Talking through Suicide

New QPR Training Provides Coaching for Conversations

BRIGITTE ESPINET
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

"Part of what saved me was being able to talk about it." These words from a Georgia Tech staffer who’s overcome struggles with suicidality powerfully substantiate the goal behind the Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR) training.

Georgia Tech now offers campuswide on a monthly basis to make the campus community more comfortable talking about suicide. "One of the biggest barriers in suicide prevention is the fear of talking about suicide," says Lacy Currie, coordinator of Suicide Prevention and Crisis Response at Tech’s Counseling Center. "But the research shows that suicidal individuals benefit from talking about it."

After crippling bouts of feeling alone with suicidal thoughts triggered by an ongoing battle with panic and anxiety disorder, Stephanie Phillips agrees with the research. A production coordinator in Institute Communications, Phillips recalls being overwhelmed by helplessness and loneliness in her darkest days, which is why she’s now eager to contribute to the discourse surrounding mental health and suicide. She wants others to know what she didn’t initially understand — that opening up about your struggles is the first step in opening the doors to healing.

"It meant so much for my therapist to tell me: ‘You can’t help how you’re feeling, and that’s OK.’ That then made it easier for me to trust him and let him suggest things that might help me manage my feelings," Phillips explained. She said that validation of her feelings and resultant treatment exploration could never have happened had she not decided to simply talk about what she was going through.

"There’s definitely a lack of discussion because, I think, people generally have a hard time talking about emotions and mortality. That’s often why they end up feeling so isolated. As a society, we still have a lot to learn about how to openly talk about how we feel," says Phillips. "But, I just remember how helpless I felt, and even though everyone’s story is different, I want to open up and share mine if it might help others."

Everyone Has a Role

Phillips’ willingness to actively contribute to suicide prevention efforts is an attitude Currie hopes will catch on around campus and is one of the main pillars of the recently introduced Tech Ends Suicide Together initiative (of which the QPR training is a part).

"Most systems have turned to professionals to address suicide concerns in our schools, workplaces, and communities," Currie said. "Part of what saved me was being able to talk to someone they trust — and that’s why I want to open up and share mine if it might help others."

In the Pediatric Technology Center, there have been several changes to enhance the scheduling process for our students, said Steven Girardot, associate vice provost for Undergraduate Education. "The changes are designed to assist students in planning their academic careers, better utilize campus resources, and increase coordination of the classroom-scheduling function among academic and administrative units. Current changes include a new daily scheduling grid for Fall 2017 and a realignment of classroom scheduling functions into the Registrar’s Office."

"The fundamental goal of these changes is to enhance the scheduling process for our students," said Steven Girardot, associate vice provost for Undergraduate Education. "The changes will support students in building a schedule that allows them to take the classes they need and progress through their degree programs as efficiently as possible."

Classroom, Academic Scheduling Changes Underway

Full Implementation to Be Complete by Fall

SUSIE IVY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Following the release of the Classroom and Academic Scheduling Task Force final report in Fall 2016, several changes are currently underway.

The changes are designed to assist students in planning their academic careers, better utilize campus resources, and increase coordination of the classroom-scheduling function among academic and administrative units. Current changes include a new daily scheduling grid for Fall 2017 and a realignment of classroom scheduling functions into the Registrar’s Office. "The fundamental goal of

Employees Break Giving Record in 2017 Charitable Campaign

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia Tech’s 2016-17 Charitable Campaign raised $393,460.96, breaking the Institute’s record (previously set in 2014) by almost $28,000.

A total of 1,279 people donated to the Campaign, which supports more than 1,300 worthy causes including support for cancer research, aid to families in need, and food for animals housed in shelters. The effort surpassed the overall Campaign goal of $375,000.

Campaign Chair Leanne West

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Be Prepared for Severe Weather

The Office of Emergency Preparedness will observe the state of Georgia’s Severe Weather Preparedness Week from Feb. 6–10 with internal exercises and planning, as well as campus tests. Learn more about the office’s work at: emergencypreparedness.gatech.edu

Schedule Set for 2017 Football Season

Tech starts the season against Tennessee in the Chick-fil-A Kickoff Classic at the new Mercedes-Benz Stadium on Sept. 4. Faculty and staff get $60 off season ticket packages. Learn more at c.gatech.edu/fballfacstaff2017

Charitable Campaign

INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

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February 6, 2017

The Counseling Center’s Lacy Currie leads faculty and staff through the new training program, which is part of the Tech Ends Suicide Together initiative.
EVENTS

