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.

Our program this evening is very brief, but it focuses on the reason why Georgia Tech exists – our students. The most energizing part of my job as President of Georgia Tech and the part I enjoy the most is interacting with students like the ones you just met. Georgia Tech students are not only intelligent; they are thoughtful, creative and good at solving problems. And they, more than anything, give me both hope and confidence that the future is in good hands.

Our challenge is to imagine the skills and the knowledge they will need to be leaders in the world into which they graduate, and prepare them for that role. Or, to say the same thing a different way, to recognize the promise that is inherent in our students and prepare them to realize and fulfill their potential.

You, as our alumni, have gone on to realize the promise and potential that lay within you as students. And as you heard from these students a few moments ago, you are their role models. They admire you. They look up to you. You represent what they want to become.

You in turn are linked to today’s students by the unique traditions that you share, from Varsity cuisine to shouting “to hell with Georgia.”

All of the special traditions that have been represented in the exhibit and the pictures during dinner… all of the special traditions that have become part of life at Georgia Tech through the decades and give Tech its identity… were developed by students and are an ongoing part of student life.

They are what keep you connected, bringing you back for the Ramblin’ Wreck Parade, for athletic events, for reunions that refresh the memories and renew the relationships.

But in addition to recognizing the value of your own student days, you have also been perceptive in recognizing the promise in each new generation of students that has come along behind you, and you have been generous in supporting them. Tonight, as we focus on our students, we celebrate the investment you have made in them.

One of your investments was recognized earlier this year when Georgia Tech won the Theodore M. Hesburgh Award, which is the top national award honoring excellence in undergraduate teaching.

Beyond the fact that we as a technological university care about excellence in teaching, what impressed the judges was the investment our alumni have made in endowing programs to help our faculty to improve their teaching skills.
There are many things that separate Georgia Tech from the typical public university. But one of the most significant is our outstanding alumni and the strong contribution you make. Yet nowhere on this campus is there any kind of permanent tribute to you, who continue to support us with such strong enthusiasm long after you have “gotten out.”

That is about to change. The Class of 1959 has chosen to celebrate its 40th reunion with a special fund-raising project that pays tribute to the outstanding support Tech alumni give to Tech students. They are raising $220,000 to build Alumni Park, which will benefit students and at the same time recognize the outstanding contribution of all of our alumni.

Alumni Park will be located on West Campus, behind the Aquatic Center and between Stamps Field and the Sixth Avenue dorms. It will literally serve as the front yard, or outdoor living room if you will, for the Sixth Avenue dorms.

Alumni Park is already under construction, which is an indication of the strength of the commitment the Class of 1959 has made to raise the funds for the park. What used to be a muddy gully between the Sixth Avenue dorms and Stamps Field is being graded and landscaped, and concrete stairs and lighting will be added. The Park will also feature two sand volleyball courts, welcoming students who need to release pent-up energy as well as those who want to relax. A gate will provide access to Stamps Field.

Alumni Park is going to be beautiful when it is competed. And I want to mention to those of you who are members of the Class of 1959 that every donor to this 40th reunion project will receive a copy of the full-color architectural rendering of the Park, matted and ready to frame.

Then on October 8, at 2:00 in the afternoon, you are all invited to the dedication ceremony and unveiling of a permanent plaque, located at the focal point of Alumni Park, naming it and recognizing the Class of 1959 for making it possible.

Alumni Park is an investment in our students. And that is what the Capital Campaign is about... investing in our students and preparing them to realize their promise as leaders in the 21st century.

The campaign is an investment in developing the promise our students carry within themselves. You’ve heard Chris Young say what being a Presidential Scholar has meant to him. Joe Hamilton is at Georgia Tech, Matt Kuchar was showing Tech colors at the Master’s, because of your investment in them as students.

The Capital Campaign is an investment in the educational experience we offer our students. The Bioscience and Bioengineering Building, which will open this summer, is an expression of the campaign. The high quality of the faculty that we can attract with the 31 chairs endowed so far, is an expression of the campaign.

The campaign is also an investment in student life. At the dedication of Alumni Park next October, look out across the newly restored Stamps Field to SAC, which will be renovated by the
campaign. And as you look at the Aquatic Center, visualize in your imagination an enclosed, world-class facility.

As those historical photographs demonstrate so well, it is the human tide that has flowed through the decades of Georgia Tech’s life that has made this university great. Your efforts, first as students then as alumni, have lifted Georgia Tech to preeminence among world-class universities who far exceed us in size and in wealth.

The Capital Campaign is both our legacy and our promise that in the midst of changing times and changing technology we will be steadfast in our commitment to our students and in our resolve to strive for excellence in providing them with the best education they can possibly have.

I know that the legacy and the promise of the Capital Campaign have captured the imaginations of all of you, and I want to express my heart-felt thanks on behalf of the Institute and its 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 $398,562,040!