the university. "Georgia Tech is rooted in a strong engineering tradition that values problem solving and the application of knowledge. Today, these skills — plus an understanding of technology and its management — are becoming more essential in a wider range of disciplines. Georgia Tech can fill a unique role for society by producing technology-savvy graduates in fields like business management, public policy, international affairs, and the sciences."

New web-based e-mail system gives users remote access

Theresa Harvard Johnson
Office of Information Technology

Indicating the measure was "in response to input from our campus constituents," the Office of Information Technology has launched the GT Spectrum Mail System, giving users remote access to their e-mail accounts. The mail system, launched June 18, is expected to be the first in a series of initiatives designed to offer the Tech community secure remote access to a variety of campus information services.

The GT Spectrum project will address the need for off-campus access to OIT's central services (Prism, mail, etc.) via the Internet, said John Mullin, OIT executive director.

"It will allow authorized customers to connect to any of the services from wherever they happen to be," he said. "In addition to flexibility and convenience, GT Spectrum will use the tools and techniques that will provide secure connections to these services, thereby reducing the risks of disruption and system compromise."

Utilizing a Prism account and password

over a 128-bit browser, users must first activate their GT Spectrum service. The new system will be accessible via a web browser using standard protocols.

The web interface to GT Spectrum mail will feature standard viewing, composing, folder management features, e-mail address lookup, sending and downloading attachments options, and maintaining a "Rolodex" of e-mail addresses. Users will also be able to create nicknames for commonly used e-mail addresses and set account preferences.

"We've also created an interactive, on-line introduction to the Spectrum web interface," said Mullin. "This presentation will provide a brief overview of features and instruct users in their use."

Remote Access for Other Services

OIT is also supporting Secure Shell (SSH) access to the acme.gatech.edu server. Users who need to access files stored on the Acme complex can use Zmodem or Secure Copy (SCP) to upload and download files.

Windows users can take advantage of the Zmodem support in SecureCRT or use the

console utility VCP that is included with SecureCRT and uses SCP to transfer files.

Macintosh users can use the SCP capabilities of NiftyTelnet. OpenSSH on Unix platforms includes support for SCP. OpenSSH clients supported by OIT are SecureCRT and NiftyTelnet.

"Requests from users in need of access to other services from off campus will be handled on a case-by-case basis," Mullin said. "Anyone with these concerns should contact the OIT Customer Support Center, or complete a Remedy request on-line. The request should include the users contact information, what the user is requesting access to and why."

For more information...

GT Spectrum mail activation:

<http://www.prism.gatech.edu/activate/>

Spectrum web interface FAQ:

<http://www.oit.gatech.edu/cs/spectrum/>

Remote access clients:

<http://software.oit.gatech.edu/>

Wishon to leave OIT, joining University of Notre Dame

Theresa Harvard Johnson
Office of Information Technology

After more than seven years as associate vice president and associate vice provost of the Office of Information Technology (OIT), Gordon Wishon has announced plans to join the University of Notre Dame's Office of Information Technologies as chief information officer, effective August 1.

"My time at Georgia Tech has been tremendously fulfilling," said Wishon, "and I've had the opportunity to work with the greatest group of people one could ever hope to. In the seven years I have been here, we have faced enormous challenges and made enormous progress, and together we have created one of the premier information



Gordon Wishon

technology organizations in all of higher education."

During his tenure, Wishon played a key role in the support of the telecommunication and network requirements for the 1996 Olympic Village, and the Institute's System 2000 Plan, a strategy to replace and re-engineer campus administrative systems and processes. He also led major campus educational and infrastructure initiatives such as the mandatory student computer ownership program, the revitalization of the

Institute's Instructional Technologies Development Center, and the technological enhancement of campus classrooms, which provide faculty and students access to and use of state-of-the-art equipment and instruction.

Wishon chairs the IT committee of the

Southeastern Universities Research Association, and serves on its executive committee and board of trustees. He also chairs the Educause Security Task Force, and is past chair of the University System of Georgia's Administrative Committee on Information Technology.

"Gordon's leadership and extensive expertise in information technology has had a tremendous impact not only within the Georgia Tech community, but regionally and nationally as well," said John Mullin, OIT's executive director. "We are grateful for his efforts and contributions to enhance the quality of the IT services we deliver to the campus, and for his efforts on behalf of the OIT team. Georgia Tech stands strong as an IT leader among an elite group of academic institutions worldwide, and OIT will continue its rich tradition of innovation and excellence in the development and deployment of leading-edge information technology services."

Mullin will act as associate vice president and chief information officer until the position is filled.

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governance of Georgia universities," Scarborough said. "And a 1972 attorney general opinion strongly supports that authority."

Also present at the meeting were Tech's Associate Vice President for Human Resources Chuck Donbaugh and Staff Benefits Manager John Grovenstein. Responding to a question about how state health insurance plans are established, Grovenstein said the Georgia Department of Community Health (DCH) negotiates all employer-paid medical insurance coverage for all state employees, including the University System. Defining who is covered under the state's insurance plans is part of the annual negotiation process. Currently, DCH-approved plans cover employees, their spouses and their dependent children.

Grovenstein said that while DCH

technically has the ability to negotiate domestic partner coverage, the Board of Regents would have to seek increased funding from the General Assembly to cover the increased cost of providing such coverage, estimated to be about 1 percent to 2 percent of existing expenditures.

Scarborough added that the experience of numerous corporations and private universities that have adopted domestic partner benefits shows that the increased cost of insurance coverage is minimal.

Data prepared for the meeting by OutTech Coordinator Danny Ingram, Office of Information Technology, cite a U.S. News & World Report survey of top national universities. The study reveals that 23 of the top 27 schools offer same-sex domestic partner benefits. On the list of U.S. News' top 25 public universities, 10 offer domestic partner benefits, seven (including Georgia Tech) include

sexual orientation as a protected category in their Equal Employment Opportunity and/or Affirmative Action statements, four offer sick/bereavement leave for employees with same-sex partners, and three offer access to some campus facilities to employees' partners.

"In the highly competitive environment of higher education, an institution that needs to maintain a competitive advantage must recruit and retain the best employees and students," Ingram said. "Georgia's University System cannot afford to lose gay and lesbian faculty, staff, researchers or students to other universities that offer domestic partner benefits."

The next Coalition meeting is planned for late July at Georgia State University.

For more information...

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