

Dr. Peterson

9th Annual Black Leadership Conference

9:45-10:15 a.m. Saturday, March 3, 2012, College of Management LeCraw Auditorium

- Thank you Erica (if she is introducing).
- On behalf of Georgia Tech, I welcome to the 9th Annual Black Leadership Conference. I understand that Georgia Tech student groups collaborated with students from other area universities, and we extend a special welcome to you.
- You are to be commended. You have chosen to sacrifice valuable free time, and possibly even more valuable to college students, sleep, to participate in this leadership conference.
- After looking at your program, I have also decided I am pretty brave to come and speak to you. Tomorrow Touré will most likely be talking about his latest book (Who's Afraid of Post-Blackness) and the people he's interviewed for it—Jesse Jackson, Malcolm Gladwell, Soledad O'Brien. . .or he could talk about his work with Rolling Stone, or appearing on The Today Show or Anderson Cooper 360.
- To make myself feel better I looked at your list of former speakers. I thought they couldn't possibly be as intimidating. But then I saw former Dr. Maya Angelou, and President Barack Obama when he was a senator. I understand several student groups collaborate efforts for this annual event, and I want to let you know, you know how to put on a conference.
- When Erica invited me to speak, she asked that I share my experiences of diversity and leadership since coming to Georgia Tech. I will have been at Georgia Tech three years next month. Came from Colorado. Asked Why? "Because if we are to develop solutions to many of the grand challenges in this generation, they will be developed at places like Georgia Tech." I wanted to be a part of it. Georgia Tech is a place where we prepare leaders and innovators.
- If we are going to develop solutions, it is going to take all of us working together.
- Our commitment to diversity is not only the right thing to do; it is critical to our nation's ability to meet the challenges before us.

- Throughout the 20th century, the U.S. was known as a global leader in innovation. We put a man on the moon, developed microchips, personal computers, the Internet and mobile communications. Now, there is a much more level playing field with other countries in the world. To be pacesetters in economic growth and innovation, it will take all of our best minds working together. Our nation needs more individuals with advanced degrees in science, technology, engineering, and math, or STEM fields.
- The Census Bureau projects that by the year 2050 African Americans, Hispanic or Latino Americans, Native Americans, Alaskan Natives, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders will account for about 45% of the U.S. population. While these minority groups are the fastest growing segment of the national population, they are underrepresented in STEM fields.
- According to the National Science Foundation, African Americans comprise 15% of the population between ages 20 and 24, yet account for only 8% of the Bachelor's degrees in science and engineering. The ratio is similar for Hispanics. To turn this around it will take all of us working together, and at Georgia Tech we're committed to doing our part.
- Georgia Tech is known for academic excellence. While we're proud of our global rankings, we're equally proud of the diversity of our students, and in particular our efforts to recruit minorities to STEM fields. But we're committed to more.
- Last year we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the matriculation of African American students at Tech with a number of events. We were celebrating our successes and reiterating our commitment to the journey going forward.
- Our part as an institute is to ensure that diversity is woven into the fabric of the institution. We are accomplishing a great deal towards our goals in that area.
- One of the first things I did when I arrived at Tech was to expand the duties and elevate the position of vice provost for academic diversity to a vice president for institute diversity, reporting directly to me. Dr. Archie Ervin provides leadership for all institute diversity efforts. He's leading the effort to expand and enhance

diversity activities. One example is the enhanced MLK celebration this year, with Mrs. Myrlie Evers-Williams as our guest speaker.

- We're taking steps to become more diverse in our faculty, and to attract, and retain, a more diverse student body. We're working to ensure that students have leadership opportunities, like what you're doing today.
- That's our part, and we'll continue to find new and better ways to help students succeed. Your part is to do everything you can to excel academically, because that's your ticket to a future with limitless possibilities.
- At each Georgia Tech commencement, I say "Success in life is seldom a one-person effort." I believe that. In addition to family and friends, I encourage you to seek out mentors, whether they are other students, alumni, or other people at Tech or in the community. In addition, become aware of services and opportunities that are available to you. There are people who want to invest in you to help you succeed. Seek out those partnerships. If you haven't already done so, you can start with today's conference, including tonight's corporate networking dinner. I encourage you to take advantage of the leadership opportunities that are offered while you're in school (you know we have more than 400 student organizations), and to get involved in the community. Part of leadership is giving back. Georgia Tech students excel at that, and I think it helps make them the leaders they will be in their jobs and in their communities.
- I continue to be impressed with our students. Most young people want to change the world. Georgia Tech graduates are equipped to make it happen. We're looking to you for great things. Thank you.