Carters to Receive Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage

LAURA DIAMOND
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS


The former president and first lady are being jointly recognized for their partnership in a courageous collaboration to improve human rights and alleviate suffering around the world. Over the span of more than four decades their work has focused on improving health, preventing and resolving conflicts, and enhancing freedom and democracy.

They are the first couple to receive the award, which recognizes those who demonstrate leadership to improve the human condition despite personal risks and challenges. The Carters will be honored during a symposium on the power of partnerships taking place Feb. 17 at the Biltmore, adjacent to Tech Square in midtown Atlanta. Planned activities include a town hall discussion between Georgia Tech students and the Carters.

“Rosalynn and I are humbled and honored to receive this award,” said Jimmy Carter, who attended Georgia Tech and received an honorary degree from the Institute in 1979.

“Our work to advance peace and health for the world’s least fortunate people through the Carter Center has been the pinnacle of our lives,” he said. “We are grateful if our experiences offer some inspiration to others to reach out to do what they can to help make life better for their neighbors next door or those in other nations. You don’t have to be a former president or former first lady to make a difference in the lives of others. Anyone can find the courage to speak out against injustice and lend a helping hand within their own circle.”

The Carters, who have been married for more than 70 years, have accomplished much together, whether it be their time in the White House, his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 2002, or her groundbreaking work in mental health advocacy.

“For more than four decades, the Carters have worked tirelessly to improve global health and human rights, as well as to promote democracy in more than 65 countries throughout the world,” Peterson said.

see COURAGE, page 2

LIVING BUILDING COMING TO LIFE

The Living Building at Georgia Tech has reached a major milestone with the approval of the schematic design. Approved by Georgia Tech’s Planning and Design Commission in December, the schematic design provides a working blueprint for what is anticipated to be the most environmentally advanced research and educational building ever constructed in the Southeast. This rendering shows the future northwest corner of the building, which will be at the corner of State Street and Ferst Drive. Learn more at livingbuilding.gatech.edu.

see BUDGET, page 3

NEWS BRIEFS

4,380 Accepted in Early Action Admission

The acceptance rate for this round was 28 percent. Applications for regular decision admission closed Jan. 1, and the Institute received a record number of applications.

c.gatech.edu/ea2017

OMS in Analytics to Begin This Fall

Following the success of Tech’s Online Master of Science in Computer Science, a new Online Master of Science in Analytics will begin enrolling students this fall, providing another high-quality, low-cost master’s degree available worldwide.

c.gatech.edu/omsanalytics

IN THIS ISSUE

Dropbox Now Available for Faculty and Staff 2
Board of Regents Updates 3
In the Classroom with Florin Niculescu 4
EVENTS

ARTS & CULTURE

Jan. 25

What’s Going On, an original musical production written by Tech student Danielle Mathis, depicts college life with a focus on social justice issues. The free event takes place at 7:30 p.m. at the Fetal Center for the Arts.

c.gatech.edu/mk2017

Through March

An exhibition of the work of designer Santiago Calatrava combines architecture, sculpture, art, and engineering in the Flex Space of the Caudell Building.
space.gatech.edu/calatrava

SEMINARS & LECTURES

Feb. 1

Faculty members from Georgia Tech and Macau University host a panel discussion on Contemporary Chinese Foreign Policy from 1 to 2:30 p.m. in Room 1116 East, Klaus Advanced Computing Building.

ciet@gatech.edu

TRAINING

Jan. 25

Human Resources hosts a Be Well session on Preventing Identity Theft, from 11 a.m. to noon in Room 330, Student Center. Register at c.gatech.edu/bewellidtheft

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Through April

Employees can use their insurance to get a flu shot without an appointment every Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 8 to 10 a.m. at the Stamps Health Services Pharmacy.

health.gatech.edu

Feb. 8

Human Resources hosts a Be Well session on Understanding Mental Health and Important Triggers from noon to 1 p.m. in the Piedmont Room, Student Center.
bh@gatech.edu/bewell

MISCELLANEOUS

Jan. 25

Georgia Tech Men’s Basketball hosts the Florida State Seminoles at 7 p.m. at McCamish Pavilion.
radmilimestone.com

LIVING A LEGACY

COURAGE, from page 1

“Looking beyond the safe and the convenient, they have traveled to dangerous places and fearlessly confronted injustice. Their shared vision, tenacity, and courage have resulted in conflict resolution between countries and peoples, the eradication of diseases in the developing world, and advancements in mental health understanding and support. Former President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter exemplify the far-reaching global changes that are possible through a lifetime partnership in social courage.”

