Thank you, Allen (Robertson). Anne and I are pleased to join with the Alumni Association in hosting this special evening as an expression of our appreciation to you for your support of Georgia Tech. There are many things that separate Georgia Tech from the typical public university. But one of the most significant is our outstanding alumni, who continue to support us with such strong enthusiasm long after you have “gotten out.”

Georgia Tech has always been seen as a “good school,” But our goal is become a place that generates the new ideas and innovations of the future. Tonight you can see the evidence that we are achieving this goal – the smart tee-shirt; virtual reality exposure therapy; and the Georgia Tech Motorsports race car.

The smart tee-shirt has been named one of the top inventions of the decade, and on Monday the Georgia Tech Research Corporation announced a licensing agreement with a start-up company called SensaTex, Inc. to develop the shirt into a marketable product, which it will manufacture and sell.

SensaTex will test the smart tee-shirt in a clinical setting, then apply for FDA approval to market it. The company expects to have the first shirts on the market during the first quarter of next year, and interest is very strong, because they will be less expensive than the devices that are now being used to monitor vital signs.

Georgia Tech can also lay claim to five of the nation’s top 100 Young Inventors under age 35, as identified by MIT – more than any other university outside MIT itself. They include Amy Bruckman, who creates on-line communities for kids to learn reading, writing, and programming; Thad Starner, who wears his computer, with a tiny monitor attached to his glasses; and Mark Prausnitz who developed a microneedle thinner than a human hair to deliver pain-free injections.

Then there’s David Ku, who undoubtedly would have made the list if he were just a little younger. He has developed synthetic cartilage that the body will embrace much more readily than traditional implants.

Leeches got a bad rap in medieval times when doctors used them to bleed patients, but today they are making a comeback in Georgia Tech’s labs. Bill Ditto is using leeches to power computers with living intelligence. He connected leech nerve cells to computer circuits, applied chaos theory to the chatter that resulted, and discovered that the neurons are smart enough to do basic math.

Steve DeWeerth also uses leeches for research, because their systems of nerve cells are simple enough to allow for modeling. He studies the nerve systems that control swimming motions and the circulatory system, with a goal of developing better control systems for robots and better prosthetics for humans.
These are just a handful of the many exciting innovations being developed here at Georgia Tech that together will build our reputation as a source of innovation and new ideas for the future.

Someone coined the term “Harvardization” to describe the goal of most American colleges and universities. You pick out the best university you know, and try your hardest to imitate it. Over the course of the 20th century, Georgia Tech became very adept at that, and we moved up steadily in the national rankings of colleges and universities.

But we are now entering the 21st century, and we want to make it our century – a time when Georgia Tech leads the way. The Capital Campaign is providing the resources we need to do that. It is providing the endowed faculty chairs, the student scholarships and fellowships, the state-of-the-art facilities, and the program resources to lift Georgia Tech up from the ranks of the good, solid schools who do very well at imitating, and establish us as a center and source of innovation.

As these exhibits here tonight demonstrate so well, we have the potential to be a leader in innovation. Your efforts expressed through the Capital Campaign are what will make it possible for Georgia Tech to realize its potential and achieve preeminence among world-class universities who far exceed us in size and in wealth.

We are now in the final year and home stretch of the Capital Campaign, and at the same time we are also facing the biggest challenge of the campaign. We could have kept the goal at $500 million and just coasted to the finish line. But coasting is not the hallmark of an institution on the fast track. So, even as the campaign moved into its final year, we increased the goal to $600 million, and that final $100 million is going to be hardest one of all.

I am redoubling my own efforts on behalf of the campaign, and I urge each and every one of you to do the same for the next six and a-half months. Together, we can and we will achieve a goal that other institutions would consider impossible.

I want to express my heart-felt thanks on behalf of the Institute and its faculty, staff, and students for your generosity. And in closing, I want to announce that as of this very moment, the Capital Campaign has reached a grand total of $544 million!