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Through April
Employees can use their insurance to get a flu shot without an appointment every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Stampa Health Services Pharmacy. health.gatech.edu

Feb. 8
Human Resources hosts a 6e Well session on Understanding Mental Health and Important Triggers from noon to 1 p.m. in the Piedmont Room, Student Center. Register at c.gatech.edu/6ewell

Feb. 8
The School of Biological Sciences’ Jenny McGuire offers a chance to experience what it’s like to be a paleontologist at Fossil Wednesdays, when participants can and identify 30,000-year-old fossil specimens. The event takes place Wednesdays throughout the semester from 4 to 6 p.m. in Room 326, Cherry Emerson Building. c.gatech.edu/mcguire

TRAINING

Feb. 16
The Center for Teaching and Learning hosts a session on Designing and Developing Videos for Teaching and Learning: Strategies and Resources from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Creasen Room, Student Center. Register to attend at c.gatech.edu/ctlvideo

SEMINARS & LECTURES

Feb. 8
The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts Carlos Am悄然a, chief information officer for The Hershey Company, at 4:30 p.m. in the LeCraw Auditorium, Scheller College of Business. scheller.gatech.edu/impact

Feb. 9
Sherry Farrugia, chief operating and strategy officer of Tech’s Pediatric Technology Center and Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta partner, will discuss Driving Innovation through Partnerships: Lessons from a Public-Private Partnership Initiative as part of the ADVANCE Program’s Demystifying Georgia Tech series. The event takes place from 11 a.m. to noon in Room 314, Scheller College of Business. RSVP at c.gatech.edu/demystify

EVENTS continued on page 3

FACULTY AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

Raheem Beyah, Motorola Foundation Professor and associate chair for strategic initiatives and innovation in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, was named a Distinguished Scientist in the Association for Computing Machinery for contributions in networking and security. The Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering’s Edward A. Botchway, Jaydev P. Desai, Machelle Paradies, and Sathiy Gourisankar will be inducted into the American Institute for Medical and Biological Engineering’s College of Fellows in March. Selection is one of biomedical engineering’s most prestigious distinctions.

Kirk Bowman, Jon R. Wilcox Term Professor in Soccer and Global Politics in the Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, will be awarded the Georgia Power Professor of Excellence Award during Georgia Tech’s home basketball game against Boston College on Feb. 11. Ida Brown, research security manager for the Georgia Tech Research Institute, earned the National Classification Management Society Georgia Chapter 16th Chapter Champion Award, which recognizes the relentless pursuit of professionalism in security.

Madison Cario, director of the Office of the Arts, was named one of Creative Loafing’s 2017 People to Watch.

Jennifer Clark, associate professor in the School of Public Policy, has been elected chair of the American Association of Geographers’ Economic Geography Specialty Group for the January 2017 to December 2018 term.

Emily Doherty, marketing communications manager for Georgia Tech-Savannah, was recognized as part of Savannah Magazine and Business in Savannah’s 2017 Generation NEXT: Savannah’s Rising Stars of Business.

President Barack Obama renewed the appointment of Mustafa Al-Sayed, Regents Professor and Julius Brown Chair in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry, to the President’s Committee on the National Medal of Science.

Michael Evans, academic professional and freshman chemistry lab coordinator in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry, was named GT 1000 Instructor of the Year for 2016.

Air Force Major Gen. (Ret.) George Harrison, also director of strategic initiatives for the Georgia Tech Research Institute, received the Wright Brothers Master Award from the Federal Aviation Authority, recognizing more than 50 years of piloting aircraft safely.

Nalan Hertel, professor of Nuclear and Radiological Engineering in the George W. Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering, was named president-elect of the national Health Physics Society, an internationally recognized nonprofit scientific organization whose mission is to promote excellence in the science and practice of radiation safety.

James Howard, British Postdoctoral Fellow in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication, won a professional tutor award from the Southeastern Writing Center Association 2017 conference.

Ronald Johnson, professor of the practice in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, has been appointed a Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army, a distinction that underscores Johnson’s commitment to Army members and their families.

Stephanie Johnston, executive assistant to the president, was elected to the board of the National Association of Presidential Assistants in Higher Education. Johnston will serve a three-year term.

Yonggang Ke, assistant professor in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering, earned a National Science Foundation CAREER Award, recognizing the highest level of excellence among early-stage researchers. The $500,000 award will be allocated over a five-year period.

Wilkur Lam, assistant professor in the Wallace H. Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering, has been inducted into the American Society for Clinical Investigation.