Earlier this month the Carter Center announced it is poised to wipe out the Guinea worm disease from the planet. In the mid-1980s the painful disease afflicted about 3.5 million people each year in 21 countries across Africa and Asia. Today the number of cases has dropped to just 25 in three countries — Chad, Ethiopia, and South Sudan.

The Carter Center’s unique focus on disease eradication has filled a vacuum in the world when few were paying much attention to this problem. The last disease eradicated was smallpox in 1980.

The Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage honors the people behind the efforts to improve the human condition. The award is named for former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. Funded in perpetuity by a grant from the Wilbur and Hilda Glenn Family Foundation, recipients are awarded a $100,000 stipend. The inaugural prize was awarded in March 2011 to former Senator Sam Nunn. Other past recipients include William Foege, U.S. Rep. John Lewis, and humanitarian activist Nancy Parrish.

Due to space limitations, the event will be invitation-only. The campus community is encouraged to view a live webcast beginning at 10 a.m. on Feb. 17 at vanallenprize.gatech.edu.

Dropbox Now Available to Faculty, Staff

OFFICE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

The Office of Information Technology (OIT) recently added Dropbox as a new service for faculty and staff at Tech. The popular cloud-based file storage service offers a convenient way to securely store and sync files in a central location.

“Offering faculty and staff a centralized and easy-to-access data storage service can greatly enhance the security of research data and intellectual property,” said Rachel Moorehead, senior support manager for architecture and infrastructure in the Office of Information Technology. “Plus, this service will add to our external collaboration options and simplify the way we access and share files on a day-to-day basis with third parties.”

Once a Dropbox account has been set up, a user can access files, both on and off campus, from any computer or mobile device using a web browser or by installing the Dropbox app.

According to Moorehead, while users can safely store confidential information, such as FERPA, HIPAA, and encrypted data within Dropbox, it is important for them to be mindful of whom the data is being shared.

Features of the Dropbox service include:

• Unlimited file storage.
• Version roll-back and deletion recovery.
• Remote access to work files without VPN.
• Easy, secure sharing and collaboration tools.

Users who have an existing Dropbox account, whether free or paid, can migrate their existing account to Georgia Tech’s Dropbox service or opt to keep the existing account separate. Users with paid-add-on features can request a refund from Dropbox once the account has been migrated to one managed by Georgia Tech.

Dropbox is not a service offered upon separation from Georgia Tech, and any data users wish to maintain should be transferred before their account is deactivated 30 days after separation.

To get started with Dropbox, visit dropbox.gatech.edu and click “Login.” For more information, email dropbox@oit.gatech.edu.

Tech, Piazza Sign Formal Agreement to Safeguard Data

BRITTANY AIELLO
CENTER FOR 21ST CENTURIES

Georgia Tech and Piazza, an education Q&A web service provider, have signed a formal agreement to ensure the safety of student data across campus.

More than 200 Georgia Tech courses, both on-campus as well as digital courses in the online Master of Science in Computer Science program, use Piazza’s services. Up to this point, no formal agreement existed between Georgia Tech and Piazza due to the free nature of the provider’s web services. Now, a formal agreement has been reached that ensures the appropriate use of student data now and in the future.

“Up until now, students and faculty were agreeing to Terms and Conditions with Piazza on an individual basis,” said Matt Lisle, director of digital learning technologies for Georgia Tech’s Center for 21st Century Universities. “This agreement is news for Georgia Tech because it’s important the community knows we are actively working to protect their data.”

