Provost forms faculty groups to review core missions

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Provost Gary Schuster has engaged members of the faculty community to tackle some of the big issues important to enhancing Georgia Tech’s reputation in education and research. During a meeting last week at the Global Learning and Conference Center, Schuster called on more than 60 faculty to help further its vision as the technological university of the 21st century.

This assessment is to be conducted by two task forces, who will spend the next 12 months reviewing the state of undergraduate curricula and interdisciplinarity. Themes grew out of conversations Schuster had with faculty and students during his initial months as provost.

“Where should Georgia Tech be going in order to fulfill its vision?” he asked. “In particular, what are the areas we should become expert in, that we can take action on, and where we can make a difference?”

Each task force is further broken down into three subgroups and will address specific aspects of the larger topic. Expectations are that the groups will provide preliminary findings during a planned fall retreat, with final recommendations set for next spring.

The first will deal with a review of the undergraduate curriculum. The committee, led by Civil and Environmental Engineering Professor Laurence Jacobs, will move to develop an plan for curriculum reform or, as Schuster put it, “define the technological education for the 21st century.”

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It is the big, time-consuming job, and we appreciate their effort and attention to detail.” This group includes staff in the Athletic Association, Registrar’s Office and all the schools and colleges.

“In terms of meeting NCAA requirements for academic certification of student-athletes, times have certainly changed,” said Athletic Director Dan Radakovich. “We in the Athletic Association can’t do all this work on our own. The goal of everyone involved in this process is for our athletic programs to be as highly lauded as our academic programs.”

Following the presentation of Schrage’s annual report, the meeting’s athletic theme continued with a report from Susan Paraska, assistant vice provost for Institutional Development. Jack Lohmann, Paraska gave an update on NCAA certification of Georgia Tech’s athletic programs, a process that takes place every 10 years.

“This process is much like the (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools) accreditation process,” said Paraska, “in that it provides us the opportunity to see what we’re doing well and what we can do better, and to ensure that we are operating with the highest integrity.”

The certification process began last spring with the formation of a steering committee and an executive committee (chaired by Lohmann), and three subcommittees dealing with governance and commitment to rules compliance (chaired by Regents’ Professor of Mechanical Engineering David McDowell), academic integrity (chaired by School of Mathematics Chair Tom Trotter), and equity and student-athlete well being (chaired by Ivan Allen College Dean Sue Rosser).

Paraska said the committees and subcommittees are comprised of 50 faculty, staff members and students.

A self-study that emerged from the work of these groups was submitted to the NCAA on May 1. An external peer-review team will visit campus in late September, and Georgia Tech will be notified of the NCAA’s decision on late September, and Georgia Tech will be notified of the NCAA’s decision on
Global package race puts major carriers to the test

Megan McRainey
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How hard is it to deliver a package to Quaggauguagua? A group from the Supply Chain and Logistics Institute in the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, one of the most respected logistics programs in the world, puts the major carriers (UPS, FedEx and DHL) to the test every year with its Great Package Race, a contest to see which carrier can get a package to a very challenging locale the fastest and in the best condition.

A group of 60 logistics students led by Professor John Bartholdi sends identical boxes bound for places like Lome, Togo and Split, Croatia. With no indication that there’s a competition under way, each carrier picks up its parcel, and the race begins. The progress of the packages is tracked online and students follow the often byzantine journey (across oceans, rivers and jungles and sometimes by bicycle) from Atlanta to a location that may not even have an official street address.

Admittedly, the race is an extreme test of the carriers’ ability to deliver anywhere in the world, Bartholdi said. This year’s packages were sent on April 13 to Yangon, Myanmar (formerly Burma); Tikrit, Iraq (one of the centers of Sunni insurgence); Florianopolis, Brazil (a small island); Harare, Zimbabwe and Apia, Samoa.

Most packages arrived within a week or two, but one has yet to be delivered or returned.

DHL beat the competition this year, delivering first to three of the five locations and second to the remaining two. FedEx managed to deliver to three locations, and UPS delivered parcels to two. The remaining packages from FedEx and UPS went undelivered for a variety of reasons. In past races, the carriers traded wins in different locales.

While carriers usually have no trouble getting the package to the general vicinity of the package address, the last part of the package’s journey slows things down considerably.

“The world’s not quite flat,” Bartholdi said. “The last mile is always the hardest.”

