Mullin and Hutchins form new OIT leadership team

Goal: bringing equal focus to academic, administrative bodies

Theresa Harvard Johnson
Office of Information Technology

Capping a search that began last fall, John Mullin has been named director of Georgia Tech's Office of Information Technology. He succeeds Gordon Wilson, who left in August for a position with the University of Notre Dame.

In addition, Ron Hutchins has been promoted to a new, separate position created for the purpose of meeting the demands of Tech's academic and research communities. The position was created in response to concerns among the academic and research communities that Tech might lose its competitive edge if OIT were more focused on administrative efficiency than on developing its academic capabilities. Since each of these entities has different priorities, it was decided that each would have its own representative. OIT is taking this team-oriented approach in an effort to bring equal focus to divergent needs in a manner consistent with a top-tier technological university.

The newly formed leadership team will work closely with Provost Jean-Louis Chameau and Bob Thompson, senior vice president of Administration and Finance, in selection and implementation of IT solutions for the campus.

“We are pleased to announce this exciting change in the focus and leadership for the Office of Information Technology,” said Chameau. “One of my goals as provost is enhancing the role of information technology and its support in the academic and research areas. The transition under way in OIT for new leadership has presented an opportunity to support this focus.”

Thompson said, "This partnership brings over forty years of combined knowledge, executive managerial expertise and professional skill in the information technology environment under one umbrella, and into an academic environment that fosters blending technologies with the Institute’s teaching, learning and research missions. Mullin and Hutchins are both committed to building upon the strengths of OIT and forging new campus-wide partnerships that benefit the entire academic, research, administrative and residential communities of Georgia Tech.

Mullin has served as interim chief information officer since Wilson left in August 2001. He is now the associate vice president and associate vice provost for Information Technology, as well as chief information officer (CIO). As CIO, he will oversee the development, implementation and support of information technology systems and services.

He joined Tech in 1994, two years later he was named director of OIT’s Operations and Engineering group, where he led the modernization of the campus electronic network infrastructure and the expansion and modernization of the campus computing environment.

In 1998, Mullin became the executive director of OIT, responsible for the development, implementation and operational support of information technology needs for the campus.

“We are committed to moving forward with this new direction that has been set in motion by our organization's innovative leadership structure,” said Mullin. “Our efforts are concentrated in two key areas — supporting the academic and the research missions of Georgia Tech — but I am equally committed to the continuing success and growth of the support needs that drive the campus community.

OIT continued, page 3

What a wearable world: computers for better living

Elizabeth Campbell
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

Suddenly, for the first time," says Starner, "our computers have the ability to see and hear the world from our perspective. Instead of being deaf, dumb and blind sitting on our desks or in our pockets, our computers might be able to observe what we do all day, understand what is important to us, and act as a virtual assistant that helps us on a second-by-second basis.

Wearables also allow a new meta-language for communication. By combining a head-up display with services like an Instant Messenger, I can ask for a colleague’s help while I’m in a group discussion at a conference or work site. This is a great advantage when I’m on a panel session and want to appear smarter than I am!”

Wearables continued, page 2

Ferst Center gets new director

David Terrano
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

Starting next month, the Robert Ferst Center for the Arts will have a new boss. Jay Constantz will leave his post at Bayfront Park in Miami to take over as the new director of the arts center.

"I find the Robert Ferst Center to be one of Atlanta’s premier cultural institutions," said Constantz. "Ferst’s hiring ends a four-month search and capped more than one year of strategic planning following the departure of the Center’s previous director, John Talbott.

Sue Rossen Dean of the Ivan Allen College and chair of the Ferst Center’s search committee and management team, said the decision to hire Constantz was unanimous. "Everyone agreed that he was the person who could move the center to the next level," she explained.

President Wayne Clough added that Constantz understands the Ferst Center’s unique mission to serve both the campus and neighboring Atlanta communities. "Jay Constantz is an accomplished arts leader who will help us take the Ferst Center into its second decade and establish it as one of Atlanta’s top cultural resources," he said.

Constantz will take the helm at the Center April 8, just as the current season is winding down, giving him time to plan for the new season that begins in mid-October.

Constantz has a long history in Atlanta, serving as the assistant general manager at the Fox Theatre for 12 years and events manager for three years. He left his position as assistant general manager at the Fox Theatre for 12 years and events manager for three years. He left his position as..."
Looking for the next killer app

A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT

The Contextual Computing Group develops applications and interfaces for a wearable to be aware of what the user is doing and to assist as appropriate.

- GPS Schedule Prediction
  - Starner's current wearable gets 13 hours of power using two standard camcorder batteries, a vast improvement over his earlier systems.

- Another problem is networking, off your body to the Internet and networking on the body between the computer’s components," Starner says. "These different components need to talk to each other, so an on-body wireless bus [an internal electrical pathway between computer components] is an area of research." Safeguarding personal information is also an issue, says Starner. "Wearable computers allow you to have access to information that you normally wouldn’t have … however, the sensitive issues are still there. You have to figure out how you’re going to protect your privacy." However, I find that the most interesting problem is interface. How do we communicate with the computer and how does it communicate to us?

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY

Some assistive technology projects have grown out of Starner's wearable computing research.

- Mobile Sign Language Translator
  - Brashear, uses a wearable computer system to track users' hand movements as they sign in American Sign Language. The application translates the signs into text to facilitate communication with non-Signers.

- Gesture Pendant
  - A related assistive technology project is the Gesture Pendant, a wearable system that recognizes and translates simple hand gestures into commands for home appliances. This system can also track tremors in the hands to aid in the monitoring of health conditions or assist in watching for signs of overmedication.

