Former NAACP Chair to Give MLK Lecture

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Each January, the Georgia Tech community comes together to celebrate the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. and rededicate itself to his vision.

This year, Julian Bond, social activist and former chairman of the board of the NAACP, will give the keynote address at Georgia Tech's fourth annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Lecture, on Jan. 14 at 3 p.m. in the Student Center Ballroom.

An eyewitness to several key moments of the Civil Rights Movement, Bond has insight on the struggle of African-Americans for equality, the need for diversity in the shaping of laws, and the future of civil rights. “Julian Bond serves as a bridge between an unimaginable past and a foreseeable future,” said student Alex Berry, co-chair of the Student Government Association's Cultural and Diversity Affairs Committee and a member of the MLK Campus-wide Planning Committee. “He isn’t just bringing a new, or different, perspective for his speech. Instead, he is tangibly embodying the ideals that many Georgia Tech students aim to live by.”

Bond was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives in 1965 but was denied his seat by legislators — because of his opposition to the Vietnam War — until the Supreme Court intervened. He was elected to four terms in the Georgia House of Representatives and later to six terms in the Georgia Senate.

Watson Goes to College

Computing Class Taps into IBM Supercomputer

TYLER SHARP
COLLEGE OF COMPUTING

IBM’s Watson computer system burst into the nation’s consciousness in 2011 with a dominant run on “Jeopardy!” Then Watson started appearing elsewhere — in hospitals, laboratories, and other research environments — as a data-crunching, analysis tool. Now, Watson is going to school.

Prep Begins for Potential Winter Storms

KRISTEN BAILEY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Last winter was memorable for many, particularly those who spent hours stuck on roadways during “Snowmageddon.”

Some weather forecasters are predicting this winter to be colder and wetter than average. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts lower than average temperatures overall for the Southeast this season. That does not necessarily equate to more frequent or stronger snowstorms, though, which are only predicted about a week in advance.

The Office of Emergency Preparedness advises that all employees, especially commuters, be prepared for whatever weather comes their way. “Especially for commuters, it is critical that they put together a basic kit for their cars,” said William Smith, project manager for Emergency Preparedness. Smith advises that kits include food, water, a space blanket, gloves, hats, a flashlight, and a cellphone charger. Drivers should also keep fuel tanks at least half full.

Emergency Preparedness works closely with Facilities to plan for seasonal weather issues in advance. This year, Facilities has more ice
School Shares Stories of How It Connects Humanities, Technology

MARGARET TATE
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

While the nationwide push for STEM education has caused hand-wringing and eraser-gnawing in some English departments, Tech’s School of Literature, Media, and Communication (LMC) has long worked within this reality, as reflected in its first-ever book, Humanistic Perspectives in a Technological World.

Filled with photos and essays by LMC faculty as well as statements from academics and administrators across campus, the 140-page, hardbound volume that recognizes that it’s because we’re in the same place that many of our activities are possible. So, how do you get people to think about what everybody else is doing? By creating a volume that “binds everybody together.”

His hope is that the book will spark more conversations and collaborations among faculty, and he also sees it as a “calling card” that will give other disciplines, alumni, and prospective students more awareness and appreciation for how LMC contributes to the Tech education and experience. Almost all Tech students take their requisite English courses through LMC, but Utz thinks more might opt for an LMC major or take LMC electives if they knew about the school’s research and scholarship.

“How can admissions officers and advisors recognize someone who would be a good student for our majors if they don’t have a clear picture of what we do?” he said.

Enter the book, which was launched at LMC’s 2014 alumni celebration in November. Every essay addresses the interplay between humanistic perspectives and some form of technology.

The two are inextricably linked, according to LMC’s Alumni Project Director and Assistant Professor Krystina Madej, and always have been.

“Human beings have never stopped wanting to tell stories, ever since the beginning of time,” she said. “When we wrote in hieroglyphics — that wasn’t enough. We wanted to move forward. So we wrote stories in books — that wasn’t enough. We always want to share more through the ways that are around us, so the technologies and the narratives are very symbiotic.”

