A student gets in a bubble to play bubble soccer on Tech Green during Pastimes between Class Times, an event co-hosted by the student groups Wreckless and Burdell’s Buddies on Sept. 22. The event was planned to encourage stress-relieving hobbies and give students the opportunity to try something new during breaks between classes. Students, faculty, and staff demonstrated their skills in activities such as music, breakdancing, juggling, and unicycling. Learn more and see more photos at www.c.gatech.edu/pastimes.

Open Enrollment Begins Nov. 2; Materials to be Mailed in October

MYRA OVIATT
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

In just five weeks, Georgia Tech Human Resources kicks off the 2016 Benefits Open Enrollment period. Staff and faculty are encouraged to review current elections and consider future options and changes.

“As a University System of Georgia employee, you have a wide range of benefits available to you,” said Brandon Conkle, director of Total Rewards in Georgia Tech Human Resources. “Open Enrollment is your opportunity to review all the plans and make conscious choices about which programs and benefits make the most sense for you in 2016.”

This year, USG health care options remain the same, though all plans will see a premium increase as the USG moves toward providing for all plans equally in 2017. The benefits team has scheduled information sessions to answer questions and provide in-person assistance. The annual Benefits Fair will take place Wednesday, Nov. 4, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Student Center Ballroom. Employees are also welcome to attend Benefits Fairs at any other USG institution. (View dates at www.usg.edu.)

The Open Enrollment period for 2016 coverage is just two weeks — Nov. 2–13. If you don’t enroll for 2016 benefits, your 2015 coverage will continue at 2016 rates. But, you must re-enroll if you want a flexible spending account in 2016, even if you had one the previous year.

More complete information about plan designs, premiums, and voluntary benefit options will be available Oct. 1 at www.ohr.gatech.edu/openenrollment and www.usg.edu/benefits. A detailed summary booklet will also be mailed to each employee’s home in mid-October.

New this year, Georgia Tech has partnered with the USG’s Shared Services Center to provide individualized support to employees. Representatives will be available Nov. 2–13, from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., with special hours on Saturday, Nov. 7, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The Call Center will also remain open until 8 p.m. on the last two days of Open Enrollment.

2016 Open Enrollment Dates

• Oct. 19: Materials mailed to employee homes
• Oct. 26: Info session, 11:30 a.m., Gondy Room, Wadlow Center
• Oct. 28: Info session, 2:15 p.m., Piedmont Room, Student Center
• Oct. 30: Info session, 12:30 p.m., Room 101, Scheller College of Business
• Nov. 2: Open Enrollment begins
• Nov. 4: Georgia Tech Benefits Fair, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., Student Center Ballroom
• Nov. 13: Open Enrollment ends

News Briefs

Athletics Offers Ticket Discount for Pittsburgh Game
Faculty and staff can purchase tickets for the Oct. 17 football game against the University of Pittsburgh for as low as $15. Purchase tickets online at www.buzz.g/t11f8acstaff

Tech Participating in Atlanta Bike Challenge
Atlanta businesses will compete against each other to see which has the most employees riding bikes from Sunday, Sept. 27, to Sunday, Oct. 25. Rides do not have to be to or from work. Sign up to participate at www.c.gatech.edu/bikechallenge

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ARTS & CULTURE

Oct. 7
Student Diversity Programs hosts a showing of Hedwig and the Angry Inch at 6 p.m. in the Student Center Theater.
diversityprograms.gatech.edu

Through Nov. 13
The College of Computing and Georgia Tech Libraries host retroTECH: A Hardware History of Computing, showcasing historical computing hardware and memorabilia that together tell a story about the history of computing and some early ties to Georgia Tech. The exhibit will be on display on the third floor of the Clough Commons.

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Oct. 9
The Campus Recreation Center hosts a free yoga class from noon to 1 p.m. in the Peachtree Room, Student Center. Mats are provided.
healthpromotion.gatech.edu

Through Nov. 30
The Campus Recreation Center hosts weekly group runs/walks following the campus Pi Mile course. The group meets in the CRC lobby on Mondays at 7:45 a.m. and Wednesdays at 5:30 p.m. Learn more and register at e.gatech.edu/programwalk

TRAINING

Sept. 30
The Center for Serve-Learn-Sustain hosts a workshop on developing courses that incorporate community engagement for the new Public Service Pathway, from 3 to 5 p.m., at the Institute for People and Technology, Sixth Floor, Centergy Building. RSVP at e.gatech.edu/pubserviceworkshop

SEMINARS & LECTURES

Oct. 1
Edward Humes, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of this year’s Project One book, Gastrology, gives a plenary talk on sustainability at 5 p.m. in Room 144, Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons.
seminars.gatech.edu/preparedness

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Events

Tech Takes No. 12 Spot for ‘Most Innovative’ in U.S. News Rankings

LAURA DIAMOND
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia Tech continued its longstanding record for high marks in the 2016 Best Colleges undergraduate rankings by U.S. News & World Report. Tech ranked seventh among public universities and 36th among all national universities.

