Thompson retires with 40 years in higher education

Tech President G. Wayne Clough announced last week that Executive Vice President for Administration and Finance Robert R. Thompson will retire, effective April 1. “Bob has made an extraordinary contribution to the transformation of Georgia Tech into one of our nation’s leading universities,” Clough said. “During his tenure Bob’s innovative leadership was critical to successfully completing more than $1 billion worth of construction and development projects on campus. He also modernized our administrative systems and processes in ways that made the campus much more efficient and customer-friendly.”

“My 13-plus years at Georgia Tech have been the highlight of my 40-year career in higher education,” said Thompson. “I am thankful for the opportunity to have been part of the leadership team that has made Georgia Tech a world-class institution.”

Alumni Association centennial highlights Tech and its people

Robert Nesmith
Communications & Marketing

A woman, speaking in a slight German accent, tells how her life and the world changed following the 1914 assassination of the archduke of Austria. A man remembers visiting London’s Parliament in 1951 when he was 15 and seeing Winston Churchill in action. Yet another speaks about how she was part of the minority groundswell at Georgia Tech in the 1970s, then graduated with high honors.

Each of these varied individuals—Ann Marie Eaton, John Endicott and Patrice Perkins-Hooker—share a common thread: As Tech alumni, their stories are featured prominently as the Alumni Association celebrates its centennial. The Centennial Series podcasts are taken from video interviews shot during the last 13 years of alumni giving first-hand accounts of their lives. While described by Living History director Marilyn Somers as a “work in progress,” over the next year 52 of these podcasts will be shared.

Technology brings nanoparticles into focus

Megan McRainey
Communications & Marketing

Tech and Emory University researchers have found that techniques for differentiating the largest of objects also work on the completely opposite scale. Scientists can now tag single molecules with nanoparticles, particles specially designed to bind with a certain type of cell or molecule and illuminate when a specified target is found. The clearer images allow researchers to collect more detailed information about the molecule, such as its binding in a gene sequence clarified by new technology and Emory technology.

CATEA helping to make subjects more accessible

Robert Nesmith
Communications & Marketing

It’s an unfortunate trend. Physically disabled students tend to opt out of science and math classes at the secondary and post-secondary level, limiting their career options. While the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA) usually works directly with the intended group, through a National Science Foundation grant the Center is providing indirect help to these students.

SciTrain, located on CATEA’s Web site, is an online instructional toolset for helping high school educators reach all students—including those with and without disabilities. The program is a collaborative effort between CATEA and the Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics and Computing (CEISMIC).
Clarification

Last week’s article on creation science, engineering and technology neglected to mention the new institute is a collaboration between the Colleges of Science, Engineering and Computing. The Whistle regrets the omission.

"It’s a big victory for the consumer. This will lead to a much richer experience for viewers. When people have these higher-end screens at home, they take great pleasure in them, and this will push ahead the delivery of movies in high-definition.”

—Janet Murray, director of Graduate Studies, School of Literature, Communication and Culture, on last week’s announcement that Blu-ray DVDs will be the sole disc-based medium for delivering consumers high-definition movies. (Reuters)

"We find these students often opt out of science and math classes (in higher education),” said Robert Todd, CATEA director of Information Technology. "The long-term effect is you have more people with disabilities not going into science, math and technology careers."

With SciTrain, CATEA created all-online materials, along with teleconferences and calls. "All materials will be online and accessible—even for teachers with disabilities,” he said.

Using STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) funds from NSF, the program works with teachers, rather than students directly, which places the grant in a unique light. "(The NSF) normally only provides funds if the study directly reaches the (intended) population,” Todd said.

Adhering to Universal Design principles, the modules show teachers how to give all students access to the information simultaneously. "In public schools, there’s a push to mainstream students with disabilities,” he said. "These students will be tested along with others as part of the No Child Left Behind program.”

CATEA’s online material is available to any teacher at any time online, provided they have access to a Web browser. The modules contain units on Universal Design, Disability Laws, Vision, Hearing, ADHD and Mobility through three tiers: Accessible Science, Accessible Math and Accessible Computing. Educators can move through these modules, having access to resources and activities at their finger-tips to help them understand what needs their students have.

