Tech Celebrates Past Feats While Embracing an Innovative Future
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As we approach the end of the semester with final exams and commencement, it is appropriate to pause a moment and reflect on what we, as members of the Tech community, have been able to accomplish together this past year, and to highlight some of the challenges that lie ahead.

This year we celebrated Tech’s 125-year anniversary and launched our new 25-year strategic plan designed to lay a foundation for global leadership and position Tech to “define the technological research university for the 21st century.”

I have been pleased with the engagement of the entire Tech community—including our students—to develop and implement strategies and initiatives that will help to bring the five overarching goals of the strategic plan to life.

Just a few of the many initiatives undertaken were exploring the X-College concept and launching an undergraduate leadership program with multidisciplinary minors and a graduate leadership program in biomedical engineering. We also laid the groundwork for the formation of the Center for 21st Century Universities, the Institute for People and Technology (IPAT) and the Institute for Electronics and Nanotechnology (IEN).

Finally, this year we expanded the co-enrollment partnership with Emory and fostered new partnerships, including an agreement with the Woodruff Arts Center to allow students unlimited access to the arts at a deeply discounted rate.

As we commemorate the 50th anniversary of the matriculation of black students at Tech, we are reminded of how far we’ve come, and how much more we need to do to recruit, develop, retain and engage a diverse cadre of students, faculty and staff to create a campus community that exemplifies the best in all of us and fosters inclusive excellence.

I am particularly proud of the leadership role Tech students have taken during the past year. From serving as the lead for the student-focused gubernatorial debate to providing input into the statewide discussion of how best to preserve the HOPE scholarship program. When our students spoke, leaders across the state listened.

It is no surprise that students took the lead in Tech’s response to the Japan crisis and have reached out to the campus community through the TechCares initiative. I am pleased to see SGA formalizing these outreach efforts through TechCares that have included activities such as blood drives and fund raising.

On April 19, the University System Board of Regents set tuition and fees for its member institutions, taking into consideration the needs of institutions, declining direct state support (now at less than 17 percent for Tech), the overall economic condition of the state and the nation, and the many financial challenges our students and their families are facing. The regents voted to approve a three percent tuition increase for resident students as well as an additional $350 special institutional fee per semester for Tech. We realize any increase presents challenges; however, our first priority is to ensure the quality of our research and educational programs and preserve the value of your Tech degree as you prepare for an increasingly competitive and global job market.
We plan to use these funds to hire additional faculty to accommodate our enrollment growth, continue financial aid for our neediest students and support our important academic initiatives, including critical programming for the new Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons.

The solutions to some of society’s most pressing problems will be developed at places like Tech, and we believe that creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship are the engines that will drive economic development in the state and the nation. To this end, we are working to provide even more opportunities for students to foster innovation, such as the InVenture Prize competition for undergraduate students and the Tech Research and Innovation Conference for graduate students.

As we look forward to the opening of the G. Wayne Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons, as well as beautiful surroundings due to renovation on the Campanile, the redesign of Skiles Walkway and a new transit hub, we also celebrate the past, saying goodbye to the Alexander Memorial Coliseum. We will all look forward to seeing the first game in Hank McCamish Pavilion in 2012. The 2011 games will be played off campus, and I hope you will be there to support both the men’s and women’s programs and our new basketball coach, Brian Gregory.

The physical improvements will be reinforced by the continued implementation of our strategic plan and the leadership of our student community. I look forward to working with you as together we design the future of Tech.