REM團隊會議 BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH
Opening of Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center
September 4, 2003

Thank you, Susan (Hill). This is a very exciting day for us, as we mark the official opening of the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center.

After the Downtown Connector was built, separating Georgia Tech from Midtown Atlanta, the property where we are today deteriorated rapidly, and for many years it remained an eyesore of vacant lots and abandoned buildings. Then Georgia Tech made a strategic decision to purchase the land, and in conjunction with area businesses and the Midtown Alliance neighborhood organization, we developed a plan for its use. Even the city of Atlanta and the state of Georgia eventually became participants, especially in the ongoing effort to improve the Fifth Street Bridge, which, when it is completed, will transform this back door to the front door of Georgia Tech’s campus.

Over the past three years, more than $300 million has been poured into the construction of a complex of buildings totaling more than 2.5 million square feet and lining either side of Fifth Street between the Connector and the Biltmore. Technology Square gathers Georgia Tech’s economic development resources in a place where our students, faculty, and staff can be incorporated into and contribute to the city’s economic heartbeat and help to drive the development of a signature technology corridor for Atlanta and Georgia. Technology Square also includes wide, pedestrian-friendly sidewalks and a number of retail outlets, anchored by Barnes & Noble @ Georgia Tech to serve our students, faculty, and staff and Midtown workers and residents alike.

Right in the middle of this nexus of education, research, economic development, retail outlets and global outreach, we built a 252-room hotel with 21,000 square feet of meeting space. At the highest level, this beautiful new addition to our campus will enable us to host high-profile, some might even say glamorous, events with the potential to attract national and even international attention. We had begun to do some of this in recent years, hosting special events for the U.S. Council on Competitiveness on e-commerce and on its Cluster Study. But we have been severely handicapped by the lack of appropriate facilities both to hold conference sessions and to house our guests.

This beautiful new facility offers us an opportunity to hold conferences and host guests both in style and at a location where they can easily tour our campus and engage our students and faculty. And because the Georgia Tech hotel is tied to our Global Learning Center, we also have the opportunity to take our events to the world and to bring the world to the hotel.

You will see this happen next month, when we hold the Grand Opening for all of Technology Square. On October 23rd, we have planned an all-day symposium on the role of technology in the global economy. The featured speakers include Mike Duke, the head of WalMart U.S.; Duane Ackerman, the head of Bell South; and Deborah Wince-Smith, the head of the U.S. Council on Competitiveness.
The Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center also offers a myriad of new opportunities at the more ordinary level of our daily lives. It is a special place for faculty retreats and alumni events, and for our many fans who come to campus for athletic events or cultural events at the Ferst Center. As an integral component of Technology Square, the hotel will be surrounded by the daily activities not only of Georgia Tech’s students, faculty, and staff, but also the employees and residents of Midtown.

Universities have traditionally been focused inward, and that used to be true of Georgia Tech. In our early years we had a fence around our campus. Then the construction of Interstate 75/85 to our east and the Techwood Homes housing project to our south cut us off from both downtown and Midtown. When I returned to campus as President in 1994, I met with Central Atlanta Progress and discovered we were not on their map. Then I met with the Midtown Alliance and discovered we were not on their map. It was kind of discouraging. We’re a pretty highly regarded university, and I didn’t understand why no one wanted us.

Today, that has changed. The edges of our campus are becoming blurred as we reach out to our neighbors and work together with them to create a better quality of life for all of us. Technology Square bridges the gap between Georgia Tech and Midtown Atlanta in a partnership that benefits both of us and makes sense in many ways.

The Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center is an integral part of that partnership. It fills a huge need for Georgia Tech as well as serving the visitors, businesses and residents of Midtown. We are very pleased to join with all of you in celebrating its opening.