

# Notes from the President

## *The Winter Storm*

01/30/2014

The winter storm that quickly dumped snow and ice on the metro Atlanta area last Tuesday afternoon (Jan. 28) has already been dubbed “one of the worst storms in the past two decades.” We have all heard stories about the incredible commute times and other problems that people were forced to endure as a result of the storm and I deeply regret that so many of our Georgia Tech folks were among those negatively impacted. I do, however, want to offer our most sincere thanks for all of the individuals and teams who worked tirelessly during the storm, and are continuing to work to get our campus up and running at full speed again.

Although we all knew a serious weather system was coming, the forecasts changed quickly. The storm front was initially predicted to remain south of Atlanta, but quickly moved north, arriving earlier and resulting in more accumulation than initially suggested by the weather service and radio/television outlets.

As is our practice here at Georgia Tech, we continually monitored the weather in advance of a storm. Our leadership team met twice Tuesday morning to get updates and develop a plan of action, and at 11 a.m. made the decision to close the campus at 1:30 p.m. Shortly after we announced the timing of our campus closure, many other institutions, schools and major employers quickly followed suit. While the conditions were slightly worse and reached a broader area than originally expected or anticipated, the bigger problem, which we did not anticipate, was that the entire city of Atlanta released at approximately the same time. The result was a miserable day, and in some cases night, for many in the Atlanta region, as thousands were stranded for hours in their efforts to get home or to reach family and friends. Even on the best of days, having the entire city get on the roads at the same time would be problematic.

As we continue to hear stories of how long it took for some of our faculty, staff, and students to make it home or to shelter, we are also receiving accounts of many in our campus community who worked together and sacrificed to ensure the safety of not only the people of Georgia Tech, but also many others in the Atlanta community. The Georgia Tech Police Department (GTPD) remained fully staffed and operational throughout the night, and even took in stranded families – the Georgia Tech Hotel and the Hampton Inn on North Avenue provided towels and toiletries for those who were stranded on campus. Our staff from Facilities and Grounds worked throughout the night clearing campus roads, and Parking and Transportation went above and beyond to ensure safe transportation. The Campus Recreation Center provided sleeping bags for stranded students, faculty and staff, and also provided a place where Atlanta Police Department officers could shower and rest. Dining Services helped feed both APD officers and stranded guests in addition to many others in the Tech community. Housing took care of our residents and others. The list goes on and while I could name numerous individuals who went above and beyond, I want to share just one specific example. William Smith, our Emergency Preparedness Project Manager, worked throughout the night here at Tech and was then asked to help in the coordination of the Atlanta Fulton County Emergency Management Operation Center with other state assets, to rescue the Fulton County school students who were stranded on buses throughout the city.

Finally, I want to assure you that I personally, along with the rest of the Institute leadership, hold the safety and well being of our campus community foremost in our thoughts and decisions. It is during times of challenge that the Georgia Tech community shines, and I am grateful to all of you for your continued commitment to the safety and well-being of our community and for all you did help us “weather the storm!” Thank you - stay warm and be safe!

G. P. "Bud" Peterson  
President, Georgia Tech