Good morning. It is always a pleasure to speak to fellow Rotary members. When I speak to groups such as this, I especially enjoy finding out how many Georgia Tech alumni are in the crowd. Could those of you who attended Georgia Tech please raise your hand?

Thank you. It is nice to know that we are well represented in Rome.

As you would expect, Tech graduates are for the most part, engineers—however our alumni job titles and accomplishments run the gamut from former president of the United States to the comedian best known for his “You Might Be a Redneck If” jokes. From a Nobel Prize winner to the inventor of WD-40, and from an astronaut who has walked on the moon to a commander of a space shuttle.

Regardless of the abilities of our alumni, I realize that not all of you are fans of Georgia Tech. And that’s perfectly fine. The past president of the University of Georgia, Chuck Knapp, is a friend of mine. He often tells the story of how when he was once giving a speech in a thunderstorm, he talked about the bond of friendship between Georgia and Georgia Tech. Well, just as he did so, the thunder boomed and the lights went out.

Chuck Knapp took that to mean God is a Bulldog, but I prefer to think it was His way of telling Chuck that he had been speaking too long! UGA

Wherever you graduated from or wherever your loyalties lie, as a Georgian, the universities within Georgia’s university system belong to you. In fact, you could say that all of the public universities in Georgia are working for you.
Today, I’d like to tell you about my university, Georgia Tech, and exactly what it is we do for you and for Georgia.

The first, and most obvious way we serve Georgia is through the education we provide its students. Recent rankings place Georgia Tech among the top 50 institutions--both public and private in the country. When just public schools are considered, we are ranked among the top 15. In fact, one of the advantages enjoyed by Georgia Tech is that we are a public school with a private school reputation.

Georgia students are able to access this high-quality education at an extremely reasonable rate. Most of our students from Georgia finance their Georgia Tech educational experience through the HOPE Scholarship, and attend Georgia Tech virtually free of charge!

Through education, we improve the quality of life and economic condition for thousands of Georgians. As educators, we reach more than 13,000 students each year. Of that number, almost 65 percent of our undergraduates and more than 29 percent of our graduate students come from Georgia counties. Each year, we accept approximately 80 percent of the applicants from Georgia.

According to current enrollment statistics, Floyd County sends Georgia Tech almost 70 students per year. When you add Floyd’s surrounding counties, that number jumps to more than 100.

Through the university and graduate-level education we provide, we prepare thousands of Georgia students for productive careers. After just four or five years at Georgia Tech, the average management major can expect to enter the workforce and earn around $30,000 a year; the average starting salary for chemical engineering majors is $42,000; and the
average for computer science students is around $40,000. All are very nice salaries—especially for students just out of school!

Continuing education courses are also available; residents of Georgia as well as those from other states can even earn a master’s degree without once setting foot on the Georgia Tech campus.

Through the Economic Development Institute, Georgia Tech also offers StarTech, a satellite distance learning system that provides educational courses in advanced technology and management from 50 of the nation’s leading universities and commercial organizations. So far in 1997, StarTech, has delivered 20 National Technological University programs to some 420 attendees across Georgia, enabling companies and their workers to access needed information, training, and education—without incurring high fees and travel costs.

Here in Rome, NTU classes are delivered in conjunction with Floyd College’s continuing education department. Both can be found in Floyd College’s Heritage Hall.

Although our primary concern will always be education, we have discovered a definite link between providing educational opportunities and bolstering economic growth.

In fact, Georgia Tech was founded to further the economic growth of Georgia. Tech’s foresighted founders looked at a technological institute as a method to lift Georgia out of the economic slump begun during Reconstruction. In a key editorial supporting the need for such an institute in the South, Tech supporter and editor of the Atlanta Constitution Henry Grady predicted: “...the technological school will be recognized ten years from now as the most important factor in the new era
that will open gloriously for Georgia.”

Through the years, Georgia Tech has maintained its commitment to economic prosperity for Georgia. Our commitment has taken many forms. From education as I mentioned earlier to research and economic outreach programs.

The research undertaken by our academic faculty and researchers from the Georgia Tech Research Institute is useful and relevant. Proof can be found in the continuous growth of our research programs as industry and government receive satisfaction from our researchers—and then return for more. In 1996, more than $173 million in extramural research support was generated and our research awards from industry doubled in number from the year before. This is especially significant when you consider that across the country, research support for universities is dwindling.

