



**Georgia Institute
of Technology**

Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

GTS Task Force Report: *Defining a Path Forward for Georgia Tech-Savannah*

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Note:

This document is the official report of recommendations from the Georgia Tech-Savannah task force charged by President G. P. “Bud” Peterson and chaired by Provost Rafael L. Bras. Further details of the task force’s activities are contained in the Table of Appendices and available upon request.

Unless noted otherwise, source of all data is Georgia Institute of Technology Office of Institutional Research and Planning.

Task Force Formation and Charge

*Designing the Future*¹ lays out a new Georgia Tech strategic vision and calls for a fresh review of all our educational activities. In that spirit and in accordance with Institute practice, a review of Georgia Tech-Savannah was initiated last year. Also motivating a review of GTS are additional factors external to Georgia Tech; among them are the continuing state budget challenges, evolving engineering degree offerings in the state, and the cyclical nature of workforce needs. Internally, there has been evidence of dissatisfaction and anxiety in students, staff and faculty at GTS and in units in Atlanta involved with the Savannah operations. A review of Georgia Tech-Savannah was initiated to define a new path forward for Georgia Tech's operations in Southeast Georgia.

In November 2010, Provost Rafael L. Bras began discussions with leaders of the Institute, GTS, College of Engineering, and the Schools of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Civil and Environmental Engineering regarding the formation of a task force to review the academic programs offered at Savannah. The membership of the task force was designed to provide a diverse representation of opinions and to bring expertise to the discussions regarding the programs and activities in Savannah. Formation of the task force was also guided by ideas from an off-site meeting of the GTS faculty. The task force was formally established in December 2010 (see membership list appended) with the following charge:

Define a sustainable and viable path forward for GTS that a) is in keeping with Georgia Tech's reputation for excellence, b) is unique and complementary to GT Atlanta and, c) can be viable and self-sustaining within five years.

Consistent with Institute practice regarding comprehensive academic reviews, individuals directly responsible for operations in Savannah — the GTS director, the dean of Engineering, chairs of the Schools of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Civil and Environmental Engineering, and the director of undergraduate admissions — were not members of the review team. However, all were important resources to the group during the process.

A Primer on Georgia Tech-Savannah

Modeled after the Regents' Engineering Transfer Program (RETP), the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program (GTREP) was established in 1999. This program allows students to spend their first two years at Armstrong Atlantic State University (AASU), Georgia Southern University or Savannah State University, with some minimal engagement with Georgia Tech faculty. Students transfer to Georgia Tech-Savannah — or, in some cases, to Tech's Atlanta campus — once they complete the appropriate course work and have met the minimum GPA requirement. In essence, the GTREP program is just like the RETP program except that students are tracked to transfer and are expected to become GTS engineering students. GTREP students receive some minimal instruction from GT faculty and staff during their first two years. The program began by offering a

¹ The strategic plan of Georgia Institute of Technology is available at: www.gatech.edu/vision/

bachelor's degree in civil engineering or computer engineering. Master of Science degrees in electrical engineering and civil engineering were added in 2001 and 2002, respectively, followed by undergraduate degrees in electrical engineering and mechanical engineering in 2003.

In 2008, Georgia Tech-Savannah entered into a partnership with AASU, the Engineering Alliance (EA), to create a unique opportunity for freshman applicants. Unlike GTREP, students are admitted to Georgia Tech as freshmen, but take courses at AASU for the first two years. The last two years are spent on the Georgia Tech Savannah campus where students earn an engineering degree.

The civil engineering and computer engineering bachelor's degrees received ABET accreditation in July 2003 and were re-accredited in July 2009. The mechanical engineering and electrical engineering bachelor's degrees received ABET accreditation in July 2009. There are 23 tenure-track or tenured faculty members and 41 staff members assigned in Savannah.

Process Summary and Basic Data

The task force met nearly weekly since inception. The group reviewed information and history and engaged in creating a common foundation of knowledge. The task force gathered information about the operations of GTS, local community needs, interests, and opportunities through two primary methods.