Jimmy Lummis, associate director of Georgia Tech Cyber Security, and members of the Institute for Information Security and Privacy, are leading efforts to solve security challenges at the university and manage the development of this formal agreement with Piazza.

“This agreement allows us to ensure that we are in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act — to protect the privacy of our students’ information and continue to use a very popular cloud app,” Lummis said.

So, what does this mean for the campus? Simply put, it means that students, teaching assistants, and faculty can continue to use Piazza as they have in the past, without concern that their data might be sold, accessed, or used in ways that breach their privacy.

“The main message we’d like to send is that Piazza is safe to use at Georgia Tech,” Lisle said.

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### BUDGET, from page 1

of a committee of representatives who now span multiple buildings.

“We decided back then that instead of just celebrating ourselves we wanted to help people at the holidays,” he said. The organizing committee solicits nominations from several campus departments, including Auxiliary Services, Dining Services, and Facilities Management. Supervisors are asked to submit nominations with details of the employees’ situations, but not their names, and they are vetted by the supervisor and committee. Though they don’t look for a specific number of families to support each year, they’ve never turned one away.

“We’ve always found a way to support them,” Kirk said. “Several departments are very generous in sponsoring families.” Many offices that participate will sponsor more than one family, or smaller groups team up to take on larger requests. The Budget office even once nominated an employee from within its own staff who was facing particular hardship that year.

At times, employees have felt a special connection with the beneficiaries. This year, one nominee is raising his son and daughter as a single parent following the death of his wife. Two contributing employees could relate, having lost their own spouses and experiencing similar circumstances themselves, so their two offices teamed up to sponsor him.

The season of giving culminates in a celebration that would be the envy of many offices (and may be reminiscent of the popular TV show “The Office,” without the bungling boss). The atrium of Lyman Hall becomes center stage for a performance contest, dessert contest, and tacky holiday clothing contest, as well as door prizes and a visit from Santa. Gift donations are brought to the party, all wrapped, and supervisors pick up their employees’ gifts to keep the recipients anonymous.

“We hear stories from supervisors of the families when they receive the gifts, a lot of them in tears,” Kirk said. “A lot of these families would otherwise not have gifts for their children or grandchildren, and some are struggling to just pay their bills.” In many cases, families have taken on an additional responsibility of caring for an older parent, grandchild, or other extended family members who have added strain to their finances. The 2016 efforts supported 14 employee families, and the estimates they’re supported around 175 families over the years.

The “service” part of Tech’s “progress and service” also has become a hallmark for the day Kirk manages his office. They also do an annual fall clothing collection for the Atlanta Mission and contribute to the Buzzin’ Back to School drive held by Georgia Tech Human Resources each summer, which also benefits Tech families.

“It’s as important as any other work we do,” Kirk said. “We’re willing to put in the extra time to do it. It’s a morale booster and creates good will and camaraderie.”

### Kirk at Work

Kirk, who has made a career in the public sector, previously worked in local and state government, as well as at the University of South Carolina before coming to Tech 16 years ago. He and his wife left behind three adult children (and now seven grandchildren) when they relocated to Atlanta for the job.

His cycling began following a knee surgery eight years ago, and he found a way to weave it into his commute. It’s only led to a handful of wipe-outs over the years — thankfully, he always wears a helmet.

Kirk’s team is responsible for overseeing Tech’s $1.7 billion budget (as of Fiscal Year 2017), including all submissions from campus departments. They prepare all budget schedule documents for the Board of Regents and support Tech’s executive leadership team in its budgeting decisions.

“We try to get people good data and advice,” he said. “We have a huge budget compared to other groups, and we have people asking us about where our money goes.”

**For a more comprehensive listing of events, or to add your own, visit calendar.gatech.edu.**
Marius Florin Niculescu has always loved mathematics. Since the fourth grade he entered individual mathematical competitions at the county, then district levels in his home country of Romania. From grades four through eleven, he made it to the national level of competition, and in the 12th grade he was first among the first place group.

It wasn’t until he was a course assistant as an undergraduate at Harvard University — grading students’ assignments and holding recitation sessions — that he started thinking about teaching.