Many government and industry groups have relocated to Georgia to take advantage of proximity to our research centers and research faculty. Two recent examples are the relocation of Philips Electronics headquarters and the expansion of Lucent Technologies. Both cited Georgia Tech’s research as well as its ability to provide a technically trained workforce as one of the reasons behind their decision.

Inside Georgia Tech, an entire division has been created to encourage economic development in Georgia. Through our innovative Economic Development Institute and its 18 industrial extension offices, we see to it that Georgia’s businesses have access to the information that increases their competitiveness and delivers jobs to our citizens. Formerly known as Georgia Tech’s Industrial Extension Service, EDI is a network of field offices conducting technology transfer, economic development, and technical assistance activities across
Georgia. The very first Industrial Extension Office was founded here in Rome in 1961. Two years ago, that same office also became the first regional office to co-locate with neighboring institute of higher education. Our Rome Economic Development office is now co-located with Floyd College’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) in Heritage Hall. As president of Georgia Tech, I wish I could take credit for this partnership, however it was the leadership of Floyd College President Lynn Cundiff that made it possible.

One of our most active regional offices, during the past year, Georgia Tech's Rome extension services provided over 700 management and technical assists to 270 different organizations in the Rome, northwest GA Area. These organizations include manufacturers, retail and commercial businesses, local and regional governments as well as economic development organizations.

A few examples of this assistance include: facility planning and layout, energy assessments, safety and environmental assessments, productivity improvement, quality systems management and assessments, wage and labor surveys, impact analyses, process improvement, computer and software selection, and human resource development and training.

So, for those of you that thought Georgia Tech was just an Atlanta institution, you can see that we are very definitely committed to the rest of the state as well.

In addition to the field offices, a small unit of EDI, Tech’s Advanced Technology Development Center was founded in 1980 to stimulate the technology base here in Georgia. ATDC is a business incubator that
helps start-up companies get up and running.

Finally, Georgia Tech also helps Georgia through education, industry, and government partnerships. One such partnership that incorporates elements from education, industry, and government is the Georgia Center for Advanced Telecommunications Technology. GCATT’s goals include more jobs for Georgians as well as more dollars for Georgia. Industry experts have estimated those figures at more than 300 jobs for Georgia and more than $9.7 million in increased incomes for Georgia citizens. This year, industry involvement at GCATT increased to more than 100.

Another partnership is the Traditional Industries Research Program. Targeting the food processing, textiles, and pulp and paper industries—industries that have been traditionally strong in Georgia—the partnership works to help Georgia companies in these areas compete in the global economy and meet new environmental and food safety standards. Georgia Tech assists through technological research that helps Georgia companies virtually re-invent themselves to better compete and through our service on the Program’s steering committee.to spend two years at Floyd College and then transfer their credits and attend and graduate from Georgia Tech.

As you can see, there’s much more to Georgia Tech than the solid education we provide. We are also working on a daily basis to improve the economic condition of Georgia and its citizens.

To continue to better serve Georgia, during the past year, a group from Georgia Tech has been visiting the different Regions within Georgia to determine what businesses want from their state universities. We’re calling those trips listening tours and plan to continue until we’ve heard from most of the state.
In addition, if you have a chance after this speech and would like to speak to me about how Georgia Tech could help your company or Rome, please don’t hesitate to come forward. Or you can always give our local Economic Development Office a call. We’re always looking for a fresh perspective on how we can help Georgia and its citizens.

In that same vein, I hope my speech today was also able to offer new insights into Georgia Tech and I would like to close today with a brief story about fresh perspectives.

It is a story that journalism professors love to tell, and it goes something like this:

On the day the news came that Napoleon had escaped from Elba, the headlines read, “Corsican Monster Escapes.” Two days later, the newspapers labeled him “the Pretender.” Then as it became obvious that he was making his way back to Paris, the headlines read, “Bonaparte Arrival Eminent.” Finally the headline read “His Imperial Majesty Will Be in Paris Tomorrow.”

I believe that story illustrates the importance of perspective, and I hope my speech today was able to provide an equally fresh perspective on the Georgia Institute of Technology.

Thank you.