First, the bulk of the process involved meeting and interviewing various constituencies, groups, and individuals with interest and/or knowledge of the GTS operations and the coastal region. Guests of the task force included faculty, staff, and current GTS and GTREP students in Savannah. Also interviewed were chairs of the three schools offering degrees at GTS – Electrical and Computer Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, and Civil and Environmental Engineering. The deans of all the colleges, particularly the dean of Engineering, were engaged and kept informed. The executive vice president for research and vice provosts with knowledge of Savannah were interviewed. The director of undergraduate admissions made a presentation to the group and engaged in discussions. The whole task force and, at times, individual members, spoke with members of the Savannah community, GTS alumni, and the GTS advisory board. The legislative delegation of the region was kept informed through conversations with our government relations staff as well as a meeting in Savannah. Several meetings occurred with institutions such as Skidaway Institute of Oceanography (SkIO), Armstrong Atlantic State University (AASU) and Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). The military in the region was engaged in discussions, specifically with leadership at Fort Stewart. A briefing and discussion with interested faculty in Atlanta as well as staff from admissions, financial aid, and others occurred. The Office of the Chancellor of the University System of Georgia has been kept apprised of the task force's work. Overall, members of the task force travelled six times to Savannah.

In addition to conversations with constituencies, the second method the task force used to learn about GTS was the study of relevant trend data related to enrollment, admissions yield, graduation rates, faculty size, and budget.

Enrollment in GTS programs has been small, despite projections of 1,600 students in GTREP by 2010². Table 1 shows the actual enrollment history for GTS, including all GTREP campuses as well as enrollment at all Georgia Tech campuses (including Savannah) during the same time period.

Table 1: Enrollment History at Georgia Tech and Georgia Tech Savannah, Fall 2000-Fall 2010

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
GTREP: AASU, undergraduate	26	26	34	27	49	39	26	34	62	102	116
GTREP: GA Southern, undergraduate	18	38	82	80	95	85	100	104	96	98	94
GTREP: Savannah State, undergraduate	5	0	0	2	2	8	4	0	2	1	3
GTS, undergraduate	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	12	36	63	58
GTS, graduate @GTS	0	0	3	14	24	26	32	32	44	48	38
GTS, graduate, on ATL campus ³	2	4	14	19	13	12	16	20	19	16	29
Total GTS & GTREP students*	51	68	133	142	183	170	180	202	259	328	338
Total GT students, all campuses&	15,451	16,170	17,040	17,192	17,454	17,691	18,531	19,340	20,010	20,824	21,341

* (undergraduate & graduate, includes co-op and internship students)

With 23 tenure-track faculty members at GTS, the enrollment of 338 corresponds to about 14.7 students per faculty member, less than half of the equivalent figure in the College of Engineering overall, which has a 32:1 student-to-faculty ratio⁴. More revealing, though, is the fact that these students have very little, if any, contact with GT faculty while at AASU, Georgia Southern or Savannah State – only 58 undergraduate and 39 graduate students were physically present and co-located with the 23 faculty members and 41 staff members in the Savannah facility during 2010. Faculty frustration with the teaching of very small classes has been expressed. Although the low student-to-faculty ratio has been frequently cited by students as a strong benefit of the program,

² USG Board of Regents, *Minutes of the May Meeting of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia*. 2002: Atlanta, GA. p. 13-19; and Clough, G.W. and D. Frost. *Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Programs - Presentation to the Board of Regents*. in *Board of Regents May Meeting*. 2002. Atlanta, GA.

³ Source: GTS records

⁴ Based on fall 2010 data; the number of undergraduate and graduate students in engineering is 12,399. The engineering faculty count (tenured and tenure track) was 387.

the significantly smaller ratio at GTS creates resource struggles with disciplinary counterparts on the Atlanta campus.

