Dr. Peterson  
Veterans Day Remarks  
11 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 11, 2014, Tech Lawn  

We come together today to honor our American military veterans, men and women who have played a vital role in our country’s history, and who are a treasured part of Georgia Tech as students, faculty, staff, and alumni.

You might have seen them out on campus, or maybe in one of your classes. Their numbers aren't large — we have 208 veterans enrolled this fall and another 300 or so on faculty and staff — but their contributions to our country have been huge. They have often been America’s first responders when there is danger around the world. Unlike most of us as we go about our daily duties, our veterans can face existential threats, ranging from hostile fire to deadly diseases.

Veterans have had a significant impact on Georgia Tech throughout our history. Our curriculum changed dramatically during World War II, and after the war there was a huge influx of veterans to the campus, largely due to the G.I. Bill. To meet the needs of an expected doubling of enrollment by the late 1940s, we undertook a massive campus expansion.

At the same time, Tech experienced an increase in research, transforming the Engineering Experiment Station. In 1944 Georgia Tech became the first public school in the South to create a Veterans Guidance Center to assist our servicemen and women in everything from entrance exams to counseling.

Diversity is an important tenet here at Tech, and that includes diversity of life experiences. Our veterans contribute to that diversity in many ways. With an average age of 27 for our veteran undergraduates and 34 for veteran graduate students, they are typically a bit older than our traditional students. They bring a rich background of
life and work experiences to our campus that can enhance not only their education, but also enrich the educational experience of their fellow students.

Today, we’re in the midst of a weeklong celebration of our veterans. I hope some of you were able to get to the Veterans Day Parade that was held Saturday morning in downtown Atlanta.

Tomorrow (Nov. 12) from 9 a.m. to noon, our Veterans Resource Center at the Smithgall Student Services (Flag) Building is celebrating its one-year anniversary with an open house. If you have time, I hope you’ll stop by and meet David Ross, the center’s director and a 20-year Air Force veteran.

At Georgia Tech, we’re committed to our veterans and making sure that their on-campus needs are met.

One of our veterans is Joshua Jarrell, a third-year Ph.D. candidate in applied physiology who’s also a sergeant-first class and senior medic in the Alabama National Guard. He has 16 years of service and two combat tours in Iraq under his belt. Last week, Joshua delivered a keynote speech during the National Science Foundation’s annual “Saluting Veterans in STEM” symposium in Arlington, Virginia. We’re very proud of him and honored that he’s here at Georgia Tech.

We're also proud of our Veterans Education Training and Transition Program (VET², also called Vet-Squared or Vet-Two), which we hope will help lower the 13.9% unemployment rate for post-9/11 veterans in Georgia. It’s a four-week program offered by Georgia Tech at no cost to service members. The program is open to Active duty, Reserve or National Guard personnel with at least four years of honorable service and leadership experience.
The VET\textsuperscript{2} program is one of the first in the nation of its kind that ties professional education with experiential learning.

Other points of pride:

- Georgia Tech is the second-biggest recipient of Department of Defense research funds (after Johns Hopkins).
- We have an active Military Affinity Group.
- Our cutting-edge research works on problems such as traumatic brain injury, regenerative medicine/tissue engineering for wounded service members/veterans, prosthetics and orthotics and countless innovations for virtually all parts of the military.
- We will continue to partner in research, education, and community outreach related to veterans’ concerns.

We honor our veterans on this Veterans Day, and that’s wonderful and fitting. But when the parades and celebrations have ended, let’s remember that every day they represent us here and abroad with a deep sense of duty that binds them together and also inspires them to serve as a shield for all Americans. They are both warriors and peacekeepers. They carry this burden so that we may all pursue our shared values of liberty, justice, and self-determination. This is a debt that can never be fully repaid.