An Occasional Series

50 Years of Women at Tech

Woo enjoyed eventful, unique time

By Joshua Cuneo
Contributing Writer

As a Chinese immigrant, Sal-ly Lin Woo faced even greater challenges than her American counterparts at Georgia Tech. For instance, “I only spoke Chinese,” No-En English, she said in a recent interview. “At first, I didn’t un-derstand [what everyone was say- ing], but I had classmates who helped me and teachers who helped me.”

But she adapted to the new language and culture well enough to survive Tech’s rigorous aca-de-mic program, becoming the first Asian-American female graduate from Georgia Tech.

Woo immigrated to the United States in 1959 with her parents and five siblings. After a brief stay in New York, her family settled in Augus-ta, where Woo com-pleted high school and accepted a four-year scholarship to the Medical College of Georgia.

“I was the early 60s. I think most of the girls went into other teach-ing, or secretarial work, or some students and professors who re-ceived the number of part-time faculty. Other methods involve using a straightforward head count, or to-tal credit hours taken by students instead of full-time students. The FTE count is included in the statistics for Tech’s Common Data Set, which provides the num-ber that are reported in the well-known U.S. News and World Report College rankings. Tech is also re-quired to report these figures ev-ery fall to the federal government, in order to get funding for research and other initiatives.

The most recent Common Data Set lists that Tech has an undergra-duate student to faculty ratio of 19:1, and an overall stu-dent to faculty ratio of 19:1. How does that compare with other schools? Also listed on the Office of Institutional Research and Planning’s website are Georgia Tech’s peer institutions, which include:

1. The University of Florida, which has a similar mission to Tech and a similar ratio of 19:1.
2. The University of California, Berkeley, which has a ratio of 22:1.
3. The University of California, Los Angeles, which has a ratio of 18:1.
4. The University of California, San Diego, which has a ratio of 16:1.
5. The University of California, Irvine, which has a ratio of 15:1.

All of these institutions, which serve as a basis for comparison and include both pri-vate and public institutions, are located in the western part of the United States, except for Florida, which is located in the south. Georgia Tech is located in the southeast, and it has a ratio of 19:1.

Although class size and student to faculty ratio are not mutually exclusive, they are two different calculations.

Sandi Bramblett, Director, Office of Institutional Research and Planning
maintain the rigor of its academic system for its women, and the system became more flexible to their needs throughout the 1960s. Women who wanted to graduate with non-engineering degrees could do so if they petitioned the Board of Regents. (Part of the ruling that women were to be allowed to Tech stated that female applicants could only major in subjects not available to them at other Georgia universities, namely engineering fields.)

As for Woo, her transfer credits from the Medical College of Georgia only counted as elective hours, so she was forced to take the entire core curriculum, which, she said, was extremely difficult. "At Tech, I was just average," she admitted. "I had to study to keep up."

Her academic challenges grew when she married her high school sweetheart Bobby Woo her senior year. A short time later, she took a maternity leave and gave birth to her first child. When she returned, she found herself unusually distracted. "My in-laws took care of my baby for three months so I could finish," she recalled. "It was very hard to focus, but I did it."

She graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Chemical Engineering in 1966. "I was happy," she said. "Looking back, it was pretty tough, but it really was a good experience."

Although women were forbidden from using the space for the Varsity, the Robbery, shopping downtown and extracurricular activities, including the football games, the Varsity, the Robbery, shopping downtown and extracurricular activities, including the newly-established Women in Engineering club (although women were forbidden from using the pool and typically didn’t join activities such as the student publications).

"Woo herself was a member of the Women Students Association and the Chinese Student Club. Some fraternities, particularly Chi Phi, were notably receptive to women and invited them to many of their functions. Woo fondly remembers these activities, particularly shopping and the football games, but "we just didn’t have a lot of time for them."

Tech had kept its promise to maintain the rigor of its academic system for its women, and the system became more flexible to their needs throughout the 1960s. Women who wanted to graduate with non-engineering degrees could do so if they petitioned the Board of Regents. (Part of the ruling that women were to be allowed to Tech stated that female applicants could only major in subjects not available to them at other Georgia universities, namely engineering fields.)

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"[Art] is a peaceful way for me to express myself."  
Jason Reeves  
Skiles chalker

Although Reeves welcomed the contributions, he is hesitant about a club forming from this endeavor. “It’s great that Georgia Tech has so many organizations, but there’s also something to be said for something that’s independent,” he said. “Art is something special to everyone who creates it, and anybody should be able to do it without it being an organization, so to speak.”

He encourages anyone who is interested to contribute, though. “So many people say that they have no artistic talent, but if they have the imagination, the desire to express themselves and the supplies,” he said. "Many people say that they have no artistic talent, but if they have the imagination, the desire to express themselves and the supplies, they can do it." Reeves has observed has been from three other people. "Even with the class contributing, there were even interested in helping, and the end product of the water lilies drawing featured contributions from three other people.

