



# The Whistle

WORK AND LIFE AT GEORGIA TECH • July 6, 2021



Vol. 46, No. 14  
whistle.gatech.edu

## First Juneteenth Events Take Place at Georgia Tech

COURTNEY HILL  
INSTITUTE DIVERSITY, EQUITY,  
AND INCLUSION

On June 18, OMED and Black student organizations partnered to host what are believed to be the first Juneteenth recognition events at Georgia Tech, which included a virtual discussion and afternoon celebration on Tech Green. One day prior, just days after the U.S. Senate passed a unanimous bill to establish June 19 as Juneteenth National Independence Day, President Joe Biden signed it into law, making Juneteenth the country's 12th federal holiday.



Photo by Christopher Moore

see **JUNETEENTH**, page 3

Students enjoy the Juneteenth celebration on Tech Green on June 18.

## CLINICS CONTINUE



Photo by Rob Felt

Covid-19 vaccinations continue on campus for all Georgia Tech students, faculty, and staff, as well as their family members age 12 and older. Clinics take place Tuesdays at the Exhibition Hall from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Sign up online at [mytest.gatech.edu](https://mytest.gatech.edu).



### Still Buzzin'

The Buzzin' Back to School drive continues through July 23. Donations are still being collected through an Amazon wish list, or other store-bought supplies can be brought to Georgia Tech Human Resources.

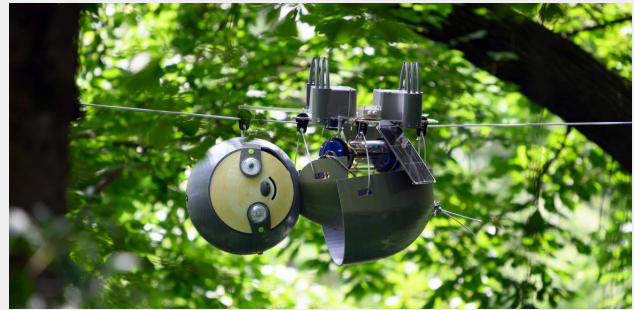
This school supply drive benefits Georgia Tech employees with children in grades K-12.

Learn more and view the Amazon wish list at [hr.gatech.edu/news](https://hr.gatech.edu/news).

## A Year Alone in the Trees

Magnus Egerstedt thought his robot would survive a few months. That was the goal when he and his team of Georgia Tech College of Engineering students installed their 3-foot SlothBot in the Atlanta Botanical Garden's tree canopy in May of last year.

But soon, the hot summer days gave way to cooler temperatures and the machine found itself amid leaves colored by fall. SlothBot would successfully endure Atlanta's chilly winter nights and managed to hang around for its first birthday in the spring. Finally, 13 months after it went up, SlothBot has come down. Read the full story at [coe.gatech.edu/news](https://coe.gatech.edu/news).



## U.S. Senator Raphael Warnock Visits GTRI

AYANA ISLES  
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Georgia U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock visited Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI)'s Cobb County Research Facility on Wednesday, June 30. His stop at GTRI was part of his statewide tour focused on Georgia's resources around infrastructure, defense, and research.

GTRI Director Jim Hudgens kicked off the visit with an overview of GTRI and laid out some of its state-focused initiatives including agricultural advancements, product development with industry partners, cybersecurity advancements, and job creation. Warnock was also able to get a firsthand look at GTRI's research during a tour of the labs, and Hudgens highlighted Tech's work with the military and



Photo by Rob Felt

(L-R): Dean Charles Isbell, Sen. Raphael Warnock, GTRI Director Jim Hudgens, and Dean Raheem Beyah.

intelligence communities.

"I was so glad to help secure support in the U.S. Innovation and Competition Act to make sure we're investing in our nation's research institutions like Georgia Tech, so we can continue innovating the solutions that our military needs to keep our national defense strong and protect our service members,"

Warnock said.

Sen. Warnock was also able to see the direct impact of GTRI research in a video highlighting a chicken-deboning robot, which has been designed to vastly improve efficiency at Georgia poultry factories. The innovation has the potential to save the poultry industry millions of dollars by reducing costs and waste.

In addition to the focus on GTRI, Sen. Warnock heard from the deans of Georgia Tech's Colleges of Computing and Engineering, Charles Isbell and Raheem Beyah. Both Isbell and Beyah gave insight into Tech's rankings and pathway programs, as well as the Institute's partnerships and academic offerings. Beyah spotlighted the entrepreneurial efforts at Tech by touting CREATE-X and shared ongoing efforts to strengthen and expand Georgia Tech's dual degree program with the Atlanta University Center Consortium. Isbell talked about the nation's first accredited Master of Science in Computer Science earned exclusively online — Georgia Tech's OMSCS program — and the Constellations Center for Equity in Computing to expand computer science education in Atlanta.



# CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH



Photos by Christopher Moore

On June 18, the Office of Minority Educational Development (OMED) and Black student organizations partnered to host what are believed to be the first Juneteenth recognition events at Georgia Tech. Attendees enjoyed lawn games and music as they socialized on Tech Green.

## JUNETEENTH, from page 1

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, a Union general rode into Galveston, Texas, to announce that the Civil War had ended — and slaves had been freed. Though the Emancipation Proclamation became law in January 1863, it could not be enforced in places still under Confederate control.

Juneteenth has been celebrated across Texas and other parts of the country for years. However, following nationwide protests in 2020 over police brutality and the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and other Black Americans, there has been a renewed interest in the day that celebrates emancipation.

The virtual conversation featured Andre Brock, associate professor in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication, discussing

“Juneteenth and the Black Digital.”

“I’ve been invited to discuss Juneteenth and its importance on the occasion of its first-ever federal holiday to mark the event,” Brock opened. “Today, using my research on Blackness and digital media, I’d like to offer a way to contextualize where we find ourselves.”

Brock’s scholarship includes published articles on racial representations in video games, Blackness, and digital technoculture, as well as groundbreaking research on “Black Twitter.” He recently received a sub-grant to further interdisciplinary research into issues of race, difference, and computation.

“We should also remember it [Juneteenth] is Black folks making something out of nothing; a moment of rest to mark the dismantling of an apartheid state — and its love for slave labor — and we have continued to celebrate that moment, even as our ancestors endured Reconstruction, the nadir [considered a particularly brutal

period in African American history, spanning the end of Reconstruction in 1877 through the early 20th century], and the piece-by-piece construction of Jim Crow laws.”

Brock’s presentation was followed by a question and answer session between the scholar and his virtual audience.

Later that afternoon, OMED hosted a celebration on Tech Green complete with food, games, camaraderie, faculty, staff, and students — including several Georgia Tech men’s basketball and football team members — and tabling by organizations including Delta Sigma Theta and Zeta Phi Beta sororities and Omega Psi Phi and Phi Beta Sigma fraternities.

The day was supported by the African Student Association, the Georgia Tech Caribbean Student Organization, and the African American Student Union, the Institute’s oldest Black student organization.

A full recording of the virtual discussion can be viewed at [youtu.be/p8zc4Vzg\\_vM](https://youtu.be/p8zc4Vzg_vM).

# Paid Parental Leave Now Available to Employees

GEORGIA TECH HUMAN RESOURCES

Georgia Governor Brian Kemp recently signed into law House Bill 146, which provides up to 120 hours of paid parental leave for state employees. Effective July 1, 2021, eligible University System of Georgia (USG) employees can receive this leave.

## Eligibility

Qualifying life events include:

- The birth of a child.
- Placement of a minor child for adoption.
- Placement of a minor child for foster care.

Eligibility is contingent upon the employee meeting the following criteria:

- Full-time regular, part-time regular, and temporary employees who have six months of continuous service and have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six months immediately preceding the requested paid parental leave date.

## Conditions

- Eligible leave amount: Up to a maximum of 120 hours of paid leave per qualifying event.
- The maximum of 120 hours is the same, regardless of the number of qualifying events within the year and across USG institutions.
- Leave may be used on a continuous or intermittent basis.
- Unused leave does not carry over for future use.
- Unused parental leave has no

cash value upon separation from employment.

## Request Process

If an employee has one of the qualifying life events mentioned above they should submit a request for extended leave through OneUSG Connect Employee Self-Service.

GTRI employees and temporary employees requesting leave must submit their requests using the appropriate request forms. Request forms are located under Leave-Absence on the GTHR Forms and Guides website.

## Contact

For additional information, contact your unit's Human Resources Business Partner or representative, or visit the HR portal in [services.gatech.edu](https://services.gatech.edu).

## GOING OUT IN STYLE



Photo by Atlanta Event Photography

Georgia Tech celebrated its retirees at the 2021 Retirement Celebration on Tuesday, June 22, at the Georgia Tech Hotel and Conference Center. This year's event celebrated those who retired between July 1, 2019, and Feb. 28, 2021 — including retiree Belinda Harding, pictured above. Learn more about the event and the Silver Jackets retiree group at [specialevents.gatech.edu/retirement-celebration](https://specialevents.gatech.edu/retirement-celebration).