Tech Experts Help Assess the Risk of Holiday Travel

ZOE KAFKES
CITY AND REGIONAL PLANNING

As Covid-19 outbreaks surge in several states, the choice to see family this holiday season gets more complicated by the day. Thankfully, there’s a tool — developed by Georgia Tech faculty, scientists, geographic information system (GIS) specialists, and graduate students — that can help estimate the potential risk of exposure involved with a trip home.

Joshua S. Weitz, Patton Distinguished Professor in the School of Biological Sciences, and Clio Andris, assistant professor in the Schools of City and Regional Planning and Interactive Computing, created the “Covid-19 Event Risk Assessment Planning Tool.”

They launched the tool in July, and since then it has generated more than 2 million unique visitors, been featured in national and international media, and spurred the development of related sites in Spanish and Italian. A multi-authored scientific article describing the tool was published in Nature Human Behaviour in November.

“We are starting to see the traffic ramp up again as people plan for the holidays,” Andris said.

The tool breaks down the risk of attending events, no matter the size, based on county-level Covid-19 case reports in the U.S. and parts of Europe. Users can select the county they are interested in and the size of the event they wish to attend.

Read the rest of the story, and assess your own risk, at c.gatech.edu/travel.

Holiday Testing Hours

Testing will continue at full capacity through Friday, Dec. 11. The following week, locations and hours will be reduced leading up to winter break. Testing sites will close when campus is closed Dec. 21–25. Sites will reopen Monday, Dec. 28, at a reduced capacity, but will be closed when campus is closed Friday, Jan. 1, 2021. Testing sites will resume their full capacity the week of Jan. 11.

For updated testing site locations and hours, visit health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/testing.

For updated health alerts and case counts, visit health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/health-alerts.
Two finalists have been chosen in the College of Engineering dean search. As part of the final selection process, candidates will present an open seminar addressing their broad vision for engineering at Georgia Tech. The hour-long seminars will be open to all students, faculty, and staff. Interested individuals can watch virtually in realtime, or watch a post-event video of each candidate presentation.

The finalists are listed in order of their campus seminar presentations:

**Magnus Egerstedt**, Steve W. Chaddick School Chair and Professor, School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, will present an open seminar on Monday, Dec. 7, from 11 a.m. to noon.

**Raheem Beyah**, vice president for interdisciplinary research and Motorola Foundation Professor, School of Electrical and Computer Engineering, will present an open seminar on Wednesday, Dec. 9, from 11 a.m. to noon.

Additional details can be found at provost.gatech.edu/dean-engineering, including each candidate’s bio and curriculum vitae as well as links to the seminars and surveys. Surveys for the College of Engineering dean search will be available through midnight on Sunday, Dec. 13.

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**BOOSTING A STELLAR COLLECTION**

Since 1998, Georgia Tech’s collection of science fiction books has been one of the largest and most important of its kind in the U.S. Now, thanks to longtime Georgia Tech supporter Kathy Betty, that already renowned collection is even better. Betty, a member of the Georgia Tech Athletic Association Board of Trustees, has donated 2,724 of her late husband Garry Betty’s science fiction novels to Georgia Tech. Many of the books are first editions. Read the full story at c.gatech.edu/scifi.
Teaching in the Time of Covid-19

Four engineering professors and their students talk about the challenges of online learning during the pandemic, and the human touchpoints that make all the difference.

GEORGIA PARMELEE
COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

It's a very different time on campus for both students and faculty at Georgia Tech. Classes are mostly remote, and if hybrid classes are offered, very few students show up in person, opting instead for the safety of their dorm rooms. New methods of learning have forced professors to think outside the box, creating novel modes of teaching and virtual engagement, fully embracing their responsibility to deliver a top-ranked Tech education that students are so eager to receive. Here are four stories of classes that were successfully taught this semester, largely due to the care and commitment of the professors.

