New Senior Vice President Joins Tech

There’s one thing in particular that Dr. Amir Rahnamay-Azar, Georgia Tech’s new senior vice president for administration and finance, is looking forward to experiencing this fall — watching the leaves change.

“Living in southern California, you don’t get to see the leaves change color in the fall,” he said. “Palm trees don’t really change colors.”

Before arriving at Tech, Rahnamay-Azar served as associate senior vice president for operations at the University of Southern California (USC).

He joined USC in 1997 and served in progressively more responsible roles until his most recent appointment at the university, which began in July 2005. In his role at Tech, Rahnamay-Azar will oversee and manage a wide range of business and financial functions, including financial systems planning, disbursement services, budgeting, and sponsored project accounting, that support the agenda of the Division of Administration and Finance and the Institute as a whole.

One initial goal is to streamline and formalize the decision support infrastructure used by the President’s Office, which provides information that allows for data-driven, informed decisions.

‘Under Steve Swant’s leadership, I look forward to working with him and his team in evaluating our existing processes, implementing improvements and instituting new key initiatives, such as decision support,” Rahnamay-Azar said.

Since arriving at Tech almost a month ago, he has had an opportunity to start meeting faculty and staff and has been pleased with everyone’s collegial nature.

“There’s a sense of community here, and I feel like everyone has the Institute’s best interest in mind,” Rahnamay-Azar said. “I look forward to working closely with my colleagues across campus to pursue new and different ways of achieving institutional effectiveness.”

www.admin-fin.gatech.edu
The Department of Biomedical Engineering welcomes Debra Augusta, an assistant professor at Harvard University, as she speaks about “Cerebrospinal Fluid: A Drug Delivery Solution to a Dynamic Problem” at 11 a.m. in room 1103, Whitaker Building. www.bme.gatech.edu

October 28
Georgia Tech’s ADAPT/TS-Disability Services Program for Students welcomes Rebecca Palapart to speak on “Combating the Stigma of Mental Illness: Unique Approaches through Public Policy and the Media” at 1 p.m. in the Crescent Room, Student Center Commons. www.adapt.ts.gatech.edu

October 29-30
The Women’s Resource Center will host the 2010 Women’s Leadership Conference Friday and Saturday’s events will be held at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center and Saturday’s sessions will be at the Student Center. www.gtwlc.com

November 3
The Center for International Strategy, Technology and Policy, the College of Management, and the China Research Center will hold a lunch and lecture with Yasheng Huang discussing “Chinese Economy: Dynamics and Challenges.” The event will be held at noon in the Gordy Room of the Wardlaw Center. RSVP by noon on Nov. 2. www.cistp.gatech.edu

FACULTY/STAFF DEVELOPMENT

October 26
The Georgia Tech Library will host a class on “Blogging Basics” at the Homer Rice Center at 4 p.m. www.library.gatech.edu

October 28
The Georgia Tech Library will host a class on “Introduction to Dreamweaver” at the Homer Rice Center at 4 p.m. www.library.gatech.edu

HEALTH AND WELL BEING

October 25-28
A campus-wide blood drive will be held in the Student Center Ballroom each day from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Participants will receive a T-shirt, snacks and a chance to win one of two pairs of roundtrip Delta Air Lines tickets. To sign up, visit the website and enter sponsor code “gatech.” www.redcrossblood.org

October 26
Flu shots will be available for $25 (no cash) from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. and from 2 to 6 p.m. in room 343, Student Center Commons. health.gatech.edu

Programs Support Student Success

It’s true that students need to take the initiative to reach out to their instructors when coursework gets challenging. But it’s also key for faculty members to know what resources are available to assist them.

“We enroll very bright, talented and capable students,” said Steven Girardot, director of the Office of Success Programs at Tech. “And as they transition into our rigorous curriculum and throughout their education, I believe that it is important that we offer programs and services that support their diverse learning needs.”

This year, Tech’s first-year retention rate and six-year graduation rate are at all time highs of 94.2 percent and 79.7 percent, respectively.

More in-depth information regarding these retention rates will be available in early 2011. Although many departments working together collaboratively have influenced these high rates, the Office of Success Programs is a piece of the retention puzzle that all faculty and staff should be aware of.

In case a student comes to you seeking assistance, here are a few programs to keep in mind:

GT 1000. “One challenge many new freshmen face when they come to Tech is learning time management skills,” Girardot said. “They’re used to being in high school for seven to eight hours a day — so with only 12 to 16 hours of classes a week, having a lot of unstructured time is a change.” Time management is just one of the topics taught in GT 1000, Tech’s freshman seminar course. The course, taught by both faculty and administrators, meets weekly and covers topics such as study skills, co-op, study abroad, and career and major exploration. Freshman students may take the course during either fall or spring semester. This fall, 82 sections of the course are being offered, with more than 70 percent of the freshman class enrolled, Giradot said.

