The Tenth Anniversary of the Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering  
April 22, 2008  
A Message from Wayne Clough

It is a joyful day for me, because it is time to celebrate my wife’s birthday with friends who have traveled far to be with us, and it is a day for many of my friends and colleagues to gather at dinner to celebrate the founding of the Emory/Georgia Tech Coulter Department of Biomedical Engineering. While I am not able to attend your dinner, I am proud to have been one of the co-conspirators who helped birth the Coulter Department and I want to send my heartiest congratulations to all.

It was a risky proposition to imagine that two universities, one private and one public, could partner in a way none before had, but those present at the time believed it could be done. It helped that we had the right man to lead it in Don Giddens, with the able assistance of his Emory partners in Mike Johns and Tom Lawley along with two highly supportive Georgia Tech provosts in Mike Thomas and Jean-Lou Chameau. In addition to these leaders, many outstanding faculty helped to drive the initiative forward.

While success might have been accomplished just by the will of the two institutions and the leadership team, we were blessed with remarkably timely and generous philanthropic support from the Whittaker and Coulter Foundations. Their major gifts supported a new and innovative building and provided a programmatic endowment for the Department. Not only did the gifts, shall we say, hit the spot, but we were able to name the Department for Wallace Coulter – a fitting tribute to Georgia Tech’s pioneering alumnus whose inventions demonstrated to the world what biomedical engineering could do for humankind. In addition we gained the support and advice of the president of the Coulter Foundation, Sue Van, who has been a true friend throughout.

Within a remarkably short time the wisdom of this joint venture showed its merits through the creation of joint degree programs, the attainment of high national rankings, the hiring of an outstanding group of faculty, and the winning of not just one, but several national centers of excellence. We were also able to hire Larry McIntire, one of the nation’s top biomedical engineers, to replace Don when he became the Dean of the College of Engineering. In the space of a short time, the Coulter Department has become one of the most attractive to the entering undergraduate students at Georgia Tech, while its graduate programs attract a large and growing number of top MS and PhD students.

The story does not end there, since Emory had the wisdom of hiring one of our biomedical engineering faculty as its new president – Jim Wagner. As a president of one of the other partner institution I am indebted to Jim as well as his predecessor, Bill Chace, who both have been steadfast in support of the Coulter Department.

As I head off to my new career in the Smithsonian Institution I will look back on the creation of the Coulter Department as one of the highlights of my tenure as president of Georgia Tech. I wish all of you at the dinner the very best and extend my congratulations...
to my colleagues from both Emory and Georgia Tech who have made it such a remarkable success. Most notable, however, I believe that this is just the start of something big.