GEORGIA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
TWO HUNDREDTH AND THIRTIETH COMMENCEMENT EXERCISE
FERST CENTER FOR THE ARTS

April 23, 2008, 7:00 P.M.

(Faculty and President’s Party will assemble at 6:00 p.m. in the Richards Gallery in the Ferst Center for the Arts).

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Induction into Mr. C. Meade Sutterfield, Class of 1972
Alumni Association Chair, Georgia Tech Alumni Association

Alma Mater Al Enger

Faculty Recessional Georgia Tech Commencement Ensemble

"Ramblin' Wreck" Graduates and audience
Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Will everyone please stand for the reflection by Rev. Al Lacour, Georgia Tech’s campus minister for Internationals, RUF - International, and remain standing for our national anthem.

Please be seated. Once again, good evening. It is my pleasure to welcome everyone to Georgia Tech’s two-hundred thirtieth commencement exercises. This spring we are celebrating the largest commencement in Georgia Tech history, with the individual recognition of about 2,300 students. Fortunately for you, the master’s and undergraduate degrees will be awarded on May 3. This special ceremony this evening focuses on awarding 135 Ph.D. degrees.

This ceremony takes me back to when I completed my own PhD at U-Cal Berkeley. The difference between then and now is greater than simply the years that have elapsed, because when I finished in 1969 more things than just academics were happening on Berkeley’s campus. To file my dissertation I had to design a travel route around the demonstrations and figure out how to avoid pockets of tear gas. Nevertheless, I look back on my years in graduate school as some of the most intellectually stimulating and satisfying experiences of my life. Lots of great colleagues, wonderful faculty, and all of us involved in creative research.
Today you are probably feeling a great sense of relief from the stress of theses, dissertations, and comprehensive and oral exams. But for the rest of your life you will look back and value the experience of these years. And you will discover that graduate school will continue to shape your life in ways that you do not yet anticipate.

I can tell you from personal experience that the level of freedom to develop your mind and pursue your interests during graduate study is rare. The pure intensity of investigating a tough problem for days and weeks at a time and finding a solution, is intoxicating. And, if you are like me, the friends you made during this time will be lifelong.

Today, as we celebrate the successful conclusion of one chapter of your lifelong education, it is important to acknowledge that you have not done it alone. With you every step of the way – at least in spirit – were your parents and your spouses, who made all the difference in your success. The faculty and staff of Georgia Tech and our graduates would like to thank you for your support. Would our parents and spouses please stand so that we may recognize you.

(LEAD APPLAUSE)

Additional support for our graduates came from the Georgia Tech faculty. I know that when you got papers or tests back you did not always feel loved by the faculty, but today they are here to testify that you earned their respect. So now is the time for all of our graduates to say thanks for all the help they received from the faculty and I would like to ask the entire faculty present today to rise and be recognized.

(LEAD APPLAUSE)

Of course, those who deserve the most recognition on this momentous day are the graduates, who entered this room as students and who will leave as Georgia Tech alumni. Would all of you please stand so that we may recognize you and your achievement?
We have had many prominent and noteworthy commencement speakers through the years, but I cannot remember one who has touched the lives of our graduate students more directly than our speaker today.

The National Science Foundation is the only federal agency that funds research and education in all fields of science and engineering except for medicine, and NSF grants support roughly 200,000 scientists, engineers, educators, and students across the nation. Here at Georgia Tech, NSF is our single largest research sponsor, providing $45 million last year for research that involved many of you. At any given time, about 1,000 Georgia Tech graduate students are benefiting from NSF support, either through scholarships and fellowships, or through research assistantships funded from NSF contracts and grants.

Dr. Arden Bement is in his fourth year as the director of the NSF. He was appointed to the directorship by President Bush in the fall of 2004 and sworn in on November 24th, after serving as acting director for most of that year. And the nation is very fortunate to have someone with his breadth of experience at the helm of the NSF.

The National Science Foundation does not conduct any research, but rather guides and supports frontier research conducted by universities and non-profit organizations. Its divisions range across biology, computer science, engineering, geosciences, the physical sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences, including economics and behavioral sciences. The research funded through these divisions stretches from Antarctica to the jungles of New Guinea… from under the ocean to outer space… from stem cells to climate change… from solving cybersecurity problems to applying abstract math to the treatment of cancer.
In addition to thinking broadly across the many disciplines that the NSF engages, Arden Bement also has to think strategically. As NSF director, he serves ex officio on the National Science Board, of which I am also a member. And his job, together with the Board, is to advise Congress and the President on science and technology research. So, he provides advice and leadership in thinking strategically about how frontier research across many disciplines can be orchestrated to serve the best interests of the United States in the context of a global economy.

Keeping U.S. science and engineering well-positioned on the breaking frontier in today’s world requires an international mindset. And Dr. Bement is increasingly looking for ways to encourage scientists and engineers in the United States to engage in collaborative international research.