The introduction of the Engineering Alliance (EA) program with AASU in 2008 was intended to foster enrollment. Table 2 below shows admissions yield trends in the program. Although the actual yield for fall 2011 is not yet known, the yield for this program has been significantly below that of the in-state yield for the Atlanta campus, which is typically more than 60 percent. In fact, very few students applying to Georgia Tech indicate a preference for the GTS campus. During the 2010 and 2011 admissions process, this number was less than 1 percent of the total (ca. 14,000) applicant pool, or 86 and 126, respectively. Only a fraction of these applicants are admissible. To make up the entering class, a large number of individuals are offered admission to Georgia Tech through the Engineering Alliance program only. Given that situation, the low yield is not surprising.

Table 2: Engineering Alliance Program Admissions Trends

	Fall 2008	Fall 2009	Fall 2010	Fall 2011
Students offered Admission to EA	183	389	461	319
New Students Enrolling in EA	29	63	62	TBD
Yield	15.8%	16.2%	13.4%	TBD

Of equal concern is the low retention rate of the entering undergraduate students. For example, the 2008 cohort of 29 students entering the Engineering Alliance has only nine remaining in the AASU or GTS pipeline and six have transferred to Atlanta as of Spring 2011. The other 14 students have left the program and only 52 percent remain in the program. The 2009 cohort had 63 students and 71 percent remain in the program with 38 at AASU and seven transferred to Atlanta. The second year retention rate for undergraduate engineering students on the Atlanta campus is 88 percent.

In order to maintain programs of similar quality to the Atlanta campus, GTS has had to build and maintain a comparably talented engineering faculty, which has become increasingly complex. Recruiting faculty members to Savannah has been difficult and, although not a unanimous feeling, a considerable number of the existing faculty members would rather be in Atlanta. Frustrations with access to the facilities and synergism of a full campus are evident. Savannah faculty members have a more difficult time than their Atlanta counterparts recruiting graduate students. They are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis Atlanta colleagues in the pursuit of tenure and career advancement due to the limited opportunities for scholarly collaboration and mentorship.

Like the undergraduate programs, the current GTS graduate programs are also extensions of Atlanta-based programs. These programs are offered on the GTS campus to meet the professional needs of academic faculty to conduct research and advise graduate student work. This component of an academician's career is essential to scholarly productivity and ultimately success in research funding and tenure. These graduate students belong to the same programs as their colleagues in

Atlanta. However, the graduate student-faculty ratio in Savannah at about 3:1 is much smaller than the graduate engineering student-faculty ratio in Atlanta, which is 10:1.⁵ A significant number of Savannah graduate students are in fact resident in Atlanta at any one time.

The cost of maintaining the necessary infrastructure to support undergraduate and graduate degree programs is significant. The current GTS operating expenses are \$8.1M and revenues from GTS are \$3.6M⁶. This gap between revenue and expenses cannot be sustained in the current environment of limited resources.

Task Force Recommendations

All potential options for transformational paths forward were on the table at the onset of the task force's discussions. A broad list of these options was created early in the group's process. The set of options considered was wide ranging, from completely pulling out and shutting down all operations at GTS to expanding existing services and programs at GTS to a four-year degree program by investing in the development of a campus environment for the faculty, students, and staff. The list grew and was modified based on the various discussions, ideas presented, and information gathered – each option was vetted and considered carefully.

While keeping all options open, the objective of the review was to gather information, insights, data, and reports from all relevant academic and non-academic stakeholders in order to give members of the task force as clear a picture as possible of:

- the evolution of GTS since its inception;
- challenges that GTS has and is facing, how these challenges have been addressed and whether, or the extent to which, proposed solutions were productive;
- the successes and challenges of similar satellite programs at other universities (the Education Advisory Board commissioned report of satellite campuses is available upon request); and
- the local region's educational needs, economic trends, and culture.

The knowledge gleaned during the data gathering phase was extensive and provided the necessary background information that enabled the task force to evaluate the full set of options available and identify those options that would best meet the task force's charge of defining a viable and self-sustaining path forward. The task force recommends a continued and strong commitment to Southeast Georgia by creating a new academic and operational model for GTS, but discontinuing the current degree programs – both paths are described in more detail below.