That’s all they need. Art is too personal and subjective to dictate who has talent and who doesn’t,” he said. A personal outlet is important, according to Reeves. “Everyone needs to have some type of outlet, whether it’s playing a sport, playing an instrument, writing or painting. Just something to keep them sane—especially at a demanding school like Georgia Tech,” he said.

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The Common Data Set is the only place where the student to faculty ratio is actually formally reported. However, it is also used when the Office of Institutional Research and Planning submits budget requests to the Board of Regents. Said Bramblett, “For example, in the last five to six years we’ve added two to three thousand students, and if you’re calculating a student to faculty ratio of 22:1, then that’s probably not in the best interest of the students. So we use [the student to faculty ratio] as a way to make our case that Georgia Tech needs to maintain a certain level of service to the students by hiring more faculty.”

The ratio can also be misleading, though. One important distinction is the difference between the ratio and class size. Bramblett acknowledges that the two are very different, which may help students to understand why the ratio doesn’t really manifest itself in the classrooms, even in the 1000- and 2000-level courses. “Although class size and student to faculty ratio are not mutually exclusive, they are two different calculations,” Bramblett said.

Another distinction about the 19:1 ratio that is listed in the Common Data Set is that it includes both graduate and undergraduate students and faculty. Bramblett pointed out that other schools often have just a graduate faculty that only deals with grad students. “Here at Tech, professors teach both graduate and undergraduate level courses, and are part of that core of instruction; therefore, we include all of them in the count.”

Bramblett said, “That actually is the hardest question that I have to answer: how many faculty do you have?”

There are several different categories of faculty, including academic, research and general. General faculty, for example, also includes those professors that hold administrative positions such as deans or department chairs. Also, distinctions are often made between faculty that hold tenure-track positions and those who don’t. In addition, teaching assistants, which generally are not counted as faculty, do still play a part in students education. With a less strict definition of faculty, then, Tech’s ratio may be less than is reported. Even so, Tech is constantly working to lower the student to faculty ratio. The Office of Institutional Research and Planning worked with the President to formulate some of the goals listed on Tech’s Strategic Plan, and one of those goals was to lower the overall student to faculty ratio to 16:1.

But students wondering why they aren’t seeing more of this ratio might want to remember that ultimately, the old adage is true: don’t depend on the student to faculty ratio alone if you want to get to know your professors.
On August 2, Xiaolan Li, of the People’s Republic of China, received Georgia Tech’s first Master’s of Business Administration degree. Li was the only graduate in the summer program. “Normally we don’t have any graduates who attend in the summer, but we’re excited to award our first MBA this summer,” said Ann J. Scott, director of graduate programs in the Dupree College. The Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia only changed the name from Master of Science in Management to Master of Business Administration in June.

Why the name switch from the traditional MSM degree? “In the past years, it has been an educational process for hiring companies to understand the significance of the MSM program and its equivalence to an MBA. Now, instead of justifying the MSM degree, students are able to focus on selling themselves and their area of expertise,” said Terry Blum, Dean of the Dupree College of Management.

Additionally, several other universities have eliminated their MSM programs. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Carnegie Mellon University, Northwestern University and Purdue University have all changed the names of their graduate programs to MBA.

The graduate school program has become increasingly competitive and difficult to get into because of the recent economic downturn. The MBA degree makes many job seekers more marketable to employers and recruiters. The average starting salary for the class of 2001 was $81,000. The mean salary increased from five percent in the year previous. Over 91 percent of the graduates had employment at graduation and 72 percent of the graduates received a signing bonus. The signing bonuses ranged from $1,500—$40,000 and the average signing bonus was $13,315.

The new MBA program focuses on entrepreneurship and innovation, e-business for the global economy and the management of technology. The average student entering the class of 2002 had at least four years of work experience as well. The only prerequisite to the MBA program is calculus with a grade of C or better. If a student has not taken calculus during their undergraduate studies, they must complete it before they begin the program.

The MBA program is a full time two-year program. The first year of the program helps students with non-business backgrounds learn the core foundation of business administration.

During the second year, the students have to design their own curriculum and select courses from two or three concentrations and earn certificates. They can select from one of these concentrations:

- **E-Commerce.** This concentration combines technical and managerial course work offerings. Students can focus on electronic commerce management, networking, interface design, or multimedia.
- **Entrepreneurship.** The Entrepreneurship certificate focuses on the skills and experience required to start a new business, manage an entrepreneurial unit, and participate in an entrepreneurship company. Students can work on ventures with the Advanced Technology Development Center and the Georgia Center for Advanced Telecommunications.
- **International Business.** Students learn the fundamentals of international business, investments, and global operations. Students in the certificate program must demonstrate language proficiency and either study or work abroad.
- **Management of Technology.** Students learn the decision-making involved in organizations dominated by engineering, science or computing disciplines.
Tech Up Close

email: focus@technique.gatech.edu
Winner of the Tech Up Close contest receives a Technique T-shirt and a coupon for a free student combo at Li’l Dino’s.

Last week’s Tech Up Close:
Honor society bent outside the Van Leer building
Last week’s winner:
Eric Clopper