1-to-1 Tutoring. “The first step that I advise students to take if they have questions about their courses is to meet with their professors and/or teaching assistants during office hours,” Girardot said. “The next step I encourage is to take advantage of the numerous free tutoring programs on campus. In Success Programs, we offer 1-to-1 Tutoring, where students may sign up for an individual tutoring appointment.” The service is free and is offered in more than 60 courses, with an emphasis on introductory freshman- and sophomore-level courses. Tutors are undergraduate or graduate students, and students may sign up for tutoring online at the Office of Success Programs’ website.

PLUS Sessions. These peer-led graduate and undergraduate study sessions support students enrolled in historically difficult courses by providing an opportunity for them to work with peer leaders who have successfully completed these courses. PLUS leaders attend the classes and meet with students several times each week. And these sessions aren’t just for students who are struggling — all students enrolled in a PLUS-supported course are encouraged to attend. This fall, PLUS is offered in both Calculus I and II.

Sophomore EXCEL Cohort. The logic behind offering a support program aimed specifically at sophomores is that historically there has been a dip in retention rates between students second and third years, Girardot said. This program is being piloted this fall and is designed to help second-year students who aren’t meeting their own academic expectations. The cohort includes students with a GPA of 2.2 or lower. Participants attend biweekly academic coaching meetings and success skills workshops and complete five hours per week of study hall hours in Office of Success Programs such as 1-to-1 Tutoring or PLUS sessions.

Health Services Offers Free HPV Vaccine

If you are a female faculty or staff member who is 26 years old or younger, listen up.

Stamps Health Services will offer the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, Gardasil, free of charge to students, faculty and staff in room 216 from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 25, 26 and 28. No appointment is necessary.

“The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that at least 50 percent of sexually active men and women will acquire genital HPV at some point in their lives,” said Michelle Cohen, health educator at Health Services. “Most of these people do not have symptoms and don’t know that they have it.”

The HPV vaccine’s purpose is to prevent genital warts and cervical cancer and is effective against four types of HPV (types 6, 11, 16 and 18).

According to Merck, the manufacturer of Gardasil, Types 6 and 11 cause 90 percent of cases of genital warts, and types 16 and 18 cause 73 percent of cases of cervical cancer.

The vaccine is offered in a series of three shots. After receiving a shot in October, patients will return in four to six weeks for the second vaccine and will receive the third shot in the spring.

Although females as young as 9 years old can be vaccinated (before they become sexually active), women who are already sexually active should still consider getting the vaccine.

“Even women diagnosed with HPV will derive some benefit from the vaccine, because a clinician can’t tell which type a woman is infected with, and she is most likely not infected with all types the vaccine protects against,” Cohen added.

It would usually cost a patient $500 to complete the series of three HPV vaccinations, said Dr. Maureen Olson, medical director at Health Services.

However, Health Services is able to offer the shots free of charge thanks to federal stimulus money available from the Fulton County Health Department.

www.preventhpv.gatech.edu
Provost Names Engineering Dean Search Committee

Following the announcement in August that College of Engineering Dean Don Giddens would retire at the end of this academic year, Provost Rafael Bras has named a search committee to begin the process of identifying the College’s next leader.

With more than 60 percent of the students and about half of the tenured and tenure-track faculty at Georgia Tech, the College of Engineering is the largest program of its kind in the country. The committee is expected to meet for the first time later this month, where they will discuss the search process and receive a formal charge from the provost.

“The committee will be charged with articulating the qualities of leadership needed to implement the Institute’s new strategic plan; with screening and interviewing candidates; and with recommending finalists for the position,” Bras said.

An executive search firm will be retained to help facilitate candidate identification and vetting.

Members of the search committee include:

- Mostafa El-Sayed (Chair)
- Regents’ Professor, Chemistry and Biochemistry
- Dean Allford
- Chair, College of Engineering Advisory Board
- Mostafa Ammar
- Regents’ Professor, Computer Science
- Karolyn Babalola
- Graduate Student, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Giselle Bennett
- Director, Electro-Optical Systems Laboratory, GTRI
- Corey Boone
- Undergraduate SGA president
- Barrett Carson
- Vice President, Development
- William Chesborough
- Director of Financial Services and Administration, Mechanical Engineering
- Sam Graham
- Associate Professor, Mechanical Engineering
- Deborah Harris
- Alumna and Georgia Tech Foundation member
- David Ku
- Regents’ Professor, Mechanical Engineering
- Michelle LaPlaca
- Associate Professor, Biomedical Engineering
- Steve McLaughlin
- Vice Provost for International Initiatives
- Shuming Nie
- Professor, Biomedical Engineering
- Elsa Reichmanis
- Professor, Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering
- Stephen Ruffin
- Associate Professor, Aerospace Engineering
- Ken Sandhage
- Professor, Materials Science and Engineering
- Carlos Santamarina
- Professor, Civil and Environmental Engineering
- Jeff Shamma
- Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering
- Sandra Slaughter
- Professor, College of Management
- Julie Swann
- Associate Professor, Industrial and Systems Engineering
- Jeff Wu
- Professor and Associate Chair, Industrial and Systems Engineering
- Jennifer Herazy (ex-officio)
- Assistant Provost
- Marita Sullivan (ex-officio)
- Interim Associate Vice President, Human Resources