⁵ Based on fall 2010 data; the number of GTS graduate students is 67 and the number of engineering graduate students in Atlanta is 3,768. The faculty count was 23 at GTS and 362 on the Atlanta campus.

⁶ Source: Georgia Institute of Technology Office of Budget and Planning

Transition from the Current Undergraduate and Graduate Degree Programs

The task force recommends phasing out the current GTS undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Specifically, the current degree programs fall short of a sustainable and viable path forward that is unique and complementary to Tech's core operations in Atlanta.

From the beginning, GTS has aimed to achieve and maintain the same academic standards for both students and faculty as the Atlanta campus. When recruiting students, GTS relies on a population base that cannot provide the critical mass of students necessary to form a sustainable number of Georgia Tech engineering students. As seen in Table 1, the number of students originating from GTS's original partnership agreements through the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program (GTREP), has, at best, remained constant or exhibited only modest growth in recent years. In response, GTS has added some new partnership programs. The largest of these programs, the Engineering Alliance (EA) program, typically generates approximately 100 applicants, with only about 40 percent being admissible.⁷ Given this small pool of applicants who apply to GTS specifically, the only means for generating additional EA students is to admit students who originally applied to Atlanta and not Savannah. Since attending GT's Atlanta campus is the preference of most of these applicants, Table 2 shows that their yield is very low.

The GTS programs duplicate the undergraduate degree programs offered in Atlanta, are in direct competition, and offer nothing academically unique for the citizens of Georgia. GTS is at a distinct disadvantage in this competition being in a smaller metropolitan area and lacking the breadth of academic and social programs offered at the Atlanta campus.

The Board of Regents recently approved the offering of engineering degrees by Georgia Southern University in the same areas as those offered at GTS. A majority of our upper-level (junior and senior) GTS students are in residence at Statesboro. Although the Georgia Southern program is just starting and there are many questions to be answered in regards to its viability, its presence will add further competition for this dwindling student population. Despite extraordinary efforts, the GTS undergraduate student population has remained well below the levels necessary to be self-sustaining and shows few signs of growing significantly over the next five years.

Although the task force recommends phasing out the current EA and GTREP transfer programs, the RETP transfer partnerships should be continued and enhanced. Current GTREP schools can shift their focus to RETP and invitations to join RETP or dual-degree partnerships should be extended to other regional schools, such as Augusta State University, College of Coastal Georgia, South Georgia College, East Georgia College, Waycross College, and University of South Carolina-Buford.

Changes to the undergraduate degree programs are subject to the policies of the University System of Georgia and notification to SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the regional accrediting body) and ABET (the accrediting body for educational programs in applied science, computing, engineering, and technology).

⁷ Source: Georgia Institute of Technology Office of Admissions

The creation of the undergraduate degree programs dictated the need for an academic (tenure or tenure track) faculty presence at GTS. The current GTS graduate degree programs were added to facilitate the recruitment of faculty and go hand-in-hand with the academic faculty presence and would not be viable without them. Therefore, the task force also recommends the phase out of the current graduate degree programs offered at GTS, as well.

Creating a New Model for GTS

The task force recommends establishing a new operational model for GTS that has the strong potential for financial self-sufficiency and revenue neutrality (or even revenue generation) in a relatively short period of time. The proposed organization will offer a portfolio of undergraduate co-curricular educational experiences, educational programs directed to the military, executive and other non-credit educational programs, credit-bearing professional master's degree programs, and regional applied research opportunities. At the same time, it will support the advanced education requirements of regional business and the local community. These programs will not be limited to engineering. Georgia Tech's presence in Savannah should be characterized by alignment with our mission, vision, and strategic plan as well as flexibility and the agility to respond to shifting market demands.

1. Offer alternate undergraduate student experiential learning opportunities

Even though it recommends that GTS no longer function as an undergraduate degree-granting entity, the task force sees potential for the Savannah campus to function as a venue for undergraduate learning and education-related experiences focused on the unique aspects of the Savannah region. Possible co-curricular activities include field research, capstone design, cooperative education and other internship opportunities that contribute to undergraduate education and learning. Such offerings also present additional avenues to assure undergraduate participation at GTS and would not be limited to just engineering.