The race results are often mixed and entertaining. Two carriers once showed up at the exact same time to deliver their packages. One package was carried back-and-forth across the Atlantic nine times before delivery. Another was sent to Costa Rica instead of Croatia. And one carrier claimed that the destination country didn’t exist at all.

Bartholdi started the Great Package Race back in 2003 as a fun exercise for his logistics students. Each package provided a window into how the carriers operate, revealing everything from which hubs carriers route packages through to what types of operations functions can go wrong when a package is shipped internationally.

The carriers themselves are good sports about the race and sometimes communicate with the students about what went wrong and what went right, Bartholdi said.

The packages, containing Georgia Tech merchandise, are sent to the group’s friends and acquaintances all over the world, provided that their addresses present a suitably sadistic challenge for the carriers.
of skills and abilities that will allow them to be as successful as we have been in our careers,” he said.

The second committee, chaired by Industrial and Systems Engineering Professor Leon McGinnis, is expected to set an institutional vision and strategy for interdisciplinary programs at Georgia Tech. The Institute has already made strides with its building program, Schuster said, but improving organization and communication across disciplinary lines will bring additional opportunities for collaboration.

“Georgia Tech, like almost every other research institution, evolved as an undergraduate institution formed out of departmental structures,” he said. “As a result, we have an interdisciplinary overlay on a departmental structure. In many cases that’s acceptable, but we have not taken the hard and critical look at what it means to be interdisciplinary and adjusted our structures to accommodate that view.”

Schuster stressed, however, that Tech will not ignore its core strengths. “You can’t build strong interdisciplinary programs on weak disciplines,” he said. “You need to have disciplinary strength, but you have to have structures available to take advantage of that strength, and organize it in such a way to meet the challenges of an interdisciplinary future. The knowledge to do this resides with the faculty.”

USG offers 2008 faculty seminars

Each summer the University System of Georgia’s World Regional Councils offer two faculty development seminars in an international setting. The seminars are designed to familiarize USG faculty with the country or countries visited, introduce the local education systems, initiate integration about the countries visited into the home curriculum and open possibilities for collaborative faculty research.

Descriptions and applications for the 2008 Faculty Development Seminars are now available for the two programs: “Artistic Expressions of Culture: The Literary, Visual and Performing Worlds” and “Years of Migration, Conflict, and Integration of Cultures.”

A limited number of Chancellor’s Awards to be applied to the cost of the Faculty Development Seminars will be awarded to qualified, eligible seminar participants. For detailed information, visit www.usg.edu/oie/facstaff/development/seminars_awards.phtml.

Posthumous degree granted

Last month, the Institute Undergraduate Curriculum Committee (IUC) approved the granting of a posthumous degree for undergraduate Daniel Compton. Compton died last year and would have been a senior graduating this month.

Compton, a computer science major, was a co-op student and attended Georgia Tech in good standing from Fall 2002 to Spring 2006.

Tuition rates, budget tentatively approved for fall

The Board of Regents has approved new tuition rates for those students entering the University System of Georgia as freshmen this fall, as well as for those in their third year and beyond. The tuition rates for freshmen in the requirement of the University System to provide approximately 25 percent of the cost of instruction over four years, with the state funding the remaining 75 percent.

Students entering University System institutions for the first time in fall 2007 will see a research university tuition rate of $2,248 per semester, a 15 percent increase over the rates of students who first enrolled in fall 2006.

In all, the board approved a budget containing a record $2.1 billion state appropriation, along with $276 million for construction and renovation of System facilities. The board also approved budget allocations to the System’s 35 degree-granting institutions and the Skidaway Institute of Oceanography. The board’s actions on the budget are subject to Gov. Sonny Perdue’s approval of the overall state budget.

Mary McAleese, president of the Republic of Ireland, paid a visit to campus last week as part of a five-day tour of the United States. Her visit offered an opportunity to witness some of the technology developed by Institute researchers that has moved into the commercial market. She is pictured with her husband, Dr. Martin McAleese, and President Wayne Clough.

In March 2006, the Georgia Tech Research Institute established a research enterprise in Athlone, Ireland, to focus on industry research and development needs in fields such as digital media, radio frequency identification (RFID), biotechnology and energy.

“Ireland is delighted to be in partnership with such an eminent research institution,” McAleese said. “It is a symbiotic partnership that promises significant, ongoing economic dividends for Ireland and the state of Georgia.”