Pleased to be here. Welcome President Grube to Georgia. Georgia Tech is pleased to be working with Georgia Southern and our Savannah partners in the creation of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program, which will make four-year engineering degrees from Georgia Tech available in southeast Georgia.

Here with me today: Dr. David Frost of Georgia Tech – professor of civil and environmental engineering who is providing the hands-on direction for GTREP. Also Dr. Jean-Lou Chameau – dean of the College of Engineering, who oversees GTREP. We are glad to have an opportunity to tell you where we’re coming from and answer any questions you might have. In addition to David and Jean-Lou, I would like to introduce Bob Thompson, Sr. VP of Admin and Finance, and Andrew Harris, director of Governmental Relations.

Georgia Southern is already one of ten University System partners with Georgia Tech in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program. First two years of Georgia Tech’s engineering curriculum are offered here on campus. Students who successfully complete this curriculum transfer to Atlanta for their junior and senior years on the same footing as engineering majors who have spent their first two years in Atlanta.

The Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program – GTREP for short – builds on that foundation by making the junior and senior years of the curriculum for two engineering degrees available here in southeast Georgia. GTREP students will graduate with an engineering degree from Georgia Tech without ever going to Atlanta.

In addition to Georgia Southern University, we have two other partners in this Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program – Savannah State and Armstrong Atlantic State Universities.

When the new school year begins six weeks from today on August 23rd, these three partner universities will enroll the first formal class of four-year GTREP freshmen, and identify the first GTREP sophomores and juniors from students who are already in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program. We expect to have our first graduates in 2001.

We are beginning with two degrees – bachelor of science in civil engineering, and bachelor of science in computer engineering. These are not degrees that we picked out of a hat. The degree in computer engineering was chosen to meet workforce demand in this part of the state, and civil engineering addresses the basic infrastructure needed for economic growth. So it was a decision based on promoting economic development.

We also know that a demand for computer engineers plus the availability of a four-year degree program are two essential building blocks that will help position this region of the state to participate in the Yamacraw Mission. Yamacraw identified three areas of technology that underlie the next generation of computer and electronic products and that are suffering from a workforce shortage. Our goal is to attract computer industries to Georgia by providing an educated workforce in these technologies. At Georgia Tech we believe that
Yamacraw can help to promote high-tech development statewide, and we want to be a full participant in making that happen in southeast Georgia.

- GTREP will also expand linkages between the participating institutions and Skidaway. Through faculty and planned research park and technology incubator.

- You can think of the structure of GTREP as a triangle. One point is here in Statesboro and includes Georgia Southern and Georgia Tech faculty. Another point is in Savannah and it includes faculty at Savannah State and Armstrong Atlantic State Universities, as well as Georgia Tech faculty at the Coastal Georgia Center. And the third point is Georgia Tech faculty in Atlanta. And distance learning courses can move in both directions along all three sides of the triangle.

- Georgia Tech’s GTREP faculty will be predominantly located here in southeast Georgia, divided approximately equally between Statesboro and Savannah. Students will enroll in the program through Georgia Southern, Savannah State and Armstrong Atlantic Universities. So we have students at institutions at two of the three points of the triangle – Statesboro and Savannah.

- We will use distance learning technology in two ways. And when I speak of distance learning, keep in mind I am speaking of using the latest technology, such as the Internet, which will allow for on-demand delivery to regular or non-traditional students. First, this technology will enable GTREP students to enrich their curriculum by providing access to courses offered from any of the four institutions involved. For example, students here at Georgia Southern can take classes taught by GTREP faculty in Savannah, or students in any other location can obtain courses taught by faculty based at Statesboro. This will be particularly important while we build the GTREP faculty to a level that will support more on-site offerings. The key factor in deciding when and how classes will be delivered will be demand, and being able to enroll students at four locations will make for the greatest possible efficiency, providing strength for the program when we go to ask for additional funding for our joint efforts. Second, through distance learning we will be able to offer master’s degree education, making the GTREP program more attractive at the outset for those who will think about such possibilities and to companies that will see this as another reason to locate here.

- GTREP freshmen will continue to get all of their instruction in person from faculty at their home university, same as they do now in the Regents Engineering Transfer Program. Sophomores will also get most of their instruction this way, as they do now. But GTREP will begin to give sophomores a few more options... an opportunity to broaden out a little into other courses available both from local GTREP faculty and through distance learning.

- When students reach their junior year, they will officially become Georgia Tech students, even though they may remain at their home institution. Juniors and seniors will have about 60 percent of their courses taught by GTREP faculty based here in the region and 20 percent delivered through interactive distance learning. The remaining 20 percent will be electives and related courses taught by local faculty.
• The bottom line of this meeting, the one thing I hope you remember of all that has been said and will be said, is that Georgia Tech has made a firm and long-term commitment to this regional engineering program. The GTREP faculty will be Georgia Tech faculty – they will work for Jean-Lou. The GTREP degrees will be Georgia Tech degrees – and we will hold students to the same high level of excellence as students on the Tech campus.

• In March *U.S. News & World Report* ranked Georgia Tech’s College of Engineering third in the nation, behind only MIT and Stanford. That is both an expression of the high level of excellence and quality that we have already achieved, and an expression of the high standards we will continue to expect in order to uphold that level of excellence. And we are committed to achieving that same level of academic excellence in GTREP as back on campus in Atlanta.

• We recognize southeast Georgia’s strong potential for economic development. We also understand the importance of engineering education in realizing that potential. In terms of economic development, Georgia Tech’s involvement in GTREP helps by:
  1. Linkage to the nation’s largest cooperative education program.
  2. Linkage to our network of corporate partners and research sponsors that includes the nation’s major technology companies: Lucent, HP, Georgia Pacific, Ford Motor Company, Motorola, Siemens, Kodak, Michelin, Medtronics, among dozens of others.
  3. Direct and up-front connection to the Yamacraw Project.
  4. Support for economic development efforts from our EDI offices and our business incubator service through ATDC, soon to have a satellite location at Skidaway.
  5. Linkages to the nation’s venture capital companies.
  6. Connections to the nation’s 25th largest research program, some of which can be done here in Savannah and Statesboro.

In conclusion, we are here not because we were asked to be here or to start something up and leave. We are here because we believe in this effort. As a southeast Georgia native, I bring a special commitment to this effort. We believe it is best achieved through a full collaboration with the local University System of Georgia institutions which will engage them in a partnership that can be a model for the rest of the nation. Georgia Southern will be the key local institution and we look forward to working with you to see this to success.