Lisha Li, civil engineering librarian and patent coordinator for the Library, earned the Service to the Community award from the Office of the Provost for her work with patents.

Zhiqun Lin, professor in the School of Materials Science and Engineering, has been appointed aneditor for Macromolecular Research, a journal by the Polymer Society of Korea that publishes original research on all aspects of polymer science, engineering, and technology.

The National Academy of Inventors named Seth Marder, Regents Professor and Georgia Power Chair of Energy Efficiency in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry, one of its 175 fellows in the class of 2016. Marder is also founding director of the Center for Organic Photonics and Electronics.

Wendy C. Newsietter, assistant dean of Educational Research and Innovation in the College of Engineering, has been appointed to a three-year term on the Army Science Board.

School of Computational Science and Engineering Professor Haesun Park was named a 2017 Fellow by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE).

Christine Payne, researcher with the Princeton Institute for Bioengineering and Bioscience, has been elected councilor for the physical chemistry division of the American Chemical Society.

Terry Sturm, professor in the School of Civil and Environmental Engineering, has been named a fellow of the American Society of Civil Engineers, an honor afforded to fewer than 3.5 percent of the society’s members.

Aleka Zajic, assistant professor in the School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, earned a National Science Foundation CAREER Award for her work in computing exploring ways to design wireless links at terahertz frequencies that can provide data rates of hundreds of gigabytes per second.

KEEPING TECH BEAUTIFUL

Faculty and staff are invited to participate in Tech Beautification Day, an annual spring event where the community does beautification projects around campus. This year’s event takes place Saturday, April 8. Volunteer applications will open March 6. Learn more at gttbd.wordpress.com.

Black History Month

The African American Student Union is hosting events all month long to celebrate and recognize Black History Month. Events include:

- Black Women in STEAM Luncheon
  Feb. 11, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m., Student Center Ballroom
  Staff Appreciation Day
  Feb. 14
  Keynote Speaker Janet Mock
  Feb. 10, 5:30 p.m., Room 319, Student Center
  Black Georgia Tech Female Pioneers
  Feb. 20, 6 p.m., Student Center Theater
  For complete event information, visit gtaauss.org.
**SUICIDE**, from page 1

says. “So this requires everyone getting involved. At Tech, we want every member of our community to see themselves as having a role in suicide prevention work.”

And, judging from the numbers, the requirement is urgent.

In the United States, suicide is the 10th leading cause of death — ahead of homicide at No. 17. This translates into another startling statistic: One in every six people is personally impacted by suicide.

Electrical and Computer Engineering Associate Professor Ben Klein is one of those people.

Four years ago, one of the Ph.D. students he had been advising took his life.

“He was an excellent researcher because he was talented and meticulous,” says Klein. “His work had hit a roadblock, but that’s a normal part of research, I didn’t feel anything was seriously wrong.”

And while Klein is quick to acknowledge that his pain certainly pales in comparison to what he witnessed from the student’s immediate family, he still has to work through difficult emotions — even though a few years have passed.

“It has felt like a heavy burden. His suicide has made me reluctant to advise graduate students; I’m afraid of repeating whatever mistakes I may have made with him, particularly since I’m not sure what they were,” Klein says.

On the other hand, teaching classes has been a key coping mechanism for him.

“It’s been important for me to feel needed; to be reminded that I can’t just give up.”

Having intimately experienced the loss of a student, that message of not giving up is one he wants other students to really hear.

“I think most of our students are accustomed to some degree of academic success. But, problems can sneak up. This happens to everyone — even people who appear to have everything figured out. The people in your life want you there regardless of how successful you are in school or research. And even seemingly insurmountable problems tend to be resolved in time. Give yourself the opportunity to see what the next chapter is,” says Klein.

**The 95 Percent**

While the suicide statistics are alarming, there is an encouraging one: 95 percent of people who attempt suicide and get help are never suicidal again. And so, Tech’s approach of rallying all members of the campus community to get behind this cause increases the outlets and opportunities for individuals to get help.

Eighty percent of students who take their life on a college campus never walk into the doors of a counseling center. They never seek help,” says Currie. “I can’t reach 26,000 students, but, through training, we can all be the eyes and ears for the counseling center.”

Klein spoke of one central channel to be used when serving as those “eyes and ears”: the Dean of Students Office.

“I always encourage fellow faculty members who are concerned about a student to contact this office — and I’d encourage students to do the same. The Dean of Students website has an excellent and easy-to-use reporting tool (referral.studentlife.gatech.edu).”

