P-card flap necessitates rule changes

As a result of recent reports of misuse in the state of Georgia’s Purchasing Card program, Georgia Tech has revised some p-card procedures and is considering further changes.

The state of Georgia established the p-card in 1997 in an effort to streamline the purchasing process for state agencies and institutions. Cardholders have the ability to purchase non-equipment, business-related items under the state’s no-bid limit of $5,000. Instead of requesting a purchase order or a check request for every item, the card allows for one bank payment per month. Georgia Tech’s nearly 2,000 cards amounted to purchases of $49 million in fiscal year 2007.

In September, the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts Performance Audit Operations published a report uncovering examples of financial mismanagement in the p-card program in various state agencies.

In an environment where science and technology rapidly change, it is crucial that academic leaders anticipate and invest in emerging disciplines that hold great potential, often at the interface of traditional academic disciplines. Georgia Tech’s ability to nurture such emerging areas of study has increased dramatically thanks to Fred D. Gibson Jr., director and retired chairman, president and CEO of American Pacific Corp. (AMPAC).

Gibson has made a commitment of $1 million for the establishment of the Mary and Maisie Gibson Endowment Fund, whose income will support the Mary and Maisie Gibson Institute Professorship. Appointments to the Professorship—the first Institute Professorship in Georgia Tech’s

Next phase of Fifth Street improvements under way

Creating a unique, neighborhood backdrop on Georgia Tech’s urban campus continues, as the next stage of the Fifth Street Streetscape Project began the last week of September. Spanning from Cherry to Fowler streets, this is the final segment of the streetscape to be completed this year. Ultimately, the project will extend from Technology Square to Atlantic Drive, and possibly even beyond.

“There are some future projects, but they don’t seem to be happening any time in the near future,” says Jerry Young, landscape project manager with Tech’s Facilities, Design and Construction department. “Our master plan shows the streetscape extending all the way to Atlantic, but best-case would be the project starting at the beginning of next year.”

Stated to be completed before the end of January, the current remodel will continue the work started from Technology Square, across the interstate in Midtown. The project includes removal of utility poles, implementation of bike lanes and a new trolley pull-off, and installing new sidewalks, landscaping and paving. “With the telephone poles gone, you’ll get a good view of Klaus (Klaus Advanced Computing Building) from the street,” Young says.

One sidewalk will remain open at all times, but the street’s closure will be required twice in the project’s duration. For a few days at the end of October, Facilities will install commu-

First Institute Professorship established

Dan Treadaway
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

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Open enrollment brings new plan

This year’s open enrollment brings with it not only the ability to alter one’s benefits, but also a late payer.

The Board of Regents has approved a new high-deductible, low-premium health plan (HDHP) for employees, which comes in roughly $60 per month less than Tech’s HMO plan.

"The deductible is steep—$1,500 per individual, $3,000 per family, in-network—but the plan does have its good points," said John Grovenstein, benefits director with the Office of Human Resources.

While both an HSA and a flexible spending account (FSA) work with pre-tax dollars, the money deposited into an HSA remains with the insured, rolling over to the next year.

"The HDHP plan could be of interest to healthy individuals that do not typically access medical care since they would save by having a lower monthly premium and would not have medical expenses that would subject them to the offsetting high deductible," Grovenstein said. "Indemnity plan participants who have high medical expenses could also be advantaged by the plan, due to its low 10 percent in-network co-insurance for prescription drugs and medical services."

For more information...
2008 Benefits Open Enrollment
www.ohr.gatech.edu; benefits fair, Oct. 17, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Student Center Ballroom

Painless flu vaccine ‘patch’ goal of joint development

John Toon
Research News

Flu vaccine delivered through painless microneedles in patches applied to the skin could soon be an alternative to delivery through hypodermic needles, according to researchers at Georgia Tech and Emory University. Using recent grants from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) totaling approximately $11.5 million over five years, researchers from the two institutions plan to develop a new vaccine product using the microscopic needles.

"We expect that this research will lead to a better way of delivering the flu vaccine, which will allow more people who need it to receive the immunization in a convenient and effective way," said Mark Prausnitz, a professor in the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering. "Beyond that, the possibility of replacing a hypodermic needle with a microneedle patch should significantly impact the way that other vaccines are delivered."

The team is assessing the effectiveness of transdermal patches that include arrays of microscopic needles containing or coated with vaccine. They hope to design patches that could be stored for long periods of time at room temperature and that will increase the breadth and duration of immunity to influenza—perhaps with smaller amounts of vaccine.

The project team has extensive experience in microneedle development, influenza vaccines, vaccine delivery systems, product development, and interdisciplinary collaboration. Beyond influenza, the research could have implications for immunization programs in developing countries, where eliminating the use of hypodermic needles could make vaccines more widely available and address the problem of reusing contaminated hypodermic needles.

Prausnitz and his colleagues have been working since the mid-1990s to develop microneedle technology for painless drug and vaccine delivery through the skin. The needles in the arrays are made of titanium, stainless steel or various polymers—including some that could dissolve into the skin, carrying vaccine with them. The Georgia Tech team has also developed manufacturing processes for microneedle patches and tested the delivery of proteins, vaccines.

W W W. W H I S T L E. G A T E C H. E D U

An array of microneedles is shown against a microscope image.

nanoparticles, and small and large molecules through the skin.

Other members of the microneedle research teams include Emory microbiologists Joshy Jacob, David Steinhauer, Chingiali Yang and Joanna Kouzoutsou; Georgia Tech bioengineers Thad Allen, Harvinder Gill and Vladimir Zarnitsyn; and pharmaceutical scientist James Birchall at Cardiff University.

Holly Rorschau contributed to this article.

For more information...
Mark Prausnitz’s faculty Web page
www.chbe.gatech.edu/fac_staff/faculty/prausnitz.php

Young’s keynote opens 9th GT Model U.N.

Robert Nesmith
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

While fall break carried with it a subdued atmosphere across campus, Georgia Tech welcomed a former mayor, congressman and ambassador, along with high school students from across the Southeast, here to solve pressing global issues.

A political participant on the local, national and international level, Andrew Young presented the keynote address kicking off the Georgia Tech Model United Nations Conference. Inviting attendees to practice diplomacy where they live, Young recounted his experiences both as a child growing up during segregation and as the United Nations’ first African-American ambassador to the U.N., appointed by President Jimmy Carter.

“I am glad to share some of the excitement I feel about the world in which we live,” Young said. “There are horrors, but each of these turns a tragedy into a chance for opportunity.”

Pointing to the strengths of diversity and a technology-based education, Young invited the students to consider Georgia Tech for their post-secondary instruction. “Many of our political problems will have scientific solutions,” Young said.

Molly Cochran, director of Undergraduate Programs and associate professor in the School of International Affairs, has been a faculty advisor with Tech’s Model U.N. program for five years. She sees this not only as an opportunity for students to learn the finer points of diversity, but also as an introduction to a Georgia Tech of which most may not be aware. A place where a technology-based education and the liberal arts come mingling.

“Our involvement with high schools in hosting this conference lets young people across the Southeast know that we here at Tech are very much interested in fostering international awareness and leadership in future generations,” Cochran said.

For more information...
Molly Cochran’s faculty page
www.inta.gatech.edu/∼molly_cochran

Georgia Tech in a suit of the University System of Georgia.

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“QUOTE-UNQUOTE”

“We’re developing hybrid and electric cars, building wind farms and ocean wave energy stations. New batteries, fuel cells and solar panels are smaller, better and cheaper than they were just a few years ago. I am in awe of the new technologies that I see being developed at Georgia Tech, and such research is happening at the nation’s major research universities and in the private sector.”