To accompany the co-curricular activities, formal course work in several areas may be appropriate and feasible, especially by leveraging current distance learning facilities. A key requirement for these activities is that they take advantage of the unique opportunities provided by the region's resources and should be positioned within the context of local industries.

The Savannah environment offers numerous opportunities for curricular experiences focused on aerospace engineering, port operations, logistics, alternative energy technologies, and water resource issues as well as many coastal aspects, such as biogeochemical processes, oceanography, conservation, environments, engineering, biology, and aquatic robotics. Partnerships with accomplished and vigorous local educational and research institutions, such as the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and Skidaway Institute of Oceanography (SkIO), also may contribute to a unique set of opportunities available from GTS.

Along with undergraduate experiential learning opportunities, GTS has fostered a K-12 outreach program that further offers experiential learning activities. These programs and the partnerships they have garnered should be studied for leveraging and continuing activities within the region and throughout the state.

Potential for alternate educational activities is demonstrated by the following:

- Expanding the pool of participants to all Atlanta students, in all fields of study.
- Addressing our strategic goal of creating closer relationships to industry, and puts new emphasis on our tradition of cooperative education. It can also engage institutions like the SkIO and potentially SCAD.
- Responding to student requests for this type of experience.
- Leveraging existing facilities and on-going co-op programs in Savannah will make the location attractive – students would potentially be able to use distance learning facilities to keep some course work on-going while engaged in a co-op assignment or internship.
- Does not rely on large numbers of permanent tenure-track faculty and can be managed efficiently without large personnel infrastructure, but does generate tuition revenue.
- Responding to regional needs and offers the opportunity for local industries and students to become acquainted.
- Largely self-sustaining if the participation of industry is secured.
- Quick implementation.
- Potential for further development, for example by engaging in combined co-op early career education.
- There is evidence of success elsewhere. Georgia Tech-Lorraine uses elements of this model effectively, and the University of Connecticut-Avery Point also has successful experiences offering course work in tandem with field and/or hands-on experiences to enhance the impact of learning.
- A unique offering not duplicative of Atlanta efforts.

2. Deliver educational programs catering to the military

The task force is very interested in partnering with local and national military leadership to offer educational programs to military personnel. Such programs offer the potential for a sustainable revenue source based on successful business models. Given the existing strong relationships between the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), the Distance Learning and Professional Education (DLPE) unit of GT, and the military, there is a familiarity and relationships on which to build. Some of Georgia Tech's strongest adult learning areas, such as defense technologies, could find linkages to programs desired by the military.

Discussions with Savannah-area military leadership have yielded a great deal of interest in the development of such programs, especially catering to individuals transitioning from active service to the civilian workforce. This would also present a new demographic and a national market base drawing upon the men and women in active duty, guard, and reserves, as well as their dependents, civilian personnel, and those in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers potentially interested in the offerings at GTS. The military provides funding and support for education of these groups through the Army PROSPECT training program for continuing education, Veterans Administration (VA) benefits, commissioned officer graduate degree support, and the Post 9/11 GI Bill. The large spectrum of educational readiness among military personnel provides an opportunity for GTS to

partner with other USG institutions by providing them space and infrastructure to offer courses and programs outside of Georgia Tech's strength areas but appealing to the spectrum of military-related students.

The U.S. Army Engineering School at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, is an example of a similar, successful program. That program provides required civil engineering-focused curriculum to enlisted soldiers. The Servicemembers Opportunity Colleges (SOC) is a yet untapped program for Georgia Tech that partners with higher education to foster college degree completion for service members, their family members and veterans. While acknowledging the formidable challenges between University System of Georgia and Georgia Tech requirements and those called for in the SOC program, opportunities could exist.

