Colorful Sculptures Come to Campus

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Students, faculty, and staff taking their usual route across the Georgia Tech campus noticed something different last week: large-scale outdoor sculptures are popping up everywhere.

The 12 sculptures are part of "Engineered Art: An International Sculpture Exhibit at Georgia Tech," which is a 15-piece international exhibition by various artists. The sculptures are on loan to the Institute until June 2014.

Three more sculptures will be installed during the next few weeks, including a soaring 50-foot steel piece titled La Tour by the internationally acclaimed Chattanooga-based sculptor John Henry, who is also the curator for the exhibition.

Henry is known for his large-scale public sculptures. Since the early 1970s, he has produced monumental works of art for museums, cities, and public institutions across the United States, Europe, and Asia. Henry's style has been described as "huge, welded steel drawings." He arranges linear and rectilinear elements that appear to defy gravity.

Many of his works suggest a snapshot of arrested motion, where flying or tumbling elements are frozen. As the sculptures were being installed, students stopped to ask Henry questions including, "What does it do?"

"That's an interesting question," Henry said. "Because people usually ask 'what is it?'"

The location of each sculpture was chosen to complement Tech's lush and open green spaces. The sculpture exhibition is part of Arts@Tech, an initiative to enhance the Georgia Tech community by fostering programs and events spanning the arts spectrum at the intersection of technological innovation and creative expression. The initiative is an outcome of the Institute’s strategic plan.

SAUL KLEINER
Vice Provost for Institutional Advancement

I've heard that Georgia Tech has a digital "swag" Web page — what's it for?

The "swag" Web page offers a variety of free Tech-themed images and ring-tones for download and is available to any Tech fan. Ring-tones include the Ramblin’ Wreck fight song, while images range from the GT logo to the Campanile at night and are available for use as your computer, tablet, or cellphone’s wallpaper, and for your social media pages (such as Facebook).

http://gatech.edu/swag

Have a Tech-related question that you’d like answered? Email it to editor@comm.gatech.edu.

Tech kicks Off Operations Planning Initiative

JENNIFER MATTINGLY
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Support for university research remains sound in Washington, D.C., despite the bleak effects of the sequester.

That’s a key message Georgia Tech Director of Federal Relations Robert Knotts reported in a campus briefing May 30 as part of the Policy@Tech speaker series.

"Federal agencies are taking actions to protect essential priorities, but many are delaying solicitations and reducing the number and size of awards," Knotts said. "Long-term, research and development, and basic research will remain a top priority on both sides of the aisle, but universities can expect relatively flat research budgets for coming years. Also, public-private partnerships will remain the favored mechanism for large-scale efforts."

Knotts presented this information along with federal funding priorities and interdisciplinary themes stemming from President Barack Obama’s Fiscal Year 2014 Budget to help Georgia Tech has responded to the sequester. That's a key message Georgia Tech Director of Federal Relations Robert Knotts reported in a campus briefing May 30 as part of the Policy@Tech speaker series.

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Tech Kicks Off Operations Planning Initiative

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EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

If a weather disaster or other emergency forces Georgia Tech to shut down, it will be crucial to have plans in place to help normal campus operations resume.

That's why the Institute has implemented a continuity of operations planning (COOP) initiative to ensure that Tech’s units are prepared to meet this challenge head-on.

“It’s important for us to develop continuity of operations plans at the departmental level on up to the Institute level,” said Andy Altizer, director of emergency preparedness. “Without these key pieces of

The next continuity of operations planning training session will be held on June 26 at 10 a.m. Register at trains.gatech.edu.

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Campus News

Event Offers Opportunity for Diversity Dialogue

AMELIA PALVIR
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

A title was all it took to pique Paul Kohn’s curiosity about this year’s Diversity Roundtable event.

“I remember that this year’s program title involved fish not seeing water — language that was catchy enough to make me want to learn more — so I decided to register for the event,” said Kohn, vice provost for Enrollment Services.