Georgia Tech’s College of Engineering maintained fifth place for undergraduate engineering programs at institutions that award doctoral degrees. The College also continued with solid rankings in its engineering programs, with all of its programs ranked in the top 10 of their disciplines and in the top five among public institutions.

“Almost for two decades, Georgia Tech has ranked in the top 10 among public research universities. While we are well known for excellence in engineering and other STEM fields, word is also getting out about our other outstanding programs, such as our undergraduate business program, along with our focus on innovation,” said Georgia Tech President G. P. “Bud” Peterson.

Georgia Tech’s Scheller College of Business ranked 29th among best undergraduate business programs. The College continued its fifth place ranking in Quantitative Analysis while its Management Information Systems program ranked No. 7.

U.S. News & World Report introduced a number of new categories this year. Georgia Tech ranked 13th in the Most Innovative Schools category and 30th in Best Colleges for Veterans.

Always Be Prepared

September is National Preparedness Month. Though the month is almost over, you should always be ready for a potential crisis. The Office of Emergency Preparedness offers a few steps to take to be a more prepared member of the campus community all year long:

• Follow the Office of Emergency Preparedness on Facebook (fb.com/GETEmergency) and Twitter (twitter.com/GTTEmergentials).
• Sign up for Georgia Tech Emergency Notification System (GETENS) alerts at passport.gatech.edu.
• Download the LiveSafe app at livesafe.gatech.edu.
• Register for emergency preparedness classes at train.gatech.edu.
• Always report suspicious activity to Georgia Tech Police at 404-894-2500.

The rankings reaffirm our vision to ‘define the technological university of the 21st century.’ It is gratifying to get the recognition of our continuing excellence in all areas of engineering and to see that recognition expanding to many other areas,” said Georgia Tech Provost Rafael L. Bras. “It is indeed one of the most innovative schools in the nation, and we will not rest until all our programs are the very best in the world.”

Facilities Management Remembers Andrew McKinney

JESSICA ROSE
FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Landscape Services lost a beloved teammate when Andrew McKinney died this month.

McKinney, landscape turf supervisor and a certified arborist and former U.S. Army serviceman, started at Georgia Tech in 2010 and quickly proved to be a top performer. He began as a groundskeeper and rose to the role of grounds foreman. He maintained top attendance up until his first health challenges in 2014. McKinney was willing to take ownership of any task necessary to get the job done and to serve Landscape Services. He volunteered as Santa Claus for Facilities Management’s annual holiday parties and is remembered for always having a joke to share. He was known for spending time on campus on weekends and reporting if something looked out of place, even when not on the job.

He was heavily involved in Georgia Tech’s Professional Grounds Management Society Accreditation that was earned earlier this year, being one of the principal contributors to an extensive application. Before coming to Tech, McKinney was employed with the city of Smyrna for 12 years.

Condolences may be sent to 3207 Lee Street S.E., Smyrna, GA 30080.

In Memoriam

Andrew McKinney
Hidden Georgia Tech is a photo essay series highlighting places on campus that may largely go unnoticed but are sometimes hidden in plain sight. If you know of a place worth exploring, email editor@comm.gatech.edu.

HIDDEN GEORGIA TECH

THE GLASSBLOWING SHOP

On the lower level of the Ford Environmental Science and Technology Building, Georgia Tech’s scientific glassblower repairs cracked condensers and other glass equipment from labs across campus. The work is much like that of a precision welder, combining hand skills, using torches and lathes, with lasers, diamond grinding and lapping machines, and computer-assisted furnaces.

Scientific glassblowing is a specialty field of glassblowing used in science, industry, art, and design. There are approximately 50 scientific glassblowers employed at American universities. (1) The Glassblowing Shop has one scientific glassblower, Brian Markowicz, who is available for consultation on the design, construction, modification, and repair of vitreous scientific equipment. Markowicz has a degree in scientific glassblowing from Salem Community College in Salem, New Jersey. He came to Tech in 2014. (2) Established in 1955, Georgia Tech’s Glassblowing Shop can help researchers stretch their budgets by repairing — instead of replacing — expensive equipment. (3) Markowicz repairs a coil condenser that has a broken ball joint. (4) The scientific glassblower designs and constructs each apparatus by collaborating with individual researchers, using drawings as a guide. See more of the Glassblowing Shop at www.c.gatech.edu/glassblowing.

written by Victor Rogers • photos by Rob Felt
In 2012, after teaching at Georgia Tech for 10 years, School of Public Policy Associate Professor Robert Kirkman was starting to feel frustrated with what he saw as a lack of student engagement.

Searching for answers, he attended a Center for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning (CETL) workshop on problem-based learning, which promised a major overhaul of his teaching method. One year later, his excellence in teaching was recognized with a Hesburgh Award Teaching Fellowship and the Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award.