"CATEA developed the course from the ground up. There is nothing like this online,” Todd said, adding that it took a year just to develop the modules. CATEA had to dig for the information, as no dedicated source existed that had it all in one place. Everything on the site is built upon research both the center and others have done. "Even if we get the initial information somewhere else, we’re expanding on it and making it our own.”

In SciTrain’s first year, Todd and his staff held focus groups with teachers from roughly 12 Cobb County high schools. CATEA started testing the program with teachers in January. "Teachers (kept) logs on how this will improve—or will not improve—their classrooms.” Preliminary results will be available in the coming weeks. "It’s hard to (gain access to) schools and get teachers—who are already overwhelmed—to respond to surveys and ideas,” said Todd. Fortuitously, the center had a good relationship with George Stickel, science coordinator for Cobb County Schools, grades six through 12. "He Stickel’s very interested in reaching all the (system’s) kids, not just some of them,” Todd said.

"They have a good structure in Cobb for students with accessibility issues,” Todd says, in part because the county has a fairly large number of students with disabilities. Because of this access, CATEA was able to hold focus groups with teachers and conduct surveys. "We added the ADHD component because of their survey.”

In October, the center held focus groups with teachers, asking "What would be the perfect classroom situation?” and "What is it like now?” Then CATEA invited the teachers to help them get from one to the other.

"We asked how they would approach it,” he said. "We found out from them what is really (able to be done). For instance, we learned that teachers are not really comfortable with the ‘fancier’ assistive technologies. It’s frustrating to hear that, and it’s frustrating for them to procure it.”

This is compounded because educators said the learning curve to use it may be steep, and afterwards there may not be enough of a need for continued use of the learning tool, requiring teachers to relearn it.

"We want to help them find (what they need), use it and archive the information so they can reuse it easily.” Todd said.

CATEA is very interested in reaching all the (system’s) kids, not just some of them.”

For McEachern High School teacher Gerald Climmons, the overall process has been positive. "I have discovered that there are so many more strategies teachers can utilize to assist in the teaching and learning process as it relates to students with disabilities,” Climmons said. "SciTrain has made me more aware and sensitive to the needs of all my students and not take for granted that all students learn differently. I have changed my lesson plans and teaching methods many more times than usual in order to accommodate students with physical, emotional or behavioral and psychological disabilities.”

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Podcasts...cont’d from page 1
stories—one a week—will be featured in podcast form. She modeled the series after National Public Radio’s StoryCorps. "I wanted to mix the voices to provide a different point of view," Somers said. "Old and new, male and female, minority and majority, (they all) help showcase the varied history of Georgia Tech." One of her more recent interviews is that of a man who enlisted in the Army after his 2003 graduation as a result of the 9/11 attacks. He is now with the 75th Ranger regiment as a special operations officer. The interviews, ranging from 3 1/2 to 5 1/2 minutes, provide “little glimpses of Georgia Tech history and [its alumni’s] impact on history.” As the vignettes are not necessarily germane to the centennial celebration, Somers will select and edit these interviews for downloading from the association’s Web site or for podcasting this year. “If it’s successful, then maybe we’ll continue after this year is over.” These first-person accounts eventual- ly will also go online in the library’s SMARTech archive. Somers started with the “very old” stories and those that are 50 years old. “For example, this year is the class of ’50 reunion, so I will interview 10 or 12 people from that class.” She describes the program as not only about the history of the school, but that of the region, Atlanta, and the state. One interview is with the daughter of H.L. Smith, Tech’s first graduate who received his degree in 1890, two years after the Institute first opened.

