



Photo by Rob Felt

Marilyn Brown poses in the solar array atop the Clough Undergraduate Learning Commons.

## Marilyn Brown Receives Distinguished Professor Award

PATTI FUTRELL  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Marilyn Brown is a leading expert on renewable energy and energy efficiency, a transformative intellectual thinker, and one of the founders of the field of energy and climate policy.

Her research has shaped energy policy in the U.S. and globally. Over the past two years, she has been tapped for several prestigious honors, including being elected to both the U.S. National Academy of Engineering and the National Academy of Sciences, and receiving the 2021 World Citizen Prize in Environmental Performance. Now, she is the first woman to receive the Georgia Tech Class of 1934

Distinguished Professor Award in the 38 years of its existence. It is the highest honor given to a Georgia Tech professor. The award is presented to a professor who has made significant, long-term contributions to teaching, research, and public service.

Brown is the Regents and Brook Byers Professor of Sustainable Systems in the School of Public Policy. She joined Georgia Tech after 22 years at Oak Ridge National Laboratory, where she directed several national climate change mitigation studies and became a leader in the analysis and interpretation of energy futures.

At Oak Ridge National Laboratory,

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## Purchasing Helps Ensure Responsible Stewardship

RACHAEL POCKLINGTON  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

At Georgia Tech, just about everyone, from research faculty to student employees, at some point needs to make a purchase using Georgia Tech funds. While the funding sources may vary (that's a story for another day), as a state agency Georgia Tech must follow state procurement rules, including obtaining and documenting approvals to make purchases. It is an integral part of being responsible stewards of taxpayer resources. But if you spend any time reading about these rules and regulations, you quickly learn to appreciate the complexity of seemingly simple purchases.

To help us understand the basics of making a purchase at Georgia Tech, Ajay Patel, who was recently appointed interim senior director of Business Services at Georgia Tech, shares some tips.

### Can you give us an overview of what the Purchasing department is responsible for at Georgia Tech?

We are responsible for the actual processing of a purchase as well as payment to the supplier — both via PCard and purchase orders generated through Workday. This applies to all purchases with the exception of capital and public works as well as subawards and

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# Well-Being Strategies Can Boost Resilience

VICTOR ROGERS  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Beth Cabrera, the first lady of Georgia Tech, is a psychologist and Tech alumna (M.S. PSY 1993, Ph.D. PSY 1995). Her research focuses on the power of positive psychology to achieve greater success and well-being. For the last few years, she has been sharing her expertise on positivity with Tech students as a guest presenter in a five-week course called “Resilience Building Strategies: Growing Through What We Are Going Through.” It was developed in 2019 by Sonia Alvarez-Robinson, executive director of Georgia Tech Strategic Consulting, and Joi Alexander, director of Health Initiatives.



**Beth Cabrera**

“Social support is the number one factor for well-being,” Cabrera said. “We need people. It’s an evolutionary thing, because back in the caveman days, if you didn’t have your tribe to help keep you safe, you died. You could not survive alone.”

Today, because of physical distancing in work and social environments brought about by the pandemic, many people are less connected to others.

“Some people feel like they’re connected because they’re using social media, but that’s not the same kind of connection,” she said. “We are less connected to our communities. We aren’t as involved in our churches or different associations. During the pandemic it was important to have physical distance, but not social distance.”

Cabrera said that having a positive outlook and experiencing happiness are also important to well-being. But she said that “being happy” should not be the goal.

“There’s a difference between doing things that allow you to experience positive emotions and having the goal of being happy,” she said. “Being happy all the time is never going to happen, so if you set a goal to be happy, then you’re always going to fall short.”

Instead, Cabrera suggests participating in activities that make you happy. That could be anything from reading to exercising to hanging out with friends. The result will be a feeling of happiness that can be repeated as needed.

Positive psychology does not mean you deny your negative feelings. “Positive psychology first and foremost recognizes that we are human and that humans are going to experience a wide range of emotions,” she said. “It’s very important to accept all of your emotions, the good and the bad. We know that if you try to ignore or suppress any of those negative emotions, they just get stronger.”

Cabrera is encouraged to see that society is more attuned to mental health issues than ever before.

“I started talking to companies in 2004 about employee well-being, telling them that it actually is linked to performance. Happy employees will be smarter, more creative, and they will work together better,” she said. “Today there is a heightened awareness of the importance of mental health and the need to help people address these issues.”