Last week, faculty and staff members from across campus attended the roundtable titled “The Blindside: Self-Management of Fish Who Don’t See Water.” This was the first year that the event included morning sessions in addition to a lunch program.

Kohn, who has attended other diversity-focused events in the past, chooses to attend the events for two reasons.

“First off, opportunities to get together with colleagues and address elephants in the room related to diversity are important to me,” he said. “But I also feel like it’s important for leadership to practice what they preach. If we don’t support these types of events, why should we expect anyone else to?”

Prior to the event, Kohn mentioned that he hoped the event would offer an opportunity to reflect on his own attitudes toward diversity.

“I also hope to hear some discussion regarding the status divides on campus among faculty, staff, and students,” he added.

PERCEPTION OR REALITY

The morning kicked off with a presentation from Charlotte Hamlin, a diversity consultant who created the Diversity Drama training program. Hamlin shared stories about her own eye-opening experiences related to diversity, with one of her key messages being that perception often has more impact on what we think than reality does.

“I often see what I want to or expect to see,” Hamlin said. “And I may attribute causes of behavior to favor myself or the groups I belong to.”

Her parting advice was for the audience to focus on similarities to others — instead of differences — and to build communities based on these.

THE TRUTH OF OUR STORIES

Following Hamlin’s presentation, several staff members shared their own diversity-related stories, which were followed by opportunities for the audience to discuss their experiences in small groups.

Danny Ingram, senior technical analyst from the Office of Information Technology, acted out a scene depicting an experience in which he is gay and in the military.

Associate Dean of Students and Director of Diversity Programs Stephanie Ray shared a story about her father, who was a sharecropper, and the friendship with a white man that would change his life.

Cheryl Colefield, director for culture, diversity, and inclusion, and Pearl Alexander, senior director for people strategies (both in the Office of Human Resources), also led a segment where people were encouraged to acknowledge their own prejudices.

For example, Colefield shared that several years ago, she was close to not hiring someone — who was completely qualified for the job — based on these types of events, agency policy, and her collective transformation. Colefield shared that technology is a catalyst for self-discovery and connection, as well as our collective transformation. Colefield shared that today’s events help to open our eyes and move us a step closer toward inclusive excellence.

In the June 24 issue, we’ll feature part II of Kohn’s experience at this year’s Diversity Roundtable event. Find out if the event lived up to his expectations.

SCULPTURES, continued from page 1

“There is a pent-up desire by students to engage in the arts as evidenced by our tremendously talented musicians and the participation in the recent Art Crawl and Festival,” said Rafael L. Bras, Georgia Tech provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs, who helped bring the exhibit to campus. “Art expresses creativity and results from the same design processes that our students follow, whether designing policies or instruments. This exhibit will promote conversation, debate, and appreciation of the creative spirit while making our beautiful campus even more interesting.”

The sculpture exhibition is free and open to the public. Descriptive plaques for the pieces will be installed soon. Official unveiling events are planned for next fall.

www.arts.gatech.edu

BUDGET, continued from page 1

researchers anticipate and react quickly to new funding opportunities as Congress mulls over agency allocations.

Among those, multipurpose research priorities are advanced manufacturing, big data, and innovation and commercialization — common themes at Tech. Priority areas in which Tech is poised for more federal support include cybersecurity, education, and urban opportunity initiatives.

For example, although Tech has had limited activity with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Knots stressed that the agency is rethinking its purpose and broadening its support well beyond land-grant universities. (On June 20, at 11 a.m. in room 102, Clough Commons, USDA Director Sonny Ramaswamy will conduct a seminar as part of a campus visit.)

Knots encouraged attendees to think boldly about how their work presents broad implications for any of the priority areas and to contact the federal relations team for assistance formulating a plan of attack.

Tech’s advocacy efforts are designed around the Institute’s priorities and advocacy landscape in Washington, D.C., and focus on areas where the Institute can contribute unique expertise and expertise in research, development, student aid, and K-12 science, technology, engineering, and mathematics education.

He also urged researchers to work closely with Tech communications staff to participate in the showcase role that federal funding plays in fueling research and spin-off companies.

