Institute makes Honor Roll for service projects

Robert Nesmith Communications & Marketing

While Tech’s students and faculty continue to excel on the academic and research level, the Institute itself received an impressive accolade in February, largely because of its students’ participation. The Corporation for National and Community Service named Tech to the 2007 President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll.

No ‘phishin’

E-mail scam hitting Tech community

Robert Nesmith Communications & Marketing

Tech will always be in danger of hackers working from outside to get to sensitive information from the Institute. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) wants to ensure that members of the community do not offer any assistance.

Several messages titled “Update YOUR Gatech EMAIL EMAIL NOW” have been sent to campus inboxes, claiming to be from “Gatech messaging center.” Stating that Tech’s e-mail center and database are undergoing an upgrade, the senders request the recipient’s username and password for help in clearing unused e-mail addresses.

This is the latest example of phishing, an attempt to fraudulently acquire sensitive information from a company or organization. Typically this technique has been used in messages disguised as a request from PayPal, eBay or financial institutions.

The Institute’s Computer and Network Usage and Security Policy prohibits sharing passwords, and any system administrator requesting it would be in violation of the policy. OIT officials state that this type of e-mail scam is becoming more sophisticated, and may even appear to be legitimate. Users should never provide this type of personal data via e-mail to anyone for any reason and be suspicious of any message that looks official.

Phishing continued, page 3

USG: Most P-card misuse was not fraud

Robert Nesmith Communications & Marketing

In a report released March 3 by the University System of Georgia (USG), problems with the state purchasing card in a majority of cases were not the result of fraud, but from a “lack of understanding of and training in the appropriate procedures for the use of cards.”

USG auditors, along with auditors from the four research universities—Tech, Georgia State University, the Medical College of Georgia and the University of Georgia—conducted an audit of the system’s 8,435 p-cards in the hands of 40,000 University System employees. In all, only 22 cases of actual fraud were identified.

Key recommendations put forward in the report include increased oversight of card activity, including establishing concrete procedures, enforcing compliance and improving purchase monitoring. These recommendations came from four general observations given by the audit group:

- Supervisory review, approval and management were lacking.
- Documentation was inadequate or insignificant.
- Policies on both the institutional and USG levels did not provide enough detail.
- Institutions often either did not have a policy or did not integrate other policies with overarching p-card policy.

Many, if not all, of these procedural changes have been in place at Tech since the p-card abuse issue first came to the fore.

“Since the initial p-card audit was conducted in the fall, we have changed the way we do business,” said Joel Hercik, associate vice president of Financial Services. “We’ve made a number of changes clarifying the duties and responsibilities of all personnel involved in the purchasing process and made process changes.”

These corrective measures include moving from a negative approval system—managers and p-card coordinators flagging suspect changes—to a positive approval system. Now, unit managers and coordinators must OK any p-card purchase within 45 days. Without it, any card used for unauthorized purchases is suspended. Beginning this month, unit coordinators will be able to submit their monthly reports electronically.

Training also has been mandated for supervisors, coordinators and cardholders. Supervisors and coordinators were recertified in the fall, and cardholders were certified as a group in December.

P-card continued, page 2

Sloan Fellows named

King Jordan Dan Breznitz Nick Feamster Adam Kalai

Four named to early career fellowships

Robert Nesmith Communications & Marketing

Four faculty members were recognized by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation for their contributions in their selected fields of study. College of Computing Assistant Professors Adam Kalai and Nick Feamster, along with School of Biology Associate Professor King Jordan, were named 2008 Sloan Research Fellows. Sam Nunn School of International Affairs Assistant Professor Dan Breznitz—currently in China—was awarded one of five 2008 Sloan Industry Studies Fellowships.

Feamster’s research centers on network operations and communications. He is currently working with students on network operations and protocols and platforms for improving network connectivity.

“Ultimately, my goal is to improve the reliability and operation of communication networks using a first-principles approach.”

