**New Engineering Dean: ‘I love complex problems’**

Steve McLaughlin Shares Goals, Challenges of Shaping Tomorrow’s Engineers

MICHAE BAXTER  
GEORGIA TECH ALUMNI MAGAZINE

President G.P. “Bud” Peterson disembarks an autonomous bus at Ponce City Market on Sept. 14. Georgia Tech has been working with the city of Atlanta since 2015 to design, implement, and study Smart Cities initiatives. “The North Avenue Smart Corridor represents a triumph of innovation and collaboration between the City of Atlanta, Georgia Tech, and numerous businesses,” Peterson said. “By collecting and analyzing data and traffic patterns in the area immediately adjacent to our campus, our students, faculty, and staff can partner with the city to create a safer and more efficient place to live, work, and play.” Tech is also partnering with the City of Atlanta on a Smart Cities Speaker Series at City Hall. Learn more at c.gatech.edu/smartcities.

Steve McLaughlin, president of Techmasters, speaks at the group’s meeting on Sept. 14.

**Mastering Communication, Leadership with Techmasters**

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impromptu speaking in my job, and I wanted to feel more comfortable and have that come through in my presentation style,” said Clemmons, who now serves as president of Techmasters. Clemmons also uses her speaking skills outside of work by leading a running club, giving motivational speeches, and hosting a noncommercial radio show. “I wanted a place to get more comfortable in front of crowds and where I could practice putting together speeches.”

Toastmasters is an international organization with materials, guides, and resources related to public speaking. Participants can work through the curriculum, which gives certain types of speeches on certain topics, at their own pace. The 90-minute meetings begin with table topics, where a subject prompt is given and attendees can give short extemporaneous talks about the topic, usually around 45-60 seconds. The meetings then move to prepared speeches, where club members give speeches of around 5 to 10 minutes.

For Clemmons, who first attended a meeting in 2015, the welcoming environment kept her coming back almost immediately. “That’s what got me to join so quickly,” she said. “Even though it’s early in the morning, you feel productive and are accomplishing something in a fun way. I always tell people, since you can win trophies for prepared speeches, you could win a trophy before a lot of people are even up in the morning.”

Toastmasters International provides a manual of 10 speeches to work through, each building off the previous. The manual has members learn speaking skills such as how to cut to the chase, manage body language, and use vocal variety. “It’s very informal and self-paced,” said Molly Croft, executive director of development for the College of Engineering and a long-time Techmasters member.

An evaluation period at the end of each meeting lets those who presented prepared speeches get feedback on their delivery. A collective vote also gives recognition — and possibly a trophy — to the standout of the week.
VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

As the Institute prepares to celebrate retiring employees with the annual retirement dinner at the end of the month, The Whistle caught up with a few former employees to see how they are adjusting to life after Tech.

Maggie and Frank Lamia worked at Georgia Tech for 17 and 16 years, respectively, before retiring last spring. Maggie was a financial manager for CEISMC, then for OIT, and was with the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering at retirement. Frank was in Facilities Design and Construction the whole time, and retired as associate director of construction administration. They left Atlanta for the beautiful sunsets of Fairhope, Alabama, a city on the bay across from Mobile and 45 minutes from Gulf Shores and Orange Beach.

And they’re loving every minute of it. “Every day is Saturday. It does kind of diminish the importance of Friday night,” Maggie said. “But, I’ll take it.”

She describes their new home of Fairhope as “Decatur on steroids.”

“It’s a small town, larger than downtown Decatur, and has everything Decatur has to offer – just more of it,” she said.

Frank said, “The people here are very friendly, and there’s a nice vibe,” with Maggie adding, “They’re even nice at the DMV.”

They play golf once a week, and Maggie has scored a hole-in-one. When asked about her skill level as a golfer she said, “I have the equipment to play golf, and sometimes I get lucky.”

They also volunteer at St. Vincent De Paul’s food pantry, and they have time to do their own housekeeping and yard work now.

“That’s different,” said Maggie, remembering how they paid others to handle their household chores in Atlanta. “It was nice coming home to a clean house and the lawn already cut. Now we do all of that ourselves, and we find it therapeutic.”

They also have time for Frank to focus more on painting watercolors, something he has done as a hobby for many years, quietly stashing away paintings here and there. Now, his hobby has become a new job, of sorts, for the couple. Frank paints, and Maggie helps support the endeavor.

“I’m a toter,” she joked. “I help load stuff.”

“Joking aside, the new venture is working. ‘We’ve got some paintings in a gallery in downtown Fairhope, and we’ve sold some pieces there,’” Frank said. “ ‘We’re going to be in an arts festival in Daphne, Alabama, next weekend.’

