



# THE WHISTLE

WORK AND LIFE AT GEORGIA TECH • February 14, 2022



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## DOING THE WORK

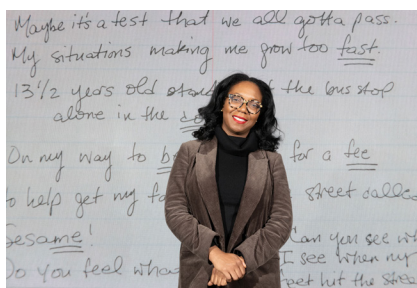
### Celebrating Black History Month



Story by Evan Atkinson • Photos by Allison Carter

*Black History Month is a time to reflect on African Americans' achievements and struggles. It's also a time to highlight individuals who, today, are doing the work to make society more just and more inclusive tomorrow.*

*This work is happening across Tech's campus, by students and researchers who focus on race-related or antiracist technology and research, and by those who, simply by existing and thriving in spaces where they are underrepresented, are helping to bring about change. Meet a few of the people who are making a difference in the Tech community and beyond at [c.gatech.edu/doingthework](https://c.gatech.edu/doingthework).*



Joycelyn Wilson



Joe Bozeman



Dorien Minor



Nashlie Sephus



Assata Quinichett



Manu Platt

## Zoom Now Available to Campus Community

COURTNEY HILL  
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Georgia Tech began a soft launch of the Zoom video collaboration platform Monday, Feb. 7. The announcement comes after an almost yearlong effort to evaluate and introduce a new videoconferencing solution for academic course delivery and collaboration.

With the Institute's existing agreement with BlueJeans set to expire at the end of the spring semester — and the sunset of the WebEx platform in December 2021\* — the Video Collaboration Review (VCR) team formed in early 2021 to explore new video collaboration platforms that meet the academic and operational needs of students, faculty, and staff. The committee, comprised of members from each division and College, along with students and technology representatives, identified requirements and evaluated possible solutions on their ability to:

- Enable secure, reliable, and flexible course delivery and student learning.
- Support virtual classrooms and meetings of multiple sizes.
- Facilitate effective collaboration and communication across the Institute.

"It was critically important to us that

see **Zoom**, page 4

# Meet Renjith Narendranathan Nair, OIT Project Manager

VICTOR ROGERS  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Renjith Narendranathan Nair is a project manager in the Office of Strategic Initiatives in the Office of Information Technology. His job sounds straightforward, but there's more beneath the surface.

"I have a complicated role," said Renjith. "A normal project manager is one who plans, tracks, and monitors to make sure that projects go smoothly and reach the goal within budget. But Georgia Tech is always special. It presents a lot of challenges, not just to me but to my colleagues, because we have to wear multiple hats."

At times his role ranges from gathering the requirements for a project to serving as the bridge between the technical teams and functional offices, such as the Registrar's Office or other campus clients. He sometimes acts as a "unifier" to get the disparate teams to work together, which is both challenging and rewarding.

"We also need to maintain business relationships and work with multiple stakeholders outside of Georgia Tech," he said. "We have to bring all of that together to ensure the project is a success."

One of Renjith's current projects is collaborating with the Registrar's Office to switch the web access system (OSCAR) from Banner 8 to Banner 9, starting with student registration. The software maintains student, faculty, course, financial aid, and personnel data.

"This is an important and exciting project because it's something the students have wanted for about five years," he said. "Transitioning the current registration system to Banner 9 will provide students with a more modern interface with more features

