Jerry Jackson (left) and Jerel Harris, both employees in Environmental Health and Safety, fill containers with hand sanitizers for distribution on campus.

TECH MOVING FORWARD: FALL 2020

Georgia Tech is planning for in-person instruction for the fall semester.

The fall calendar looks different, but students will have the same number of contact days with instructors. Changes have been made to discourage travel, including canceling fall break and ending fall instruction by Thanksgiving break. Reading days and final assessments will be administered in a hybrid format, and the calendar will be modified.

Because of ongoing health risks, a return to campus does not mean a return to the normalcy of our previous environment. Yet, with effort by each one of us and some adjustments in the way we teach, learn, and interact with one another in classrooms and labs, workspaces, and everywhere else on campus, we will be able to resume our activities and deliver on our mission while minimizing risk.

Read more on page 4.

Tech Volunteers Support Mask-Making Organization

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

When Shelley Wunder-Smith volunteered to brush up on her sewing skills to help an organization called Sewing Masks for Area Hospitals (SMAH), she had no idea she would end up becoming the group’s communications director.

“I was like a lot of people, just absolutely desperate to do something helpful and meaningful during the pandemic,” said Wunder-Smith, a senior writer-editor for the H. Milton Stewart School of Industrial and Systems Engineering (ISyE). “I haven’t sewn since I was a kid but was willing to do whatever I could to support SMAH’s mission.”

That mission is to provide supplementary cloth face coverings to healthcare professionals experiencing shortages of personal protective equipment (PPE) due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Read more at c.gatech.edu/smah.

SMAH has delivered more than 55,000 face coverings to area hospitals.
Surveys Gauge Comfort With Return to Campus

KRISTEN BAILEY
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

A set of campus surveys this month is gauging the Georgia Tech community’s comfort with returning to campus and practicing health and safety measures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Faculty, staff, and students have all received an email message inviting them to complete their respective survey. Responses are confidential, and results will be shared with senior leadership to inform what tools and support may be needed as employees and students return to campus. Results will be shared with the campus at large. Undergraduate and graduate students can access the surveys for their groups at comm.gatech.edu/moving-tech-forward/surveys.

Employees received an email from Human Resources with their survey link, and faculty members also received a survey from the campus recovery task force. Employees have until Monday, June 29, to provide feedback.
TECH MOVING FORWARD: THANKS TO ESSENTIAL WORKERS

Georgia Tech is taking steps to ensure the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff who will be on campus this summer and fall. Many jobs cannot be done remotely — custodians, landscapers, maintenance workers, post office staff, police officers, and others have been reporting to campus and keeping the Institute going since things went quiet in March. Here, we highlight a few employees doing their jobs while following the new health and safety guidelines.

Chris Conley, assistant sports turf manager with Georgia Tech Athletics, wears a mask while edging the field at Russ Chandler Stadium. He uses disinfecting wipes to clean the handles before storing the equipment. “We’re doing our part to help student-athletes get back to campus safely,” he said.

Locksmith Salam Ali has worked at Georgia Tech since 1999. “Every task in my job is like the next level of my favorite video game,” he said. “Covid-19 has made it harder for me and everyone, with the extra precautions when touching doorknobs, levers, keys, and everything I put my hands on. Safety is the first priority to think about.”

Custodian Juanita Slaton has worked at Tech for 16 years. “We’re taking extra precautions to keep everyone safe, including ourselves,” she said.

David Stevenson, hazardous materials specialist in Environmental Health and Safety, holds a bachelor’s degree in chemistry from Georgia Tech. He enjoys getting to use his degree at his alma mater. “Since Covid-19 started, with lab closures all over campus, our job has shifted away from lab-specific support to community support. We’re collecting and redistributing personal protective equipment for the Georgia Tech community to get back to work, so everyone has what they need.”

Valerie Edward, stationary engineer at the Holland Plant, enjoys many facets of steam plant operation. Her job has additional safety precautions because of Covid-19. “Following practices that have been prescribed by health authorities can be a challenge, but a necessary one for all of us,” she said.
Key Takeaways From the Fall Plan

• The fall academic calendar will be compressed to discourage travel, but students will have the same number of contact days with instructors. Fall classes begin Aug. 17, and there will not be a two-day fall break. Fall instruction will end by Thanksgiving break.
• Classes will be held in one of five delivery modes, ranging from a traditional format where physical distancing is viable to a variety of hybrid options leveraging online technology.
• All study abroad, international internships, exchange programs, and any Georgia Tech-sponsored international curricular and co-curricular travel programs for Fall 2020 are canceled.
• Georgia Tech will retrain staff, adopt new cleaning methods, and redirect select operations to provide more time for cleaning and disinfection. Signage will be installed to encourage best practices regarding personal hygiene and the movement of people through campus spaces.
• Georgia Tech will continue to encourage teleworking, split shifts, staggered shifts, and other measures that promote physical distancing. Those who can work remotely should continue to do so to the extent that teleworking does not affect the Institute’s ability to serve students.

View the full plan at health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/institute-operations.

Research, Outreach Continue Amid Campus Recovery Efforts

Town Halls Outline Plans, Answer Questions
A series of virtual town hall events has given the campus community the chance to hear directly from campus leaders and ask questions about summer and fall plans. All recent events are available for viewing online through Microsoft Teams and YouTube.

Access the presentations at health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/town-halls.

Redesigning Sanitizer and Donating to Local Facilities
So many people Seth Marder spoke to didn’t see the hand sanitizer crisis brewing. The country was going to run dangerously short if someone did not act urgently.

The Regents Professor and Georgia Power Chair in Energy Efficiency in the School of Chemistry and Biochemistry rallied colleagues and partners around the cause in March, and by early June, they had replaced a key component of hand sanitizer, created a new supply chain, and initiated their own donation of 7,000 gallons of a newly designed sanitizer to medical facilities.

Its name: Han-I-Size White & Gold, named for the colors of Georgia Tech. The new supply chain also may ensure that hand sanitizer producers across the country do not run out of the main active ingredient, alcohol, but the team’s path to success was a stony labyrinth.

Read more at c.gatech.edu/sanitizer.

Study Shows Harmful Effects of Hydroxychloroquine on Heart Rhythm
The malaria drug hydroxychloroquine, which has been promoted as a potential treatment for Covid-19, is known to have potentially serious effects on heart rhythms. Now, a team of researchers has used an optical mapping system to observe exactly how the drug creates serious disturbances in the electrical signals that govern heartbeat.

Read more at c.gatech.edu/hydro.