Remembering Georgia Tech

During their years at Georgia Tech, Maggie and Frank each worked on a variety of programs. But, certain jobs immediately come to mind. For Maggie, as a financial manager, it is end of year close-out.

“Budget amendments were always an interesting time,” she said. “You basically use your pool of money to cover your expenses. With everything so fluid, it gets kind of hairy at the end of the year. You’re trying to close out the books, but the Institute is still moving forward.”

For Frank, the project he recalls is the creation of the Fifth Street Bridge over the Downtown Connector, linking Tech Square to the main campus.

“That project stands out because of the logistical challenges,” Frank said. “We had to keep the bridge open the whole time. We couldn’t shut down the existing bridge because that would have choked off access to Tech Square, and we had classes over there. Everyone would have had to detour all the way around to 10th Street or North Avenue to get there, and that wasn’t going to work.

The bridge had to be built in halves. They demolished one half of the bridge at a time, keeping the other half open to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The freeway beneath never closed the entire time, as a park-like setting was being constructed above.

“It was just an amazing project, logistically speaking, to be able to do that over such a busy interstate highway,” he said. “The end product is fabulous.”

Frank and Maggie keep in touch with friends from Atlanta, and their children come to visit. Maggie’s son and daughter have been to see them in Fairhope. Frank’s son, who is in the military, just returned to the states; they’re looking forward to a visit from him.

“We miss the Georgia Tech community and the wonderful people we got to work with,” Frank said. “We both had nice careers at Tech, love everybody there, and made really good friends.”

Working after Retirement

For some, retirement means having time for family, travel, hobbies, and more work. That’s certainly the case for Marie Thursby.

Marie Thursby hikes in Joshua Tree National Park in 2016.

Thursby, Regents Professor Emeritus in the Scheller College of Business, retired last fall after 15 years at Georgia Tech. But retirement doesn’t mean she has slowed down.

At the moment, she is in Passau, Germany, working on a research paper with a co-author. She also recently presented another paper at a conference of scientists and social scientists in Geneva, and she made a research stop in Amsterdam.

After retiring, she left Atlanta to be closer to family.

“My husband and I moved to Nashville, Tennessee, for our grandchildren,” Thursby said. “It is great to be close to the younger part of the family. I also introduced a small version of my TI-GER program (Technological Innovation: Generating Economic Results) to Vanderbilt University.”

In addition to traveling and continuing to work, Thursby’s retirement includes indulging in hobbies.

“We’ve met lots of new friends, and I am exploring taking up pianoing, which I did before economics,” she said. “Love and miss Tech, but life is great after retirement.”

Events

• The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts Jenny Levison, founder of Atlanta’s Souper Jenny restaurants, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in Room 100, Scheller College of Business.

• The Staff Council hosts a general meeting from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Orcement Room, Student Center.

• The Georgia Tech Faculty Women’s Club hosts an open house from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at O’Church [1197 Peachtree Street]. Wives and partners of faculty and administrators and all women faculty and administrators are invited to learn more about the group.

• Postdoctoral fellows present their research at the 4th annual Postdoctoral Research Symposium from noon to 5:30 p.m. at the Petit Institute.

• The Institute for Information Security Technology and Privacy hosts the 15th annual Cybersecurity Summit from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Georgia Tech Research Institute Conference Center.

• The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts Adam Zimmerman, vice president of marketing for the Atlanta Braves, from 4:30 to 6 p.m. in LeCraw Auditorium, Scheller College of Business.

• The IMPACT Speaker Series hosts the University of North Carolina at Bobby Dodd Stadium. Game time is TBA, but discounts are available with code FASSTAFF at ramblinwreck.com/promo

For a more comprehensive listing of events, or to add your own, visit calendar.gatech.edu.
Sights of Tech: Faculty and Staff Art Exhibit on display through Oct. 2 in the Ferst Center for the Arts.

The Office of the Arts received 86 entries from active faculty and staff campuswide. All submissions were reviewed and juried, and 36 were selected for the show. Now, visitors can vote for their favorite, and the winner will receive the People’s Choice Award.

The idea for a faculty and staff art show stemmed from the popularity of the Clough Art Crawl, an annual student art showcase. “As the Office of the Arts, we try to promote and provide opportunities for the entire campus to get involved in the arts,” said Blake Bedford, marketing specialist with the Office of the Arts.

See some of the works below, and visit the Ferst Center for the Arts Gallery during regular business hours to see the full exhibit.