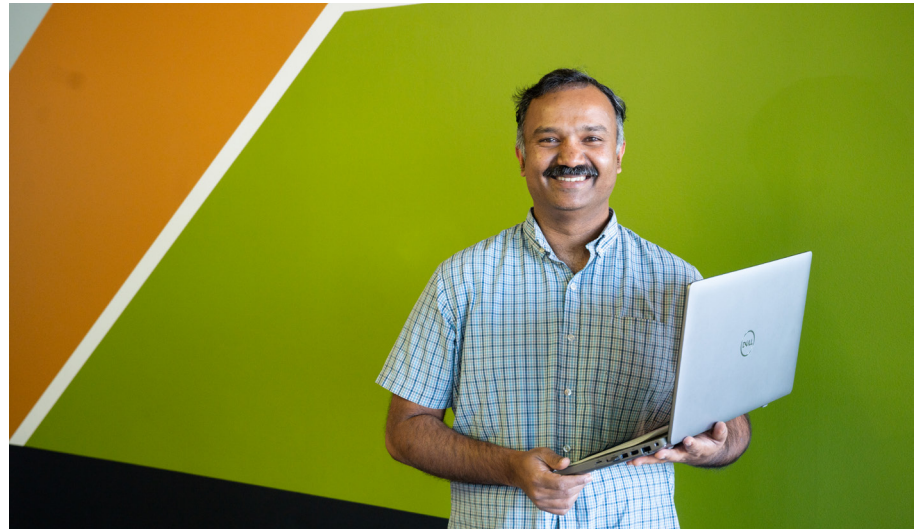


Photo by Allison Carter

Renjith Narendranathan Nair pictured in the Coda Building.

and a more responsive design. They will be able to use it on their tablets or other mobile devices." The new system is scheduled to go live in March.

During the pandemic Renjith has been working remotely most of the time and coming to the office as needed. He misses being able to connect with his colleagues on a personal level.

"I miss walking down the hall and having a two-minute chat to catch up," he said, acknowledging that most video meetings don't allow much time for personal conversation. "I don't want the environment to have too much of a strictly business state of mind. As a project manager you need to have a good working relationship, professional but also personal at times. Understanding what the other person is going through is critical."

## Away From Work

In 2016 Renjith moved to Atlanta from Minneapolis. Georgia's relatively mild winter season was a warm reprieve for the native of Kerala, India.

"It is probably at minus 20 degrees in Minneapolis right now," he said. "So,

coming here was a big change."

He settled in the Johns Creek community near Alpharetta with his wife and their three children — a daughter in third grade, a son in eighth grade, and a son who's a junior in high school. When he isn't busy with family activities, he enjoys reading and playing video games.

"When I was driving one hour or more from Johns Creek to campus, I listened to audio books. Now I am picking up real books again," Renjith said. He is reading Isaac Asimov's robot series, and during the pandemic he renewed his love of video games.

"I've always played video games. *Call of Duty: Warzone* is one that I've picked up recently," he said. "I'm still pretty bad at it but playing video games brought me closer to some of my friends in Australia and India." He and his friends around the globe find a common time they can play and reconnect.

"Playing with someone you know is a different experience. You're just enjoying the game and you don't worry about whether you're good or bad at it."



# Finalists Chosen for Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

STEPHANIE KADEL  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Two finalists have been chosen in the search for Georgia Tech's next vice provost for Undergraduate Education. As part of the final selection process, each candidate will present a seminar on their vision for the role. Any interested Georgia Tech student, faculty, or staff member can watch the hourlong seminars virtually in realtime or watch a post-event video.

The finalists are listed below in order of their virtual seminar presentations:

- Steven Girardot, interim vice provost for Undergraduate Education — Thursday, Feb. 17, from 9 to 10 a.m.
- Stephen Ruffin, professor and associate chair for Undergraduate



Steven Girardot



Stephen Ruffin

Programs in the Daniel Guggenheim School of Aerospace Engineering, director of the Georgia Tech University Center of Exemplary Mentoring, and director of the NASA Georgia Space Grant Consortium — Friday, Feb. 18, from 9 to 10 a.m.

Additional details, including each candidate's curriculum vitae, seminar

link and feedback survey can be found at [provost.gatech.edu/vice-provost-undergraduate-education-search](https://provost.gatech.edu/vice-provost-undergraduate-education-search). Survey forms for the candidates will be available through 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 22.

As the leader of the Office of Undergraduate Education, the vice provost manages Institute policies affecting undergraduate students and has oversight of the units and personnel that report into Georgia Tech's Academic Engagement Programs, Tutoring and Academic Support, Retention Initiatives, Undergraduate Advising, Honors Program, Serve-Learn-Sustain, and the Career Center. The position will report to Laurence J. Jacobs, the newly announced senior vice provost for Education and Learning.