Alvarez-Robinson said, “Having Dr. Cabrera come and speak to our class has been a highlight of the students’ experience since we started the class in

2019. We recognized that our students needed additional skills for navigating change, challenges, and uncertainty. We proposed it as part of the mini-mester pilot program and the first cohort launched in Spring 2020.”

The one-credit course will be offered again in the fall and is listed as Resilience Building Strategies 4801/8801 (cross-listed for undergraduate and graduate students).

A recording of Cabrera’s most recent workshop, along with other related sessions, is available at [sdie.gatech.edu/resilience-erg-past-events](https://sdie.gatech.edu/resilience-erg-past-events).



## Mental Health Awareness Month

May is National Mental Health Awareness month. Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

According to the World Health Organization, 46% of Americans will meet the criteria for a diagnosable mental health condition at some point in their lives.

To support the Institute’s commitment to well-being, and in recognition of Mental Health Awareness this month, Human Resources is providing resources that can support faculty, staff, and students with their mental health.

View resources and learn more about mental health this month at [hr.gatech.edu/news](https://hr.gatech.edu/news).



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**GT Georgia Tech.**

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# Kendeda Exhibit Highlights Experiences of Women at Georgia Tech

CASSIDY CHRENE WHITTLE  
SCHOOL OF LITERATURE, MEDIA,  
AND COMMUNICATION

In 1952, Elizabeth Herndon and Diane Michel became the first full-time female students at Georgia Tech. Fast forward to 2022, and the first-year admitted class is 44% women — the highest percentage in Institute history. Michelle Ramirez, a digital media master's student in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication (LMC), crafted her final project to explore women's experiences on campus over the past 70 years.

Ramirez's curated exhibition, *SDG 5, Gender Equality: Reimagining our Future Through Art and Technology*, is on display through December in The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design. Ramirez also designed an interactive oral history about women's experiences at Georgia Tech.

"I am passionate about the intersection of storytelling, art, and feminism," Ramirez said. "When I learned that 2022 marks the 70th anniversary of women attending Georgia Tech, I wanted to design a master's project that not only celebrates their remarkable achievements but shows the reality of attending a male-dominated institution."

With the support and guidance of her team of advisors, Ramirez invited trans women, non-binary folks, and cis women affiliated with Georgia Tech to submit digitized photography, paintings, creative writing, and research papers related to the theme "Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Visitors can see a selection of these artworks hanging from six banners on the second floor railing of The Kendeda Building and three posters on the first floor.

"The exhibition aims to connect diverse research methods, artistic endeavors, and knowledge production occurring today on Georgia Tech's



Photo courtesy of Michelle Ramirez

Michelle Ramirez stands amid her exhibit in The Kendeda Building for Innovative Sustainable Design. The exhibit will be on display through December.

campus," Ramirez said. "It is not a space to simply showcase women in technology, but to demonstrate how women and gender non-conforming folks in technology are reshaping research questions and pushing artistic boundaries, which can bring us closer to accomplishing this grand goal."

During her graduate studies, Ramirez worked as a graduate research assistant in SLS, a campuswide initiative working with educators to incorporate the U.N. SDGs and community partnerships into student learning.

"When Michelle shared that her final project would focus on gender equity, we started brainstorming ways she could bring together her academic work with SLS. We are thrilled with the impressive exhibit she curated," said Rebecca Watts Hull, Serve-Learn-Sustain Service Learning and Partnerships Specialist.

"The exhibition presents a much-needed supportive and celebratory recognition of gender equality progress and issues on Tech's campus," said LMC Assistant Professor Noura Howell. "Michelle chose to work in the background and showcase others' artworks in this exhibition, yet through her vision, curation, and execution, the artworks in this exhibition come together as more than individual works."

In addition to curating the *SDG 5* exhibition, Ramirez invited visitors to a "living room" space she created in the basement of The Kendeda Building for a one-day demonstration. She designed the space to serve as a "familiar" and "conversational" environment for visitors to experience the project.

Visitors interacted with objects lined with touch-sensitive conductive tape, which played snippets of interviews from the Living History Program on the wall. Some of the objects displayed were reproductions of relevant documents and photos, such as *The Freshman Girls' Handbook* — a female-student-written handbook, which provided information on "dress, activities, and campus rules" — and a RAT Cap. Other items were symbolic representations of the video content, such as an old record player.

