



# THE WHISTLE

WORK AND LIFE AT GEORGIA TECH • January 18, 2022

Georgia  
Tech.

Vol. 47, No. 2  
whistle.gatech.edu

## NEW TESTING SITE OPENS

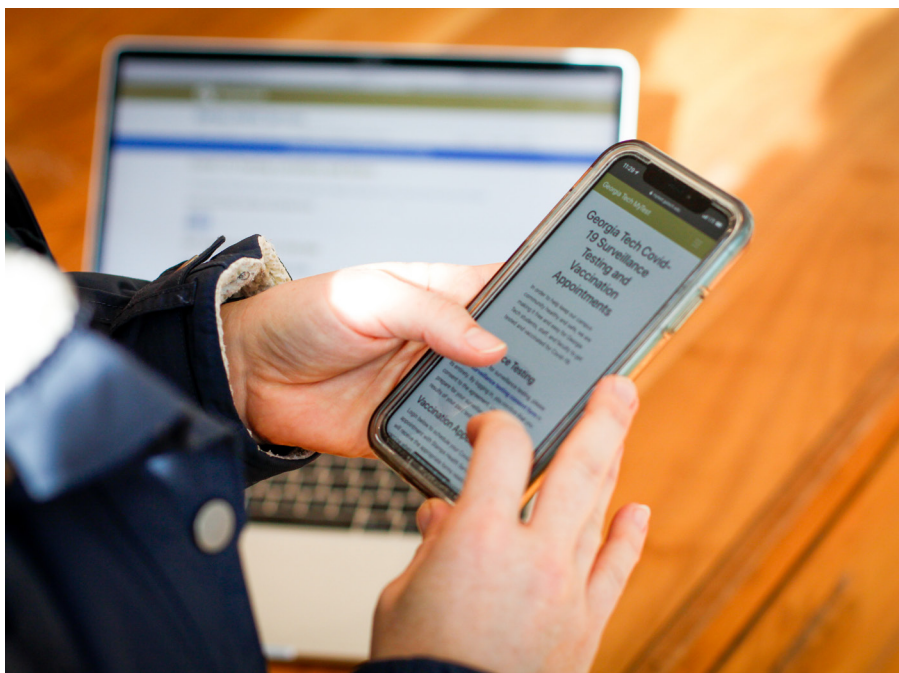


Photo by Brice Zimmerman

Employees experiencing Covid-19 symptoms now have an option to get tested on campus. A new drive-thru site in the W23 parking deck is available for symptomatic testing. No appointment is necessary — register at [mytest.gatech.edu](https://mytest.gatech.edu) as you would for asymptomatic surveillance testing.

## Georgia Tech Expands Campus Covid-19 Testing Options

In addition to Georgia Tech's asymptomatic surveillance testing program, there is now a drive-thru symptomatic testing option for faculty and staff. Employees and students with Covid-19 symptoms can get tested on campus at the W23 parking deck, located behind the Krone Engineered Biosystems Building.

The new drive-thru site provides saliva-based test kits that are sent directly to diagnostic testing. While no appointments are required, symptomatic individuals will need to

register in [mytest.gatech.edu](https://mytest.gatech.edu) and show their barcode when visiting the site.

Faculty, staff, and students without symptoms are still encouraged to participate in asymptomatic Covid-19 testing on a weekly basis. Testing is saliva-based, fast, and free.

Learn more about both options at [health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/testing](https://health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/testing).

Vaccine clinics have also resumed on campus. All employees are eligible to receive a Covid-19 vaccine or booster. Learn more at [health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/testing/vaccine](https://health.gatech.edu/coronavirus/testing/vaccine).

## Tuition Reimbursement Program Now Covers Job-Related Certifications

RACHAEL POCKLINGTON  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

The Staff Council Employee Engagement Committee partnered with Georgia Tech Human Resources to expand the Institute's Staff Tuition Reimbursement Assistance Program (STRAP) to provide reimbursement for professional certifications related to an employee's job functions on campus. The expansion, Staff Tuition Reimbursement Assistance Program - Certifications — or STRAP-C — went into effect at the beginning of 2022.

While STRAP provides partial tuition reimbursement for degrees, technical diplomas, and certificates that offer letter grades and credit hours to classified Tech employees at any accredited private institution, STRAP-C will reimburse for professional certifications. The expansion will cover up to \$750 toward a staff member's exam costs every other year.

