Study names Tech among top technology transfer universities

Megan McRainey
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

Georgia Tech is one of the top universities in the world for technology transfer — bringing technologies from the lab to market — and a top producer of start-up companies, according to a new biotechnology study from the Milken Institute.

Georgia Tech was ranked No. 4 for start-up companies, No. 11 overall for technology transfer and No. 8 for patents filed. Tech also ranked No. 9 in number of patents in 2005, according to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office. While some of the rankings included information on technologies other than biotechnology, biotechnology was a significant portion of the total for each ranking.

Atlanta was also ranked No. 9 among top technology-transfer metro areas in the United States, according to the study.

The study, "Mind to Market: A Global Analysis of University Biotechnology Transfer and Commercialization," shows the position of institutions such as Georgia Tech in the commercialization pipeline, which starts with the quality of research and moves to patented ideas and, finally, to the market.

Based on information gathered in 2004, the study revealed that the United States dominates the top rankings on many key measures, including published research, patents issued and licensing income.

Georgia Tech has a strong reputation for shepherding technology from university research to the commercial market. And as biotechnology began to take hold in the research community, Tech put itself on the frontlines.

Planning guide helps communities assess their walkability, choose pedestrian projects

Jane Sanders
Research News

Though it’s not a prescription to cure obesity or a magic wand to make traffic congestion disappear, the new Georgia Guidebook for Pedestrian Planning does provide detailed directions for administering a healthy dose of help.

The guidebook, developed by researchers at the Georgia Institute of Technology for the Georgia Department of Transportation, helps planners assess their pedestrian environment and prioritize projects to improve it.

Advocates of pedestrian travel say walking can help citizens and communities in numerous ways. It can decrease obesity, and therefore improve public health. Walking can reduce air and noise pollution, as well as traffic congestion and petroleum consumption. It also builds a sense of community. Also, walking requires no special training, and it’s relatively cheap to implement. The guidebook explains how.

“There’s something in the guidebook for everyone — from local, regional and state planners in the beginning stages all the way to the advanced stages of developing pedestrian facilities — and that was our intent," said Associate Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering Adjo Amekudzi, the project’s principal researcher. "It was also important to us that it not be prescriptive. There is not one model that fits all."

Amekudzi and fellow researcher Karen Dixon — a former Georgia Tech associate professor who led the study until she moved to Oregon State University in 2005 — worked with an advisory committee of public and private group stakeholders to establish a vision, and goals and objectives for pedestrian planning in Georgia.

“Georgia must continue to develop pedestrian facilities — which include sidewalks, walkways, crosswalks and shelters — as a viable transportation choice,” Amekudzi said. “We want to make walking for short trips safe and convenient and provide citizens the opportunity to maintain a healthy and active lifestyle. That is our vision.”

Given the number of accidents in Georgia involving both pedestrians and vehicles, safety is a high priority with regard to pedestrian facilities. Amekudzi says. From 2000 to 2003 in Georgia, 8,416 pedestrians were injured, and 624 were killed in collisions with vehicles.

Detailed in the guidebook are four primary goals: enhance safety; create seamless integration of pedestrian

Giving back

Alumni Association Donor Relations Manager Gerri Elder presents the Office of Human Resources with an award for the highest percentage increase in participation to the Faculty/Staff Fund. The Fund is part of the Association’s annual giving program known as Roll Call, which provides funds used for student scholarships and financial aid, faculty recruitment and retention, and new academic programs.
Athletics program gets boost from two donors

Georgia Tech does athletics like no other university. The Institute boasts one of the nation’s top NCAA Division I athletic programs, a unique attribute among technological universities globally renowned for their academic prestige and rigor.

As successful as our student-athletes have been in both their academic and athletic pursuits, the Tech athletics program continues to face some substantial challenges, especially securing the funding required to continue offering the full complement of scholarships allowed by the NCAA.

Thanks to a recent $1 million bequest provision from Deen Day Sanders, an honorary alumna who serves as chairman of the Cecil B. Day Foundation Co., Tech is now in a much stronger position to continue offering the full complement of scholarships allowed by the NCAA, which will help Georgia Tech remain competitive with its ACC and national peers.