Walk and Talks to Clear the Mind

In late August, Emily Marshall made the 11-hour drive down to Atlanta from Northern Virginia hoping she could have some sort of in-person, on-campus experience at Tech. That's been challenging this fall, with many classes either fully remote or classified as 'hybrid,' where very few students actually attend in person.

“This semester has been weird, and I don't get outside much,” said Marshall, a third-year electrical engineering major. “I just wanted any opportunity I could to see in person the professors or to work in labs, but really, I've gotten very few chances to do that.”

For Marshall and her roommates, they rarely leave their apartment except to buy food or get tested for Covid-19. She wishes she could see more people around campus but finds staying social is easier to do online these days. With classes almost exclusively virtual as well, Marshall finds it hard to stay motivated and focused.

However, her experience with one class has been completely different, and that's electrical engineering Professor Bernard Kippelen's Electromagnetics course. His class is delivered in a hybrid mode, where synchronous class attendance is encouraged to foster interaction. But there is also a physical touchpoint for the class in the form of outdoor walk and talks.

Kippelen allows small groups of students to sign up for time slots, and they walk around campus with him. Group size is limited to 12 but generally consists only of a few students. Students stay socially distanced and wear masks.

When Emily signed up for her first walk and talk, she was the only one in that time slot. She met Kippelen outside Van Leer, and they walked around campus talking about the plant life and gardening.

This story has been condensed for space. Read the rest of the story at c.gatech.edu/teaching.
President Forms Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council

More than 50 representatives from across the campus have been appointed by President Ángel Cabrera to the newly formed Georgia Tech Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (GTDEIC). The Council will identify issues of campus racial and gender disparity, bias, and inequity to be addressed in order to deliver upon the Institute’s vision of diversity and inclusion. The members represent diverse voices and perspectives from staff, faculty, and students. Their initial meeting was Nov. 30.

The GTDEIC will continuously monitor and assess the Institute’s progress on achieving its goals for becoming a model campus community for diversity, equity, and inclusion and develop evidence-based, informed recommendations, which they will submit periodically to Cabrera and the Institute’s Executive Leadership Team for consideration in developing strategic actions.

“Our Diversity and Inclusion Council is one of several action steps announced this past summer to deliver on our promise of inclusion,” said President Cabrera. “As outlined in our new strategic plan, we are striving to remove barriers to access and success, and to build an inclusive community where people of all backgrounds have the opportunity to learn and contribute to our mission.”

Campus research has revealed discrepancies in the satisfaction levels of various groups. The 2017 Faculty and Staff Climate Assessment Surveys and 2018 Student Climate Assessment Survey revealed high levels of faculty, staff, and student satisfaction on a wide array of campus experiences across multiple social identities, such as faculty rank, job function, gender, and race.

“The surveys also revealed there are some important differences in levels of satisfaction regarding some campus experiences,” said Archie Ervin, vice president for Institute Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (IDEI). “Disaggregation of the data by social identity reveals lower levels of satisfaction with campus experiences that deserve attention and deeper exploration to understand why the differences exist and what action steps, if any, could be taken to address root causes of problematic or potentially adverse differences of experiences for campus members.”

“In sum, the climate assessment reports help us to understand our strengths and suggest areas where we should focus our attention to improve experiences of some members of the Tech community,” Ervin added.

The group will be chaired by Ervin, and Pearl Alexander, executive director of IDEI’s Staff Diversity, Inclusion, and Engagement, will serve as vice chair. The GTDEIC is composed of representatives from across the campus academic and administrative units, faculty, staff, and student governance (undergraduate and graduate), and other faculty and staff.

Read the full story and view a list of members at c.gatech.edu/GTDEIC.

Compliance Training Deadline Extended to Dec. 14

Due to technical issues with the learning management platform (D2L), the deadline to complete this year’s Annual Compliance Training has been extended to Dec. 14. All faculty, staff (including Tech Temps), and student employees hired prior to Oct. 1 should complete the 2020 Annual Compliance Training.

Those who have not yet completed the training should have received a reminder email this week. Complete the training modules today at training.hr.gatech.edu.