Nominations Open for Diversity Champion Awards

When you think of diversity champions at Georgia Tech, is there a particular student, faculty or staff member, or unit that comes to mind? If so, take a moment to nominate that individual or unit for a Diversity Champion Award. The deadline is Friday, July 17.
c.gatech.edu/diversitychampion

Tech Student Part of Winning Team in Airbus Competition

Mohit Gupta, a graduate student in aerospace engineering, was part of the team that won first place in the Airbus “Fly Your Ideas” international competition. Gupta collaborated with four others to develop aircraft wings covered with a composite “skin” that harvests energy from natural vibrations generated by a plane’s movement. The winning team earned €30,000.
c.gatech.edu/airbus

Don’t Believe Everything You Tweet

Researchers from the College of Computing analyzed 60 million tweets to learn that about 25 percent of information on Twitter is false.
c.gatech.edu/falsetweets

MAD MEN OR HEFFERNAN?

Tucked away on Fifth Street is a mid-century architectural relic that could pass as a set for Mad Men. See page 3 for a look at this house that’s hidden in plain sight on campus.

Three More Goals Met in Campaign Georgia Tech

With the clock running down on Campaign Georgia Tech, three additional programs join the ranks of those that have already surpassed their goals: intercollegiate athletics, the College of Architecture, and the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering.

Intercollegiate Athletics

“Reaching our goal early is a huge achievement,” said Director of Athletics Mike Bobinski. “And it was only possible because of the generosity of so many people — alumni, friends, and fans who are deeply committed to supporting the Yellow Jackets.” The Campaign goal is $250 million, and in the first quarter of 2015, an influx of philanthropy brought the total funds raised to an impressive $253 million.

During the past 11 years, the Campaign has made a significant and lasting impact on athletics. From state-of-the-art facilities such as McCamish Pavilion, the John and Mary Brock Football Practice Facility, the Zelnak Basketball Center, and the Byers Tennis Complex to the creation of hundreds of endowed scholarships totaling more than $67 million, Georgia Tech is well positioned to remain highly competitive in the ACC and to continue nurturing the academic success of its student-athletes.

Bobinski noted that, while there is much to celebrate, there is also much work still to be done. “It is crucial that we take this momentum and build on it,” he said. “There is no time to rest on what we have accomplished.” The top priority in the months that remain is completing the funding for three major renovation projects: the Noonan Golf Facility, Russ Chandler Stadium, and the Edge Center.

College of Architecture

The College of Architecture joins Computing and Sciences in surpassing its goal, pushing past the $45 million mark in the early months of 2015.
Community-Minded Educators Convene at Piedmont Project

KRISTEN BAILEY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia Tech recently chose to make creating sustainable communities a pillar of its undergraduate curriculum through the new Serve•Learn•Sustain initiative, but it’s not the only university in the city working to expand this aspect of undergraduate learning.

Emory University’s Piedmont Project, which began in 2001, is a faculty development program designed to help educators incorporate sustainability and environmental issues into their courses. This year, Emory invited Georgia Tech faculty to participate in a two-day summer workshop that’s part of the project.

Monica Halka, associate director for the Honoros Program, took the opportunity to meet with peers from around the area to discuss how they are addressing sustainable communities in their classrooms. Participants came from disciplines as varied as health sciences, dance, film, or environmental studies.

“We all had different perspectives on sustainability — there are so many ways to think of it — but with a focus on place: the Piedmont,” Halka said, referring to the geographical region that encompasses the Atlanta area.

Part of the two-day workshop discussed making personal connections with community partners to find the right opportunities for university partnerships. Some outside groups may want to work with students but are not aware of some of the challenges, such as trying to fit a project into the timeline of a semester.

“You can’t do this work unless you have personal connections,” Halka said. “You have to find people who want to work with students and, really, who have a project ready to go.”

When these challenges are faced and worked through, though, the partnerships can be extremely rewarding for both sides. Halka teaches an urban forests class that focuses on the role of trees in cities, frequently partnering with Trees Atlanta. Ongoing project was to conduct a tree survival inventory to help the organization determine which trees grow best in which places in the city. They also have worked with Georgia Tech Facilities Management on a soil study to determine the same thing on campus, and to look at stormwater management.

“Students just love it,” she said. “They feel like they’re doing something real.”

Many of Halka’s students have continued to volunteer with partner organizations such as Trees Atlanta, even after they finish their work in the course.

