Thank you, Dean Giddens. Don was founding chair of our biomedical engineering program before becoming dean of engineering, and he did an exceptional job of getting this academic program off to a fast start, so that it was already ranked among the nation’s leading programs right out of the gate. Today, as we dedicate the U.A. Whitaker Biomedical Engineering Building and the potential it offers our academic and research endeavors, we are also celebrating the success of his leadership.

I also want to thank Ta Resa Wills and our biomedical engineering students for bearing with us through the process of creating an innovative academic program in biomedical engineering and building a permanent home for it. They have not only put up with the implementation of a pioneering new curriculum, but they have also endured early-morning and late-afternoon classes scattered here and there across campus wherever classroom and lab space could be borrowed. I know they were ready for the vision of this facility to become a reality, and are glad to settle into their new permanent home, where they have the tools they need to thrive and grow.

I also want to welcome two new members of our biomedical engineering faculty. Larry McIntire came to us from Rice University, where he chaired the Department of Bioengineering and Institute for Biosciences and Bioengineering. He is a very highly regarded scholar and expert in this field, and we are very pleased and fortunate to have him at Georgia Tech.

Serving as a member of Larry’s faculty is Jim Wagner, a biomedical engineer who had an outstanding career at Johns Hopkins and Case Western Reserve before coming to Atlanta as President of Emory University. I have never had the president of another university on my faculty before, but I am looking forward to working with Jim. Georgia Tech and Emory already have a very close working relationship in biomedical engineering and biotechnology, and having Jim Wagner intimately involved will help to lift that partnership to the next level.

The joint biomedical engineering program between Emory and Georgia Tech not only crossed the traditional boundary between a private and a public institution to build a unique program that neither one of us could have done alone, but it happened with remarkable speed. As I thought back over the events leading up to this day, I realized that this year marks the 15th anniversary of the formation of the Emory/Georgia Tech Biomedical Technology Research Center, which was the very first formal iteration of our working partnership. And that came only two years after Georgia Tech made our first attempt to gather up the biotechnology research that was going on here and there around campus and coordinate it.

In addition to two spectacular buildings, over the past 15 years we have also developed the Petit Institute of Bioengineering and Bioscience, attracted the NSF Center of Excellence in the Engineering of Living Tissues, created numerous endowed chairs for eminent scholars, begun EmTech Bio to promote start-up companies and house incoming firms, and developed a full-fledged academic program with degrees at all levels.
That is an incredible array of accomplishments in a very short time, and a tribute to the high caliber and hard work of the faculty and staff from Emory and Georgia Tech. It is also a tribute to the U.A. Whitaker and the Wallace H. Coulter Foundations, which have had enough faith in our endeavors to make significant investments of resources, and we are grateful for their support.

During this same timeframe, the state of Georgia has emerged as a national leader in biotechnology. Just from 1995 to 2001, Georgia’s biotech companies grew by almost 65 percent, catapulting our state from 16th in the nation to ninth. The states just ahead of us do not have a very big lead on us, and Governor Perdue has declared his intent to continue a strategic focus on biotechnology with the intent of moving even further up the list. Georgia Tech and Emory University will be a driving force in helping the state to reach that goal.

Here at Georgia Tech, and I think Jim Wagner would say the same for Emory, we have a mission to use science and technology to contribute to the quality of life in Atlanta, across the nation, and around the world. And good health is a very important measure of quality of life for people everywhere.

The engine of life is the human body each of us took for granted when we got out of bed this morning. It is not only the world’s most complex machine, with thousands of components that interact in countless interwoven processes, but it is also made of the world’s tiniest machine – the living cell.

We have learned much about human life through the centuries, but there is still much to be learned. The U.A. Whitaker Building is a state-of-the-art resource to help our students and faculty to discover the new knowledge, solutions, and technology that will contribute to the health and quality of human life around the globe.