

REMARKS BY GEORGIA TECH PRESIDENT G. WAYNE CLOUGH  
Present Distinguished Faculty Award to Jim Foley  
Faculty-Staff Honors Luncheon, April 10, 2008

I want to begin by paying tribute to the classes of 1934 and 1940, who provided us with the means to honor and reward outstanding performances by the Georgia Tech faculty. These alumni recognized the important role our faculty played in giving them the education that enabled them to succeed, and the endowments they created make Georgia Tech's top faculty awards possible.

With so many excellent faculty to choose from, narrowing the field down to one person to receive Georgia Tech's highest faculty honor is always a challenge. Every year I am always impressed and amazed at the incredible caliber of faculty we have here at Georgia Tech. The people I have had the opportunity to honor through the presentation of this award through the years are truly incredible, not only as experts in their fields, but also as human beings. It's been an honor for me to have been associated with all of them and with all of you for the past 14 years. And it is the people that I will miss the most as I leave Georgia Tech.

The recipient of this year's Distinguished Professor Award is a founding pioneer in two broad but related fields in computing. First, he is a pioneer in computer graphics and co-author of the definitive textbook, which is used internationally and has been translated into seven different languages. He has received the top award in computer graphics research – the Coon Award – from the Association for Computing Machinery.

And second, he shaped the field of human-computer interaction, known as HCI, from its earliest beginnings into a broad and rich field of study. In fact, in presenting him with the Lifetime Achievement Award in Human-Computer Interaction, the Association for Computing Machinery said, "It is difficult to think of anyone who had a larger role in the institutionalization of HCI as a discipline."

That is how the world of computing sees Jim Foley, who holds the Stephen Fleming Chair in Telecommunications – as an award-winning pioneer and prolific and significant contributor to the major forums for research in graphics and HCI. And his papers are frequently cited as seminal.

Here at Georgia Tech, we are fortunate to have a more personal view. Those who know him well report that he inspires students and colleagues to expand their thinking and to

challenge their assumptions... and that he mentors students and young faculty, and is always interested in the well-being of his colleagues. A variety of student groups and associations have presented him with awards recognizing him as an inspirational teacher who is committed to his students, and whose example is most likely to make students want to grow up to be professors.

His colleague in the College of Computing Mark Guzdial says, "Jim is my role model of what a professor can be – a highly regarded researcher, a skilled teacher, and one of the kindest human beings I have ever met."

His former Ph.D. student Krisha Bharat, who is better known as the creator of Google News, says, "I owe a lot of my professional success to Jim, as do many people who revere him as a guide, builder, and visionary. He has made Georgia Tech a leading light in the human-computer interaction community – both in industry and academia – and has helped launch many successful careers."

Jim Foley earned his bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from Lehigh University. Then he went to graduate school at the University of Michigan, where he took an early course from computing pioneer Bert Herzog and was hooked. He subsequently earned a Ph.D. in computer information and control engineering.

As he has moved through his career, Jim has had one foot in academia and the other in private industry, and his contributions have enriched both of these arenas. On his resume, periods of work at Information Control Systems in Ann Arbor, the Census Bureau in Washington, D.C., and Mitsubishi Electric, are interspersed with stints on the faculty of the Technical University of Berlin in Germany, the University of North Carolina, George Washington University, and Georgia Tech. In fact, he has been on the Georgia Tech faculty twice – before and then after he worked for Mitsubishi Electric as CEO of the Information Technology Center America.

During his first round on the Georgia Tech faculty, he founded the Graphics, Visualization, and Usability Center, known around campus as GVU. The expertise with which he developed GVU quickly catapulted Georgia Tech into the national and even international forefront of both graphics and HCI.

Today GVU is a vibrant center with more than 50 active faculty from computing, digital media, psychology, music technology, biomedical engineering, assistive technology, industrial design, and international affairs – a truly rich interdisciplinary mix. At its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration last fall, the Center announced the launch of the Foley Scholars

Endowment. Since then, gifts from more than 60 of Jim's colleagues, family, friends, and former students have flowed in to support talented student researchers.

In the meantime, Jim – not being content to rest on his laurels as a pioneer in just two major fields of computing – has moved on to plow new ground. He now runs Georgia Tech's Learning Technologies Lab.

Despite the fact that universities have education as a primary mission, they pay remarkably little attention to the process of teaching and learning outside of traditional schools of education. Georgia Tech is an exception to that rule, not only because of our Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning, but also because of creative, curious faculty like Jim Foley in the Learning Technologies Lab.

His goal is to increase active learning and student engagement in the classroom, and his efforts have a dual focus. First, he is focused on the design, implementation, and evaluation of educational tools based on computer science and technology. And second, he is building a Human-Centered Computing Educational Digital Library to serve as a resource to students and faculty.

Jim is a Fellow of both the Association for Computing Machinery and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and earlier this year he was elected to the National Academy of Engineering. He has served on many boards and committees over the years, including extended leadership with Computer Research Associates, the leading voice of computing research in Washington, D.C. But the committee I am most grateful that he was willing to serve on was the search committee that brought me to Georgia Tech as president.

It is my honor to present Dr. James Foley with the 2008 Georgia Tech Distinguished Professor Award.