The task force recommends a team be created to review all of these programs for potential overlap with current Georgia Tech degree programs as well as identify areas where programs can be strengthened or developed to meet the educational needs of military service personnel. Market studies to determine sustainable demand and areas of focus would be necessary. The task force envisions singular focused efforts responding to a niche need or a bundle of programs branded under an umbrella organization for educational programs offered to the military to respond to the breadth and depth of the educational opportunities that may be possible.

The potential of this activity encompasses the following:

- Responds to a national, state and regional imperative, getting Georgia Tech into servicing a sector that so far has not been our focus in recent times.
- There is a large population of military personnel and related individuals, and a constantly renewing one, in the state and the region. This clientele is sufficiently broad that GT can define subset of the military population it can serve best with a variety of targeted products: non-credit, credit, and degree-granting alternatives.
- A successful model can be replicated nationally.
- Unique and complementary to Atlanta activities.
- Self-sustaining through available, untapped resources if GT can formulate a program sanctioned by the military.
- Not reliant on traditional educational offerings, degrees and staff.
- There are available successful models and examples.

3. Establish unique executive education and other non-credit programs

The task force sees opportunities for executive education and other non-credit offerings that respond to a strong local interest and support economic development, and may function in collaboration with or separate from the military-focused programs. Both the risk and cost for such offerings are low. Courses can be targeted to the needs of industry clients and may be local or global. Like the military education offerings, these programs can be managed through the established DLPE operation at Georgia Tech. In addition to the revenue potential, these programs can open doors to further partnerships for education and research.

The tourism industry and scenic environment of Savannah provide a unique and desirable location for companies seeking executive education coupled with recreational activities for their developing and senior leaders. As with the military opportunities, market studies will be necessary to determine the pricing structure, stable demands, and potential regional competitors.

The task force sees the following advantages to these offerings:

- They are low risk and low cost; DLPE, the College of Management and other colleges have experience doing this.
- They are self-sustaining.
- They cater to particular needs of the regional industry – customized programs are possible.
- Savannah may prove to be an attractive destination for this type of effort.
- They can be delivered long-distance, in person or with hybrid models.
- They are not restricted to activities of Colleges – it is outside the traditional educational model.
- They address a regional need not presently being served.
- They can be augmented with workshops, professional meetings, and other activities compatible with the Savannah location and GTS facilities.
- They could be “branded” in Savannah.
- They could be implemented quickly.
- The University of Washington, University of Texas-Austin, University of California Extension programs, and Harvard Extension are examples of similar, successful credit and non-credit programs.

4. Create a portfolio of professional master’s degree programs

The task force sees a great deal of potential for professional master’s degree programs. Through the utilization of distance technology building on Tech’s core strengths and leveraging some course offerings to augment content, these types of degrees offer an independent opportunity for innovative and customized programs separate from traditional master’s programs. Further, these alternative programs would alleviate some pressures on our current graduate degree programs and will not directly compete with existing Atlanta programs.

Professional master’s-level programs represent a great deal of potential for the local community and industry. They can be customized for targeted industry clients as needed and through distance technology have the potential for national and international marketability. Programs can be experimental and interdisciplinary in content to create and meet niche market needs. Unlike traditional graduate or undergraduate degree programs, a large research-oriented faculty is not necessary to sustain the courses, and in fact, experts from industry and retired and part-time faculty make ideal and knowledgeable faculty for these programs. This type of business model allows for a potential revenue stream not available in traditional degree programs with a significant resource demand.

This presents a newer educational model for Georgia Tech (only a few professional master's programs exist⁸), and careful management is needed to ensure brand consistency. We also must realize that this direction requires longer lead times than the other recommended programs since curriculum and creation/approval of new degrees will be required. These programs present a significant opportunity to leverage the Georgia Tech name, provide educational acumen to a broader population of students, and to align with the stated competitive strengths of the Savannah Economic Development Authority (SEDA) and statewide economic development strategies.