“Phishing continued, page 3

WWW.WHISTLE.GATECH.EDU
Tech tests wireless alert system for visually impaired

Researchers at Tech's Wireless Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center received good news last month during testing of their Wireless Emergency Communications (WEC) project. Results indicate that 94 percent of blind and visually impaired test subjects found WEC to be a significant improvement over their current methods of receiving emergency alerts. Given that 18 percent of Americans are thought to have some type of disability, and that an estimated 60 percent of Americans use wireless services, it was not surprising that the Center's Survey of User Needs (SUN) revealed that people with disabilities are significant users of wireless products and services. Further, 57 percent of those respondents said that their wireless devices were important partly because of the role they play in summoning help in an emergency. "The advantage of accessible emergency communications software and devices is that they can reach the user, no matter what their activity or location, with lifesaving information," said Helena Mitchell, executive director of the Center for Advanced Communications Policy and project director for WEC. "In the end, people with disabilities have the right to expect that the technology they use on a regular basis is capable of providing them with emergency communications and timely warnings and alerts."
The first field test involved participants from the Georgia Radio Reading Service in a full-day study to engage the effectiveness and accessibility of this prototypic emergency alerting system. Subjects ranged from sight-enhanced individuals to those who are fully blind. Additionally, the test subjects' level of familiarity and use of wireless technologies ranged from technically savvy to infrequent users. 

Mobile phones with WEC custom software featured an audio-oriented interface and text-to-speech reading of critical messages and emergency alerts for the visually impaired; the capability to recognize an incoming call via critical importance and override any muted sound or vibration settings to ensure that the critical alarm was delivered; and an alert signal that is identical to the national Emergency Alert System (EAS) tone familiar to the hearing population. WEC engineers simulated the emergency alerts, employing the Common Alerting Protocol, as if they originated from the National Weather Service.

Three separate weather alerts of increasing intensity were issued to participants over a period of time. Many of the test subjects liked the idea that with each "test message," the alert signal got louder, indicating the severity of the event. In three test groups, affordability was raised as an important issue. Some noted they liked the "repeat" option in case they did not hear it clearly the first time. Others felt that the specialized software would not only benefit them, but also their family and friends who might be on public transportation, biking, or anyone away from home carrying a mobile device. Additional field tests are slated for upcoming months in 2008, including at Public Broadcasting Atlanta and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID) in Rochester, N.Y., in June. In the NTID field test, the WEC software will have the additional feature of vibration alarms that will notify the deaf and hard-of-hearing population of incoming alerts. A full report on the field tests is expected to be completed in fall 2008, when all the test results and user feedback is complete. Primary funding was made possible by the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research.

For more information...

Wireless Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center
www.wirelessrerc.org

Gamble indicted

Douglas Gamble, a former Institute of Bioengineering and Bioscience administrative coordinator, pleaded not guilty after being indicted by a federal grand jury for mail fraud and theft of federal funds last Tuesday. In one of the more high-profile purchasing card abuse cases, Gamble is accused of charging more than $516,000 for personal purchases to the state-issued card. She is alleged to have purchased nearly 4,000 items during a five-year period by using grant money from the National Science Foundation and submitting fake receipts to her supervisor. She is the first person to be indicted in the P-card flap, but other investigations are ongoing. State charges could be levied against Gamble as well.

Joel Hercik, associate vice president of Financial Services for the Institute, said he is "certainly pleased with the legal action," and he looks forward to the forthcoming legal processes.
IN BRIEF:

Change for the holidays

According to the Office of Human Resources, the dates for the 2008 Winter Break have been changed. The new dates are Christmas Day (Thursday) through Wednesday, Dec. 31. Although the Institute will remain closed on Jan. 1, 2009, those who want to take Jan. 2 off should request vacation. For more information, visit www.oehr.gatech.edu.

Chemistry paper often cited

A research paper from Chemistry and Biochemistry Professor Mostafa El-Sayed has once again been counted in the top 10 most cited papers in chemistry. The paper, "Cancer Cell Imaging and Photothermal Therapy," was published in the Journal of the American Chemical Society in 2006. As of January, El-Sayed’s paper was in the No. 1 position. El-Sayed is the Jules Brown Chair and Regents Professor in the School of Chemistry & Biochemistry, and is the director of the Laser Dynamics Laboratory. His research centers on nanoscience and nanotechnology, specifically the properties of materials at the nanoscale and potential applications for nanoparticles. For more information, visit www.chemistry.gatech.edu.

Ammons elected to IIE board

Jane Ammons, associate dean of Engineering for Faculty Affairs, was elected president for the Institute of Industrial Engineers (IIE) Board of Trustees.

A member of IIE for more than 30 years, Ammons serves on the industrial engineering dean’s council and is an ABET (Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology) program evaluator for industrial engineering. IIE is headquartered in Metro Atlanta. Also a professor in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial & Systems Engineering, Ammons’ areas of expertise include production systems design and analysis, manufacturing systems, reverse logistics and continuous quality improvement. For more information, visit www.iise.gatech.edu.

Phishing

Anyone who has sent sensitive information via this or any other e-mail should immediately reset his or her password and then contact the OIT Customer Support Center at 894-7175.