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Paul Kohn (right) and Jamon Holt, graduate assistant to the vice president for Institute Diversity, discuss one of the diversity-related questions posed during the morning program of this year’s Diversity Roundtable.

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MOOC Matters: Keeping Students Engaged

AMELIA PAVLIK
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Are my students engaged? This is the burning question that can be challenging to answer when you’re teaching students face-to-face—or when they are squirrelled away behind a computer screen halfway across the world.

That’s why a group of faculty members from Georgia Tech is looking into the issues related to keeping students engaged and involved in massive open online courses (MOOC).

“We’re trying to figure out what can and cannot be replicated when you transition a course from an on-campus to an online learning environment,” said Al Ferri, associate chair for Undergraduate Studies in the Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering and the project “champion.” “And we also want to know about subtle things that can help students successfully complete MOOCs.”

This project is one of seven being explored by a group of mini innovation hubs that are researching questions related to MOOCs and online learning. The hubs are part of an initiative led by the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning and the Center for 21st Century Universities.

“As luck would have it, when our hub was forming, ME was getting ready to run a special course called ‘The Buzz on Open Online Courses,’” Ferri said. “The students who signed up for the course each took two MOOCs of their choice and were the perfect subjects to help us learn more about our research topic.”

During spring of 2013, 13 students enrolled in a number of MOOCs — ranging from Aboriginal Worldviews and Education offered by the University of Toronto to Introduction to Finance offered by University of Michigan — and completed all assignments.

As part of their participation, the students gave final presentations about their experiences with the MOOCs. There were a number of common themes that students shared:

• Students enjoyed the convenience and ability to “go at your own pace” that MOOCs provide.
• The hub technical glitches were particularly frustrating when coupled with the lack of access to a professor.
• Students who had peer-evaluation activities associated with their MOOCs mentioned that they did not like it.
• Many students mentioned the importance of having a good instructor in their MOOCs. They commented on instructors’ “enthusiasm,” “expertise,” and “care for students’ learning.”
• Many commented that they wanted/needed to see the professors’ heads in the inset box on the computer screen.
• The students said forums are an important part of the success of MOOCs, but they must be managed to maintain a high signal-to-noise ratio. Assigning expert personnel to monitor the message boards is crucial in making effective use of this medium.
• Students indicated variety is important, even in a world of six-minute modules. They reacted very positively to mixing lectures with demos, interviews, outside videos, etc.
• The consensus among the students was that they liked the MOOCs as a way to gain exposure to a new subject area or to review a topic they had already studied, but they acknowledged that the rigor and depth of most of the courses were not up to the level found in their Tech face-to-face classes.

The hub is taking the information gained from the students and will continue their research in the months to come.

“The study that we did in the spring semester showed what sorts of things a MOOC developer could do to encourage students to stay engaged, and what mistakes can discourage or frustrate students,” Ferri said. “But we need to know much more about what drives a student to complete a MOOC, why the attrition rate is so high in MOOCs, and why completion and pass rates in face-to-face classes are so much higher in comparison.”

For more information or to join this hub, contact Ferri at al.ferri@me.gatech.edu. For video and PowerPoint presentations from the May 8 showcase, visit http://c.gatech.edu/12YYILS

This is the second in a series of articles about Tech’s mini innovation hubs, which are researching questions related to massive open online courses and online learning. In the issues to come, we’re featuring a few of the hubs and the progress they’ve made. On June 24: the Physics Labs Hub
Prof’s Tactic: Do Things Most Wouldn’t Do

AMELIA PAVLIK
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

A quote on a piece of paper — this is how John Cressler ends every class with.

“I like to do activities with my students that other professors might shy away from,” Cressler said. “For example, during the last class with.

“How did you arrive at Tech?”

“I started teaching full-time at Auburn University in 1992. Several years later, I bumped into one of my old Tech professors who suggested that I take a position here. I’ve been here since 2002.

Describe your research.

“In my lab, we are trying to create new types of transistors to help electronics run more quickly and efficiently. For example, one project we might take on is figuring out how to make more efficient parts for a cell phone to help the battery last longer.

