

## **Dr. Peterson**

### **Andy Smith Retirement Reception**

3:30-5 p.m. Tuesday, May 29, 2012, Clough Commons Third Floor Gallery

I count it a privilege to share with you today a few thoughts about what Dr. Andy Smith has meant to the Georgia Tech community over the past four decades. I would like to extend a special welcome to his family — his wife Glenna, their daughter Nan Hunter and her daughters Taylor and Sydney; Andy and Glenna's daughter Leigh-Ellen and son-in-law Christian, along with their daughters Sadie and Mary Fitzgerald.

I just happen to be the last in a long line of Georgia Tech presidents that Andy has served with. He started with Art Hansen, then Joe Pettit, Pat Crecine, Wayne Clough, and now me. That's five of us, along with four acting presidents mixed in. And, he just missed Edwin Harrison and Vernon Crawford by one year. They left in 1969 and he came in 1970.

Andy started at Tech as an assistant professor of Psychology. He has taught undergraduate and graduate students consistently since he arrived, even after accepting his position in administration. Our estimate is that he has taught somewhere in the neighborhood of 5,000 to 6,000 students. He advised 15 PhD students, and hooded the last one at commencement earlier this month. He did confess that he began to have students come up to him and say "Dr. Smith I've signed up for your Intro to Psychology class. My dad took it, and he said he really enjoyed it." Andy said he gave up teaching undergraduates several years ago to avoid the students coming up and saying "My grandfather took your course and he really enjoyed it . . ." Having said that, he's agreed to teach an undergraduate class next year. Andy, you may have a Tech graduate's grandson or granddaughter yet.

Andy is committed to Georgia Tech students and their success. That's why he agreed to serve on the committee of faculty, staff and students who planned Clough Commons. He wanted Tech to create an academic home for undergraduate students,

especially for freshmen and sophomores who only had a few classes in their major area of study. He served on the committee with Rich Myers, Kent Bearfield, Donna Llewellyn and others. It was chaired by Bob McMath, and when he left, Andy took over as chair. It's also the driving reason that he agreed to take his current position. He felt that it would be transformative for undergraduate education. Andy, you were right. The team visited other universities and combined those ideas with some of their own. They recommended things like at least two rows of desks on each level in the lecture halls to allow for more student interaction, lots of study space, flexibility, and centralized resources. They used the library as a test bed for some of the concepts that are in Clough — taking computers out of east commons and adding outlets for students' computers, which allowed more room for common areas. He said his biggest question in planning Clough Commons was "Will students adopt the building?" And we know the answer to that. Since the first semester alone, the building had one million visits. It has 12,000 student visits each day.

Andy has spent much of his career as a psychologist studying the effects of aging. Along with giving so much of himself at Tech, Andy is very involved in the community, and has a special place in his heart for senior citizens. He chaired the committee to build an affordable retirement community with amenities and opportunities for aging in place. This month St. Anne's Terrace in Buckhead celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. It is non-profit, sponsored by St. Anne's Episcopal Church, where he is a member. Andy has served on the St. Anne's Terrace board continuously since it began. He's also on the board of Meals on Wheel Atlanta Senior Citizen Services.

I often say that when you talk about Georgia Tech, you're really talking about people and their impact. We can be very grateful to Andy Smith for helping to change Georgia Tech's culture. Several years ago the National Academy of Engineers came out with a "changing the conversation" campaign to attract more young people to the field. Andy has helped to change the conversation here. It bothered him when Tech graduates would say "I got out" or be irritated with Georgia Tech when they graduated. He talked

the Alumni Association into changing their annual spring “Getting Out” party to a “Ramblin’ On” party. He talks about “rigor with a smile.” Still having a challenging academic environment, but doing everything we can to communicate that we want students to succeed at Georgia Tech. He receives great satisfaction when he looks at the changes we’ve made in the past 15 or so years — living/learning communities, the academic advising network, internships, the center for academic success and study abroad programs.

When speaking to alumni and other groups, he sometimes closes with a saying: “Look to your left, look to your right. You might be looking at a Nobel prize winner and the CEO of a Fortune 500 company.” Now that’s changing the conversation, and it has the added benefit of being true!

Andy, thank you for your commitment to Georgia Tech, and for investing your career in generations of students. You’ve left your mark on this fine institution.