One of the 34 entries that tell LMC’s story in Humanistic Perspectives is “ADAM, EarSketch, and I,” by Assistant Professor Brian Magerko, which offers a look at the work done by his Adaptive Digital Media Lab, including EarSketch, a multimedia research project that introduces high school students to programming code through music remixing.

There’s “On Narrative,” by Professor Carol Colatrella, which discusses how students can benefit from the value and power of storytelling in their professional and everyday lives.

There’s “Designing Community Engagement,” by Assistant Professor Christopher Le Dantec, an engineer who came to realize that “of the many things that are possible with technology, the only possibilities that truly count are those that resonate with human values.” He and his students launched a smartphone app so Atlanta cyclists could record their rides and share the data with city planners.

Then there’s “The Poem Is a Bridge: Poetry@Tech,” wherein Professor Thomas Lux writes that good poems are not written, they are “engineered.”

If none of this sounds like “art for art’s sake,” that’s OK with Utz. Just as Georgia Tech realizes that a humanistic perspective makes for better scientists, engineers, and business people, he observes, the fact that his faculty must continually find meaningful and creative ways to incorporate technology into the teaching of literature, media, and communication makes them better humanists.

“We teach so many students from outside of the humanities, so we have to go back to the roots of the humanities — what does it mean to be a human being?” he said. “For those who are at institutions where it’s established, you don’t have to explain yourself every day. But if I teach students from mechanical engineering, I need to create for them a path to the beauty of the language, the communication and the craft of literature. How do I do that? By selecting topics they can relate to, by opening the door for them.”

Humanistic Perspectives in a Technological World presents stories from individual faculty in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication, while also providing a broad look at the work of the entire School.
What Are the Keys to Keeping Your New Year’s Resolutions?

You make (and maybe break) them every year: New Year’s resolutions. What are the keys to being successful in 2015? Brain power, hard work, and strategy. That’s the word from Georgia Tech’s School of Psychology.

Segment Your Goals

Professor Ruth Kanfer says many studies show that people who set realistic and challenging goals are more likely to reach their desired outcome than people who don’t set clear goals.

Kanfer explains, “New Year’s resolutions are typically outcome goals — that is, end states (e.g., losing 20 pounds or mastering a new language) that are highly desirable. Envisioning such outcome-focused or distant goals is often initially motivating, but such goals alone are often insufficient for sustaining motivation and daily behavior change over time and in the face of setbacks.”

Our findings and those of others in the field indicate that motivation for accomplishing difficult goals or changing well-ingrained behavioral habits also requires setting short-term, learning-focused goals. Such goals provide support for accomplishing the outcome goal by allowing people to learn what aspects of their behavior and environment contribute to goal progress.

Breaking up a large outcome goal into smaller segments also helps to motivate continued effort in at least two ways. First, setting and accomplishing subgoals provides a mechanism for boosting confidence and self-efficacy. Second, subgoals allow people to better monitor their progress and to adjust their strategies when encountering obstacles.

This is critical for staying the course, and the lack of learning-based process goals has probably derailed many New Year’s resolutions.”

Use Your Brain

Associate Professor Eric Schumacher says there are little things you can do to help your brain, and yourself, to stay on task.

More from Schumacher: “When we set a goal, we activate and organize a set of memory representations related to the goal. This task set guides processing and behavior to achieve the goal. For example, if we set a goal to lose weight in the new year, then we’re likely to attempt to slim down related to that goal — like running shoes in the closet or weights under the bed — differently than if we didn’t set the goal.

That is, seeing the running shoes may activate other associated memories, processes, and behaviors that will lead to achieving the goal (i.e., exercising). However, we often have many concurrent goals, and New Year’s resolutions may compete with stronger goals that offer more immediate rewards. So the immediate goal of eating another piece of chocolate cake may activate goal-related behaviors that compete with and overcome one’s New Year’s resolution to lose weight.”

USG Perks Program Offers New Employee Discounts

RACHEAL POCLENGTON
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Discounted movie tickets, flights, and gym memberships are just a few of the hundreds of offers now available to Georgia Tech employees through the new USG Perks program.

The University System of Georgia (USG) added this free program as a benefit this year for all employees, including temporary workers. The program includes savings at national retailers such as Macy’s, Saks Fifth Avenue, Under Armour, DSW, Shoes.com, Williams-Sonoma, Best Buy, and Lowe’s, as well as local Atlanta restaurants.