Mrs. Sanders, widow of Days Inns of America founder and Tech graduate Cecil B. Day Sr., and wife of Tech alumnus James R. (Jim) Sanders, is a fervent supporter of Tech athletics.

“Deen Day Sanders truly understands the importance of intercollegiate athletics to Georgia Tech’s overall mission,” said Athletics Director Dan Radakovich. “Thanks to Mrs. Sanders’ generosity, our coaching staff will be in a much more competitive position when it comes to recruiting and retaining the most highly skilled athletes who also happen to be among the country’s brightest students.”

In addition to her bequest for athletic scholarships, Mrs. Sanders has also made a $250,000 commitment to support the renovation of the Basketball Practice Facility. This commitment builds upon the momentum stimulated by last year’s commitment to the project from alumnus Stephen Zelnak, a member of the Campaign Georgia Tech Steering Committee. The project will modernize the outdated Freshman Gym and result in a high-quality practice facility for Tech’s men’s basketball team.

“I am so pleased to help provide more scholarships for the talented, hard-working athletes at Tech,” said Mrs. Sanders. “It’s just a wonderful feeling knowing that this support will continue long after I’m gone. Athletics at Tech is a fine tradition and has helped shape so many young people’s lives. I want that tradition to continue for many more years to come. My husband, Jim, supports me in this endeavor.”

David Dorman is spending so much of his time and energy promoting the welfare and future health of Georgia Tech, one might get the impression that he’s on the Institute’s payroll.

A member of the Campaign Georgia Tech Steering Committee, Dorman has served on the Georgia Tech Advisory Board, the Georgia Tech Foundation Board of Trustees, and the Alexander-Tharpe Fund Board of Trustees. He was named a distinguished alumnus of the College of Management last spring.

While his ongoing service to Georgia Tech is invaluable, Dorman’s giving to his alma mater extends far beyond that realm. Recently, Dorman made a $1 million gift to Tech in support of athletics. Dorman’s gift includes an endowment for the golf program, support for a special fund to be used for construction and renovation projects at the discretion of the athletic director, and support for the renovation of the Freshman Gym for a men’s basketball practice facility.

“Our are very grateful to David Dorman for his support of our athletic program,” said Athletics Director Dan Radakovich. "When a leader of his caliber makes such a tremendous investment in our athletes and our program, that’s a strong affirmation that we are providing something very valuable to our student-athletes and to our stakeholders.”

The endowment for the golf team will support golf scholarships and other needs within the nationally recognized program.

“I believe in Georgia Tech’s mission, and I believe in the important role that athletics play in that mission,” said Dorman. “Our student-athletes face the obvious kind of competitive challenges on the playing field, but they also deal with the constant challenge of balancing their academic goals with their athletic endeavors. I think it is important to support them in maintaining that balance because athletic competition is such a fantastic training ground for overcoming all kinds of obstacles they will face in life. Our hard-working and talented student-athletes need and deserve our support.”

A highly regarded veteran of the telecommunications industry, Dorman most recently served as chairman and CEO of AT&T Corp. He previously served as chairman, president, and CEO of Pacific Bell and president of the Business Services Group at Sprint Corp.

Staff honored for professional development

Members of Georgia Tech’s staff packed the Student Center Ballroom last week to celebrate “the value of lifelong learning.”

The luncheon event, sponsored by the Office of Organizational Development, is held every other year to honor those who have completed one of the Institute’s four certificate programs in professional development.

In his opening remarks, Director of Training Lanous Wright noted the growing popularity of the programs — Professional, Supervisory, Management Development and Departmental Financial Management — by citing some numbers: 101 graduates at the inaugural celebration in 2002 compared with 238 graduates for this event.

On behalf of the administration, newly appointed Provost Gary Schuster offered congratulations to the graduates and said professional development of Georgia Tech’s employees was an investment in its future.