The task force sees the following potential advantages:

- This will not be competitive with Atlanta; there are very few such programs in existence.
- There is a need for such programs spanning practically all areas where Georgia Tech excels – across all Colleges. It should be part of our core business.
- Generally these programs are self-sustaining and involve differential tuition. By their nature, these programs must rely, to a large extent on experienced professionals to serve on the faculty – not tenure-track research faculty. Nevertheless, offerings and engagement by the regular faculty are complementary and needed but can be delivered without a permanent presence.
- Savannah could become Tech's professional degree center.
- The target population is world-wide.
- It could engage educational institutions like SkIO and SCAD.
- There are some reasonably easy options that can be pursued to initiate activities. We already offer a Systems Engineering program with these characteristics and managed by DLPE and the College of Engineering. We have opportunities in the logistics space with need established with activities in Panama and other countries that are compatible with the needs of the Port of Savannah, the manufacturing base of the area and the supply chain needs of many companies using the port to move goods into the US. Software Engineering is another discipline with proven demand world-wide for a professional master of science or engineering. A professional master of science/engineering in Coastal Processes and/or Sustainability and the Environment is possible with SkIO.
- These models have proven successful in a variety of places like MIT, Johns Hopkins, Wisconsin, and UC-Santa Barbara.

5. Develop regional applied research opportunities

The task force recommends that Georgia Tech, through its applied research arm, the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), explore applied research opportunities in the Georgia coastal region. Applied research offers low-risk activities that leverage the Georgia Tech brand and strengths, but are unique to this region. Applied research opportunities are, by their nature, transient and “follow the funding.” Therefore each project would be self-sufficient, have a logical and sustainable life

⁸ Georgia Tech offers professional masters in Bioinformatics, Human-Computer Interaction, Prosthetics and Orthotics, Quantitative Computational Finance, and Applied Systems Engineering.

cycle and could spur infrastructure development such as research labs that leverage available facilities. However, GTRI has demonstrated the ability to support long-term research programs at customer related sites using medium to long term contract relationships. A GTRI-like research presence would provide visibility and as well as co-op opportunities.

Potential exists for applied research in areas of economic interest to the region, including underwater robotics and sensing, logistics, port security, aerospace, entertainment, health, education, sustainability and other research endeavors that would build synergies with educational offerings (such as possible subject related short-course offerings) as well as business development opportunities with local partners.

The advantages of involvement in this space include the following:

- Quick and low implementation; supported by external funding.
- GTRI and others are currently pursuing such activities and are willing to explore others (GTRI currently operates in 16 locations worldwide).
- Activities are by definition self-sustaining and unique to the region.
- Not reliant on traditional tenure-track faculty for staffing.
- Synergistic potential with traditional research activities in Atlanta and will bring activity to Savannah
- It offers business opportunities and fits into the economic development strategies of the region.
- Has the potential of engaging with institutions like HERTY, the Port, the military, SCAD, and SkIO, among others.

As Georgia Tech moves forward in the implementation of these ideas it will continue to have the economic development of the region and the state in mind. Georgia Tech will work closely with the Savannah Economic Development Agency (SEDA) and will seek programs and activities compatible with their new strategic plan. The task force feels that the general directions outlined in this report are already aligned with SEDA's planning efforts. As we move to define the areas to be covered under these programmatic directions, Georgia Tech will consult closely with SEDA and other community leaders. Georgia Tech's Advanced Technology Development Center already is active in the region, helping industry and supporting business development. These recommendations intend to augment and enhance those activities.

Governance of the new Georgia Tech-Savannah

To implement and govern the new model for GTS, the task force proposes an administrative structure that will embody Georgia Tech's commitment to excellence and the strategic plan, while at the same time, operating autonomously with independence of action and authority to ensure support and success. The new GTS should report through the established and successful Distance Learning and Professional Education (DLPE) unit. The advantages of this structure include:

- The head of this unit is a vice provost and responds directly to the provost.
- DLPE has significant budgetary and administrative autonomy – it has operated successfully with a self-sustaining economic model; it contracts and hires staff to provide educational content as necessary.
- DLPE works with colleges and schools to develop innovative approaches to education and programs that are unique and not duplicative of existing Atlanta programs.
- Its business model rewards success and incentivizes participation by the traditional academic units.
- DLPE is also the campus unit that develops the technology for distance and non-traditional delivery of education and currently delivers content and technology to Savannah, as well as to other Georgia Tech campus locations and to individuals around the world.
- DLPE provides the nimble and non-traditional approach that is needed to make this new model succeed without the limitations and constraints of traditional degree programs.

