I’m pleased to welcome all of you to this special ceremony to dedicate the Joseph Brown Whitehead Building, which houses the Dr. Edward Roe Stamps III Health Services. This ceremony commemorates the lives of two very special people who never knew each other, but whose legacies come together in this space on the Georgia Tech campus.

Neither of the individuals we honor is here with us today. Edward Roe Stamps III passed away early last week, and our thoughts and prayers are with the Stamps family during this difficult time. Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans died 50 years ago this year, and it is almost a century since her husband, Joseph Brown Whitehead passed away. But the stories of these individuals are interwoven through Georgia Tech history, and their legacies will live on in the service of our students for many years to come.

Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans’ connection to Georgia Tech dates back to 1909 when Tech President Kenneth Matheson enlisted the help of the Federation of Women’s Clubs of Georgia in a fund-raising campaign to build a small hospital for the students. One of the club leaders in the Atlanta area was Lettie Pate Whitehead, whose husband Joseph had just died three years earlier.

While practicing law in Chattanooga, Tennessee, Mr. Whitehead and a friend had come up with the idea of bottling Coca-Cola, which until that time was strictly a fountain beverage. They had come to Atlanta in 1899 and met with the legendary Asa Candler, who had not been impressed by their idea. But the two young men had persuaded him to give them exclusive rights to bottle and sell Coca-Cola in most of the United States. Joseph Whitehead had taken the southeastern, southwestern and middle western states as his territory, and had moved to Atlanta to establish the Dixie Coca-Cola Bottling Company.

After his untimely death from pneumonia in 1906, his widow immediately stepped in to assume responsibility for the family’s business interests, including overseeing the expanding Coca-Cola bottling operations. She soon proved herself an astute and savvy businesswoman. She not only successfully managed the family’s interests, but also became one of the first women to serve on the board of a major American corporation, serving for almost 20 years on the Board of Directors of the Coca-Cola Company.

Georgia Tech President Matheson explained to Mrs. Whitehead and her colleagues in the Federation of Women’s Clubs that even though Tech students were generally healthy, the school was nevertheless handicapped by its lack of medical facilities. When the occasional contagious illness like measles or mumps would sweep through the campus, a building off campus would have to be rented to serve as a make-do infirmary.

Mrs. Whitehead, who like her husband was very civic-minded, contributed $5,000 to the cause — a significant sum that adjusted for inflation would equal more than $100,000 today. Her initial gift provided the impetus that enabled Tech to raise $15,000 total, and within a year construction
was underway on a two-story brick building on Cherry Street – the building that now houses the dean of students.

The formal dedication of the first Joseph Brown Whitehead Memorial Hospital was held in November of 1911. Tech’s student newspaper, the *Technique*, reported that “the halls and wards were decorated in the school colors, four young ladies presided over the punch bowls, and the Tech orchestra provided music.” President Matheson declared, “In every way the Infirmary is a credit to the school, and better still it is a model in efficiency, both as to prevention and cure of disease.”

This first Joseph B. Whitehead Hospital was under the supervision of a doctor who also had his own private practice, so a leading student from the Emory School of Medicine would be selected to run the day-to-day operations of the infirmary. One of the medical students chosen for that honor was Edward Roe Stamps III, and his time on our campus was the start of a long and fortuitous relationship between the Stamps family and Georgia Tech.

Dr. Stamps’ time on our campus was relatively brief. He went on to become a flight surgeon in the Army Air Corps, then practiced medicine in Waycross and Macon, Georgia. But he never forgot his days in the Georgia Tech infirmary, where he enjoyed getting to know the students and admired the structured and disciplined environment that prepared them to succeed in life. He encouraged his two sons to attend Georgia Tech, and in the process passed on his fondness for the school to the next generation.

As Georgia Tech grew through the years, so did the demands placed on its infirmary. For example, it was totally inadequate to deal with the flu epidemic of 1938 when as many as 500 students got sick. By 1941, the need for a larger facility was noted, and in 1953 a new facility was recommended by consultants from the American College Health Association. Once again it was Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans who came to the rescue.

When she died in 1953, her will dedicated a portion of the investment income from her estate to Georgia Tech, with the provision that the first priority for the use of these funds was either to remodel the old infirmary or build a new one. Ground was broken on Ferst Drive on August 10, 1959, for the second Joseph Brown Whitehead Memorial Hospital. The facility was dedicated on June 23, 1960, and it opened its doors to students on the same day. In addition to twice as many beds as the first infirmary, it featured modern medical equipment and office space for a medical staff that, instead of one Emory intern, included three full-time physicians. It was clearly a significant improvement.

Today, we celebrate yet another significant improvement as we dedicate the third iteration of the Joseph B. Whitehead Hospital. This time we changed the name to the Joseph Brown Whitehead Building, because this beautiful facility is much more than a hospital for sick students. Of course, the Dr. Edward Roe Stamps III Health Services include a wide array of medical services from doctor and dental appointments to X-rays. But they also assist students with fitness and nutrition, and address women’s health issues and the prevention of sexual attacks. A computer lab offers students information ranging from diet to drugs and alcohol, from study skills to lifestyle assessment.
As we dedicate the Joseph B. Whitehead Building, new home of the Dr. Edward Roe Stamps III Health Services, we pay tribute to two families whose generosity has benefited Georgia Tech in many ways.

Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans survived both of her husbands and both of her sons, so prior to her death she established a Foundation to administer her estate for the benefit of charitable and educational institutions – primarily in Virginia, where she was born and raised, and Georgia, where she lived most of her adult life. A portion of the income from her estate, provided through the Lettie Pate Evans Foundation, benefits Georgia Tech in perpetuity.

As a result, she has posthumously become the largest donor in Institute history. In addition to the Joseph B. Whitehead Building, her generosity is recognized in the naming of the oldest and best-known landmark on the Tech campus – the Lettie Pate Whitehead Evans Administration Building, which is topped by the Tech Tower.

The Stamps family has also been generous in its support of Georgia Tech. Hundreds of students participate in intramurals and club sports on Stamps Fields, the largest stretch of artificial athletic turf anywhere in North America. Several of Georgia Tech’s best students are named the Stamps Family President’s Scholars, and the Roe Stamps Teaching Award honors the best faculty in the Ivan Allen College. The family’s gift to this facility commemorates their father’s service in the original Joseph B. Whitehead Memorial Hospital, and is recognized in the naming of the Dr. Edward Roe Stamps III Health Services.

So today we join these two families in commemorating the memories of two special individuals in their lives and in the life of Georgia Tech, and in honoring them by dedicating this beautiful new facility and the expanded health and wellness services it will offer to our students.