Top Georgia companies sign on to health reform initiative at Tech

Helping patients and providers make better decisions about health care

Megan McRainey
Institute Communications and Public Affairs

In a meeting at Georgia Tech, representatives from top Georgia organizations in both the public and private sector joined Georgia Gov. Sonny Perdue, former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives and founder of the Center for Health Transformation, and Georgia Tech and Emory University and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt to pledge their support for a Value-driven Health Care initiative on behalf of Georgia Tech and the HSI.

"Georgia Tech is pleased to host this event to draw attention to the need for electronic systems for health care," said President Wayne Clough.

"Through our Health Systems Institute, Georgia Tech and our partner, Emory University, are working to make many of the goals outlined in this national initiative a reality." The Health Systems Institute was chosen to host the event because it is developing many of the technologies needed to make these health care improvements technically possible. The Institute creates systems and technologies designed to help improve communication among all the players in health care, from the patients to the doctors, administrators and insurers. It partners with local, regional and national health care organizations to research, develop and implement improved technologies for health care that will integrate information, decision support, communication and biomedical technologies.

"HSI’s mission is to create novel methods and technologies to transform health care delivery systems and lead the nation away from an ineffective, reactive, disease-focused system to achieve a cost-effective, proactive, high-quality, health-and-wellness-focused system," Sainfort said. "The Value-driven Health Care initiative represents one important step for this transformation to happen."

For example, one of HSI’s projects focuses on the development of a comprehensive electronic patient record that contains everything from a genetic profile and socio-demographic information to detailed clinical and insurance information to help doctors and health professionals make better-informed and more efficient decisions about a patient’s health care. The Georgia businesses and organizations signed a pledge to provide quality and price information about doctors, hospitals and other medical providers.

Top Georgia companies continued, page 2
GTRI names new deputy director for Support Operations

Abby Vogel  
Research News

W hen Lisa Sills joined the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) in January 1989 as a research scientist, she just graduated with her Master of Science degree in information and computer science from the Georgia Institute of Technology. She quickly became an expert in database applications and information sharing across networks and departments, including sensitive data owned by the courts systems, law enforcement agencies and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

After serving on several successful projects as a software engineer, Sills naturally evolved as a leader in the information sharing world at GTRI. As a result, she served as a project director or associate project director for the last 15 years, participating in projects ranging from the design and innovation stage to requirements analysis, implementation, testing, documentation and final reporting.

To her new position as deputy director for support operations at GTRI, Sills brings her ability to manage successful teams and her knowledge of information technology. Her new job title combined two positions into one: director of administration, held by the retiring Janice Rogers, and director of business operations, held previously by Charles Brown, who moved to a position within the provost’s office.

“Coming from the ranks, I know how researchers live day to day,” explained Sills, who has almost 18 years of technical and managerial experience at GTRI. “I know the frustrations of the researchers with the system, and I hope to make other people aware of researcher issues and make improvements.”

In her new position, Sills is trying to create a world-class research support team at GTRI. This support team comprises more than 100 people from eight groups: Personnel Support, Rate Management, Research Property, Support Services, Machine Services, Information Systems, Business Services, and Budgeting and Finance.

Sills’ goals for this year include providing additional recognition and rewards for researchers, tailoring promotion guidelines to what researchers do on a daily basis, exercising financial discipline and improving customer service to researchers and staff.

Although much of her days are spent in meetings, Sills strives to solve the most prevalent researcher problems. When a lab director calls her about a space, information technology or personnel issue, Sills finds an answer.

“I am a problem solver by nature, so a job that presents a variety of challenges is perfect for me,” she said.

Before accepting this new position, Sills contributed to awarded research proposals totaling more than $9 million from city, state and federal organizations. Inside Georgia Tech, Sills managed the design and implementation of many functional components of the student records side of the Registrar’s Office, including online registration, transcript processing and degree audit validation. She also personally developed parts of the financial aid module used by Tech’s financial aid office.

From 1998 through 2001, Sills served as director of the Georgia Tech Criminal Justice Science and Technology Center, a center created to apply science, research and technology to the needs of the criminal justice system.

When asked if she’ll miss the daily research grind, Sills is quick to say no, but says that she’ll miss her teammates she worked with for so many years in her old lab, the Information Technology and Telecommunications Laboratory.

