



The Whistle

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Recovery Task Force to Guide Return to Standard Operations

No timetable exists yet, but a group of 26 Institute leaders is now modeling possible scenarios

President Ángel Cabrera has appointed a new task force to guide and oversee planning for the eventual resumption of Institute operations.

No timetable yet exists for reopening facilities and laboratories and returning to in-person instruction. The recovery task force will begin by modeling different possible scenarios and will coordinate the actions of different units within federal, state, and University System of Georgia guidelines. The recovery task force is led by Frank Neville,

senior vice president for Strategic Initiatives.

“As we’re making plans to resume campus operations, our focus is squarely on the safety of our students, faculty, and staff,” Neville said.

“Because we don’t yet know when the Institute will be able to resume previous levels of campus-based activity, the establishment of this task force is a proactive measure. As we develop our plans, we are drawing on the expertise of Georgia Tech faculty in public health and other disciplines to ensure that our



decisions are informed by the latest research and insight.”

When Georgia Tech transitioned to distance learning and modified operations in March, every unit within the Institute executed a continuity plan unique to its needs, responsibilities, and personnel. These continuity plans coordinated specific responses to alterations in campus operations, such as distance learning, teleworking, incident response teams, and more.

see **RECOVERY**, page 2

Virtual Town Halls Connect Employees, Leadership

VICTOR ROGERS
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

More than 3,200 people logged in on April 15 for the first in a series of virtual town halls addressing the impact of COVID-19 on Georgia Tech. In both the morning and afternoon discussions, President



Institute leadership hosted online town halls with employees, current and accepted students and families, faculty, and researchers.

Ángel Cabrera was joined by several campus leaders including Rafael L. Bras, provost and executive vice president for Academic Affairs; Chaouki Abdallah, executive vice president for Research; Kelly Fox, executive vice president for Administration and Finance; and Kim Harrington, associate vice president and chief human resources officer.

Cabrera spoke frankly about the economic impact of the pandemic and answered questions about how that might affect Tech employees. “I won’t sugarcoat it. This is perhaps one of the most complex situations that most of us have experienced in our lifetimes,” he said.

Administration and Finance has been modeling the current

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STRATEGIC PLAN, PHASE II



Georgia Tech’s strategic planning process has moved into phase two: goal setting. Working groups will now focus on six strategic themes that resulted

from the plan’s visioning phase.

In February, applications to serve on the working groups were received from interested students, faculty, and staff. Co-leaders for each working group were also identified. Comprising more than 250 people

representing colleges, schools, and other units from across campus, the working groups will meet weekly and engage between meetings through online collaboration tools, surveys, strategic analysis, and drafting goals. The working group drafts will then be considered by Institute leadership over the summer, with the final goals and objectives to be finalized and communicated in early fall.

“I thank every member of the working groups for ensuring that the momentum around our strategic plan effort continues, even in these uncertain times and as their professional and personal lives are disrupted,”

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Creativity Meets Caring

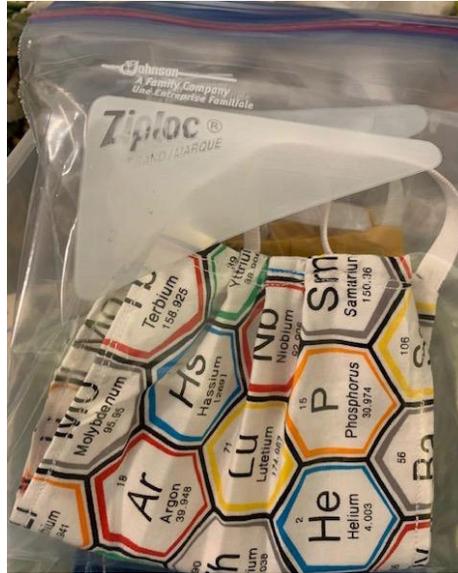
BENJAMIN HODGES
INSTITUTE COMMUNICATIONS

Volunteers within the Georgia Tech community have teamed up to sew cloth face coverings for Institute employees still performing essential duties on campus. These employees include a limited number of faculty and staff, such as Facilities Management custodial and landscape staff, Georgia Tech Police Department officers, Housing staff, and faculty and graduate student researchers.

To help these employees, volunteers with the “Heroes Helping Heroes” Face Covering Initiative are fabricating cloth face coverings and do-it-yourself (DIY) sewing kits to be donated to any interested on-campus staff member by request. The first batch of face coverings and DIY sewing kits was delivered for distribution on April 14.

“I am continually inspired by the Georgia Tech family’s ability to create and innovate, as well as our deep appreciation for each other,” said JulieAnne Williamson, assistant vice president for Administration and Finance. “A team of leaders, sewers, and experts came together from across the Institute and got this initiative ready in just four days. From those who make the face coverings to those who need them as they work on campus, Georgia Tech’s caring spirit shines through.”