"The Staff Tuition Reimbursement Assistance Program is important to Tech employees because it offers another layer of education assistance outside of the University System

see **STRAP**, page 3



## Library Offers Gadgets for Checkout

The Library offers a variety of electronics for checkout, including cables and chargers, VR headsets, drawing tablets, cameras, projectors, and more. Students have priority for requests, but employees are also welcome to check out items.

The Gadgets office, located on the third floor of Crosland Tower, has reopened for drop-in assistance. It is open from 1 to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Staff will be on hand to provide technical and logistical support for all of the items lent through the Gadgets program. Additionally, staff will provide support in selecting appropriate items.

Learn more about what's available and how to check out an item at [library.gatech.edu/gadgets](https://library.gatech.edu/gadgets).

## Tech Earns Top 20 Spot for Higher Education Research Spending

TESS MALONE  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia Tech has broken into the top 20 in higher education research and development spending for the first time in a decade. The ranking, based on an annual survey conducted by the National Science Foundation (NSF), reflects a year of innovations in healthcare, computing, and sustainability research — even amid a global pandemic.

While overall higher education research spending slowed to 3.3% growth in fiscal year 2020, the Georgia Tech research enterprise, which includes the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI), rose to 9.3% — or approximately \$1.049 billion

in expenditures.

Georgia Tech placed among top R1 or research-intensive universities such as Johns Hopkins University, which ranked No. 1 (with \$3,110 million in expenditures), and Harvard University, which rounded out the top 10 (with \$1.24 billion in expenditures). Georgia Tech was the only technological university to place in the top 20 and had the second highest year-to-year growth, behind Texas A&M University. A top 20 ranking is particularly significant, as Georgia Tech achieved it without a medical school. Nationally, medical schools account for a quarter of all research expenditures.

“Georgia Tech is proud of our continued growth and to be listed among the nation’s top institutions in

research and development spending,” said Chaouki T. Abdallah, executive vice president for Research at Georgia Tech. “Our research enterprise represents an unparalleled diversity of talent, perspective, and expertise committed to conducting research that matters — research driven by a commitment to public service, with the goals of advancing science, technologies, and policies that solve problems, address societal challenges, accelerate economic development, and improve people’s lives.”

Overall, higher education research spending totaled \$86.4 billion, with the top 30 universities contributing 42% to the total amount. Learn more about Georgia Tech’s research contributions at [report.research.gatech.edu](https://report.research.gatech.edu).

## MentorTech Program Accepting Applications

Georgia Tech's MentorTech program is strategically designed to foster the professional development and career growth of Georgia Tech's employees while building diverse networks across the Institute.

Take the next step toward creating a professional partnership. Do you have a desire to empower others? Apply to be a mentor. Do you desire to take ownership of your professional growth? Apply to be a mentee.

Registration is always open for the MentorTech program. To get started, create a mentorship profile for either or both roles (mentor and mentee). If you're matched, we'll email you the next steps. If a match is not available, you'll stay in the system until a match becomes available.

Learn more at [pe.gatech.edu/wlpd/programs/mentortech](https://pe.gatech.edu/wlpd/programs/mentortech).



### STRAP, from page 1

of Georgia's educational assistance Tuition Assistance Program," Candice Bovian, program manager for Georgia Tech's Human Resources and 2022 Staff Council chair, said. "Over time, it became clear that staff also wanted the choice of pursuing a professional certification."

"The Council worked very closely with the Office of General Counsel and Human Resources," Bovian continued. "We heard what our colleagues wanted, advocated for them, and made this a reality."

Byron Fitch, senior consultant with Georgia Tech Strategic Consulting, added, "We are very grateful to Kelly Fox [executive vice president of Administration and Finance], Kim Harrington [chief human resources officer, soon to be Administration and Finance chief of staff and associate vice president for Special Initiatives], and Kelly Cross [Institute policy manager] for supporting Staff Council with this effort. We are excited to be able to contribute to staff development with this expansion."

Fitch served as 2020 Staff Council chair and chair of the Employee Engagement Committee in 2019 when STRAP expansion discussions began.