$1 million gift to benefit servant leadership initiative

The Bradley-Turner Foundation is giving Tech a $1 million endowment to fund internships as part of the school’s servant leadership initiative. Students will get the opportunity to put the leadership skills they learn in class to the test at a variety of businesses, government agencies and charitable organizations.

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The future of wearables

Starner is very enthusiastic about the real-world applications of projects coming out of his lab. He sees wearable computers becoming more common in the future and points to the popularity of MP3 music players, predicting the portable audio devices will continue to grow in functionality, eventually merging into a general-purpose device worn on the body. Starner notes a couple of commercial wearable systems that have successfully been marketed to industry. One audio system helps workers quickly fill mail orders in a warehouse operation. Another system involves a scanner designed for workers to wear like a ring enabling them to easily track packages as they are moved.

Acknowledging limitations

Starner is passionate about the potential of wearable computers and feels the future is bright for their mainstream acceptance. However, he does recognize their limitations.

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executive director for the Meadowlands Alliance’s First Night Atlanta in 2000 to head up Bayfront Park in Miami. “We were very impressed by his work at Bayfront Park,” said Bob Harly, executive director of Institute Communications and Public Affairs and search committee member. “They were in a deficit and under investigation for corruption when he joined that venue. He came in and did a stellar job of turning that place around.”

In his first five months at Bayfront, Constantz retired the park’s $3 million debt while turned it into a $250,000 surplus by the end of his first year. He expanded profits to $500,000 by the end of the second year. In addition, he brought the world-renowned Cirque du Soleil to Miami for the first time, leading to an extended run and a yearly return engagement.

Clough noted an organizational change as well. “With Constantz’s appointment the director’s reporting line is changing to the Office of the President through Vice President for Student Affairs Lee W. Ferst,” he said. “This completes a reconstitution of the structure for the Ferst Center that follows the recommendations of the new strategic plan developed this past year. It is consistent with the objective to provide a new structure that better serve our faculty, staff and students as well as the outside community, which is primarily interested in the performing arts series.”

The center has seen its popularity rise with students and research missions of the Institute.

“By 2000, the center was 79 percent of its audience being students,” said Constantz. “Now they have a chance to come and see the work of leading artist/poets who use digital techniques (shown below). Composing with new poetic forms: speech, image, song, alphabetic media Web installations and experimental video work flows, game structures, interactive multimedia Web installations and experimental video work flows, game structures, interactive multimedia Web installations and experimental video work flows, game structures, interactive multimedia Web installations and experimental video work flows, game structures, interactive multimedia Web installations and experimental video work flows.”

But in the end, Constantz said, “It’s the shows that will keep people coming back. We have to have the experience unique, inviting and wonderful so people will want to come back and bring their friends with them.”

OIT, cont’d from page 1

developing a comprehensive information strategy for the campus and developing new technologies that will specifically target the academic and research missions of the Institute.

Hutcheson, formerly OIT’s director of engineering, is now the associate vice provost for Research and Technology and chief technology officer (CTO). His role will be to develop new initiatives in support of the Institute’s academic and research communities while maintaining close ties to the architectural and operational goals of OIT.

A Georgia Tech alumnus, Hutcheson attended the Institute in 1981 where he performed research and taught computer networking and technology courses for the School of Information and Computer Science, now the College of Computing. He helped to develop instructional and research laboratory facilities for student use, and a graduate and undergraduate course curriculum using those facilities. Hutcheson’s focus in OIT has been maintaining the strategy and architecture of the Georgia Tech computer network, one of the largest academic campus networks in the Southeast.

“Over the years, I’ve seen information technology take on a new importance here on campus, bringing opportunity and challenges. As we seize the opportunity, the new leadership model for information technology will help us meet the challenges.”

IN BRIEF:

Talking with Deirdre

The School of Economics presents scholar Deirdre McCloskey, the Distinguished Professor of Economics, History and English at the University of Illinois-Chicago and the Tinbergen Professor of Economics, Philosophy, Art and Cultural Studies at Erasmus University in Rotterdam, for a series of lectures on March 28 and 29 dealing with issues both professional and personal. On March 28, she will give a talk on “Learning to Love the Bourgeoisie” at 11 a.m., location to be announced. Later, at 5 p.m. in the Clary Theater, McCloskey will discuss her experience as a transgender person in “Crossing: Notes of a Transvee Woman.” On March 29, together with Economics Professor Stephen Ziliak, she will discuss “Oomph, and the Bankruptcy of Statistical Significance,” at 11 a.m. in room G-17 of the tablershagen Building.

For more information, visit www.ait.edu/~deirde or call 894-4917 to attend.

Seamless succession in Financial Aid

Mona Mons is moving on. Mons is the new director of Financial Aid. Mons previously served in her role as interim director, Student Financial Planning and Services. She stepped in as interim director after McTier’s retirement last month. “My twenty-year career here at Georgia Tech has been both interesting and rewarding,” said Mons. “It’s a stellar job of turning that venue. He came in and did a stellar job of turning that place around.”

Poetry with a kick

On April 1 and 2, at Recital Center for New Media, adjacent to the Library. The School of Literature, Communication, and Culture in Ivan Allen College presents TechnoPoetry Festival 2002, produced by the 2002 McEver Chair in Writing, poet Stephanie Strickland, showcases the work of emerging artists who use digital technologies (shown below). Composing with new poetic forms: speech, image, song, alphabetic text, and Chinese characters to explore the meaning of the relationships between bodies, biology, and technology. For a schedule, visit www.technopoetryfestival.com