Klein also went on to suggest that talking directly to the person who seems to be struggling is important.

“If it turns out to be nothing serious, at least you showed that you care.” — Ben Klein

“You should not be afraid to express your concerns to the person,” he says. “Don’t worry about embarrassment! You want to err on the side of taking it seriously. If it turns out to be nothing serious, at least you showed that you care. The worst feeling after an incident like this is the feeling that you could have done more.”

**The Tech Difference**

But calling on the entire community — versus relying solely on the experts — to actively work against suicidality isn’t the only way in which Tech Ends Suicide Together is different from similar initiatives at other universities. For a campus of its size, Tech has traditionally been below the national average of one student suicide per year, but the Institute has taken a stance that simply being below the national average just won’t do. “Most often, success is measured by being below the national average,” says Currie. “At Tech, we are wanting to move from prevention to elimination. Any death at all is unacceptable. We’re moving away from the data, and wanting to support our community in preventing any loss of life.”

In putting herself out there as part of that support, Phillips has this to say to others who may be in a support role: “People who helped me the most were those who didn’t judge me and were there just to listen. They offered me options and solutions but didn’t present them in a way like I had no choice — because a person like that is already feeling trapped and judged, so it’s important to open doors for them but they have to make the choice to walk through those doors.”

And for those actually facing the choice of walking through those doors, Phillips wants them to know: “Saying you’re suicidal isn’t a permanent thing about you. It’s stigmatized because it seems like a weakness, but it’s no more so than any other type of sickness that brings you close to death, like cancer. These are things you experience in life, and if you survive it, then you’re a survivor. You can be in this state of mind and come back from it.”

Learn more about Tech Ends Suicide Together at endsuicide.gatech.edu

**ARTS & CULTURE**

Through March 30

An exhibition of the work of designer Santiago Calatrava combines architecture, sculpture, art, and engineering in the Flex Space of the Candler Building. space.gatech.edu/calatrava

**MISCELLANEOUS**

Feb. 9

The Graduate Student Government Association, Center for Career Discovery and Development, and the Center for Teaching and Learning host the Career, Research, and Innovation Development Conference from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on the Third Floor, Student Center. Graduate students will hear from qualified experts in a range of field and compete for $60,000 in awards at a research showcase.

sgc.gatech.edu/cridc-2017

Feb. 15

The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts Jay Curran, president and chief executive officer of Hands On Atlanta, at 4:30 p.m. in the LeCraw Auditorium, Scheller College of Business.

scheller.gatech.edu/impact

Feb. 22

The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts Todd Blethen, Georgia Tech athletics director, at 4:30 p.m. in the LeCraw Auditorium, Scheller College of Business.

scheller.gatech.edu/impact

Feb. 28

The Center for the Study of Women, Science, and Technology (WST) presents its 2017 Distinguished Lectures Lecture with Alex M. Agogino, Ronnie and Elizabeth Hughes Chair in Mechanical Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley. Agogino will discuss Design for Social Impact: Gender and Ethnic Equity Participation in STEM at 4 p.m. in the Clary Theatre, Bill Moore Student Success Center. Reception to follow.

wst.gatech.edu
academic units.

To support class schedulers and the campus community, as these changes begin, the Registrar’s Office has developed a comprehensive website that explains the processes, procedures, scheduling-grid templates, and other details for the scheduling process. Found at c.gatech.edu/schedulinginfo, the site contains information on final exam guidelines, requests for off-grid class scheduling, and requests for common final examinations. In addition, the Registrar’s Office has established a new email address for questions, comments, and concerns about class scheduling: scheduling@registrar.gatech.edu.

Realignment of Classroom Scheduling Functions

Effective Feb. 1, all functions related to the scheduling of classrooms will be managed by the Registrar’s Office. The move consolidates academic classroom-scheduling processes formerly managed by Capital Planning and Space Management with other related functions that have been managed by the Registrar’s Office. The change will enable a more holistic, efficient, and effective process.

The consolidated scheduling duties will be managed by a new officer, the assistant registrar for academic scheduling. The person filling that role will publish and manage course-scheduling protocols, classroom assignments for each term, and academic events, and enforce all policies and procedures around current and forthcoming policy changes. The position is currently posted, and applicants are being reviewed.

“The approach to academic scheduling was always a broader set of functions that, while interconnected, were managed out of different units,” said Registrar Reta Piotrowski. “This change establishes a team within the Registrar’s Office that supports the wider range of activities and enables an ongoing review of policies and business practices to ensure that the needs of the academic units and students are foremost in the decision-making process.”