While the cloth face coverings are neither surgical masks nor substitutes for medical-grade personal protective equipment, they can still be helpful in reducing the diffusion of respiratory droplets in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained in the optimal manner. For more information about



Volunteers are helping out essential employees on campus with functional and creative face coverings.

the effectiveness of cloth face coverings, visit [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov).

If you are interested in supporting Heroes Helping Heroes, fill out the volunteer survey. Volunteers may donate their finished products at a no-touch drop-off location at Georgia Tech’s Environmental Health and Safety department.

If you’re an on-campus employee who would like a cloth face covering, please visit heroeshelpingheroes.org for instructions on how to request one. You can also find information there about creating, donating, requesting, wearing, or cleaning cloth face coverings.

If you have questions about Heroes Helping Heroes, contact JulieAnne Williamson at julianne@gatech.edu.

Read more about how Georgia Tech is joining the battle against COVID-19 with our expertise, innovation, and indomitable spirit at helpingstories.gatech.edu.

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The recovery plans will guide units as they prepare for a phased resumption of services and operations.

Since units and their operations may be differently

affected by guidelines, the recovery task force will work with individual departments to assess needs and make recommendations. While many administrative offices will be able to plan resumption of operations under similar conditions, some

units — athletics, research, or dining, for example — may have additional requirements to consider.

Visit Georgia Tech’s Monitoring Coronavirus site at health.gatech.edu/coronavirus for updates.

Marine Biologist Helps Create COVID-19 Test Kits

JESS HUNT-RALSTON
COLLEGE OF SCIENCES

Samantha Mascuch, postdoctoral researcher, is a marine biologist with a focus in marine natural products. She flies planes in her free time and isn’t afraid of a challenge. Now, during the spread of COVID-19 in Georgia, Mascuch and fellow Georgia Tech scientists are producing coronavirus test kit ingredients.

The group plans to deliver thousands of tests in the coming weeks — and they’re building better test kits for the future.

Viral RNA is converted into DNA, then amplified through RT-PCR: Reverse Transcription-Quantitative Polymerase Chain Reaction.

Next, enzymes used in PCR are purified using automated equipment to ensure accurate test results. Purified, concentrated enzymes are then placed in containers, ready to be used in virus test kits.

“First we turn that RNA into DNA, then we make a bunch of copies of that DNA, and that’s how we can tell if you actually have this virus,” Mascuch said.

The effort is part of a statewide initiative to tap academic laboratories across Georgia to help with COVID-19 testing.

“It really gives me a sense of pride and agency to be able to do something to help. And, let’s face it, quarantine gets old.”

Watch Mascuch at work at bit.ly/gt-test-kit.



Samantha Mascuch is putting her expertise to work on coronavirus test kits.

Tech Welcomes Two New Directors



Tia Jackson-Truitt

In early April, Institute Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion named Tia Jackson-Truitt as the inaugural director of Diversity and Inclusion Education Training. She will be responsible for developing and leading diversity and inclusion curriculum-based training across Georgia Tech for faculty, staff, and students.

Jackson-Truitt, who has worked in higher education since 2010, previously worked in the mental health field with at-risk youth and adults. She has also worked as a forensic social worker for incarcerated populations.

“In this new role, I hope to use my experiences in counseling and higher

education to create diversity and inclusion programming that enhances the culture and climate of the Institute,” Jackson-Truitt said. “In the 10 years that I’ve been at Tech, I have seen so much growth in how people with different backgrounds and areas of expertise are regarded and respected.”

She received a bachelor’s degree in psychology from the University of Delaware, a master’s in social work from the University of Pennsylvania, and a Ph.D. in counseling and student support services from the University of Georgia.



Tegra Myanna

On May 11, Tegra Myanna will begin their tenure as director of the LGBTQIA Resource Center. Since 2017,

they have served as assistant director of the Lealtad-Suzuki Center, which provides multicultural training, programming, and education at Macalester College in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Taking on this new role at a larger, technology-centric public university in the South is a welcome challenge for Myanna, who holds a B.S. in biological sciences and a master’s in higher education administration from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. In particular, they’re interested in building relationships with graduate students and alumni. “Thinking about what this work could look like with students who are there to engage professionally and move forward in their careers is something I look forward to,” they said.

Another goal is to develop mentorship programs related to career exploration and navigating the workplace. “We want to do the work to make sure they feel supported and confident enough in their identity to be able to leave Tech and know they always have a place they can come back to — but they can start creating that community wherever they go.”

Integrity and Compliance Campaign Moved to November

Every year, Georgia Tech requires faculty, staff, and student employees to complete the Integrity and Compliance Campaign, an online training program. The campaign is designed to educate the Institute community about ethical decision-making as well as policies regarding conflicts of interest, cybersecurity, and more.

The training usually takes place during March and April, but this year the Institute is moving the 2020 Integrity and Compliance Campaign to November to coincide with annual Ethics Awareness Week programming.