“Grading is not the part that excites you the most,” he said. “But, it clicked that I enjoyed the interaction … clarifying things for students.”

After earning his bachelor’s degree in applied mathematics from Harvard, Niculescu felt passionate about research. He did his graduate studies at Stanford University, pursuing in parallel a master’s degree in financial mathematics offered jointly by the Mathematics and Statistics departments, and a Ph.D. in operations, information, and technology from the Graduate School of Business. He joined Georgia Tech in 2009 and is an associate professor with tenure in the IT Management area in the Scheller College of Business. He is also the Ph.D. coordinator for his area.

Niculescu’s ability in the classroom is often recognized by students and honored by his colleagues. Based on student feedback, he was awarded the Georgia Tech Class of 1940 Course Survey Teaching Effectiveness Award in 2013 and 2014. And, he received the 2013 CTL/JP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Award.

Classroom Strategies
Niculescu teaches at undergraduate, MBA, and Ph.D. levels. In Fall 2016, he began teaching Managing Information Resources (MGT 6503), a core class for the MBA program. The seven-week course introduces students to a blend of foundational business concepts and hands-on tools. On the conceptual part, the course gravitates towards understanding trends and business models, opportunities, transformations, and challenges faced by consumers, firms, and governmental institutions as a result of the rapid advances, interconnectivity, and ubiquity of information technology. The course also introduces students to modern methods and software tools associated with the visualization, analysis, and management of data.

Niculescu embarked on an ambitious redesign of the course, revamping more than 90 percent of its content. In the fall iteration of the course, most business cases were from the past two years.

“Given the breathtaking pace of IT progress and its increasingly transformational impact on businesses and society, the teaching materials in this field have to be updated frequently to reflect the present with a glimpse of the future,” he said.

Beyond providing fresh, relevant examples, Niculescu also embraces the use of technology for learning purposes for all courses he teaches at the undergraduate and master’s level. He extensively uses visual aids such as slides, videos, and in-class software demos, as well as simulations to illustrate various market dynamics.

In addition, he uses learning tools such as ForClass (for the MBA course) and Turning Point (for undergraduate courses) to poll students and increase classroom engagement. For the MBA course, students have to answer several questions via ForClass before lecture (based on assigned readings) as well as in-class questions based on the material taught that day. Niculescu uses students’ answers to these questions as starting points for classroom discussions.

“The quality of the answers improves because you’ve got to own your answers,” he said. This gives students more incentive to pay attention during the lectures or when perusing the assigned reading. It also helps Niculescu gauge students’ grasp of the material in real time, allowing him to make quick adjustments to teaching and, if necessary, revisit concepts that need further clarification or reinforcement. Niculescu said it’s exciting to teach courses related to the managerial implications of IT because it is a continuously changing area. It forces him to evolve and learn, which keeps him constantly excited about his job. He wants his students to be ready for what comes next.

“Companies increasingly desire employees who can hit the ground running, and the job market for IT-savvy folks with data analytics skills is booming,” he said. “Part of my job is to identify what knowledge in my domain would help the students succeed further and transfer that knowledge to them in an effective way.”

Niculescu sees knowledge sharing going both ways.

“You learn from your students every year, especially when we talk about technology and its impact,” he said. “There will always be one student who knows something you don’t know about a new product, company, or policy change. Embrace it. It’s not my way or the highway.” Students should be encouraged to support this knowledge sharing by understanding the classroom and everyone benefits from it.

Advice for New Faculty
“A lot of new faculty have to pick up a course that is already being taught. Don’t be afraid to introduce new ideas and reshape the course,” he said.

He also reminds new faculty to “be aware that what seems easy for you may not be easy for students. Sometimes course calculation takes a few iterations.”

Niculescu added that students appreciate it if the professor puts in extra effort to help them learn better, whether that means changing the textbook or the highway. Students should be encouraged to support this knowledge sharing by understanding the classroom and everyone benefits from it.

In the Classroom is a series that showcases some of Georgia Tech’s faculty, delving into what they teach, how they teach, and what motivates them. Read more stories at e.gatech.edu/classroom.