President Talks about Challenges, Opportunities at Institute Address

KRISTEN BALEY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

President G.P. “Bud” Peterson addressed the campus Thursday, Aug. 30, in his 10th Annual Institute Address, identifying both the challenges facing Georgia Tech and the people, programs, and facilities that are the foundation of the Institute.

Nearly 400 students, faculty, and staff gathered for the annual Institute Address, filling Room 152 of Clough Commons and overflowing into the room next door. The event was also streamed online.

Peterson began by introducing some of the new appointments to senior-level positions including Chaouki Abdallah, the incoming executive vice president for

New Counseling Director Talks Data, STEM Students, and Technology

MICHAEL HAGEARTY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

The child of an engineer, Carla Bradley learned the power of data to persuade early on, when she surveyed her grade-school classmates in order to make the case to her parents for a larger allowance. That early success brought with it an appreciation for evidence-based approaches to problem solving.

She joined Georgia Tech in July as its new director for the Counseling Center, which provides mental health services and support to Tech’s student population. A licensed psychologist with a doctorate in clinical psychology, Bradley has spent the last 16 years at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

“I am thrilled to be at a STEM school where there’s a real dedication to solving problems and helping the world,” she said. “To be surrounded by this kind of intellectual energy and passion is a real privilege, and I want to work with students in any way I can to make the Counseling Center a place of innovation and service.”

Bradley sat down for an interview to share her enthusiasm for collaboration, her thoughts on technology-based options for mental health, and approaches for serving all students in need of support.

You are currently pursuing a master’s degree in Engineering Management. What was your motivation to begin and what interests you about the connections between engineering and psychology?

It began when my former institution initiated a merger between the two counseling centers on campus. As a result, I began to ask: ‘How does organizational change best occur?’ ‘What’s good management?’ ‘What’s good leadership?’ These were just philosophical questions that were in my head; when I expressed them to a colleague she told of a program offered in the School of Engineering. I never connected the idea of engineering to management, but the experience has been wonderful. My dad’s a retired engineer, so I speak a little bit of this language.

I think the connection between STEM and psychology is that psychology is trying to become increasingly clear about what ails people and what helps people, with an evidentiary basis to our problem-solving efforts. I like the engineering approach for solving problems: Identify an issue, understand the nature of the problem, and find solutions that make people’s lives easier. That’s a fundamental connection between what engineers do and what mental health professionals do.

I’ve heard from some students that a major reason they are excited to work with you is because of your plans for collaboration with existing resources. Can you share some of your early ideas in this regard?

Transit Passes Just Got Cheaper

If you take transit or want to consider it, discounted passes are now even less expensive through Parking and Transportation Services. See rates and sign up for payroll deduction at:

pts.gatech.edu/metro-transit

Retirees to Be Honored This Month

Georgia Tech’s annual Retirement Dinner will honor retirees from fiscal year 2018 on Thursday, Sept. 27, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. in the Bill Moore Student Success Center. All employees are invited to attend, and registration is $25. Learn more at:

c.gatech.edu/retirement

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Faculty Women’s Club Opens Membership to All Employees

The Georgia Tech Faculty Women’s Club (GTFWC) was originally formed as a social group for wives of male faculty members. When faculty began to include women, membership opened up to female faculty members. Now, the group is opening itself to all Georgia Tech employees.

Last spring, a special committee of the GTFWC, led by Lynne Wepler, was formed to reevaluate the existing definition of membership, and to make recommendations for possible changes. As part of this process, the committee researched best practices at similar universities around the country. Their final recommendation was to amend the by-laws of the GTFWC to more closely align with Georgia Tech’s culture of inclusivity, and with the current practices of other major universities and institutes of higher learning.

In short, the committee recommended that anyone who supports the mission and vision of Georgia Tech, and who embraces the GTFWC’s core mission of friendship, service, and scholarship, can become a member.

The board of directors of the GTFWC unanimously approved the proposed changes. Following this, the general membership of the GTFWC voted, and also resoundingly approved.

What this means for the Tech community is simply this: Anyone with an interest in joining the GTFWC is now able to. Members can participate in annual events, such as the Fall Open House, Holiday Party, and Spring Luncheon, as well as participate in a host of Special Interest Groups, which include day and night book clubs, French and Spanish conversation groups, lunch groups, and a host of others.

The club has been active since its first iteration in the 1920s and offers activities that draw community members together for friendship and shared passions and interests. The club exists to promote the values of friendship, service, and scholarship. Community service activity projects are ongoing, and every year, scholarships are awarded to Georgia Tech students with a parent who is employed at Georgia Tech.

Annual membership is $50. To join, download an application form at gtfwc.gatech.edu. Any questions can be directed to gtfwc1921@gmail.com.

The opening event for the 2018-19 year will be an Open House at Barcelona Wine Bar – Westside Ironworks on Sept. 26 from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. RSVP to gtfwc1921@gmail.com by Sept. 20 to attend.

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Research who begins Sept. 4. He then addressed the ethics-related news and concerns head-on.