“It finally dawned on me that there was a mismatch between what I understood my students needed and how I was designing my courses,” Kirkman said. “One of the vices of philosophy is a tendency to think of teaching as preparing students to become philosophers. Even though I knew better — especially when I came to Georgia Tech and none of my students were philosophy majors — the way I used to design my courses was patterned after the classic lecture-discussion course with heavy readings in theoretical philosophy. That wasn’t really engaging students. Surprise, surprise!” he joked.

Kirkman’s lighthearted moment could not have come soon enough.

“I came out of that workshop simply buzzing,” he said. “I spent the entire summer of 2012 revising my courses from the ground up, much of it ripped a major overhaul of my teaching method. I jumped in with both feet in the fall of 2012.”

Kirkman’s first semester teaching Ethical Theories (PHIL 3105) and Environmental Ethics (PHIL 4176) with the new approach was a hit.

“There was an astonishing jump in student engagement in the course. Students actually showed up, many of them had read the books, and they were engaged in their groups,” said Kirkman, who also is director of the Center for Ethics and Technology. “Then I started hearing anecdotes about how the courses were changing the way the students would hear the news or experience their other classes. They also started to think differently about their experience during internships or in the labs.”

Kirkman said he has not looked back except to see where he could tweak the new design, and he is developing a textbook on his approach to ethics, calling it A Field Guide to Basic Values. He is also working on journal articles and conference presentations.

Classroom Strategies
Kirkman said students entering his ethics classes are already in development as people capable of ethical responses to situations. His job is to help them develop further.

“It is not that I can promise to make them ethical people if they aren’t already,” he said. “I do think I can help them get from their current level to the next level, where they will have certain skills — to recognize values, process values, and analyze values in complex situations — they didn’t have before.”

In Kirkman’s Engineering Ethics course (PHIL 3109), he has groups of students work on projects in which each group of students develops a problem situation focused on an engineer who must make a decision with ethical implications.

“The students have enough experience to come up with very interesting problem situations, based on things they come across in other classes or during their internships or co-ops,” Kirkman says.

The groups work through a structured process to investigate the background of the situation, develop options, and then consider each option in terms of basic ethical values. “I don’t have them write essays because essays tend to become just ways of reinforcing your opinions. Instead, they write ‘considerations’ of two options for responding to the situation. They do not draw a conclusion, but they trace out the positive and negative implications of each option,” he said.

The students go through the entire process twice during the course. There are numerous assignments during the semester, and Kirkman gives the early assignments less weight than the later ones — where they have more confidence.

Reaching the Students
This semester, Kirkman is teaching one section of Engineering Ethics (PHIL 3109) and one section of Environmental Ethics (PHIL 4176). Most of his students are from the College of Engineering because both courses are on the list of courses that fulfill the ethics course requirements for engineering majors.

“The students often come in skeptical and slightly aggrieved because the class is a requirement. So, part of the hurdle is convincing them that this course will be useful to them in their professional lives,” Kirkman said, noting that he tries to convey to them that engineers work with people and for people on systems that can have serious ethical implications for other people — for good and for ill.

“I got my students’ attention on the first day by having them work on a fictionalized version of a historic ‘disaster case’ involving the construction of a TV antenna. I used that case to drive home the point that when you’re making decisions as an engineer, it’s never just a mathematical puzzle; it’s never just a technical solution to a technical problem. It is real,” he said.

“I joke that I’ve been teaching for 24 years, and I think I finally may be getting it right.”

Advice for New Faculty
Kirkman first stepped into a classroom 24 years ago this fall as the instructor of record for a philosophy class at Stony Brook University in New York.

“I now joke that I’ve been teaching for 24 years, and I think I finally may be getting it right,” he said.

“My advice to new faculty is to be very, very clear regarding the stated learning outcomes for the course,” he said. “In the syllabus, you should have a section that states: ‘By the end of the course, you should be able to X.’ Thank critically about that. It is important that the learning outcomes fit what the students are capable of achieving in a semester and that the design of the course matches the desired learning outcomes.”

He also encourages new faculty — in the interest of bringing about those desired outcomes — to experiment by breaking out of the old modes of lecture.

For him, it’s all about keeping things fresh: “What keeps me excited about teaching now is the process of designing the course — trying to make it better every semester so my students are more engaged,” he said. “By the end of the semester, when students begin to be able to talk about basic values with some proficiency, that’s encouraging to me. It keeps me going.”

“In the Classroom” is a series showcasing some of Georgia Tech’s award-winning teachers, delving into what they teach, how they do it, and what motivates them.

Robert Kirkman, associate professor in the School of Public Policy and director of the Center for Ethics and Technology, works with a group of students in his Engineering Ethics course. In this course, student groups address a problem situation focused on an engineer who must make a decision with ethical implications.

From Burned Out to Fired Up: Inspiration Leads Kirkman to Course Overhaul
VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS