The next step in the accreditation process: looking forward

Goal: more undergraduates in research, international education

Sean Selman
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Academic officials hope to boost the number of students involved in undergraduate research and international education through a new set of programs at Georgia Tech.

The initiatives under consideration are proposed aspects of Tech’s Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP), part of the application materials the Institute must submit to the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to remain an accredited university. Associate Provost for Institutional Development Jack Lohmann called the QEP the “forward-looking piece” of the new SACS application process, one that addresses Georgia Tech’s future programs and curriculum rather than its past academic efforts.

“SACS is one of six regional accreditation bodies sanctioned by the U.S. Department of Education,” Lohmann said. “It accredits the entire institution, and our federal funding is dependent on their accreditation.”

The 10-year accreditation cycle of SACS was substantially revamped two years ago, and accreditation approval now requires two reports to the association and a site visit by delegates of the organization, he said.

“The first report is the compliance report. It’s a self-study, and we submitted ours in September,” Lohmann said. “But the second report is new. Called the Quality Enhancement Plan, universities must submit these to SACS officials as a blueprint of future plans that improve the education experiences of students.”

“For Georgia Tech’s QEP, we’ve chosen to focus on enhancing and expanding upon two of the Institute’s strategic initiatives for undergraduates — namely, undergraduate research experiences and international education efforts,” Lohmann said. "Our QEP is due to be delivered in March 2005, and then SACS will conduct a site visit in April 2005."

The final word on Georgia Tech’s accreditation will be decided in December 2005, but consideration of QEP continued, page 3

Parkinson’s treatment shows bilateral benefits for the body

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For many patients with advanced Parkinson’s disease, deep brain stimulation can mean the difference between having difficulty walking and being able to run. Since its approval by the Food and Drug Administration in 1997, the treatment has been used by 20,000 patients with advanced Parkinson’s disease or other movement disorders to help control their symptoms. Recently, a researcher at Georgia Tech discovered that surgically implanting electrical stimulators on just one side of a patient’s brain could help alleviate symptoms on both sides of the body.

The results are published in the October issue of the Journal Motor Control. There are currently two sites in each hemisphere of the brain where stimulation is targeted. In the same study, researchers found no significant difference in motor performance between two groups of patients who received stimulation at either site.
**"QUOTE-UNQUOTE"**

“We are creating more terrorists than we kill. I don’t call that leadership.”
—Robert Kennedy, a professor in the School of International Affairs, during a Democratic rally in Dahlonega earlier this month.

(Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

“We were slapped back into reality real quick. We weren’t very good this morning. The way we played today, we lose.”
—Men’s basketball head coach Paul Hewitt, assessing the team’s performance following the first practice of the new season.

(Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

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**Homecoming 2004**

It was a week of activity that boiled over last weekend as the campus welcomed back alumni for a healthy dose of social events and school spirit. True to this year’s theme: “Superbuzz: Protecting Truth, Justice, and the Yellow Jacket Way,” the football team won its third conference game, beating Duke University 24-7. Below, a student celebrates Tech’s second touchdown, a 20-yard pass from Reggie Ball to Calvin Johnson.

One of the biggest draws of the Homecoming season is the Mini 500, a team event consisting of laps around Peters Parking Deck on a modified tricycle. Winning teams collect points for their organization — fraternity, sorority or student group — as part of a larger competition that also rewards participation and philanthropy.

At the Campanile, the Homecoming Festival had the atmosphere of a fair, as students gorged themselves on a variety of foods and festivities. Here, they compete for prizes in a doughnut-eating contest sponsored by a local radio station.
looked to see if they had any effect on the same extremity, opposite side of stimulation, by approximatively 10 percent to 15 percent by 2010.

Other goals of the QEP's undergraduate research effort would include having more than 70 percent of undergraduates involved in research for more than one term and increasing the length and enhancing the depth of student research experiences overall.

Officials are considering the creation of a concentrated research experience program. Lohmann said. Through this program, students would be involved in a minimum of three semesters of research, culminating in a thesis. Among the goals would be to raise awareness of research on campus, track student participation and monitor the quality of work being conducted.

