NOTES FOR DR. G. WAYNE CLOUGH

Board of Regents: Present Undergraduate Learning Center, June 8, 1999

• I'm pleased to have this opportunity to tell you about Georgia Tech's proposed Undergraduate Learning Center. At its most fundamental level, this 225,000 square-foot building addresses pressing needs for undergraduate library resources, classrooms, labs, academic services and student center space. These needs have developed over the past three decades as a result of enrollment growth, program growth and the evolution of a more intensely residential campus environment. Our plans for the center are designed to meet these needs using technology that is presently unfolding and will be strengthened in the next century.

• Over the past 30 years, our student enrollment has grown 75 percent from 8,000 to 14,000. According to our enrollment plan, we are slated to grow to 15,000 students by 2004. This past year our freshman class was our largest in our history. In the face of a record
number of applications for freshman and transfer admissions this year, we will see increased enrollments again next year, on the order of 100 to 200 more students.

- Within the overall increase in enrollment, growth in graduate enrollment has been especially dramatic, from less than 1,400 in 1969 to more than 3,600 today. With the development of new graduate degrees and the addition of mission-specific programs like bioengineering and the history of technology, we have doubled our academic degree offerings in the past 30 years. The new degree offerings have created a demand for additional library holdings.

- During the course of these increases in enrollment and degree programs, our library space has remained unchanged. The newest wing of our library building is now 31 years old, and its size and capabilities have fallen well behind of our needs. They are far short of what will be required to serve an even larger student body in 2004. The old library badly needs to be renovated, but space is so tight and
asbestos removal so complicates any plans, we have not been able to do it.

* Our student center was built shortly after our library and suffers many of the same problems. The existing student center is under the double stress of general enrollment growth plus an increase in students living on campus. We now have only half the student center space of other universities with similar enrollments.

* We are also struggling because most of our undergraduate classrooms and labs are located in old buildings, built more than 50 years ago when technology was not a consideration. They are neither configured nor retrofitted for the technology-based courses we are now developing.

* Our proposed Undergraduate Learning Center will help us meet the pressing space needs I described, but we are coming at this from an "out of the box" perspective, looking to create a facility that will take
full advantage of new generation technology. It represents a new approach to education that blends academic and library space with co-curricular and academic support services to create a comprehensive, collaborative learning environment enhanced by networked, interactive technology.

* At your April meeting in Savannah, Sir John Daniel made the point that technology always involves people. The need to create a technology-based, inter-active community of learners who have the ability to work in teams has been clearly articulated to us by our two key constituents – students and the companies who hire them. Our students come to us already knowledgeable and adept in technology, and they expect to use and improve their skills. Technology defines the companies that hire them after they graduate, and they have expressed their expectations that Georgia Tech become a leader in the use of educational technology while teaching students to work in teams.
The ULC will be a central facility to help us capitalize on three major initiatives we have already undertaken, and in the process, create one of the nation's first fully networked community of learners. The first initiative I am referring to is our high speed campus-wide computer network called Futurenet, which was built over the last four years and brought to every residence hall and Greek living unit. On campus, every faculty member and student has access to FutureNet through direct connection. Off campus access to FutureNet is provided by modem. FutureNet means we are a fully wired campus, although many of our older classrooms are not equipped to take advantage of it.

The second initiative of the three I referred to is the requirement put in place in 1997 that all entering undergraduate students would have a computer system that would connect with FutureNet. This was done so that our students and faculty could be guaranteed individual access to FutureNet at any time and place, including their living quarters.
The third initiative of the three is a thorough overhaul of our curriculum and how we deliver it. Our faculty have now redesigned more than 200 on-campus courses to utilize computer networks to deliver materials and to facilitate student interaction. We are also on track to have three or more degree programs ready for internet delivery by the year 2001.

These three initiatives, FutureNet, required computing systems, and a new curriculum have us well on the way to creating our technology-based community of learners. The ULC is a significant part of the last phase of this task, namely, creating a central facility to contain an array of new state-of-the-art classrooms and group meeting rooms that allow delivery of classes and group project work between faculty and students at any time and any place on campus. Now, you might be already thinking ahead of me and understanding that since a campus poses no boundary on electronic information transfer, the ULC will also be a vehicle to allow delivery of internet-based courses to any other location we choose. For example, we can use it as a
delivery point for courses to supplement those offered in our GTREP program in Savannah or Statesboro. In this way, we can provide advanced offerings that otherwise would not be available to the south Georgia-based students for many years. The ULC facilities will also allow students in Savannah and Statesboro to work interactively with their Atlanta-based colleagues on projects outside of class.

- Beyond interactive classrooms, the ULC will address our need for library space. Because for some time into the future, historic information, documents of record, and books will continue to exist in hard copy, the ULC will include some stack space. But the primary focus of the library resources in this new facility will be on the human and interactive aspects of library resources, both through technology and by providing meeting space for team research projects. Importantly, the ULC will give us the elbow room we need to better use the existing space in the old library. With the ULC in place, one of the first priorities will be to clear out significant sections of the old library so it can be renovated.
• The Undergraduate Learning Center will also be a facility that includes space for academic support for our undergraduates, including programs such as cooperative education, study abroad and community service. This will allow for better use of our present Student Center, which is now overloaded. The ULC will include outlets for food service and casual meeting space to encourage meetings between students and faculty. It is expected to be open on a 24 hour basis.

• The Undergraduate Learning Center has been estimated to cost $46 million, and we propose raising $8 million of this total from private resources. We believe the same alumni and corporations that were willing to support our new curriculum efforts will step forward to help us fulfill this goal.

• The Undergraduate Learning Center is consistent with Georgia Tech’s master plan. Its location was identified in the master plan. It
is right at the heart of campus – beside the existing library, close to the existing student center and in the middle of the existing undergraduate classrooms and labs. This site emphasizes the centrality of the building to the education process.

- As shown on our poster board, the ULC is flanked on the west side by a green space. This is consistent with our master plan which calls for creation of a center of campus that is people-friendly and pedestrian oriented. To complete the plan as shown, the Textiles Building, built in the 1950's, will have to be demolished. This building was identified in our 1996 facilities study as having the highest priority for demolition because of its poor condition. It is presently almost empty, and we will have options to empty it completely soon. We have ample time to demolish it before the construction begins for the ULC.

- In closing, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to share our thoughts about a building that represents a key step in an on-going
process to create a technology-based, people-focused, community of learners, one with a reach far beyond our campus boundaries.