It is a pleasure to welcome all of you to Georgia Tech.

You are the unsung heroes of higher education. Teaching and research get the attention; but none of it could happen if the facilities weren’t there first. Good facilities are critical to offering the good programs that attract good faculty and good students.

Facilities are one of the biggest challenges in higher education today, not only because of growth in enrollment, but also because of the changing nature of the beast.

USG has always striven for a quality campus environment at each of our institutions. A struggle particularly for older institutions like GT – we have 45 buildings over 55 years old; average building age on our campus is 43 years. Some of our classroom buildings were built 60 years ago or more, and they show their age. So we have a tremendous need both for renovation and for new facilities.

After being stuck in the same model for literally centuries – desks and blackboard – higher education now changing in profound ways; facilities need to reflect those changes:
- Building we are in is a good example (describe GCATT)
- Facilities must accommodate technology and new learning styles. Technology not only distance learning, but also changing how we educate students in our campus classrooms. GT – 1,700 miles of fiberoptic cable; over 200 web-enhanced courses; “virtual” learning communities.
- Today’s labs much more complicated than petri dishes and bunsen burners; require new designs and features, accommodation of new technology, equipment.
- Programs are becoming interdisciplinary; facility designs changing accordingly. GT – BEM Complex.
- Institutions across the System are working together in new ways – GTREP for example.

CONCLUSION: Facilities are more critical than ever to higher education, but they also pose more questions that are more complicated than ever. Your job is much more than bricks and mortar as we try to peer ahead into the next century and catch a vision of how forces such as technology will continue to shape and change education and in the process education facilities.