Dr. Peterson  
Faculty/Staff Honors Luncheon: Distinguished Professor Award  
Noon-1:30 p.m. Friday, April 17, 2015, Student Center Ballroom  

It is my privilege to present the Class of 1934 Distinguished Professor Award, the highest honor given to a Georgia Tech professor. The award is presented to a professor who has made significant, long-term contributions to teaching, research, and public service. It includes a prize of $25,000 made possible by a generous grant from the Class of 1934.

The 2015 recipient is George Nemhauser, an Institute Professor and the A. Russell Chandler III Chair Professor in ISyE. Dr. Nemhauser very much wanted to be here today, but his schedule didn’t permit that, so he has recorded a video that you’ll see in just a minute. First, let me tell you a little about his distinguished background.

Dr. Nemhauser is considered one of the world’s top optimization researchers. He has won every major award in the field of optimization, including the field’s first-ever Khachiyan Prize for lifetime achievement in 2010.

Dr. Nemhauser came to Georgia Tech in 1985. He is the first sitting professor at Georgia Tech to be elected to the National Academy of Engineering. We’re very glad he ended up here, because as a young boy growing up in New York his dream was to play centerfield for the New York Yankees. Looking ahead, he figured he’d be ready for the position about the same time Joe DiMaggio would be retiring. Unfortunately, some guy named Mickey Mantle got the job.

Some of Dr. Nemhauser’s former students, along with other leaders in the field, submitted letters in support of his receipt of this award. Former MIT Dean of Engineering Thomas Magnanti, now founding president of the Singapore University of Technology and Design, says this:
“I have had the pleasure of knowing almost all the leaders in the field of Operations Research over the past 40 years, and the pleasure of working with some of the smartest and most accomplished people in the world. George Nemhauser stands alongside the very best of them.”

As a Georgia Tech undergraduate in 1993, Jeffrey Day had Dr. Nemhauser for his first ISyE major class. Now a manager at SAS Institute, Dr. Day says he consciously uses Dr. Nemhauser’s communication techniques.

“George was one of the most conversational professors I ever met,” he recalls. “He came to class and just had a conversation with the students rather than lecturing to them or at them. It made the class fun and the material easier to learn.”

Dr. Nemhauser’s work has dramatically impacted both the theory and application of optimization. He has more than 200 publications and more than 25,000 citations. One of his books has been the premier textbook on integer and combinatorial optimization for 25 years and counting. He has delivered plenary/keynote addresses in 15 countries on five continents.

After almost 30 years at Georgia Tech, Dr. Nemhauser continues to be as productive as ever. During the past year, he has published nine papers (with five more in the review process), advised eight Ph.D. students, and earned grants and contracts totaling more than $1.5 million. He currently teaches 159 undergraduate students, at his own request, in a required optimization course that is part of our core.

George Nemhauser characterizes the essence of sustained excellence in teaching, research, and service. Although he’s not here in person, please join me in congratulating him, and then we’ll enjoy the message he prerecorded for this occasion.