Transition Planning

Pending the formal acceptance of the recommendations contained herein, the task force suggests a gradual transition plan to phase out of the current focus on undergraduate degree programs. Conducting this transition in parallel with a plan to begin implementation of the new program is integral to the growth and development strategy.

Guiding Principles

In recognition of the complexity of modifying the educational offerings, the task force offers the following guiding principles to the implementation of these recommendations, if adopted, or any transition at GTS. Consistent with an institute that serves the needs of our students and community, these principles are designed to support a smooth transition in a timely, effective and responsive manner and to establish measurable criteria to assess the progress and success of the revised growth and development strategy.

- Integrate Savannah into Georgia Tech's strategic plan and global perspective.
- Honor our commitment to Georgia Tech students in Savannah to complete their Georgia Tech degree programs.
- Be sensitive and responsive to the needs of faculty and staff within any new structure and preserve employment wherever possible.
- Acknowledge and show appreciation for the role and contribution of all stakeholders through honest, open, and frequent communication with GTS faculty, staff, students, and the Savannah community.
- Engage the Savannah community in evolving the new model to ensure a collaborative and lasting investment in success. Develop a mutual, multidimensional understanding of the needs and opportunities in Savannah and the programs and strengths offered by Georgia Tech.

- Lay the foundation for long-term partnerships in the Savannah region to foster economic and workforce development through education and outreach.
- Develop the appropriate mechanisms, structures, and support to market programs effectively, ensure quality, and assess progress toward transitional benchmarks such as viability and sustainability.

Transition Operations

In conjunction with the transition plan, Georgia Tech will establish a central office contact at the Savannah campus to help respond to and coordinate all inquiries throughout the duration of the transitions. This individual will also be a conduit for communications within the region.

The task force suggests that the GTS campus operate in a “business as usual” mode during the summer and fall semesters of 2011. A detailed degree completion plan, which will contain specific course offerings, transfer options, and other details to aid students in their academic planning after this period will be released in fall 2011. Every current student in the program should receive the attention and support necessary to complete their coursework successfully and obtain a Georgia Tech degree.

Upon acceptance of the recommendations contained herein, DLPE should be charged with developing an implementation team to guide the new directions. The team will identify segments for market study during fall 2011. Decisions on initial programs and metrics for success will be made and initiated in early 2012. In such a model, the ability to quickly create new programs based upon market demand as well as sunset programs that are no longer meeting sustainable and viable metrics is a critical feature of a successful future for GTS. In developing the transition plan and ultimately operating GTS, DLPE will seek advice from the business and government leadership of the region and work closely with the Savannah Economic Development Agency.

The Savannah campus has developed a talented and knowledgeable staff. The goal of this transition process is to move toward a set of vibrant, self-sustaining programs, and engagement of the GTS staff will be vital to these efforts. Programs will transition slowly and current staff expertise and contributions will be essential. Every attempt will be made to match the talents and experience of the staff with developing program needs.

The Path Forward

Although the work of the task force primarily focused on Georgia Tech’s operations and physical presence in Savannah, it is recognized that decisions about these matters affect the lives of the people we serve, and therefore, are not made lightly.

The Task Force believes that acceptance of these recommendations will result in a future consistent with Georgia Tech’s strategic plan that is a sustainable and viable presence in the region. In its mission to serve the State of Georgia, Georgia Tech has served and will continue to serve Southeast Georgia’s needs as they pertain to our core strengths as an institution of higher learning – providing an educated workforce that will be the leaders of our industries and communities, supporting

economic development through commercialization, and advancing knowledge through research and discovery.

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