“Georgia Tech has been in the news, and it has not been good,” he said, referring to reviews released in July detailing conflicts of interest and misuse of funds by high-ranking employees. Those reviews came in response to employer submissions to Ethicpoint, Tech’s anonymous reporting tool for ethics concerns. In addition to being shared on Georgia Tech’s news site and via email from President Peterson, external media also reported on the violations.

Peterson took responsibility for what has happened under his leadership, and vowed to fix it.

“If we have been embarrassed, and I’m sure you have been embarrassed,” he said. He reviewed some of what has already been done to address ethics concerns, such as adjustments to Tech’s organizational structure. That includes having an interim vice president for Ethics, Compliance, and Legal Affairs reporting directly to the president.

An email to the campus on Aug. 20 shared a report Peterson prepared for University System of Georgia Chancellor Steve Wrigley, detailing the progress made so far and what’s underway.

Peterson also talked about how Georgia Tech is working with the University of North Georgia’s BB&T Center for Ethical Leadership, which will administer a campus-wide ethics survey in September to ask for feedback on the Institute’s ethical culture and how comfortable members of the community feel in reporting concerns.

He continued by emphasizing some of the exceptional people, programs, and facilities at Georgia Tech. He recognized Donald “DJ” Jordan, a fourth-generation descendent. Peterson also announced that our Facilities Management Group was recently awarded the 2018 APPA Award for Excellence, which is the highest honor in higher education for outstanding achievements in facilities management. “We appreciate everything you all do to keep our facilities running and keep us operating,” he said.

“With the chance to change the culture here, and improve it.”

— President Peterson

Peterson noted other highlights from the past year, including work from the Commission on Creating the Next in Education, the expansion of resources for cell manufacturing, and construction projects that are underway or soon will be.

He concluded his address with an update on the work of A Path Forward — Together, which was initiated nearly a year ago after Tech student Scout Schultz was fatally shot by a campus police officer. The shooting and its aftermath led to the creation of several action teams to recommend improvements for student mental health, campus culture, and LGBTQ community support.

Nearly 200 recommendations came out of the initial action team meetings, which were then grouped into three focus areas and dispersed to those on campus who would lead implementation. Among these are an intake center for student mental health, an expanded LGBTQ Resource Center, and the inaugural
One of the biggest challenges in collegiate mental health today is what I’ve referred to as the “flow and volume problem.” We have a greater volume of students seeking services across the nation than we historically have, and this volume creates a difficulty with serving students as rapidly as they would like to be served and as rapidly as we would like to serve them. I am interested in what engineering might be able to offer in terms of a collaboration. We know these engineering principles have been effective for improving volume and flow problems in hospitals through the use of queuing theory, for example.

What role does data play?

Data plays a prominent role in the analysis of college mental health at the national level. There are several large-scale, collaborative efforts across the nation, and data feeds into them. From this data bank, we can tell how our student concerns compare to those at the national level. The top three concerns at Georgia Tech — depression, anxiety, and relationship concerns — are very consistent with what’s happening nationally. For Tech students, it’s a particular type of intense pressure around grades, as well as notions of accomplishment and success that I think are different from [students in] other parts of the country.

A lot of students express that they feel uncomfortable walking into the counseling center or picking up the phone. What are your thoughts on how counseling across the country might adapt in the next 10 years to engage young people who are most comfortable when using modern technology while also ensuring proper care?

There are ways in which technology is already playing a greater role in mental health. There are apps students can use to self-monitor behavior across sessions. There are applications for helping students explore stress management or temper anxiety. All of that is good. I think the problem that we don’t have enough data about yet is that most of our information comes through non-verbal channels. When we sit with another person, we’re getting a lot of data that we can’t necessarily put into words, yet is still being registered somewhere within our physiology. We really don’t yet know how much of that information can resonate via technology.

And within questions of that type there are wonderful opportunities for research into how technology can facilitate exchanges with our blossoms and our physiology. For instance, I imagine within the next decade or so we could have functional holographic representations of ourselves that can be transmitted in real-time into the same space, like a classroom or consulting room.

Once we’re technologically able to do that we can begin to learn how much of the approximately 70 percent of information transfer that occurs nonverbally between human bodies occupying the same space might be able to be transmitted through holographic representation. Holographic imagery and non-verbal communication is just one example of the fascinating questions that emerge when we begin to talk about the interface of human psychology and technology. Another fascinating question is how the use of technology may be changing our brains in ways we can’t yet really measure. What might such changes mean for our future as a species?

While there are multiple current ways of interfacing, I don’t think we clearly know yet the level of effectiveness for these technological solutions. We mental health professionals need to know much more about how to select and utilize the best that technology has to offer in order to meet the needs of our clients.

What approaches have you found to be effective in helping to break down the cross-cultural barriers for students who may benefit from mental health services? How do we engage them as equal partners in improving mental health on campus?

One of the programs we offer here is Let’s Talk, where a staff member will go out into the campus community at various locations and be available for a non-clinical conversation. It’s not therapy per se, but it’s an opportunity to meet students where they are, both geographically and culturally.