Dr. Bement’s service as director of NSF caps a long career in industry, government, and academia. Prior to coming to NSF, he served as director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology in the Department of Commerce. And we knew him at Georgia Tech in that capacity as well, because NIST is one of our research sponsors. This agency is presently providing $9 million for seven research projects here at Tech.

Dr. Bement has also been Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for research and engineering and director the Office of Materials Science for DARPA. He has consulted with the Argonne National Lab and the Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Lab.

His most recent position in academia was David A. Ross Distinguished Professor of Nuclear Engineering and head of the School of Nuclear Engineering at Purdue University. He has also been on the faculty of MIT along the way. In the private sector, he has held positions of leadership at companies like TRW, Battelle Northwest Labs, and GE.
Dr. Bement holds degrees in metallurgy engineering at all three levels, with a bachelor’s degree from the Colorado School of Mines, a master’s degree from the University of Idaho, and a Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

It has been my privilege to work together with him in several arenas. In addition to our service together on the National Science Board, he is also a member of the National Academy of Engineering, and I have appreciated his good work in this organization as well.

It is my great pleasure to introduce Dr. Arden Bement to deliver this evening’s commencement address.

(DR. BEMENT’S REMARKS)

Thank you, Dr. Bement, for taking time to speak to our PhD graduates and their families. To show our appreciation, I would like to present you with this special gift.

(PRESENT GIFT)

We come now to the time that all of you have been waiting for – the conferring of your degrees. Dr. Mark Allen, Senior Vice Provost for Research and Innovation, will present the candidates for the doctor of philosophy degree.

(Dr. Allen) Will the candidates for the doctoral degrees please rise.

(Dr. Allen) Mr. President, I have the honor of presenting to you for the doctoral degrees those candidates who have completed all requirements for those degrees.
Upon the recommendation of the faculty of the Georgia Institute of Technology and by authority of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia, I confer upon each of you the degree of doctor of philosophy with all the rights, privileges, and responsibilities thereunto appertaining.

Congratulations on your earning of Georgia Tech's highest academic degree. Will you please come forward.

( Dr. Allen presents diplomas, Dr. Clough shakes hands, and advisors step on stage to hood their students.)

Please join me in congratulating these doctoral graduates.

(LEAD APPLAUSE)

Near the close of the 1800s, a young man sent a sheaf of poems to the foremost American writer of the day to be critiqued. Ralph Waldo Emerson read the manuscript, which was entitled “Leaves of Grass” and was destined to become one of America’s best-loved volumes of poetry. And he wrote back to the young Walt Whitman: “I greet you at the beginning of a great career.”

As I look out over this sea of newly minted Georgia Tech alumni, I echo his words. I greet you at the beginning of a great career. As of this moment, you are no longer merely graduate students. You are the scholars and technological leaders of tomorrow… the role models for future generations of aspiring scientists and engineers.

I would like to offer my personal congratulations on your accomplishment in attaining a degree from one of the top institutions of higher education in the nation. It was true for
me and it will be even more true for you that your degree from Georgia Tech will open
doors for you.

You have helped Tech achieve the highest national rankings of its storied history. So you
can see that you are leaving our campus with a degree that means something special. Still,
the pace of change today means that education has become a “K to Gray” activity.
Anyone who does not continue to learn will be left behind, so I encourage you to never
stop learning.

You are primed to be the technological leaders of tomorrow. Nurture your talents,
balance your career with your family and service to your community, and you will
become one of those Tech graduates we read about and brag about as great success
stories. I wish you all the best in the future!

To induct our graduates into this special group, I would like to present Mr. C. Meade
Sutterfield, class of 1972. He is a private equity investor and also advises venture capital
firms. As chair of the Georgia Tech Alumni Association, Meade will welcome the
members of this graduating class into the fellowship of Tech.

(Mr. Sutterfield)  Induction of graduates into the Alumni Association

(Dr. Clough)

We invite all of you to join us immediately after this ceremony for a special reception in
honor of today’s graduates and their families and friends. The reception will be held in
the atrium of the Smithgall Student Services Building, located in front of the Ferst Center.

I would like to express my appreciation to the Georgia Tech Music Department for their
participation in our program this morning. Thanks also to Dr. Cecilia Montes-Alcala for
calling the graduates’ names. And many thanks to all my associates for arranging this
important event.

At this time, Alex Enger will lead us in the alma mater, followed immediately by the faculty recessional. The graduates and the audience are requested to remain standing for the faculty recessional. Then I invite all of you to join in the singing of the Ramblin' Wreck, which will accompany the student recessional.

Thank you for your attendance this evening.

(At the end of the alma mater, the mace bearer will be the first one off the stage. Dr. Clough will follow immediately, then the remainder of the President’s Party, Deans, and Faculty.)