Our last day on Georgia Tour 2018 was our busiest yet! We had six meetings, along with two alumni events and a newspaper interview. We headed out early for a breakfast meeting in Athens just a short walk from the downtown Hotel Indigo where we stayed, then hit the road for Carnesville, where we enjoyed a meeting with Georgia State Sen. Frank Ginn, Chairman of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee. Since 2010, Sen. Ginn has represented State Senate District 47, which stretches across Barrow, Clarke, Jackson, and Madison counties in northeast Georgia. As an engineer, he was able to describe several exciting projects he is working on.

From there, it was on to Toccoa, which means “beautiful” in the Cherokee language. Fittingly, we met at a beautiful venue that has been renovated by the city, Reflections at Lake Toccoa where we hosted an Alumni Lunch. Along with other Georgia Tech alumni, family, and friends, we were pleased to host several state lawmakers and local elected officials.

From there, it was on to Gainesville, almost 40 miles southwest in Hall County, and the final stop on the 2018 Georgia Tour. After finding ourselves in the “Harness Horse Capital of Georgia” (Hawkinsville) on Day 1 and “The Granite Capital of the World” (Elberton) on Day 3, we spent the last part of Day 4 in “The Poultry Capital of the World.” Jesse Jewell (1902-75), who is given much credit for helping develop Gainesville as a poultry center, studied civil engineering at Georgia Tech and the University of Alabama. And Gov. Zell Miller, a great friend of higher education in our state who passed away earlier in 2018, signed an act of the Georgia General Assembly declaring Georgia the “Poultry Capital of the World” on April 8, 1995, so it's official!

This is the city that (whimsically) had a 91-year-old woman arrested for eating chicken with a fork, so we knew they took their chicken seriously. Fortunately, we were able to avoid a similar debacle while in town.

Following a midafternoon Development appointment, we traveled to University System of Georgia District 9 Regent Philip Wilheit’s office in Gainesville for a meeting to talk about some of the exciting things happening at Georgia Tech. Regent Wilheit is a tremendous supporter of higher education, and it was a pleasure to be able to spend some time with him.

Later, we met a representative of The Times in downtown Gainesville, another opportunity to bring the Georgia Tech story to an audience that doesn’t have the chance to learn about it on a regular basis. Originally The Gainesville Daily Times, the newspaper printed its first edition Jan. 26, 1947, and the presses haven’t missed a run since. The Times remains a prominent media voice in northeast Georgia.

Our interview with The Times was held in Scott’s Downtown, a popular Gainesville gathering place. We moved to another part of Scott’s for an Alumni Reception that drew over 90 Georgia Tech friends and supporters. Georgia House Rep. Matt Dubnik, MGT ’03, provided a kind introduction. This past August we launched the Georgia Tech Scholars Program, which offers
automatic acceptance to Georgia high school valedictorians and salutatorians from any accredited Georgia public or private high school with 50 or more graduates. It is designed to increase exposure and access to Georgia Tech for the state’s most prepared students. For the incoming class of 2018, we have 169 vals/sals enrolling from Georgia, a 25 percent increase over the previous fall. We were fortunate to have several incoming and prospective students join us, and among them were two of the incoming valedictorians and their parents — Riverside Military Academy’s Runyi Yang, who attended with his U.S. “host” mom, and North Hall High’s Kota Teasley.

From there, it was off to Atlanta and our last stop on the tour, home! So closes another Georgia Tour. As I alluded to on Day 1, we’ve covered 650 miles, through 27 counties, 12 cities, and had 30 meetings or events. My sincere thanks to all of the great folks who worked so hard to make the tour possible.

-G.P. "Bud" Peterson

For a look at the public gallery of photos from the Georgia Tour, visit: https://gtgcr.smugmug.com/2018/GeorgiaTour

Photos from Day Four:

From left, Georgia State Rep. Matt Dubnik, a Georgia Tech alumnus, with Casey Aultman, manager of State Relations for Georgia Tech’s Office of Government and Community Relations, and Dene Sheheane, Georgia Tech VP for Government & Community Relations, at Georgia Tour stop in Gainesville.
With the Ramblin’ Wreck as a backdrop, North Hall High School valedictorian Kota Teasley poses with President G.P. "Bud" Peterson and first lady Val Peterson during Georgia Tour stop in Gainesville. Teasley will attend Georgia Tech as part of the Georgia Tech Scholars Program.

Riverside Military Academy valedictorian Runyi Yang, shown with President Peterson in Gainesville, will attend the Institute in the fall as part of the Georgia Tech Scholars Program.
From left, Dene Sheheane, Georgia Tech VP for Government & Community Relations, President G.P. "Bud" Peterson, and former Georgia State Rep. Carl Rogers share a lighthearted moment during Alumni Affairs event in Gainesville.

Ramblin' Wreck driver Hannah Todd, shown in Gainesville with President and Mrs. Peterson, helped keep the iconic car front and center during the four-day Georgia Tour.
From left, Doug Britton, program manager of the Georgia Tech Research Institute’s Agricultural Technology Research Program, with Georgia Poultry Federation President Abit Massey and his wife, Kayanne, in Gainesville.

Georgia Poultry Federation President Abit Massey enjoys a visit with the Ramblin’ Wreck!
President Peterson gives the good word about Georgia Tech to an attentive audience at Georgia Tour event in Gainesville.