REGENTS, continued from page 1

- ADOPTED: A new admissions policy for undocumented students. Specifically, Policy 4.1.6 of the Policy Manual of the Board of Regents states: “A person who is not lawfully present in the United States shall not be eligible for admission to any University System institution which, for the two most recent academic years, did not admit all academically qualified applicants (except for cases in which applicants were rejected for non-academic reasons).”
- POSTPONED: The regents met as a “Committee of the Whole” to review the University of Georgia’s application to expand its engineering degree programs. After discussion, the regents elected to postpone a vote on the proposal until November, when a similar application from Georgia Southern University is on the agenda. The Board will consider both proposals at that time.

BENEFITS, continued from page 1

- Donated Sick Leave Program. Employees will be able to donate unused sick hours to a sick leave pool to be used by other benefits-eligible employees. The pool will cover absence(s) due to illness or injury of the employee or an immediate family member. The policy is applicable to all faculty and staff who earn sick time and have been continuously employed for no less than 12 months. Employees may donate up to 80 hours.
- Faculty and staff are not required to go through the enrollment process unless they want to make changes to their plans, are smokers, are renewing or enrolling in a flexible spending account, wish to donate sick leave, and/or have a dependent age 45 or older and need to provide a social security number for that person.
- Employees can review their benefits and make changes on TechWorks, Ray added. Changes made during this time become effective on Jan. 1, 2011.

www.ohr.gatech.edu/benefits/openenrollment

Got Questions? Come to the Benefits Fair

The annual benefits fair will be held on Wednesday, Nov. 3, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Student Center Ballroom. Representatives from the various benefits plans will be available to answer questions. Complimentary glucose checks and cholesterol screenings will also be offered, and flu vaccines will be available for $25.

Welcome New Editor

Hello, Georgia Tech faculty and staff! My name is Amelia Pavlik, and I’m the new editor of The Whistle and the Daily Digest e-mail. I come to you from the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers Inc., where I’ve worked as an assistant editor for the past three years. In the weeks to come, my goal is to get out of my office in Wardlaw and meet as many of you as possible. Also, I hope to hear your feedback. Whether it’s positive or negative, it’s always welcome. I’d especially like to hear about any of the following:

- Article ideas.
- Events for the calendar.
- New feature ideas.
- What we’re doing right and wrong.

I can be reached by e-mail at editor@comm.gatech.edu and by phone at 404-385-4142. Let’s work together to make this a publication that you look forward to reading every other week.
Grad Returns to Tech to Teach

When Kobi Abayomi set foot on Georgia Tech’s campus as an undergraduate, he was thinking about how to land a job that involved cars—not about becoming a statistician.

Abayomi started off as a physics major but soon realized that the curriculum wasn’t for him. After visiting an optometrist who had a really nice car, Abayomi decided to try his hand at optometry. “Statistics was a prerequisite for the program, and I loved it,” he added. Over the years, Abayomi’s interest in statistics continued to grow, and he now holds a master’s, master’s and a Ph.D. in Probability and Statistics from Columbia University.

Abayomi has also held positions as a visiting professor at Duke University and as a visiting fellow at Stanford University. These days, he is an assistant professor in the statistics group at the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering. Recently, The Whistle sat down with Abayomi for a conversation about research, teaching and his favorite lunch spot. Here’s what he shared.

**Who are your teaching mentors?**

Marla Montesori because she wrote about student self-determination, and Andrew Gelman because he taught me a few tricks for teaching statistics.

**What is your teaching philosophy?**

I wouldn’t assign grades if I didn’t have to. The whole point of grading and testing is to get students to engage themselves in study. The best classes occur after tests when every one has spent time learning the material.

**What is one thing all faculty and staff should do while working at Tech?**

Swim in the Olympic Pool at the Campus Recreation Center and the pool at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center. They’re both impressive.

**Where’s the best place to grab lunch (on or off campus), and what do you order?**

Spoon. I like to order tofu pad thai.

**Tell us something unusual about yourself.**

I have Siberian huskies named “Sasha” and “Trooper” that I rescued using the website www.petfinder.com.

**If you weren’t in your current line of work, what would you be doing?**

I’d be living in Encinitas, Calif., and I’d have a performance shop where I would change automatic transmissions to manual.

**What is your greatest challenge when it comes to teaching, and how have you dealt with it?**

I feel like I want to teach to the student that I was. But, I’ve realized that everyone doesn’t learn the same way, and everyone doesn’t have the same goals as I did (i.e., they don’t want to go to graduate school).

A few things I’ve done to address this issue is I’ve tried to slow down how quickly I go through the course material. I also try to be very clear about what information will be covered on tests, so students know what they should be studying.

**Tell me about your current research.**

I’m analyzing data related to environmental hazards and what areas of the world are most vulnerable. I’m also collaborating with people at Georgia State University’s Law School and the Georgia Innocence Project to determine factors that can identify the wrongfully convicted.

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