“While the campaign is being moved to the fall, we all need to remember that ethics and compliance is a year-round matter,” said Aisha Oliver-Staley, chief ethics and compliance officer and deputy general counsel. “Although where we work may have changed, how we work has not. At all times, every member of the Institute community is accountable for maintaining the trust and confidence of those who support us and those we serve.”

Employees will be notified when the mandatory online course becomes available in November. No action is required at this time.

For more information, visit the Integrity and Compliance page at hr.gatech.edu/integrity-and-compliance.

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said President Ángel Cabrera.

The themes and working groups are as follows:

- **Amplify Impact:** Embrace our power as agents of change for the public good and concentrate our research and learning efforts on identifying and solving the most critical and complex problems of our time, locally and globally.
- **Champion Innovation:** Champion our leadership position as an engine of innovation and entrepreneurship, and collaborate with other public and private actors to create economic opportunity

and position Atlanta and Georgia as examples of inclusive innovation.

- **Connect Globally:** Strengthen our role as a convener of worldwide collaboration and build a global learning platform to expand our reach and amplify our impact.
- **Expand Access:** Empower people of all backgrounds and stages of life to learn and contribute to technological and human progress.
- **Cultivate Well-Being:** Strengthen our culture of well-being and create an environment of holistic learning where all members of our community can grow and learn to lead healthy, purposeful, impactful lives.

- **Lead by Example:** Lead and inspire by example by creating a culture of deliberate innovation in our own practices and being an example of efficiency, sustainability, ethics, and inclusion.

To review the foundational narrative, vision, theme, values, and beliefs that will ultimately shape the strategic plan, visit strategicplan.gatech.edu. There, you can also follow working group progress and activities and learn more about the process, data collection and analysis methodology, and next steps. Email your questions to strategicplan@gatech.edu.



Student Celebration Week: Online

SARA WARNER
DIVISION OF STUDENT LIFE

They might have looked a whole lot different this year, but ceremonies recognizing the breadth of achievements at Georgia Tech were not stymied by the ongoing COVID-19 crisis.

The virtual Student Celebration Week honored more than 250 individuals and groups from across the Georgia Tech community, including students, student organizations, faculty and staff, and alumni.

From April 20 to 23, this online celebration featured live ceremonies open to the entire campus community and their families. Additionally, colleges and departments are sharing stories and features about students and award winners at studentlife.gatech.edu/content/student-celebration-week. You can also find details about each ceremony, recorded ceremonies, and lists of award-winning individuals and groups there.

Celebrate Spring Graduates — You Gussed It — Online!

Georgia Tech will recognize its Spring 2020 graduates with an online celebration on Friday, May 1, with an in-person ceremony on campus later this year. The uncertain evolution of the COVID-19 pandemic has made it difficult to set a specific date for the in-person ceremony, but as much notice as possible will be given so that graduates and their families can make plans to attend.

The virtual celebration will engage the entire community in congratulating graduates on their academic achieve-

ment. The event will begin at noon with a welcome from the president and deans and will continue throughout the day with student interviews, messages from faculty, staff, and alumni, and opportunities for sharing on social media.

“All of us at Georgia Tech have a deep sense of admiration for our graduating class, among other reasons because we know very well how much it takes to get there. Our graduates deserve to be recognized for this momentous achieve-

ment, which means so much to them and to their families,” said President Ángel Cabrera. “Our online celebration does not replace our Commencement exercises but will help mark the completion of a journey. I hope every graduate will consider returning to campus when we stage a live ceremony later this year, as public health guidelines permit.”

For updates and information about joining in the celebration, visit commencement.gatech.edu.

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and potential future financial impact of COVID-19. The team has identified at least \$55 million in losses between now and June. This includes revenue in Housing, Dining, and Parking and Transportation, as well as a decline in revenue from study abroad and Athletics.

“When you project out, it could be two, three, or four times as much over the next few months,” Cabrera

said. “Then there is the real possibility that the investment the state of Georgia makes in Georgia Tech may be cut as the state sees a significant decline in its tax revenue.”

A portion of those funds may be offset by federal stimulus money, some of which has already been announced as part of the CARES Act. In the first phase, Georgia Tech has been allocated \$10.5 million, which will be distributed to students in financial need. The second half, which is a little more than \$5 million, will help offset

some of Tech’s financial losses.

“I think it’s fair that we start getting ready for a scenario next year in which we have to cut expenses pretty drastically. At that point we need everybody on board,” he said. “This requires all hands on deck.”

Cabrera also addressed a question that is on the minds of many: Will there be employee furloughs or layoffs?

“We need to do everything we can to keep our existing employment intact. The job market will be down and if we lose jobs people will suffer. That’s why

I emphasize that every dollar counts. Everything that we can do without we should be doing without until things stabilize. With help from everyone we may be able to minimize the chance that employment will be affected. That should be our very last option.”

A question-and-answer period followed, in which leadership addressed numerous employee queries submitted beforehand or live during the discussion.

View the recordings at health.gatech.edu/coronavirus.