Good evening. Thank you all for coming. Anniversaries: special times to pause and reflect the journey that has brought us this far, look ahead to the promise of the future.

The Robert Ferst Center for the Arts began to take shape in the later part of the 1980s when the Callaway Foundation provided a grant for $3.75 million. Georgia Tech used that gift to leverage $3.75 million in matching funds from the state of Georgia.

These funds were designated for construction “Student Galleria” which consisted of the Smithgall Student Services Building and the Ferst Center. The money was evenly divided between the two facilities, which were built side by side. Today, we are amazed that we were able to build both of these facilities for $7.5 million combined.

The Ferst Center opened in early 1992 with a dedication performance by world-renowned pianist André Watts. Since then it has played important role in campus life:

- Hosted an annual season of world-class performances by such artists as Itzhak Perlman, Marcel Marceau, and Wynton Marsalis.
- Important part of life in 1996 Olympic Village, when the Georgia Tech campus was home to thousands of athletes and hundreds of officials. Even President Clinton paid a visit to the Ferst Center.

The Ferst Center is part of Tech’s efforts to prepare students for the global environment in which they will work and live, exposing them to performances like Ballethnic’s “Urban Nutcracker,” the African American Dance Ensemble, and a myriad of student cultural shows presented by the Indian, Chinese, and other ethnic communities.

The Center also enables Georgia Tech to recognize and unleash the talent of our students by providing a wonderful venue for student music and theatre groups to perform.

The Center is also an important component of our community service efforts. We bring students from Centennial Place Elementary School to performances and special workshops with the artists, and hold summer drama camp for community youngsters.

Some may think it unusual for a technological university to value and promote the arts, but we believe that the arts humanize technology and technology enlivens the arts.

- Arts enhance students’ passion for the work they do in the lab and classroom.
- Arts help develop students’ creative and imaginative capabilities, which are just as important to science and engineering as they are to the arts.
- Arts help students learn to understand and express themselves.
Tech’s goal for the future is to define the technological university of the 21st century. Part of achieving that goal is to become a national model for the integration of the arts into the very fabric of a technical institution. However, we face several challenges in working to achieve this goal:

- Increasing private support for the Center, reducing dependence on ticket sales.
- Communicating our presence and plans, and increasing our stature in the Atlanta arts scene.

The Ferst Center recently adopted strategic plan to meet those challenges, and we hope to move forward in the coming years.

I would like to conclude by recognizing and thanking several people who have been key players in the life of the Ferst Center for its first decade:

- Mrs. Jeanne Ferst
- Mr. Callaway
- Staff of Ferst Center

The Ferst Center has come a long way over the past 10 years, but we still more work ahead to achieve our vision of the arts as an integral part of the technological university of the 21st century. We intend to work hard, and with your help and support we can succeed.