Thank you, Ed (Reedy). It is exciting to finally arrive at this day. We realize that the dead of winter is not necessarily the most ideal time to be standing around outside, but this building has been long in the making, and now that we are finally ready to begin construction, we couldn’t wait any longer to get started.

This facility would not have been possible without the strong support of Georgia’s food processing industry. I especially want to thank the 16 companies that have contributed $1.5 million toward the construction of this facility. They are represented here today, and they will become partners with us, participating on the facility’s industrial advisory board and helping to shape our endeavors.

This facility would also not have been possible without the support of the University System and the State of Georgia, which contributed $4.8 million toward its cost. And we are honored to have Chancellor Tom Meredith of the University System and State Representative Richard Royal, a great Georgia Tech alumnus, here with us this morning.

This is a historic day for Georgia Tech for several reasons. First of all, this is the first state-funded Georgia Tech Research Institute building to be built in several decades. GTRI is the non-profit research arm of Georgia Tech. It conducts about $100 million of research annually for more than 200 clients in industry and government. And among the industries it serves is the food processing industry.

The GTRI Opto-Electronics, Environment and Materials Lab has had a food processing technology division for many years. And what it does, is to look all across campus at the rich array of technologies that are being developed at Georgia Tech in a wide range of fields and sort out the ones that might prove useful in food processing. Then it works to adapt and apply those technologies to processing food.

For example, biosensors can be adapted to detect e-coli bacteria in meat. Digital video and computer vision technologies can be utilized to do sizing, grading, and quality inspection of food products – speeding up the process and reducing the handling of food by humans. Robotics techniques developed for manufacturing plants can be adapted to poultry processing.

These are just a few examples of the exciting research already underway at Georgia Tech that will expand when this new facility becomes available. It is an interdisciplinary endeavor that involves both students and faculty from biology, chemistry, electrical and computer engineering, chemical engineering, industrial and systems engineering, mechanical engineering, and environmental engineering.

This building is unique in the nation. In addition to serving Georgia’s food processing industry, it will help to strengthen Georgia’s role and reputation as a center of excellence for food
processing technology. Georgia Tech is already a recognized leader in poultry processing technology and is rapidly gaining recognition for its research in other types of food processing technology. This new facility will give Georgia a higher profile as the place people look to, to learn about the latest technology in food processing.

We are honored to have Chancellor Thomas C. Meredith with us for this special occasion. Dr. Meredith just celebrated his first year on the job at the beginning of this month, and we are already experiencing the benefit of his knowledge and experience. The Food Processing Technology Building will clearly contribute to economic development in Georgia, and at this time I would like to ask Chancellor Meredith to say a few words about how it fits into the broader economic development efforts of the University System of Georgia. Chancellor Meredith…

(MEREDITH SPEAKS)

Our other very special guest is State Representative Richard Royal, a Georgia Tech alumnus who has contributed to this Institute in so many ways over the years. He is celebrating his 20th anniversary as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives this year, and we appreciate his leadership in financial matters and in economic development through the past two decades. Representative Royal…

(ROYAL SPEAKS)