

**Dr. Peterson**

**2014 Orange Bowl Pregame Luncheon**

11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 31, 2014, The Biltmore Miami

Good afternoon and welcome. I always enjoy spending time with our alumni and friends of Georgia Tech, and it's especially nice to be doing it here in Florida as we get ready to cheer on the Yellow Jackets in the Capital One Orange Bowl game.

And this is a great time to be a Yellow Jacket, isn't it? Our team has made some believers this season. First, we won the ACC Coastal Division after being picked in the preseason to finish fifth. Then a great season got even better when we went to Athens and came home with an exciting overtime victory over the Bulldogs. At the ACC championship game in Charlotte, we had a superb effort and came up just short against defending national champion FSU. Now we've got a chance to put a real exclamation point on the season by beating Mississippi State's Bulldogs.

It should be a good game.

- Mississippi State is 10-2, and we're 10-3.
- They were ranked No. 1 in the country briefly and might have ended up in the national 4-team playoffs if they hadn't stumbled against Ole Miss in their last game.
- Going into tonight's game, they're No. 7 in the College Football Playoff Rankings, and we're No. 12.
- State averages 37 points per game and gives up 19 per game.
- We average 37 points and allow 25 per game.

Their defense has been stout, giving up only 127 rushing yards per game, but we average 334 yards on the ground, and we've been able to move the ball against everyone we've played. And our defense has improved tremendously down the stretch this season.

A key to the game should be the two quarterbacks. Dak Prescott, is a great player. He's a junior who finished in No. 8 in the Heisman Trophy race. He completes 61 percent of his passes, averages 250 passing yards per game and 78 yards rushing. He's the first-team All-SEC quarterback.

Prescott is 6-2 and 230 pounds. Justin Thomas is 5-11, 190 pounds, but he runs our triple option expertly, and he's very hard to chase down. Justin averages 74 ypg rushing and is a clutch passer, even though we don't throw it nearly as often as State. He is the 2nd-team All-ACC QB behind only FSU's Jameis Winston, last year's Heisman Trophy winner.

Our team's accomplishments make us proud, but there's another aspect represented by our student-athletes that should make us just as proud.

Our 6-year graduation success rate (GSR) for student-athletes has risen to 79 percent, an all-time high for us. Georgia Tech athletes had a record-high 985 on the Academic Progress Report (APR), which is calculated by assessing each scholarship student-athlete's retention and eligibility.

Eight of our 17 teams scored a perfect 1,000, and the football team was in the nation's top 10 percent, with its highest APR ever. The collective student-athlete GPA of 3.0 for last spring semester is also impressive.

I'm also pleased to report that 17 of our football players were among 33 current and former student-athletes who received degrees in our commencement exercises last week.

Great things are happening at Georgia Tech, and not just in athletics. I'm happy to report that for the sixth consecutive fall semester we have the best-qualified and most

diverse freshman class in the Institute's history. And, our freshman class includes 39 percent women.

**In the past five years, we've seen the following:**

- 127 percent increase in applications, from 11,400 in 2009 to almost 26,000 in 2014
- Enrollment went up 11%
- Underrepresented minorities up by 23 percent
- Number of women enrolled increased by 20 percent
- Study abroad is up by 33 percent. Now 48% of our students have a study or work-abroad experience before graduating, compared to the national average of 14%.
- More than 32,000 degrees awarded

**Student success from the past five years:**

Georgia Tech has grown into one of the world's most globalized technological universities, with collaborations in more than 80 countries and institutional partnerships in more than 30 countries.

In the past five years, we have added or renovated almost 2.2 million gross square feet of space. About 1.3 million of that is new construction. \$639 million in new building construction and major renovations.

Engineered Biosystems Building, 6 stories, 220,000 square feet, to open June 2015.

The bar is set high, but that's what we do at Georgia Tech. Thank you very much for your dedication to Georgia Tech. We have some of the most loyal alumni in the nation, and we couldn't do it without you. **[Introduce John & Mary Brock.]**