That’s just one aspect of the Counseling Center’s broad outreach component. We’re contacted fairly frequently to provide support to the campus community. All of our counselors are trained for sensitivity to issues of diversity and inclusion. We want to keep in mind how we can best serve the interests of a broad range of people.

What about underrepresented minorities? Are there any special considerations here?

At a recent staff meeting, one of our counselors presented statistics about differences that we need to be thinking about: Are we being sensitive to the student when we inquire about gender identity? How are we supporting students who hold a particular faith? What about sexual orientation, or racial and ethnic differences?

Our data, then, informs this questioning process. We use it to assess who we are currently serving, and ask ourselves: “Do we need to do anything differently to ensure we are reaching all students who could benefit from our services?”

I know I’m coming to Tech in the wake of a powerful focus on mental health. I take that very seriously. I know the campus has been through a lot. And that’s by no means lost on the staff at the Counseling Center. I’m aware that my staff has been through a tough year in which the tragedy that occurred was deeply felt by campus mental health professionals and by the entire campus community. I am grateful to have come on board to lead an incredibly dedicated, talented, and altruistic staff who care deeply for our campus community. It’s vital to remember that part of the grief our campus experienced came out of respect and concern for people who are disenfranchised in our larger society.

I believe the will and heart of this campus is to embrace everyone. That type of inclusivity is just one of the many reasons I’m so delighted to be here at Georgia Tech.
BACK IN ACTION

It’s only been two weeks of fall classes, but campus life has picked up full-steam with events, openings, and the arrival of thousands of new students. Take a look at just a few scenes from recent campus happenings.

(1) Shane Jacobeen, a graduate student in physics, addresses incoming graduate students at the inaugural Graduate Student Convocation on Aug. 29. (2) Buzz welcomes graduate students to McCamish Pavilion for the Convocation event. (3) Sinet Adous, a neuroscience major and student speaker at New Student Convocation, smiles with her dad at the event on Aug. 19. (4) Georgia Tech Football resumed practice in August to prepare for the 2018 season, which opened on Sept. 1 against Alcorn State. (5) Students were able to get free T-shirts during the picnic event. (6) Graduate students enjoy a picnic hosted by the Graduate Student Government Association, which took place in McCamish Pavilion because of inclement weather, following the Convocation ceremony. (7) A first-year student fills out her RAT Cap during New Student Convocation on Aug. 19. (8) Genevieve Onyiuke-Kennedy, an international affairs major, speaks at the opening of the new LGBTQIA Resource Center on Aug. 23. The center is now located on the first floor of the Smithgall Student Services (Flag) Building.

REAL ESTATE/ROOMMATES

Room available in 2BR/1BA apt. located 1.5 mi. north of campus. Rent $550/month, electric typically $30/mo., internet $25/mo. Contact ztowner6@gatech.edu.

Beautiful 4BR/3BA house, 2300 sq. ft., easy access to Emory/CDC/Georgia Tech. Hardwood floors, open floor plan, many windows. 0.5 acres top-of-the-hill lot, trees/ View. Sought-after Oak Grove Elementary School district. Wonderful neighborhood. Minutes to I-85/285, shops, restaurants. Contact pklesnicak@gmail.com. 404-984-3978.

Affordable 2BR/1BA apt in Buckhead/Peachtree Hills. Spacious apartment, 5-min. walk to Lindbergh MARTA. Quiet garden community. $1,500/mo. including water, gas heat, cable. Furnishing available. Contact Matt, m商量ntaproperty@gmail.com.

For rent: 2BR/1BA furnished apartment suite in private North Buckhead home, available Aug. 12. 12-minute walk to Buckhead MARTA station or 15- to 20-minute drive to campus. $1,100/mo. Email newsletter@gmail.com.

For rent: 1BR apartment w/ own bathroom and shared kitchen in Stone Mountain. $500 plus utilities. Call 770-262-0566.

For rent: 2BR/1BA apartment in Johns Creek, North Fulton County. Exceptional neighborhood, close to GA-400, I-85, I-285. $850/mo. rent only, or $1,100/mo. rent and utilities (except AT&T internet). Contact jstarnes3@gatech.edu.

One or two rooms for rent in East Cobb. Each w/ own bathroom. Shared kitchen facilities. $450 for one room or $600 for both. Email bdespy@hotmail.com.

For rent: 1BR/1BA apartment in Home Park, duplex residence. Amenities include: washer/dryer, off-street parking, security system, A/C, ample storage. $925/mo. Contact 404-512-4618.

MISCELLANEOUS

Seeking participants for research study between ages 18–40. Participants should be native speakers of English (from the U.S.), or native speakers of French (from France, Belgium, or Switzerland — European French only). Study will run for 2–3 months beginning in August. Compensation is approximately $12/half-hour and will take place on campus. Contact viola.green@modlangs.gatech.edu.

Free 9-week-old kittens. Two males and one female. The two males are black, female is gray. All have had first visit to vet. Contact pk2@gatech.edu.

Looking for a carpool partner for the daily commute from East Cobb to Tech campus. Email bdespy@hotmail.com.

VEHICLES


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