## D.M. SMITH SLATED FOR RENOVATION



The D.M. Smith Building, home of the Georgia Tech School of Public Policy, will soon be getting a makeover. On Feb. 8, the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia approved a \$26 million proposal for renovations to be provided from Institute funds. The outer structure will remain largely intact, and all proposed changes will respect the historical character of the building. Renovations are planned to begin in late 2023 and conclude in Spring 2025. The School of Public Policy will relocate elsewhere during construction. Updates, as well as a chronicle of the building's history, will be provided at [spp.gatech.edu/dmsmithrenovations](https://spp.gatech.edu/dmsmithrenovations).



### Campus Covid-19 Testing Updates

With decreased demand for symptomatic testing and more community options now available, Georgia Tech's temporary drive-thru, symptomatic testing site closed Friday, Feb. 4. The Institute continues to offer free symptomatic testing for students at Stamps Health Services. A limited supply of at-home test kits is also available for students through Student Engagement and Well-Being. Additional options for off-campus symptomatic testing can be found at [c.gatech.edu/testing](https://c.gatech.edu/testing). All students, faculty, and staff on campus are strongly encouraged to continue weekly asymptomatic testing at any campus surveillance site to manage the spread of Covid-19.

## Campus Child Care Tuition Assistance Survey

Georgia Tech is assessing the need for a tuition assistance program for employees and students who are interested in on-campus childcare options. Currently, all students and employees are eligible for a 10% tuition discount; however, a tuition assistance program is being considered to make the centers more accessible. Complete the survey at [c.gatech.edu/childcaresurvey](https://c.gatech.edu/childcaresurvey) by Friday, Feb. 25, to share your ideas about childcare services and tuition. For more information about campus childcare options, visit [campusservices.gatech.edu/child-care](https://campusservices.gatech.edu/child-care).



### ZOOM, from page 1

we start our selection process with an examination of our needs from a collaboration, teaching, and learning perspective,” said Daren Hubbard, vice president of Information Technology and chief information officer. “The committee spent a great deal of time articulating these criteria so that we could, as objectively as possible, evaluate a number of options and eventually recommend a solution.”

“Not only did Zoom, to a large extent, meet our committee’s criteria, but it is also one of the most widely used video collaboration tools,” said Yakut Gazi, Ph.D., associate dean for Learning Systems at Georgia Tech Professional Education. “Many of our students, faculty, and staff have participated in Zoom meetings during and even before the pandemic, which we anticipate will facilitate adoption at Georgia Tech.”

Canvas has been integrated with Zoom and will enable convenient access for faculty and students in blended and online learning courses. During the first phase of the Zoom soft launch, the platform will only be available to Georgia Tech users who host meetings from inside the U.S. Zoom recordings will be automatically migrated to the user’s Kaltura MediaSpace account.

“Over the course of the next few



Zoom is now available to Georgia Tech users for video conferencing needs.

months, our teams will work to tighten the integration of Zoom with the classroom technology systems, as well as with the Kaltura MediaSpace video storage and delivery system, to further enhance the interoperability of our academic technology ecosystem,” Gazi said. “We will also be working with Tech entities and Zoom to expand the platform’s usage to all Georgia Tech learners, independent of their global location.”

Gazi also applauded the extensive due diligence process that guided the committee’s decision to bring the platform to Georgia Tech.

“I am thankful for the resilience and persistence of the committee members

who guided this process for many months. I am excited to introduce this much-needed platform to our community and welcome input as we continue to improve our technology tools and services.”

OIT will work with the Georgia Tech community through the spring to prepare for the transition from BlueJeans. Upcoming communications will share resources for securely migrating stored lecture and meeting recordings and additional information.

Georgia Tech users can log into Zoom at [gatech.zoom.us](https://gatech.zoom.us). More Zoom information and resources will be made available to the Georgia Tech community in the coming months.