For the international component of the QEP, Lohmann, director of International Education for Undergraduate Studies and Academic Affairs Bob McNath are leading the effort to increase undergraduate participation in research from its current level of about 19 percent to 50 percent by 2010.

While on stimulation, patients in both groups improved motor performance on the same side of the body. They found that our patients had experienced about a 14 to 17 percent improvement.

Getting substantial improvements on both sides of the body from just one implant is important, because this is brain surgery, said Michael Okun, co-director of the Movement Disorders Center at the University of Florida and co-author of the study.

"We may learn from future studies that not everyone requires two devices, and this will cut the risk for some patients in half," he said.

Patients who had stimulation at the STN or GPi sites, a finding Lohmann believes to be equally important as bilateral stimulation. STN stimulation has been touted as the target of choice, but we found GPi stimulation to be equally effective in improving upper extremity motor function," said Lohmann. "There is some evidence that there are side effects associated with STN stimulation, such as depression and a decrease in working memory, that haven't been found with GPi. Given that evidence and our latest study, we think the current bias towards STN stimulation needs to be reexamined.

For patients, the effects of the stimulators are life changing. Study participant Joel Moss was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1985. He had his first implant, on the left side of his brain, in 1999. He was not told whether he is receiving STN or GPi stimulation so he can continue to participate in clinical studies.

"The pain went away instantly. The tremors aren't even in existence any more. And my balance is good enough to allow me to run," said Moss. "With the stim on, you can be close to normal. With it off, you can be close to vegetative."

The goal would be to increase the quality of international preparation by integrating it into every discipline as a basic degree of competency, Lohmann said. To do this, there's a proposal to create an international degree option — much like the computer education degree option — that would include language proficiency and international studies, overseas work, study or research, and a senior capstone course. The proposal is being considered by Tech's Curriculum Committee, then it must be approved by the Academic Senate. The goal would be to roll out the program by spring 2005, Lohmann said.

For more information, contact the Office of the Associate Provost for Institutional Development at paul.arnold@oit.gatech.edu.

IN BRIEF:

Tech faculty benefits compete favorably with competitors

Georgia Tech's faculty benefits program compared favorably to those of 250 other universities in a recent benchmarking exercise, according to Michael Chang, chair of the General Faculty's Benefits Committee.

In presenting the Committee's annual report to the General Faculty and Academic Senate on Oct. 14, Chang said the only areas where Tech was noticeably weaker than most other universities were sabbaticals and domestic partner benefits. He said the Institute offers benefits to the same-sex domestic partners of employees, provided the employee pays the full cost. To offer benefits beyond this level, Chang said, would require Board of Regents approval and perhaps changes in state law. He also said about one-quarter of the 250 universities responding to the Committee's survey offer domestic partner benefits.

On the issue of sabbaticals, Chang said that, unlike Georgia Tech, all 250 of the surveyed universities offer some formal provision for sabbatical leave. He said there are some barriers to implementing a formal sabbatical policy at Tech, including funding.

The Committee's annual report is available at www.facultysenate.gatech.edu.

PCs go offline, keeping classes on track

It's a familiar scenario: An instructor uploads a presentation to the Web, the students are in their seats, but the classroom PC won't allow a login because the network is down.

Now, the computers in the 250 classrooms currently supported by OIT's Academic Technology Solutions (ATS) have been re-configured with a "dual boot" feature that makes them operable without logging in.

If the login fails, users can re-boot one of these PCs and operate it offline. By restarting the computer, users can select a "non-network mode" that provides access to an essential set of applications, allowing presentations to be run locally.

Only classroom computers supported by OIT — identified as "general purpose" — have been configured this way; the team has identified the systems they support with a set of labels on or near the machine.

More detailed information about service and support is located at www.oit.gatech.edu/technology. For additional information, e-mail the ATS team leader at paul.arnold@oit.gatech.edu.

Landman honored for pioneering work

The American Physical Society has awarded its 2005 Aneesur Rahman Prize for Computational Physics to Regents' Professor Uzi Landman. The citation notes Landman's work in "pioneering computations that have generated unique insights into the physics of materials at the nanometer length scale, thereby fostering new theoretical and experimental research."

The prize will be presented at the APS meeting in Los Angeles in March.

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