Other Recommendations

A permanent advisory committee that includes faculty from all six colleges — as well as other administrators involved in classroom scheduling — will be established to help the registrar on all related issues and to handle exceptions and other matters. The committee will work in close collaboration with the Institute Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, Institute Graduate Curriculum Committee, and Student Regulations Committee. This structure ensures faculty involvement and oversight of the process and policies. In the interim, Professor Joe Hughes and Steven Gurandot, the task force co-chairs, are working closely with the Registrar’s Office as these changes roll out.

Finally, a technology audit is underway to assess potential technology investments that support class scheduling, registration, and related analytics. A scheduling tool for students is also under development. This tool, once implemented in the next few months, would help students and faculty from all six colleges — as well as other professionals in the nonacademic units and students — to more efficiently and effectively handle exceptions and to oversee these assessment activities will ensure a focused, centralized effectiveness strategy moving forward.”

Two councils will also be established in support of the mission of the OAE. The Faculty Council for Accreditation will comprise the faculty leads charged with accreditation in each of the academic units and will be co-chaired by the associate provost for academic effectiveness and the assistant vice president for Institutional Research and Enterprise Data Management, Sandi Bramblett. Additionally, a Council for Assessment will consist of assessment professional staff from academic units, as well as assessment professionals in the nonacademic units and Institutional Research and Planning. The councils will serve as opportunities for collaboration, sharing of best practices, and standard setting for quality and consistency across the Institute.

A search committee is currently working to fill the new associate provost position, and a search to fill the vacant director of assessment position will follow.

New Office of Academic Effectiveness to Focus on Assessment, Accreditation

SUSIE IVY

INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

As of Feb. 1, a reorganization inside the Office of the Provost officially established the new Office of Academic Effectiveness (OAE), a move that shifts academic assessment, academic programming review and planning, and accreditation duties into a stand-alone office reporting directly to the provost.

The reorganization centralizes the coordination and oversight of these initiatives and is part of an overall academic-effectiveness strategy devised after the Institute’s Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACSCOC) reaffirmation of accreditation last year. The OAE will be led by the associate provost for academic effectiveness — a new position — who will work with and support the academic leadership and administrative units on items including SACSCOC requirements and reporting, program accreditation, Course Instructor Opinion Survey, assessment of student learning outcomes, Academic Progress Rates, new program development, and long-term planning.

The partnership and dedication of many — including Dean Catherine Murray-Rust and the library staff, and Sandi Bramblett and her Administration and Finance colleagues — helped to expertly carry us through the recent monitoring and reporting requirements,” said Rafael L. Bras, provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs and the K. Harrison Brown Family Chair. “The recent reaffirmation process revealed opportunities for improvement. Having dedicated staff to oversee these assessment activities will ensure a focused, centralized effectiveness strategy moving forward.”

“Each of the team members plays a critical role to make this happen each year. I definitely could not have done it without them.”

Members of the Campaign Support Team are: Lynn Durham, Office of the President; Dan Taylor, Division of Student Life; Greg Pridgen, Information Technology Group – Campus Services; Amelia Pavlik, Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development; Jeffrey Coleman, Office of Information Technology; Bill Georgia; Printing and Copying Services; and Tammy Benjamion, Office of the Provost. Learn more about the Charitable Campaign and Tech’s efforts at charitable.gatech.edu.

“Charitable, from page 1

Georgia Tech has received the Governor’s Cup for having the highest contribution per employee of the state institution in its division. The Governor’s Cup, which goes to the university with the highest percentage of giving for a one-year period, is determined on a percentage of the total annual salary.

West was part of the Campaign leadership team that included: Christopher Burke from the Office of Government and Community Relations as co-chair for operations; Bill Todd from the Scheller College of Business as co-chair for ambassadors, and Sheri Russell from the Pediatric Technology Center as program and operations support.

“I am so appreciative to the whole Charitable Campaign team,” West said.

Items for sale: Three cream-colored comforter sets, 100% cotton, with matching pillow cases, $350.

10BR/18A condo for rent. Amenities: pool, gym, secure gated parking, 24-hour concierge, on-site laundry, Walking distance to Tech and MARTA. $1,500/mo all utilities included. Call or text 404-822-6056.

Adapting for all at least three issues in the order in which they are received. Submit your 25-word-or-less ad to editor@comm.gatech.edu.