Photo by Rob Felt

Michael Herriott, stationary engineer, researches timetables for chemical testing at the Holland Plant. Job-related certifications are now covered as part of Tech's STRAP-C program.

Previous STRAP guidelines did not provide reimbursement for staff seeking professional certifications and designations that did not offer credit hours and letter grades. As a result, they were responsible for paying out of pocket for professional certifications — or forced to forfeit altogether.

Based on research and benchmarking conducted by Staff Council, the average cost to pursue a professional certification is \$750. This amount served as the proposed threshold that staffers could leverage for potential

reimbursement. (The allotment will cover exam fees only.)

STRAP-C applications must be submitted by the STRAP deadline for reimbursement of a passed exam. The application period opens 30 days prior to the deadline.

Important 2022 STRAP-C deadline dates:

- Fall – July 15
- Spring – Nov. 15
- Summer – April 15

To learn more about STRAP-C, visit [c.gatech.edu/STRAP-C](https://c.gatech.edu/STRAP-C).



# Tech Announces New VP, Chief Human Resources Officer

RACHAEL POCKLINGTON  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia Tech has selected Skye Duckett as the new vice president and chief human resources officer. Under Duckett's leadership, Georgia Tech Human Resources will build and support innovative staffing models to align with the Institute's strategic plan and reflect the diversity of the Georgia Tech community. This role will be responsible for anticipating employee needs to proactively improve people-centric practices in a constantly changing environment. Looking forward, Duckett will also help lead a campuswide organizational transformation as transactional, high-volume HR processes move into the Administrative Services Center later this year.

Duckett joins the Institute from nearly eight years at Atlanta Public Schools, where she most recently served as the chief human resources officer, leading the organization through a dramatic improvement following the testing scandal of 2009. As a committed Atlanta resident, she brings nearly 20 years of experience in HR

roles in urban educational settings. Her experience includes implementing ethics programs, launching new HR technology, developing capacity of hiring managers, designing career development pathways, developing comprehensive compensation programs, and supporting employee well-being.

"Georgia Tech has an opportunity to become a world leader in utilizing innovative, efficient practices to recruit, develop, and retain the most talented employees across all job types," said Kelly Fox, executive vice president for Administration and Finance (A&F). "This transition will enable us to continue the great work of building and fostering a culture consistent with the Institute's goals and values."

Duckett will join Georgia Tech on Jan. 31 and will report directly to Fox. Offices reporting to Duckett include Total Rewards and Payroll, HR Business Partners, Employee Relations, Global

HR, Talent Acquisition and Employee Services, Student Employment, and several administrative support departments.

"It is an honor to be selected to lead the human resources team for such a prestigious organization and have the opportunity to collaborate across all academic, research, and business functions," Duckett said. "I look forward to leveraging my life and work experiences to build upon the solid foundation that has been laid in order to take human resources into a new era of innovation, efficiency, and work-life balance in support of recruiting and retaining a highly engaged and talented workforce."

As previously announced, Kim D. Harrington, chief human resources officer for Georgia Tech, will assume her new role in A&F as the chief of staff and associate vice president for Special Initiatives. In this new position, she will serve as an advisor to Fox and a liaison to campus leadership — including faculty, staff, and students — to help strengthen the workplace culture by building relationships and creating an inclusive and high performing environment for employees and students.



Skye Duckett

## Finalists Chosen in Search for Vice Provost for Faculty

The vice provost for Faculty will provide direct supervision of faculty support services within the Office of the Provost and provide leadership in promoting and ensuring excellence within the faculty.

Three finalists have been chosen for the position and are listed below in order of their campus seminar presentations.

- Dawn Baunach, associate vice provost for Graduate Education and Faculty Development, presented a virtual seminar on Friday, Jan. 14, from 9 to 10 a.m.

- Ana "Annie" Antón, professor in the School of Interactive Computing and ADVANCE Professor in the College of Computing, will present a virtual seminar on Tuesday, Jan. 18, from 9 to 10 a.m.

- Michelle Rinehart, associate dean for Academic Affairs and Outreach in the College of Design, will present a virtual seminar on Wednesday, Jan. 19, from 9 to 10 a.m.

For additional details on the search, visit [provost.gatech.edu/vice-provost-faculty-search](https://provost.gatech.edu/vice-provost-faculty-search).