I am delighted to welcome all of you to this ground-breaking celebration for the Molecular Science and Engineering Building. This is the fourth and final building of the Biotechnology Campus, and it has been exciting to see this new complex morph in ten years from little more than an idea to growing like a phoenix before our eyes.

Seeing this site today, one can hardly visualize its past. One hundred and forty years ago, it stood in the center of a Civil War battlefield as two mighty armies fought the Battle of Atlanta. In the 1930s it was added to the periphery of a growing campus of an institution known then as the Georgia School of Technology. Fast forward to ten years ago, and the campus of the Georgia Institute of Technology had finally grown around it, but it was home to an undistinguished small highway materials building and an odd lot of other structures and storage areas. The highway materials building was so old that a young student named Wayne Clough took courses in it. I would note that twenty years after I graduated from Tech I learned that all of that white stuff that used to fall from the roof of the building onto our desks was asbestos. The stuff was so pervasive I think it helped me build up an immunity to any side effects.

Today this site and the buildings it serves is testimony to a dramatic change taking place at Georgia Tech. Far from its past incarnations, it is now home to what we term the Biotechnology Complex which is steadily helping move Georgia Tech toward the realization of our long-term goal of defining the technological university of the 21st century. The site and the buildings on it offer hope of future developments that will help save our fragile environment, lead to cures to deadly diseases, and create new technology beyond our ability to imagine it. Needless to say, its greatest days lie ahead.

The Biotechnology Campus is physical testimony to the rapidly growing strength of our sciences, but it also serves to align and link the sciences with our already world class programs in engineering. It is in this linkage that the great discoveries of the future will come. It is our ability to actually achieve this linkage that separates us from those who talk about doing it, but never get there. This campus is unique in that it physically brings together students and faculty around broad topics and problems, something that has been positively reported upon by a number of national and international publications.

Within the walls of the buildings of the campus are faculty and students working in emerging fields like biotechnology, sustainable technology, photonics and nanotechnology. All stand to have a remarkable impact on our lives and the way we live.

This fourth building of the campus, the Molecular Science and Engineering Building, will provide an interdisciplinary environment for students and faculty to examine and explore materials at the atomic and molecular level. It will dovetail with the Nanotechnology Research Center, which we hope to have under construction soon across the street and which will offer
specialized cleanroom capabilities needed for the faculty who will occupy this building. Taken together they will form a platform that will have few equals in the world.

The Molecular Science and Engineering project also incorporates a number of interesting special features. It is well known that many a great idea comes when talented people of different backgrounds find a place where they can exchange thoughts informally. So this building will include a café/coffee house for the residents of the entire biotechnology campus. Also, the grounds will incorporate the visual portal to the Biotechnology Courtyard that will enhance the open space in the middle of the four buildings of the campus. Eventually, on the north side of this new building, the grounds will merge with those of the EcoCommons, a greenway that will be created over time to run east-west across campus, passing through the Glade behind the President’s Home.

As you can see, there are many interesting and innovative concepts incorporated in this project. Many Georgia Tech people deserve recognition for their role in visualizing the Molecular Science and Engineering Building and the Biotechnology Complex and bringing it to this important stage. Among these are Provost Jean-Lou Chameau, Dean of Sciences Gary Schuster, and Dean of Engineering Don Giddens, who helped create the vision for the buildings and are bringing together the talent that will help realize their potential. A key role was also played by the faculties of our science and engineering programs, who pooled their ideas to shape the vision and who embraced an entrepreneurial approach to working together. Finally, there is the Georgia Tech project team, led by Senior Vice President Bob Thompson, who can be credited with the hard and creative work for making the vision a reality. I would like to express my thanks to all of these players on behalf of Georgia Tech and future generations of faculty and students.

Then we should thank those who are taking our dreams and visions to make it happen:
The program manager: Staubach Company – please stand.
The architect: CUH2A – please stand.
The contractor: Turner Construction – please stand.

This facility is also unique in that no state funds are involved in its construction, but rather a significant portion of the cost derived from contributions to Georgia Tech. We are deeply grateful to those of you who have contributed and those who have worked to help us raise the funding. I especially want to thank Cherry Emerson, Pat Nettles, Scientific Atlanta – represented here today by Allen Ecker, Bill McCargo, and Larry Bradner – Glen Robinson, and Jack Kelly.

We still have some work to do to finish up the fund raising, so if more of you would like to contribute, please see Vice President for Development Barrett Carson.

At this time, it is my pleasure to recognize one of the state’s top leaders in higher education and a friend of Georgia Tech, the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia, Dr. Tom Meredith, and invite him to say a few words.

(MEREDITH speaks)
Thank you, Chancellor Meredith for those words of congratulations and for the broader support that you and the Board of Regents provide for our endeavors.

At this time I would like to introduce College of Engineering Dean Don Giddens.

(GIDDENS speaks, introduces Schuster. SCHUSTER speaks.)

Thank you, Dean Schuster.

And now I invite all of you to join us outside for a ceremonal groundbreaking. As you can see, we were eager to begin construction as soon as possible and work is already underway on the building. So we will celebrate with a ceremonal shoveling at the platform in front of the construction site.

Afterward, please return to the Ford Building Atrium for refreshments.