Designed and customized based on input from staff, the certificate programs provide a forum for Georgia Tech’s professionals are able to develop critical skills and competencies. Each certificate program partners with on-campus and off-campus experts to provide development that meets the needs of the campus.
Tech alumna Linda Griffith was recently named as one of 25 new MacArthur Fellows for 2006 by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Griffith graduated from Georgia Tech in 1982 with a bachelor’s degree in chemical engineering. Currently, she is director of the Biotechnology Process Engineering Center and professor in the Departments of Biological and Mechanical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

“The award was a huge surprise, and I am incredibly honored — and owe much of the credit to the fantastic environment at Tech when I was an undergraduate,” said Griffith. “Tech fostered independence and rigorous thinking, but in an environment of collegiality and fun. If made engineering seem like a wonderful career — Tech let my inner nerd hang out.”

All MacArthur Fellows were selected for their creativity, originality, and potential to make important contributions in the future. This past week, the recipients learned by a phone call from the Foundation that they will each receive $500,000 in “no strings attached” support over the next five years.

Griffith is a biotechnologist shaping the frontiers of tissue engineering and synthetic regenerative technologies. Her early work focused on designing novel substrates for liver cell cultures to allow pharmacologists to test in vitro constraints of age, place and endeavor. Women and men of all ages and at all career stages of tissue engineering and synthetic regenerative endeavors. Fellowships are awarded to individuals for their creativity, originality, and potential to make important contributions in the future. Each goal in the guidebook correlates to several action items, and the guidebook provides basic planning tools to help achieve these results. “This allows us over time to execute our goals and objectives incrementally to get to the more pedestrian-friendly environment we need in Georgia,” Amekudzi noted.

The 132-page guidebook includes six chapters covering the vision and goals, planning and prioritizing projects, pedestrian facility funding, Georgia pedestrian laws, pedestrian safety and educational strategies, and land-use and zoning policy. It underscores the spirit of freedom intrinsic to creative endeavors. Fellowships are awarded to women and men of all ages and at all career stages; the extraordinary creativity of MacArthur fellows knows neither boundaries nor the constraints of age, place and endeavors.

For more information, visit www.dot.state.ga.us/bikeped/pedestrian_plan.

The work of Beijing artist Zhang Dali in “A Second History,” a photography exhibit on view in the Center’s Westbrook and the Richards Galleries. History,” a photography exhibit on view in the Center’s Westbrook and the Richards Galleries. It examines Chinese propaganda through the Open Seat Matching Program, Small nonprofit organizations in Georgia can now affordably access executive education programs for their professionals, thanks to a new program offered by the Georgia Tech Center for Nonprofits (GCN) in conjunction with Georgia Tech College of Management and Emory University.

Through the Open Seat Matching Program, Georgia Tech and Emory are setting aside spots for employees of 501(c) nonprofit organizations with less than 20 staff members. These small nonprofit organizations provide very valuable services and programs and services to the State of Georgia, says Dan Stotz, director of executive education in Tech’s College of Management. “Our goal is to increase their business acumen and learn new skills that will help them fulfill the mission of their nonprofits.”

The College of Computing has two joint projects with the Atlanta Area School for the Deaf (AASD) that will be featured on the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) children’s program “Maya & Miguel.” The Center for Accessible Technology in Sign (CATS) and CopyCat project, led by Associate Professor Thad Starnes and AASD Media Specialist Harley Hamilton, will air during Deaf Awareness Week, Sept. 24-30.

CATS is dedicated to providing accessibility to learning via sign language. The goal being to enhance language, literacy, and general world knowledge by providing tools that make text, captions, video, web pages, and multimedia accessible to deaf users, particularly children. CopyCat is a sign language tutor designed to augment a deaf child’s classroom experience by encouraging the child to sign and interact with on-screen characters in a fun and engaging way while improving communication skills. For more information about CATS, visit www.aasdweb.org/CATS. For more about CopyCat, visit www.gvu.gatech.edu/ccg/projects/copycat.

In addition to Tech’s existing space for biotech start-ups, the planned Technology Enterprise Park, located just south of Georgia Tech’s Midtown campus, will add space designed specifically for bioscience and technology companies leaving the incubation stage, with flexible space that will allow tenants to expand as needed.

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