For more information...
Georgia Tech Research Institute  
www.gtri.gatech.edu

The new School of Computer Science, chaired by Professor Ellen Zegura, will focus on the roots of the computing discipline. Professor Aaron Bobick will chair the School of Interactive Computing, focusing on computing’s interaction with users and the environment.

Both the Schools will begin operation immediately. “When creating the College back in 1990, the Institute foresaw the limitations of calling it the College of Computer Science,” said Provost Gary Schuster. “As an educational program, the College of Computing has always been at the forefront of transformation and it’s exciting that today we are still taking the lead on defining what the field will become.”

For more information...
Health Systems Institute  
www.hsi.gatech.edu
Solar Decathlon team set to begin construction

Matt Nagel
Institute Communications
and Public Affairs

Georgia Tech’s Solar Decathlon team marked the beginning of its building phase with a groundbreaking of sorts. The team gathered at the Decathlon’s construction site with sponsors and supporters to kick off the construction phase of the competition.

“It is kind of exciting and terrifying at the same time because we put a lot of thought into the design, but there are always things you don’t think about — especially from a construction perspective,” said Jodi Bell-Quinn, a master’s student in the Architecture Program.

The Solar Decathlon is an international collegiate competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy that brings student teams from universities across the United States, Europe and Canada to compete in designing, building and operating highly energy-efficient, completely solar-powered houses.

The construction site is at 575 14th Street, on the corner of Hemphil Avenue. The house will be built outside behind the Institute of Paper Science and Technology (IPST) building.

The competition consists of 10 different categories, seven of which focus on energy efficiency; others include design and comfort. The team with the most points — the most energy-efficient and innovatively designed house — wins.

Associate Professor Chris Jarrett and Southern Company representative Marc Rice at the Feb. 9 groundbreaking. Southern Company is one of the project’s top sponsors.

The prototype, created by a team of Georgia Tech students, for an international competition to design, build and operate a highly energy-efficient, completely solar-powered house.

The team won’t actually start building for a couple of weeks because it is waiting on materials and supplies, but the evolution of the house is well underway. Students from the Colleges of Sciences, Engineering and Architecture have been collaborating on developing the design of the house and learning from each other.

Working with other majors has been very educational,” said Nadine Hashlan, a fourth-year Architecture student. “Our thought processes are different from one major to the next. This project allows you to see how engineers and architecture students go about finding a solution differently.

“Working with engineers brings a new aspect to the design because they think about things we haven’t considered before,” said Bell-Quinn. “It makes the project more real, and I think the more realistic you have things coming together just makes the project richer in the end.”

Each of the 20 teams in this year’s competition will assemble their homes for judging on the Mall in Washington, DC, later this year.

For more information, visit www.gatech.edu.

Severe Weather Awareness Week

Governor Sonny Purdue, in cooperation with the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA), the National Weather Service (NWS) and Georgia’s local emergency management agencies, has proclaimed the week of Feb. 19-23 as Severe Weather Awareness Week in Georgia.

The goal of this annual observance has been to save lives and reduce property damage by encouraging residents to plan ahead and to take immediate action regarding the variety of severe weather events that occur in Georgia.

For additional information about emergency preparedness measures during severe weather events, visit www.gema.state.ga.us.

New training certificates

The Office of Organizational Development has announced two new certification programs available to the campus community.

The first — Defining Customer Service — provides enhanced training opportunities that enable Tech staff to provide the highest quality services to our community and improve the overall experience of faculty, staff, students and visitors. This is the first step toward improving the customer services the Institute provides and is in coordination with Gov. Sonny Purdue’s recent Customer Service Improvement Initiative.

The second — Instructor Certification — is designed to equip participants to become effective course leaders that fully engage their audience. The curriculum consists of two full-day classes and a one-hour debriefing session, and are currently being offered at no cost to the individual or their department.

For more information, visit www.orgdev.gatech.edu.

Recycling program

Georgia Tech Recycling Services has entered into a partnership with the Bobby Dodd Institute (BDI) to establish a toner cartridge and cell phone recycling program on campus.

The first phase of the program will provide postage paid envelopes and drop-off bins in the common areas of 15 campus buildings. Larger laser cartridges can be picked up by contacting Central Receiving in Procurement Services. For more information, call Cindy Jackson at 894-2004 or visit www.recycle.gatech.edu.

2006 Recycling Statistics

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—Source: Georgia Tech Recycling Services