Another class of individuals interviewed are described as “Captains of Industry,” including the late Garry Betty, founder of Earthlink. Yet another group is “Leaders,” those who went on to hold positions of prominence in government. Other initia- tives include chronicling hundreds of World War II accounts through Tech alumni, as well as those who portrayed Buzz through the years. The collection currently numbers 672 interviews and con- tinues to grow. In February, Somers was on the road in Tennessee, interviewing seven to eight alumni. Through the association, Somers has her own videographer, Scott Dinnenman (a 2003 Tech graduate), and a bevy of student interns hired to assist with time-coding and editing. The pod- casts are available on iTunes, Yahoo and Zune Web sites. Somers has directed the Living History Program with the Alumni Association since 1994, and has seeded the alumni- interviewing programs in other colleges and universities. “There really is an unlimited supply of these.” Somers said. “Everybody has a story.”

For more information, visit www.admin-fin.gatech.edu

Thompson...cont’d from page 1
higher education," Thompson said. “I am forever grateful to Dr. Clough for the opportunity to help move Georgia Tech from good to great under his leadership. I am very proud of the outstanding leadership team I assem- bled in Administration and Finance, and am confident in their ability to continue helping Georgia Tech move forward. I also want to thank the many students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends of Georgia Tech for their support over these wonderful years.”

Thompson joined Georgia Tech in 1995 from the University of Washington. He will be succeeded by Steven G. Swant, vice president for Administration and Finance.

“Steve brings a history of experi- ence and leadership in higher education, with previous employment at UCLA and the University of Washington, in addition to his years at Georgia Tech. Clough stated. “He understands fully what it takes to be a first-rate univer- sity president, how to handle the com- plex demands of the position and will provide the leadership and continuity the Institute requires as we look to the challenges that lie ahead.”

Swant has been responsible for the Institute’s operating and capital bud- gets, human resources management and administration, institutional research, and strategic planning since 1996. His duties as Thompson’s chief deputy were added in 2006 when he was appointed to the vice president position.

For more information...

IN BRIEF:

Professor testifies before House

Nancye Green Leigh, a professor of City and Regional Planning in the College of Architecture, testified before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment, on Feb. 14.

Her remarks focused on the unintended con- sequences of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CER- CLA), and how brownfields affect prospects for urban revitalization. For more information, visit www.coa.gatech.edu. To listen to her testimo- ny, visit http://transportation.house.gov.

Goodman addresses AAAS center

Seymour Goodman, professor of International Affairs and Computing and recent chair of the National Research Council’s Committee on Improving Cybersecurity Research in the U.S., addressed the American Association for the Advancement of Science’s Center for Science, Technology and Security Policy at the Cannon House Office Building on Feb. 14.

His presentation focused on international and domestic defenses against cyber attacks, parti- cularly in relationship to dependence on the Internet and other Internet-like networks. He highlighted trends and priorities and provid- ed examples of interventions. For more information, visit www.aaas.org and www.Inta.gatech.edu.

Chemistry professors win award

The American Chemical Society (ACS) awarded School of Chemistry and Biochemistry Assistant Professors Wendy Kelisey and Christine Payne an ACS PROGRESS/Dreyfus Lectureship. One of 20 given a year, the lectureship pro- vides support for recognized academic scientists and engineers to present their work at leading research institutions. The program is a joint award from ACS and the Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation. For more informa- tion, visit www.chemistry.gatech.edu.

Ryherd among ‘New Faces’

The American Society of Heating, Refrigeration and Air-Conditioning Engineers has nominated Mechanical Engineering Assistant Professor Erica Ryherd to be recognized as one of the New Faces of Engineering, as part of Engineers Week 2008 (Feb. 17–23). She is one of only five engineers nominated by the society.

Ryherd’s areas of research include acoustics and dynamics, noise control, architectural acoustics and healthcare acoustics. The National Engineers Week Foundation asks its members each year to nominate colleagues 20 years old or younger who have shown out- standing abilities and leadership. For more information, visit www.me.gatech.edu.

Tech snow photos

Photos of the January snows taken by mem- bers of the Georgia Tech community are available for viewing online. Visit www.gatech.edu/gallery/2008 for a look at Atlanta’s recent snowfall, both on and off campus. The snow-covered table, above, was taken in Alphabetta by Electrical and Computer Engineering Professor Yildiz Japaridze.