The Piedmont Project also was a chance for university peers to find ways to collaborate with one another. This year, Halka hopes to work with a professor from Georgia Perimeter College who specializes in microbiology and can assist with training students on how to take soil samples in urban environments. In exchange, Halka will introduce the Georgia Perimeter group to Piedmont Park, where she routinely takes classes for field work.

“Students just love it. They feel like they’re doing something real.” — Monica Halka

While Georgia Tech has an influence around the globe, Halka emphasized the advantage of working with local communities and doing work on and around Tech’s home.

“If you can’t get your own house in order, how can you go out to other places to help?”

In recent years, she’s made a concerted effort to work community involvement into Honors Program courses. Chris Burke, director of community relations for Government and Community Relations, teaches a course focused on public school outreach. Kelly Comfort, associate professor in the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts, has taught a class that incorporates outreach with Hispanic communities.

The biggest challenge Halka has found in getting more faculty involved is that they are not formally trained on how to do it.

“If you think it was the culture here to get involved in this work,” she said.

An experimental atomic physicist by trade, Halka transitioned into working in sustainability after coming to Georgia Tech nine years ago. While teaching a class that required students to calculate their carbon footprints, she discovered hers was larger than anyone’s, thanks to the international travel she took several times a year. She began trying to offset her emissions by volunteering with Trees Atlanta, which led to the development of her urban forests course.

“I found that the work I was doing wasn’t benefiting the world,” she said.

“This is kind of a nascent science, but I hope I’m becoming one of the experts in my old age.”
Hidden Georgia Tech is a photo essay series highlighting places on campus that may go largely unnoticed but are hidden in plain sight. If you know of a place worth exploring, email editor@comm.gatech.edu.
“I am thrilled,” said Steven P. French, dean and John Portman Chair. “Thanks to the dedication of our many alumni and friends, we have met our goal and hope to add to it significantly in the coming months.” The College of Architecture will continue its focus on building a world-class faculty through endowed chairs and professorships, as well as increasing the number of undergraduate scholarships and graduate fellowships.

“It has taken a team effort to get where we are today,” French said. “Dean [Thomas] Galloway laid a solid foundation for this Campaign years ago, Dean [Allen] Ballou continued the effort, and our development team has been incredibly effective over the years. We are pleased to have reached this milestone, but we do not intend to rest yet.”

Biomedical Engineering
The Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering has become the third school within the College of Engineering to pass its goal, joining the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering and the George W. Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering.

The Coulter Department’s total now stands at more than $37 million against a goal of $35 million.

“It is impossible to overstate the significance of the support we have received from visionary, generous donors,” said Ravi Bellamkonda, professor and Wallace H. Coulter School Chair. “Or the impact that support will have on biomedical engineering education and research at Georgia Tech for years to come.”

But Bellamkonda, like his counterparts in other programs, emphasized, “The work is still ongoing.” For the Coulter Department, that means an intense focus on faculty support — creating endowed chairs, professorships, and early career professorships — not only to compete on faculty support — creating endowed chairs, professorships, and early career professorships — but to retain the rising stars for the most promising talent, but just as importantly, to retain the rising stars and the eminent scholars-teachers already within the Department.

“We are also grateful to our donors who are supporting the innovations in undergraduate education that are being pioneered at the Coulter Department,” he added. “Philanthropic support is the critical magic ingredient on our journey to becoming the best BME program in the country.”

What’s Next?
Some of those areas still working toward individual goals include the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aerospace Engineering, School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, and Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts.

The Campaign also seeks to secure 100 endowed faculty chairs and professorships, of which it has secured 93, and to fulfill the naming opportunity for the Campaign, visit engineeredbiosystems.gatech.edu.

For additional information about the Campaign, visit development.gatech.edu.

As part of the Design Develop Build South Africa program in the School of Architecture, a group of students recently spent a day learning the art of masonry at Jolley Masonry Inc. in Avondale Estates.

Students from Georgia Tech will design and build an extension to Arts and Culture Centre Guga’s Thebe in Langa in South Africa, in collaboration with two German universities, local architects, and the local community. Jolley Masonry, led by Tech alumni Dave Jollay and Matt Jollay, hosted the students to let them get hands-on experience with masonry techniques in advance of their departure this month. Learn more about the program at www.ddb-sa.com.

Pictured above: Grey Peterson, architecture student. Below: Liu Qiao (foreground) and Whitney Ashley, architecture students.