Dr. Peterson  
Up with the White and Gold Ceremony  
Monday, April 23, 2012, Student Center Ballroom

I am glad to have the opportunity to be with you this evening. We especially want to welcome parents and other visitors. In my three years (so far!) in having the privilege of serving as the president of Georgia Tech, this season is one of my favorites. As we wind down each spring semester, we take opportunities to celebrate success and recognize those who have gone above and beyond in their contributions. When Val and I first started learning about Georgia Tech before we came, we were fascinated to learn that while the campus is 400 acres in the middle of a bustling metropolitan area, it is not really a “commuter campus.” While we do have a large number of students living on campus, I think the real difference in the culture is a result of what you as student leaders are doing. You’re involved in more than 400 student organizations. In many cases you’re combining fun and fellowship with community service, mentoring other students, or serving as ambassadors for Georgia Tech.

We just finished a day-long meeting with the Georgia Tech Advisory Board, leaders in business and industry from throughout the U.S. and even abroad, including alumni, who graciously give us their time to provide advice and support for the Institute. We never miss an opportunity to talk about our outstanding students. In fact, some of you have made presentations at GTAB. GTAB members frequently tell us how impressed they are with our students. And, that goes beyond academics. The ability to speak before a group, and articulate a cause or project is an important life skill. As is the ability to coordinate a project and work with teams.

At Georgia Tech, we’re in the business of preparing leaders. I can think of no better preparation than by combining student leadership activities with academics during your years in college. And, by serving as leaders in co-curricular activities you’re helping to create a memorable student life experience that is available to the entire Tech community. And let me add that this would not be possible without the commitment of
faculty and staff who invest in student leaders and student organizations. By working alongside students outside of the classroom or after hours, you’re providing a lasting investment in their lives.

In a couple of weeks, I’ll be shaking hands with thousands of Georgia Tech graduates as they cross the stage at the Georgia Dome, including some of you. When I talk with graduates and ask them about their most memorable experience at Georgia Tech. Positive, of course! Not once has someone said “It was that physics lab, or “that fundamentals of thermodynamics class.” Invariably, it is a study abroad experience, or perhaps the sense of satisfaction from accomplishing a goal as part of a co-curricular student activity where they made a difference, and made friends for life. On behalf of Georgia Tech faculty and staff, let me extend our congratulations to all of you tonight. Thank you.