REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Ivan Allen College Founders Day Luncheon, March 22, 2004

Recognition of Ivan Allen, Jr.
Ivan Allen, Jr. was mayor of Atlanta when I was a student here, back in the 1960s, and he has been a larger-than-life figure for me ever since. Those were heady times for Atlanta, but they felt uncertain and dangerous as well, especially for someone like myself from rural South Georgia. The ideas swirling around the city challenged the world I grew up with, and we felt the ground shifting under our feet.

It was during these days that Ivan Allen became a hero to me, and I suspect the same is true for many of you in this room. As mayor of Atlanta, he stood at the very center of the controversy, confusion, and change that engulfed the city and the South, and his leadership was what kept the pot from boiling over here like it did in other places. We were all proud that it was a Georgia Tech man who was leading Atlanta forward and serving as a model for the state – and to a large extent the South and the nation as a whole.

No single incident better demonstrated the unique brand of leadership Ivan Allen provided than the disturbance in the Summerhill neighborhood in September of 1966 that brought Atlanta as close to a riot as the city has ever come since the Civil War. The photograph behind me from the Atlanta newspaper illustrates the story. As you can see, Ivan Allen is impeccably dressed in a summer suit and tie and standing on the hood of a police car. A police officer is urgently advising him of the potential danger of remaining in this position, but Mayor Allen isn’t paying attention to him. Instead, he is smiling at the member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee – SNCC (“snick”) – who is standing below him, vigorously exhorting the angry crowd.

I cannot imagine a more definitive image of coolness under fire, or confidence in the face of adversity. Ivan Allen’s posture and expression conveyed the message that everything was going to turn out okay. And it did. I suspect that for many Atlantans and Georgians, that was the image that defined the unique qualities of Ivan Allen, Jr., and the extraordinary brand of leadership he provided. If you had to define the essence of Ivan Allen’s character and leadership in the language of a physics equation, it would be $E = MC^2$ in which $E$ stands for excellence, $M$ for mental ability, and $C^2$ for courage of conviction.

Ivan Allen, Jr. was part of what Tom Brokaw has termed “the greatest generation” – who collectively might be characterized by that same formula. Along with overcoming the great depression, winning a world war, and making this nation a world leader, the men and women of this generation also had to contend with the most serious domestic issue of their century – the issue of racial discrimination.

In his book, Mayor: Notes on the Sixties, Ivan Allen wrote that shortly after World War II, his father expressed to him his deep disappointment at his own generation’s failure “to enlighten or solve the major issue which our section of the country has, the race issue. Your generation,” he
told his son, “is going to be confronted with it, and it will be the greatest agony any generation went through.”

Those words from the father were both a prediction and a directive that played out in the life of the son. Ivan Allen, Jr. took on that challenge, and I think it is fair to say that no white man did more than he in this region of the country to enlighten his generation on the issue of racial discrimination and to begin constructive efforts to resolve it.

Even as Ivan Allen and his generation of Georgia Tech alumni were busy with the broader challenges of the world, they still found the time and the resources to help elevate their alma mater from a good regional engineering school into one of the great technological universities of the world. In 1990, when Georgia Tech expanded its academic structure to reflect a broadening mission, a new college was created that combined management and liberal education. Not only did it represent a new iteration of the program in commerce from which Ivan Allen had graduated, but it also sought to give its students the mental and leadership abilities to express the courage of their convictions. It was only natural to name it the Ivan Allen College, honoring the alumnus and leader who in so many ways epitomized the “greatest generation.”

Transforming a legacy into an organizational structure with academic programs, courses, books, and schedules is a continuing challenge. And there is always a danger than we will get so focused on the mechanics of it that we lose sight of the vision and inspiration.

So on the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Ivan Allen College, we began a tradition of celebrating its establishment and presenting the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Progress and Service. This award honors those who carry forward the qualities of character, mind and leadership demonstrated by Ivan Allen, and whose efforts reflect “Progress and Service” which is the motto of Georgia Tech, found at the heart of our official seal. Certainly the recipients of the Allen Prize to date – Zell Miller in 2001, Jimmy Carter in 2002, and Molly Ivins in 2003 – express the excellence that results from mental ability combined with courage of conviction.

With the passing of Ivan Allen Jr. last summer, the college, together with the Allen family, sought to extend his legacy to the rising young generations of students and young alumni whose lives and careers still lie ahead of them, as well as to the faculty who teach their minds and shape their characters.

As a result, a new category of award was established – the Ivan Allen Legacy Awards – which will go each year to one student, one faculty member, and one young alumnus who demonstrate the excellence that comes from mental ability combined with courage of conviction. And at this time I would like to ask Dean Rosser to describe the criteria and selection process for the recipients of the Ivan Allen Jr. Legacy Awards.
Introduce Sam Nunn as Allen Prize recipient

Sam Nunn began to emerge as one of the nation’s most respected voices on national defense in 1987, when he assumed the chairmanship of the United States Senate Armed Services Committee. And the accuracy of his predictions over the past decade relative to the rise of terrorism have made him a much sought-after advisor not only here in the United States, but around the world.

