



# Georgia Institute of Technology®

Office of the Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Date: May 11, 2015

To: Paul Goldbart, Dean, College of Sciences, (Co-Chair)  
Bill Wepfer, Chair, Mechanical Engineering, (Co-Chair)  
Annie Anton, Chair, Interactive Computing  
Laura Margaret Burbach, Undergraduate Student, Public Policy  
Marc Canellas, Graduate SGA President  
Laura Hollengreen, Assistant Provost for Academic Advocacy & Conflict Resolution  
Larry Jacobs, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, College of Engineering  
Sidhartha Sinha, Undergraduate Student, Industrial Engineering  
John Stein, Dean of Students  
John Tone, Associate Dean of Undergraduate Studies, Ivan Allen College

From: Rafael L. Bras, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Copy: G.P. "Bud" Peterson, President  
Archie Ervin, Vice President for Institute Diversity  
Gary May, Dean, College of Engineering  
Zvi Galil, Dean, College of Computing  
Steve French, Dean, College of Architecture  
Jacqueline Royster, Dean, Ivan Allen College  
Maryam Alavi, Dean, Scheller College of Business  
Catherine Murray-Rust, Dean of Libraries & Vice Provost of Academic Effectiveness  
Nelson Baker, Dean, Professional Education  
Susan Cozzens, Vice Provost for Graduate Education & Faculty Affairs  
Colin Potts, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education  
Yves Berthelot, Vice Provost for International Initiatives  
Paul Kohn, Vice Provost for Enrollment Services  
Jennifer Herazy, Assistant Provost for Administration

Subject: Task Force on Learning Environment

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Creating and fostering an academic environment rooted in respect is an assumed tenet of a highly-ranked university. As the Provost and Chief Academic Officer of Georgia Tech, I am committed to creating a learning environment for our students that not only is conducive to academic success, but also teaches collegiality, civility, and respect. The results of the recent SGA sponsored student experience survey indicate that this commitment is not fully shared by all members of our community, and that troubles me.

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To renew our collective commitment and identify avenues to improvement of the culture of civility and respect in our instructional environment, I am appointing a Task Force on the Learning Environment. Dr. Paul Goldbart, Dean of the College of Sciences, and Dr. Bill Wepfer, Chair of the Woodruff School of Mechanical Engineering, have agreed to co-chair the task force. You have indicated interest in the task force and I am hereby appointing you as a member of the group.

The Task Force on the Learning Environment is charged to:

1. Analyze the results of the February 2015 SGA/IC student survey in order to assess the nature of academic culture at GT – identifying problems and opportunities.
2. Suggest strategies to increase civility and respect in our academic culture and foster faculty awareness of how to create a positive academic environment.
3. Identify current and suggest new policies, tools, and mechanisms available to school chairs for responding to issues.
4. Craft recommendations for consideration by the Provost, Vice Provosts, Deans, and Vice President for Student Affairs, to include:
  - a. Education and awareness programming and/or activities;
  - b. Best practices for addressing issues and situations that are counter to a respectful climate; and
  - c. Identification of “low-hanging fruit” and quick-win solutions.

To initiate and frame your discussion, enclosed with this memo is a letter from several Georgia Tech students calling for action to improve the academic culture at Georgia Tech.

The Task Force will begin its work immediately with the goal of providing a preliminary report addressing the first two items above by August 31, 2015. The full and final report addressing all four items will be expected by November 30, 2015. During the month of December, a special meeting of the Vice Provosts, Deans, and Vice President for Student Affairs will be held for a TFLE report of the findings and recommendations.

The first TFLE meeting will be held on **Monday, May 18<sup>th</sup> from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. in College of Sciences Conference Room (2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Tech Tower)**. In addition, you are invited to attend a meeting of the Deans and Vice Provosts on **Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> at 1:30 p.m. in the Poole Board Room (Wardlaw)**. At this meeting, Institute Communications will present the results of the student experience survey. If you need parking, other accommodations, or can't attend these meeting, please contact Robbie Burr ([robbie.burr@provost.gatech.edu](mailto:robbie.burr@provost.gatech.edu)).

This topic is possibly one of the most critical we will address as an academic community. The thoughtfulness, sensitivity, and value you will bring to the group's work are appreciated. I look forward to continuing this discussion with you.