

**Dr. Peterson**

**Techmasters (Toastmasters Club) 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

7:30 a.m. Thursday, Oct. 25, 2012, Pettit MiRC Building, Room 102

Thank you for inviting me today to help you celebrate 25 years of Techmasters at Georgia Tech. Joe (Blount) serves in a critical role for the Office of the President. If you ever want to bring Carnegie to a standstill, just cut off our IT support. I don't think we would last more than a day.

I would also like to thank Dave (McGill) for starting this organization. What started as a club for faculty has now expanded to include staff and students. Public speaking is a critical skill that will give students a competitive edge not just when looking for that first job after graduation, but throughout your careers. I commend you for making a personal investment of your time in Techmasters.

I do speak quite a bit, and welcome the opportunity to talk about Georgia Tech to various audiences. Tonight, I'll be speaking at the kick-off ceremony for France-Atlanta. Included among the speakers will be Governor Deal, the French ambassador to the U.S., His Excellency Mr. Francois Delattre, French Consul General Denis Barbet and Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed. And, I want you to know that I am less nervous about speaking before all of these dignitaries than I am speaking with all of you this morning. You analyze speakers and presentations, and prepare comments for "opportunities for improvement." I just ask that you don't turn me into a "Table Topic" when I leave.

Joe suggested that I talk about the importance of communication and speeches in my career. Effective communication is critical. When I first became a manager, a department head at Texas A&M told me "Eighty percent of the problems you faced will be communication problems. The other 20 percent will be special communication problems." I have found that to be true.

Joe mentioned that I have a robust speaking schedule. Serving as an ambassador for Georgia Tech is a big part of my job, and I'm honored to represent this Institute. In the first few months after I arrived, I included a section on "some things that may surprise you about Georgia Tech." It included that we have about 35% women, our strong liberal arts program, our chair in poetry, and our culture of innovation. The more people learn about Georgia Tech, the more impressed they are.

And, as much as I speak, I'm just one person. The real impact comes when we have hundreds of faculty, staff, students, alumni and members of various affinity groups telling the Georgia Tech story in their spheres of influence. That's why what you are doing in Techmasters is so powerful. You're investing in yourselves so that you can be effective ambassadors for Georgia Tech, as well as learning valuable speaking skills that will serve you well in your communities and just about all aspects of your lives.

I'll close by telling a speaking story on myself. A couple of years ago, I was invited to speak at a mid-autumn festival event for the Chinese Friendship Association. They were planning two other speakers, followed by a lion dance where the performer would give me a special banner. I was about three quarters through my speech, and a member of the club crouched down to be discrete, and gave me the international symbol for "stop speaking now." And I did. It was a very effective method to get me to stop. The dragon did later present me with a banner by spitting it out of his mouth. These are the types of experiences that remind me that there's always room for improvement.

Thank you for inviting me today, and congratulations on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Techmasters Club.