Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

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

Appendix F: Discussions with Various Constituents and Stakeholders

Throughout the taskforce's work, many discussions were held with various individuals and groups who have had various experiences and relationships to Georgia Tech-Savannah and the coastal region. Most of these discussions were through formal task force visits and meetings. However, as is the nature with reviews of such a broad scope that encompass such a large number of individuals, some conversations were less formal but no less relevant to the information gathering process. For the sake of providing an overview of the discussions, bulleted summaries of feedback from four of the constituent groups included — students, faculty, Georgia Tech administrators and Savannah community partners and stakeholders — are detailed below.

Undergraduate Students

- The number of undergraduates attending Savannah is small, with a student-to-faculty ratio of about 12:1[1], less than half of that on the main campus. This provides for a more personalized education but creates a serious resource imbalance.
- 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 applicant pool, or 86 and 126, respectively.
- Those that get admitted and attend from the above category seem happy, via self-selection. Several would not be able to obtain a GT degree due to financial and other personal obstacles, if not for GTS.
- Students cite the small class size and campus feel among the aspects they most like about GTS. If the campus were able to grow to the initially projected numbers, this benefit would be minimized.
- Most students admitted to GTS indicated a preference for the Atlanta campus, but were required to attend Savannah. This commonly results in objections and dissatisfaction prior to attending. This naturally diminishes with time although transfers to Atlanta are common.

[1] GTS undergraduates in Fall 2010 was 271, faculty count was 23.

- Average entrance metrics of students in Savannah are less than those of Atlanta. Graduation and retention rates are on par with or even exceed transfer students who were not part of the GTS transfer program (GTREP and EA).
- Most students attending Savannah spend their first few foundational years at Georgia Southern or Armstrong Atlantic, with the former being the dominant partner.
- The reliance on other institutions to provide fundamentals means that Georgia Tech has no control of the curriculum or delivery. Given the transfer agreements and the practice with these schools, this implies less active quality control than that available under regular transfer programs.
- Undoubtedly, the relationship with Georgia Southern will be impacted by its intention to develop its own engineering programs. Despite this, existing GTS students state that they favor the GT degree.
- The undergraduate programs offered in Savannah are the same as those offered in Atlanta and depend on Atlanta for curricula. That dependence causes limited choices for electives.
- The four engineering undergraduate programs offered (mechanical, civil, electrical and computer) do not necessarily match with the most commonly stated industry needs in Savannah (i.e., industrial engineering, aeronautics).
- Students in Savannah do not have a full campus experience, no extracurricular, arts, Greek life, sports, facilities, etc. Because of this many choose to remain in partner institutions.
- Students in Savannah do not have the opportunity for the enrichment resulting from interaction with other disciplines and people of other interests.
- Some students expressed interest in greater internship and cooperative education opportunities to facilitate job placement. A few are very committed to establishing careers in the Savannah region but most are willing and ready to relocate to secure positions after graduation.
- All else being equal, an employer in Savannah would be at least equally served by an Atlanta graduate; arguably Atlanta graduates would have far more "depth of bench" due the wider variety of courses and experiences offered on the Atlanta campus. The only generic reason to hire in Savannah is that the student may be more apt to stay in Savannah if they are tied to the region (44 percent of graduates remain in the region).

Graduate Students

- Many graduate students are not happy with their opportunities in Savannah since they miss the camaraderie and intellectual stimulation of larger groups and other Atlanta campus activities. They also miss the communication with other non-Savannah faculty. They are generally happy with their own advisors. During informal discussions, most indicated they would move to Atlanta given the choice. Many already spend a lot of time in Atlanta.
- Limited course offerings and limited access to non-electronic materials are among some of the concerns of the students.
- The ratio of resident graduate students to faculty members is about three, less than a third of the Atlanta engineering number. Furthermore many of the graduate students spend a large amount of time in Atlanta or reside are in Atlanta.
- Lack of laboratories limits the type of research that can be performed. You could argue that the isolation mentioned above also limits the students' potential.
- The Savannah coastal location is advantageous for the field studies of some of the students.

- There is no differentiation in degrees offered in Savannah and Atlanta. Like undergraduate students, employers could hire Georgia Tech students that graduate in Atlanta.
- Like in the undergraduate case, the degrees arguably do not match industry needs. It also appears that local industry need for traditional graduate degrees is minimal.

Faculty Members

- Many faculty members are dissatisfied. They are anxious about their careers. Although not a unanimous feeling, a considerable number of the existing faculty members would rather be in Atlanta.
- There is no doubt that faculty in Savannah are at a disadvantage when it comes to career advancement. They lack the access to facilities, programs, students, and colleagues that Atlanta-based professors enjoy.
- They are conflicted given their direct response relationship to Atlanta chairs yet their clear status as Savannah faculty and responsibilities to that unit and its director.
- Their careers are most important, they see themselves as any other GT faculty member but feel that the Savannah opportunity is limiting their professional development.
- They feel like second-class citizens, generally not receiving the attention of their schools and colleges.
- The potential advantage of true interdisciplinarity because of the small program and integration of people in a small facility has not materialized.

Georgia Tech Administrators

- It's difficult to meet the needs of the small numbers of GTS faculty given the many needs within their schools and are disconnected from the daily needs and concerns of the GTS faculty.
- School chairs are reluctant to hire or direct resources to faculty in Savannah given their significant needs and high student-to-faculty ratio in Atlanta and limited resources available. It is also difficult to attract faculty members to GTS and retain them in the program. The school chairs are supportive of the GTS faculty and would like to move them to the Atlanta campus to better help them achieve career success.
- All faculty members should be held to the same standards to ensure quality and advance Georgia Tech's reputation. GTS faculty members face greater challenges to establishing research and have greater demands related to course development and delivery.
- The administrators that have been involved for many years express frustration with several attempts to increase enrollment and ease operations that have not yield desired results.

Savannah Community Stakeholders

The task force has communicated with and interviewed members of Savannah community to gather information regarding Savannah region's need for identifying areas best aligned with Georgia Tech's strengths. See Appendix G for a list of individuals and groups formally contacted by the task force.

- Key areas that make the Savannah area unique – logistics, aviation, military, ocean, manufacturing
- Sectors to focus on: logistics, aerospace design and advanced manufacturing, energy, digital design/media, sustainability, and business technologies

- GT can contribute to the Savannah river deepening project, including environmental and engineering expertise.
- Need for logistics and maritime security that links with homeland security.
- The name of Georgia Tech helps the region to attract business and also support the regional economic growth.
- Industry, like JCB in Savannah, has limited human resource capabilities; the presence of GTS will help industry to recruit top engineers.
- GTS could provide test bed for education and research partnership opportunities (need to be couched as part of education) within context of Ft. Stewart mission of "soldier readiness."
- Potential opportunity to partner with junior grade officer level re: transition program.
- Using Savannah military activities as test bed for bio-health studies for returning combat soldiers – such as animal therapy with returning soldier co-op program.
- Potential for non-degree executive education program, developed around a "consortium model" that leverages relationships at Gulfstream, JCB, Mitsubishi, Port Authority, etc.
- Seek out areas (ocean and logistics) that leverage the unique assets/strengths of Savannah region.
- Army wants to engage with GTS – upcoming leadership changes present further opportunity to engage/partner both at Ft. Stewart and Pentagon.
- Disappointed about the growth of GTS
- GTS lack of visibility in Savannah and suggest advertisement of GTS in Savannah downtown.
- Willingness to support GTS future growth.