All purchases must be made through the website in order to receive the discounts, and employees earn points for every dollar spent on the website. These points can eventually be redeemed for free gifts.

Employees can register using their Georgia Tech email address at usg.edu/hr/benefits/usg_perks. Once signed up, users can also sign up for five non-USG employees, such as family members or friends, to join and enjoy the benefits of the program.

WATSON, from page 1

Class began Jan. 5 for Watson when it became a part of Ashok Goel’s Computational Creativity courses. Through a special licensing arrangement, Goel, a professor in the School of Interactive Computing, and his students are enjoying extraordinary access to the computing power of Watson. Goel is hopeful that the Watson-based partnership between IBM and Georgia Tech has only just begun.

“It is my hope that once we have acquired the expertise, that IBM will give Watson to Georgia Tech for more extensive use,” Goel said.

Why are Goel and Georgia Tech interested in Watson? Watson is an artificially intelligent computer system that processes information like a human. Named for IBM’s founder Thomas J. Watson, the system is a “natural extension of what humans can do at their best.” As such, Watson is rapidly becoming a valuable resource for research and analysis.

Select, elite educational institutions across the U.S. have been granted licenses to use Watson in classroom settings. Goel is the Institute’s first licensee. He plans to use Watson as a resource capable of aiding human creativity in his courses. Goel is particularly interested in how humans make scientific discoveries and inventions.

That interest has guided Goel’s approach to his courses.

Goel plans to load biological knowledge like public domain articles and relevant information from open access journals onto Watson. Loading such information will enable Goel’s students to find information in a targeted manner. Students will need that information to be readily accessible as they design projects in teams with a focus on environmental sustainability. Subsequently, Goel hopes students having that level of access to top expertise will allow for the development of practical, new solutions.

“Using artificial intelligence to provide access to biological knowledge to non-biologists can hopefully inspire new creativity,” Goel said. Creativity that Goel hopes stretches beyond the classroom. His courses feature an extended primer on entrepreneurship. He’s hopeful such information plants a seed in the minds of his students.

“A team could start a company,” Goel said. “That’d happen in a perfect world.”

If Watson and Goel’s students have their way, that perfect world might not be far off.

FACULTY AND STAFF ACHIEVEMENTS

Cheryl Cofield, director of diversity management in the Office of Human Resources, was named one of Diversity Journal’s Women Worth-Watching for 2015. The publication acknowledged women for their passion, potential, and positive influence both inside and outside the workplace.

Spyros Reveliotis, professor in the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, was named a 2015 Fellow of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineering for extraordinary accomplishments in the field of discrete event systems for resource allocation.

Georgia Tech Parking and Transportation Services earned an Innovation award from the Georgia Transit Association for its NextBuzz system. NextBuzz was implemented in 2013 and adjusts vehicle layover time based on real-time data. The system has decreased vehicle headway and reduced wait times for campus transit.

It was developed with the help of John Bartholdi, Manhattan Associates Chair of Supply Chain Management and research director for The Supply Chain and Logistics Institute.

Events

Jan. 23

For a more comprehensive listing of events updated daily, visit calendar.gatech.edu

MISCELLANEOUS

Jan. 5

Jan. 7

Jan. 8

Jan. 14

Jan. 15

Jan. 18

Jan. 19

Jan. 23

Jan. 25
WEATHER, from page 1

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or activities may also be delayed until a
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Employees can find out about campus
closures and Tech’s response in several ways.
The first and best source for updates is the
Georgia Tech homepage: gatech.edu. Updates
will be posted there as campus leadership
evaluates and determines the response to each
weather situation.

Information is also shared via social
media. Updates will be posted to Twitter
at #gtalerts and @georgiatech, and on
Facebook at facebook.com/ugatech and
facebook.com/georgiatech.

Around 1,800 students participated in ceremonies during Georgia Tech’s 248th Commencement the weekend of Dec. 12. This year, the Student Center
and Student Government Association added a new event, the Campus Lantern Walk, which took place the Thursday before the ceremonies. Students
decorated lanterns and then had a final chance to walk the central campus area with classmates at dusk.

WEATHER, from page 1

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