"Selecting the snippets of stories, selecting and creating artifacts to relate to the stories, and designing ways of interacting with the artifacts to play the stories is a challenging design problem that Michelle tackled through carefully listening and doing justice to stories alongside thoughtful, tangible design iterations," Howell said. "All this hard work fades into the background of a highly engaging, slow, thoughtful way of eliciting and witnessing these stories of Georgia Tech's history."

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## **PURCHASING**, from page 1

subagreements. Those are handled respectively by Infrastructure and Sustainability and the Office of Sponsored Programs. On average, our department issues more than 100,000 purchase orders a year and that number continues to grow.

### **Who establishes the rules and regulations for making purchases?**

Since we are a state entity, the Georgia Department of Administrative Services grants Georgia Tech the authority to make purchases on behalf of the state. In addition, since Georgia Tech receives significant funding from the federal government, we often must comply with both state and federal procurement rules. It can get quite complicated, especially when new rules and regulations become part of the process.

I'd like to emphasize that these aren't "guidelines," these are state or federal laws. All higher education institutes that receive federal funding must comply with federal rules. In addition, all University System of Georgia (USG)

schools must also comply with state rules, which are often more restrictive than federal rules. To help ensure compliance, there are established purchasing requirements that every USG institution must follow.

### **Can you walk us through the steps necessary to make a purchase of goods and services?**

There are generally two ways to authorize and pay for goods and services. One is the State of Georgia PCard, which is used primarily for smaller dollar amount purchases, and the other is a purchase order (PO) issued via Workday Financials. Both require documentation for compliance verification.

By issuing a PO, Georgia Tech is assuring the vendor that the appropriate authorization, or approval, has been issued and Georgia Tech is financially committed to paying the vendor in return for the goods and services specified on that PO. It's essentially a contract. Plus, the State Accounting Office policy requires that a PO must be issued in most cases before a vendor is paid.

### **What does the process look like to issue a PO? How long does it take?**

It begins with issuing a purchase requisition. After it is approved by the approving department in Workday, it is then routed to Purchasing for review and approval. Once approved, the purchase requisition becomes a PO.

In approximately 80% of scenarios, Purchasing has automated the approval process of the purchase requisition, and this has really helped speed up the process for issuing a PO. On average, automated approvals of a requisition take three business days. A great example would be purchasing office supplies from the Staples catalog.

For the remaining 20% of requisitions, Purchasing will review them for compliance with state and federal procurement rules. Once all requirements are met, a PO is issued and sent directly to the vendor. The time for Purchasing to review can vary depending on the complexity of the purchase and the steps required.

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*This story has been edited for length. Read the full story at [news.gatech.edu](https://news.gatech.edu).*

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## **BROWN**, from page 1

she was the joint highest-ranking female manager. Brown was attracted to Georgia Tech after working with a high-level group of scientists from Oak Ridge, the Imperial College of London, and Georgia Tech on a project involving next-generation energy, including advanced broadband. "I really liked the people from Tech who I worked with on the project," said Brown. "They had a can-do attitude. At other universities, they might say, 'That can't be done.' The people from Georgia Tech said, 'We'll find a way.'" In 2006, she was encouraged to apply for the position of — and was chosen as — a full professor in the School of Public Policy in Georgia Tech's Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts.

Throughout her career, Brown has been known for her transdisciplinary, action-based research and linking

behavior to policy. "I started my career in the physical sciences at Rutgers. From the beginning, I brought sciences into my work and have been quantitative. It has given me the ability to span sciences and related fields," said Brown. "I tell my students they have to be quantitative in math and the physical sciences to be effective in energy."

The focus of her research has been on the clean energy transition — bridging engineering, social and behavioral sciences, and policy studies to advance the design, adoption, and diffusion of clean energy technologies and policies. She is particularly interested in energy disparities and work to strengthen energy infrastructure, especially in areas of financial need. "It is all about the diffusion of innovation to the benefit of all," she said.

### **Drawdown Georgia**

Brown also leads the research

program Drawdown Georgia, which she helped to create with the inspiration and funding of the Ray C. Anderson Foundation. A Tech alumnus, Anderson was founder and chair of Interface Inc. and a pioneer in sustainability.

Drawdown Georgia was created and is being conducted in partnership with Emory University, the University of Georgia, and Georgia State University, as well as the Southface Institute, the Partnership for Southern Equity, and Greenlink Analytics.

Drawdown Georgia has identified a roadmap to significantly cut Georgia's greenhouse gas emissions and achieve carbon neutrality. The Drawdown Georgia study, localized for Georgia's urban and rural areas, was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences in 2021.

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