What is an average day like for you?

“One gets to the office, I spend my mornings completing office tasks. I usually take an hour before I teach (two afternoons each week) to unglue myself from other distractions. My afternoons are often spent meeting with my graduate students.

Would you ever teach a massive open online course?

“I might. On the one hand, I appreciate the fact that these courses provide education to people who might not have access to it otherwise. But I also feel like these courses sacrifice the intimacy that comes with teaching a face-to-face class of 30 students.

Tell us something unique about yourself.

“I just published my first novel, Emeralds of the Alhambra, a love story set in medieval Muslim Spain. (I’d like to invite the campus community to my book signing event on June 25 at 6:30 p.m. at the Barnes & Noble @ Georgia Tech.) I’ve written several nonfiction books for both scientific and general audiences. But this book was so creatively satisfying to write, which is great because it’s the first in a trilogy. I’m already 450 pages into the second!”

AMERICA'S TALENTED PROFESSIONALS

I AM A TALENTED PROFESSIONAL — an American professional with a brilliant mind and a bright future. I have the skills, the knowledge, the experience, and the passion to succeed in any field or industry. I am committed to using my talents to make a positive impact on the world. If you are looking for a talented professional to help you achieve your goals, please consider me. I am confident that I can bring fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a dedication to excellence to any project or organization.

Student Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

This USG-sponsored program pays for full tuition (excluding fees and other costs) at USG institutions and is open to faculty and staff members who have worked at Tech in a 100 percent time, benefits-eligible position for at least six months. Like Merrick, Megan Hutchins, assistant director in the Office of Undergraduate Admissions, has taken advantage of the tuition benefits during her time at Tech. She will earn her Master’s in Higher Education Administration from Georgia Southern University in less than six weeks.

“It’s such a great deal!” Hutchins said. “If you’re thinking about advancing your career by going back to school, you really shouldn’t pass up this opportunity.”

One advantage of TAP is that employees don’t have to pay for tuition out of their own pockets and then wait for reimbursement, said BeNeidia Williams, work-life specialist in the Office of Human Resources (OHR). Instead, the money is provided in time to pay for tuition at the start of the semester.

Employees can pursue any degree (except for those in medicine and law) and must maintain a C or better to receive assistance. However, the credit limit is six hours per semester and dependent on funding. (See the website provided below for the most current reimbursement rates for undergraduate and graduate courses.)

“My experience, getting over the anxiety of taking on grad school while working was the first major hurdle,” Hutchins said. “Once I got started with my program, I realized just how manageable it was. It’s been well worth my time — and will be worth yours, too.

For more information about these programs, email Williams at benedetawilliams@og.virginia.edu or call 434-924-4756.

CLASSIFIEDS

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Beautiful 3BR/2.5BA, 4,200 sq ft. house for rent in a swim/tennis community. 20 min. to Tech, 5 min. to Silver Comet Trail. Large private backyard, lake view, basement, sunroom, and covered deck. Email rismah@gatech.edu or call 404-291-5785.

2BR/2BA condo for sale just off Howell Mill Rd. Great for couple who wants to live close to Georgia Tech. Gated, with off-street parking. Available now. VRBO.com for Tech employees/students without agent. Email carol@kennemore.net.

Hilton Head timeshare available Aug. 30 to Sept. 6. 2 BR/2BA, one bedroom, sleeps 5, harbor view, near beach. Marriott Grand Ocean Resort, $1,450 for the week. 50 percent deposit to reserve. Call 912-707-6175.

Twin-size workstation loft bed with desk, CD and bookshelf, chair, and futon in excellent condition. Mattress and futon included. $255. Pictures available at www.gatech.edu/orientalbed. Email richrd009@comcast.net.

Bublein Piano volley PS1500 digital con- trax piano with bench. Dark mahogany solid-wood case, 400+ sounds including pianos, organs, strings, brass, and percussion. Multitrack MDX playback and recording. $975. Email radam013@gmail.com.

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