—Judith Curry, chair of the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, responding to author and global warming skeptic Bjorn Lomborg’s opinion piece that existing technologies and strategies will not have an impact on reducing carbon emissions. Lomborg is an adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School. (Washington Post)
the p-card program in seven state agencies. The department found that weaknesses in the program as practiced left agencies open to fraud, waste, inefficiency and abuse. One cardholder at Georgia Tech, whom the report did not identify, is suspected of making fraudulent purchases totaling nearly $40,000. The employee has been terminated and likely will face criminal prosecution as a result. "It is a well-run program," said Joel Hercik, associate vice president of Administrative Services. "At the same time, we know there have been some bad apples, some have made mistakes and some have committed fraud. We have had some internal oversight breakdowns."

Changes already are in place, Hercik said. The monthly Network Administration meeting held last Wednesday. His office has sent notices to deans, unit heads, vice presidents, business officers and card administrators reiterating p-card policies and procedures and mandatory training for coordinators has already been completed. An annual recertification process is now in place for cardholders.

For more information, visit www.gispe.gatech.edu.

IN BRIEF:

GTISC releases 2008 cyber threats forecast

The Georgia Tech Information Security Center (GTISC), a national leader in information security research and education, released its inaugural GTISC Emerging Cyber Threats Report for 2008 on Oct. 2. Cyber security threats expected to increase and evolve during the coming year encompass five key areas, which include attacks on Web 2.0 and instant messaging, the spread of botnet attacks to wireless and peer-to-peer networks; mobile network threats, including voice spam, viruses and phishing; and attacks on radio frequency identification (RFID) systems.

The report was released at the annual GTISC Security Seminar on Emerging Cyber Threats and Countermeasures, a gathering of industry and academic leaders.

For more information, visit www.gtisc.gatech.edu.

"Mad Money" films on campus

CNBC personality Jim Cramer will film his stock-picking show "Mad Money with Jim Cramer" at the College of Management on October 18 as part of the program's college tour to top business schools around the country.

While management students will make up the majority of the audience, a limited number of tickets are available to other members of the Georgia Tech community.

The episode will be broadcast the same day at the show's regular times, 6 and 11 p.m., on CNBC.

Travel procedures eased

Georgia Tech has streamlined its travel-booking process with Travel Inc., the Institute's contracted travel agency. Direct billing is now available with submission of a one-time travel application form—available on Tech's Procurement Services Web site—after filling out an E-profile on the Travel Inc. Web site. This eliminates the need for a Travel Authority (TA) form. All employees and travel arrangers interested in direct billing should have their profiles on file with Accounts Payable by Dec. 1. For more information, visit www.procurement.gatech.edu/mm_travel.html.

Join in the photo-op

A panoramic portrait will be taken at Bobby Dodd Stadium during this week's homecoming game against Army. All attending are encouraged to wear white and gold to enhance the photo's impact. Copies will be available at the Tech bookstore and www.e-stadium.com a week after the game.

Gibson, cont'd from page 1

history—will be administered by the Office of the President within any academic discipline at Tech. This donation is especially important because the competitive landscape in higher education is a demanding commitment to supporting the research and specialties of teachers and scholars who are leaders in their fields. The establishment of the Gibson Professorship will enable the Institute to continue to attract and retain distinguished professors and scholars on a national and international scale," said President Wayne Clough. "With the help of philanthropic gifts from visionary donors such as Mr. Gibson, Georgia Tech ensures these scholars are offered an environment of discovery and innovation within which to develop new programs or breakthrough technologies—discoveries that can ultimately benefit society."

"In any business, being flexible and responding to rapid change is the key to survival and success," said Gibson. "Georgia Tech is doing great things in the areas of sustainability, health care and many other areas. My hope is that the Gibson Institute of Professorship will play an important part in furthering Tech's ability to be an innovative leader in the larger quest to improve human life in the 21st century."

A business innovator and philanthropist residing in Las Vegas, Gibson currently serves as a director of both the Cashman Equipment Co. and AMPAC, a chemical company that produces a wide array of products, including specialty products used for space flight and defense systems, automotive airbag safety systems, a clean fire-extinguishing agent and water treatment equipment. AMPAC is a Delaware corporation with operating divisions that include AMPAC Development, Halotron, Pepcon and Western Electrochemical Co. A Colorado native and a graduate of the University of Nevada, Reno, Gibson serves as chairman of the Nevada Taxpayers Association.