Sam grew up in the town of Perry, south of Macon. He attended Georgia Tech, Emory University, and Emory Law School, from which he graduated with honors in 1962. As a student at Georgia Tech, he was more concerned about the Freshman Cake Race than the arms race. He won the Cake Race, and I would like to think that he learned something about winning here at Tech, because in 30 years of elected political office, he never lost a race.

Before he began his political career he saw active duty in the U.S. Coast Guard, followed by six years in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. He also met and married Colleen O’Brien. They have two children, Michelle and Brian, and they are the proud grandparents of Vinson Nunn Martin.

His political career began with his election to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1968. He was only in his early 30s, but he had already learned much from two giants in Georgia politics – his uncle, U.S. Representative Carl Vinson who for decades was the powerful chairman of the House Armed Services Committee, and his mentor, the legendary Richard B. Russell, who was elected to the Georgia House at age 21, then served as governor before beginning his lengthy and powerful career in the United States Senate.

After Senator Russell died in office in 1971, Sam Nunn defeated a crowded field of veteran candidates to fill his vacant seat. He was 36 – just six years beyond the constitutional age requirement. He built up tremendous credibility for doing his homework and speaking knowledgeably, especially on defense issues. As chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, he was a guiding force in reshaping American policy toward Eastern Europe in the wake of the Soviet Union’s collapse. Together with Senate colleague Richard Lugar, he drafted legislation to create the Cooperative Threat Reduction Program, which provided incentives to the former Soviet republics to dismantle their nuclear arsenals and other weapons of mass destruction.

Under the provisions of the Nunn-Lugar Act, more than 6,000 strategic nuclear warheads, over 500 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 115 long-range bombers, 27 missile submarines, and nearly 400 submarine-launched nuclear missiles have been dismantled. All three of the Soviet states that inherited nuclear weapons have completely denuclearized. The Cooperative Threat Reduction Program has been so successful that scholars have hailed it as “the most significant congressional achievement in nuclear affairs since the dawn of the nuclear age.”

With the end of the Cold War and the success of the Nunn-Lugar Act, the popular perception was that the need for national security and vigilance had diminished and we could relax our defenses a little. However, Sam Nunn was not lulled into that mindset. He perceived that this
breaking down of the world order that had been dominant since World War II opened the door of opportunity for terrorists.

Well before the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, he began to speak out on the dangers that unsecured weapons of mass destruction would pose if they were to fall into the wrong hands. Already in 1996 he wrote, “Possession of nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons by rogue nations or terrorist groups could pose a clear and present danger to our society.” And world events over the past two and a-half years have proven him right.

Sam Nunn retired from the U.S. Senate in 1996, but he has continued to speak out on the dangers that technology and terrorism pose for national and international security. In 2001, with the financial backing of fellow Georgian and CNN founder Ted Turner, he established the Nuclear Threat Initiative. NTI is a nonprofit organization based in Washington, and it works to reduce global threats from nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and the ongoing acts of terrorism around the world have brought increased attention and importance to the message of Senator Nunn and the work of the NTI. His counsel is now sought by governments and leaders from Washington to Moscow to New Delhi. He has been a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for the past three years. And we want you to know, Senator, that it was only after Jimmy Carter received the Ivan Allen Prize from Georgia Tech that he went on to win the Nobel Prize.

Sam Nunn retired this year from the active practice of law as a senior partner at King & Spalding, and is now focusing his efforts on his policy work. He continues to serve as co-chairman and chief executive officer of NTI, and also chairs the board of the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington.

He has also deepened his involvement and commitment as a distinguished professor in Georgia Tech’s Sam Nunn School of International Affairs, which is part of the Ivan Allen College. And we look forward to having the Senator spend a little more time on campus in the future, which will be a boon to faculty and especially to students.

Since Senator Nunn agreed to join the faculty and to allow us to name our newly created School of International Affairs for him in 1996, the school has more than doubled in size. He has helped to increase the School’s visibility through his involvement with the Sam Nunn/Bank of America Policy Forum, which will be held tomorrow. Other initiatives like the Sam Nunn Security Fellows Program, underwritten by a grant from the MacArthur Foundation, are enabling the school to educate a new generation of scholars and engineers for service as independent international security policy advisors.

Senator Nunn, it is an honor to have you with us today, and we are pleased to recognize your lifetime of service and achievement by awarding you the 2004 Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Progress and Service. At this time I would like to ask Dean Rosser and Senator Nunn to join me at the podium for the presentation of the award.