Protect yourself at Tech and at home

■ Legitimate businesses will not request personal information through e-mail. Do not provide passwords, account information, Social Security numbers or other information if requested.

■ Do not click on e-mail links requesting personal information. Only use secure Web sites when providing personal information via the Internet.

■ Do not open e-mails from people you don’t know and are not expecting. Only open attachments from those you know.

■ Use a firewall, anti-spyware and anti-virus programs on your home computer.

Office of Information Technology

www.oit.gatech.edu

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March 13
Poetry & Tech presents poets Elena Karina Byrne, Mike Dockins and Alessandra Lynch, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in The Clayery of the Student Success Center. For more information, visit www.icsc.gatech.edu.

March 14
The Ferst Center for the Arts presents Chinese pianist Yunli Li, at 8 p.m. Tickets are $20 to $45 ($24 to $32 with subscription). For more information, visit www.ferstcenter.gatech.edu.

March 15
Jazz saxophonist and vocalist Mindi Abair plays her mix of jazz, pop and soul at the Ferst Center for the Arts at 8 p.m. Tickets are $26 and $36. $20.80 and $28.80 with a subscription. For more information, visit www.ferstcenter.gatech.edu.

March 25
The Science Fiction Film Series continues, with Ridley Scott’s "Blade Runner" (1982), from 7 to 9 p.m. in the Library East Commons area. For more information, visit www.icsc.gatech.edu.

March 13
University of Washington Professor Allan Hoffman presents a Bioengineering Special Seminar on "Controlled Drug Delivery, the Early History and Evolution to the Present and Into the Future," from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in room G011 in the N Building. The series continues through April 23. For more information, visit www.chbe.gatech.edu.

The College of Management welcomes Duke University Professor Robert Plakien, who also is the director of Engineering Whirl, as this week's IMPACT Series speaker, from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. in the Management Building's LeCraw Auditorium. For more information, visit www.mgt.gatech.edu.

Columbia University Professor Gwenolyn Wright presents "Excavating American Modernism," from 6 to 7 p.m. in the Architecture Auditorium. For more information, visit www.coa.gatech.edu.

March 14
School of Public Policy doctoral candidate Anupit Supaphattanapong presents "Is OBDII Test Valid and Reliable for Older Vehicles? Evidences from Atlanta Fleet in 2002-2005," from 11 a.m. to noon in the D.M. Smith Community Room basement. For more information, visit www.spp.gatech.edu.

March 15
University of California, Berkeley, Mechanical Engineering Professor Costas P. Grigoreopoulos presents "Laser-Assisted Micro/Nanoprocessing and Device Fabrication," from 11 a.m. to noon, in the MARC Building auditorium. For more information, visit www.me.gatech.edu.

March 18
The Women’s Resource Center presents a Lunch & Learn with Jill Barber from the Counseling Center, who will speak on recognizing and dealing with stress, from noon to 1 p.m. in room 315 of the Student Services Building. For more information, visit www.womenscenter.gatech.edu.

The Georgia Tech Observatory presents Public Night, where members of the Tech community can view the night skies through a 16-inch aperture telescope, In the case of inclement weather or cloudy skies, Public Night will be cancelled. For more information, visit www.astronomy.gatech.edu.

March 19
Auburn head coach Tommy Tuberville will read from and sign copies of "Mississippi Sissy," a memoir of the author's youth in the 1960s and early '70s, from 6 to 7 p.m. at the Georgia Tech Bookstore. For more information, visit www.gatechbook.com.

March 13
The Academic Advising Network presents "Student Coaching," a way to improve the overall learning experience for students, from 11:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Piedmont Room of the Student Center Commons. For more information, visit www.gtaam.gatech.edu.

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March 11
Korea State University Professor Christopher T. Cutbertson presents "Small Volume Biological Sampling, Fluid Handling and High Efficiency Separations on Microfluidic Devices," starting at 3 p.m. in room G011 of the Molecular Science & Engineering Building. For more information, visit www.chemistry.gatech.edu.

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March 12
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Associate Professor Daniel Pack will open the School of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering’s CHBE Spring 2008 Seminar Series with "Molecular Templatizing—Towards Quantum Information Processing," from 3:30 to 5 p.m. in room G011 in the N Building. The series continues through April 23. For more information, visit www.chbe.gatech.edu.

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March 13
U.S. Air Force Academy Professor John S. Wilkes presents "The Chemistry of and in Ionic Liquids," from 3 to 4 p.m., in room G011 of the Materials Science and Engineering Building. For more information, visit www.chemistry.gatech.edu.

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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.

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