WWW.WHISTLE.GATECH.EDU

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March 14

The Ferst Center for the Arts presents Chinese pianist Yunsoo Li, at 8 p.m. Tickets are $20 to $45 ($24 to $32 with subscription). For more information, visit www.ferstcenter.gatech.edu.

March 27

Lorenz + You Design founders Jan Lorenz and Chung Yoo present "Crossing Boundaries in Design: Alternative Careers in Design," from 6 to 7 p.m. in Room 116 of the Klaus Advanced Computing Building. For more information, visit www.coa.gatech.edu.

Engineering Psychology graduate student Anne Adams presents "Task Analyses and Theories of Skill Acquisition," part of the School of Psychology’s Brown Lecture series on Cognitive Aging, from noon to 1 p.m. in Room 217 of the J.S. Coon Building. For more information, visit www.psychology.gatech.edu.

As part of the IMPACT Speaker Series, Kenneth Byers, president of Byers Engineering Co., from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. at the LeCraw Auditorium in the Management Building. For more information, visit www.mgl.gatech.edu.

February 26

The Georgia Tech Symphonic Band will perform at the Ferst Center for the Arts at 8 p.m. For more information, visit www.coa.gatech.edu.

The Science Fiction Film Series continues, with Ridley Scott’s “Alien” (1979), from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Library East Commons area. For more information, visit www.lcc.gatech.edu.

March 6

The Office of Human Resources offers two seminars on Social Security and retirement benefits in room 117 of the Student Services Building. Eileen Salowitz from the Social Security Administration presents “Making Sense of Social Security,” from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m., and Benefits Manager Linda Mitchell will speak on Tech’s retirement benefits from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. For more information, visit www.trainsweb.gatech.edu.

March 13

Both Teacher’s Retirement System (TRS) benefits and optional and supplemental retirement benefits will be discussed in room 117 of the Student Services Building. Mike Zarem from TRS will speak from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. and Jeff Juday from Fidelity Investments will speak from 2:45 to 3:45 p.m. For more information, visit www.trainsweb.gatech.edu.

March 6

School of Public Policy Professor Susan Herbst, from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the Georgia Tech Bookstore. For more information, visit www.mgt.gatech.edu.

March 6

School of Public Policy Professor Roberta M. Berry will sign copies of her newest book, “The Ethics of Genetic Engineering,” from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. in the Georgia Tech Bookstore. For more information, visit www.gatechhtc.com.

March 6

The Georgia Tech Faculty Women’s Club offers scholarships for undergraduate students who are children of faculty members. Scholarship amounts range from $500 to $1,500. Applications are due by March 1. For more information, visit www.gtfwc.gatech.edu.

The Office of Organizational Development offers an Emergency Preparedness Certificate, which consists of several smaller courses, including “Fire Safety,” “Facilities Hazard Training” and “Basic First Aid/Adult CPR/AED.” For more information on scheduling, visit www.orddev.gatech.edu.

February 27

The last day for students to register for the Undergraduate Research Spring Symposium 2008, which will be held April 5 in the Student Center Ballroom. Undergraduate researchers will have a forum in which to present and share their works with other students and faculty. For more information, visit www.undergradresearch.gatech.edu.

February 26

Brigham Young University Mechanical Engineering Professor Ron Adams presents “High-Resolution Orientation Imaging Microscopy: Obstacles and Innovations,” from 3 to 4 p.m. in room 105 of the Love Building. For more information, visit www.mse.gatech.edu.

Scriggs Research Institute Professor H.G. Finn presents “Tailoring Viruses as Polyvalent Scaffolds,” from 3 to 4 p.m. in room G011 of the MSE Building. For more information, visit www.chemistry.gatech.edu.

Philippa Ardalan, consul general of the French Consulate in Atlanta, presents “Europe on the Eve of the French Presidency of the European Union,” from noon to 1:30 p.m. in the Wardlaw Center’s Gordy Room. For more information, visit www.inta.gatech.edu.

February 27

The Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering at Georgia Tech and Emory University celebrates its 10th anniversary, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Cox Hall Ballroom at Emory. For more information, visit www.bmc.gatech.edu.

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