Committee Members Present: Doug Britton, Amy D’Unger, Peter Hesketh, Moon Kim (substituting for Marlit Hayslett), Caitlin Manley, Helena Mitchell, David White (Executive Committee Liaison)

Committee Members Absent: Nancey Green Leigh, Margaret Loper, Tyler Walters

The meeting was called to order at 9:36 AM by chair Helena Mitchell.

Chester (Chet) Warzynski, Executive Director of the Office of Organizational Development, was the invited speaker. Committee members all introduced themselves to Chet as well as the new student member, Caitlin Manley. Chet served as the co-chair of the Strategic Plan Committee, which was tasked by President Peterson to create a 25-year conceptual plan for the university. The driving factors behind the plan and the planning process were: 1) how does Georgia Tech differentiate itself from peer institutions and how do we communicate this to the world, 2) how can we best integrate various units on campus (e.g., colleges, centers, etc.) in order to work together in inter/transdisciplinary research and teaching to best leverage our resources and strengths, and 3) how can we best train Georgia Tech students to be leaders after they leave the Institute.

The planning process—guided by a steering committee—involved the use of surveys, benchmarking, and eight subcommittees to develop a mission, a vision, values, goals, and strategies for plan implementation. The eight subcommittees focused on the following themes:

1. Sustain and enhance our culture
2. Enrich the student experience
3. Redesign education (what and how we teach and learn)
4. Ensure Georgia Tech’s research preeminence
5. Enhance Georgia Tech’s role in Georgia
6. Leverage Georgia Tech’s global engagement
7. Lead in big payoff, transdisciplinary areas
8. Establish and use best-in-class administrative and business practices and processes

Chet stated that the Institute is now in the process of engaging key stakeholders (students, faculty, staff, alumni, advisory boards, etc.) to implement the plan. One part of this engagement process was to solicit proposals for initiatives from the various units on campus. Over 120, representing approximately twelve broad themes, were submitted to the Provost. They are currently being evaluated.
Overall, the mission statement of the university has not changed significantly, but the question of developing technology for what purpose has been highlighted, with the goal of “improving the human condition.” The vision for the university is that it will be a major leader in influencing policy, such that “What does Georgia Tech think?” will be asked by those such as governments and businesses when making major policy changes. From this mission and vision, five strategic goals and seven core values were identified, as follows:

1. Be the most highly respected technology-focused learning institution in the world.
2. Sustain and enhance excellence in everything we do, but particularly in our scholarship and research.
3. Ensure that innovation, entrepreneurship, and public service are fundamental characteristics of our graduates.
4. Expand our global footprint and influence to ensure that we are graduating good global citizens.
5. Relentlessly pursue institutional effectiveness.

1. Integrity
2. Excellence
3. Impact
4. Innovation
5. Entrepreneurship
6. Leadership
7. Community

Peter then asked if the mission meant that we were moving away from our core (i.e., engineering), and Chet said that it would be a process of both strengthening what we are good at as well as giving students a wider array of options as they pursue their degrees. Doug questioned whether this process had resulted in something new or different, or if the “new” mission, values, etc. are just an affirmation of what we already do. Chet concurred that we have been doing many of these things, but that the new Strategic Plan (SP) is taking the concepts that the Institute has been trying to embody and making them more explicit, and then forming project teams to implement them. In addition, he emphasized that the purpose of the SP is not to establish a few “key areas” on which Tech would focus (e.g., nanotechnology, biomedical engineering, etc.)—in other words, it is not a reductionist plan that could have the potential for disenfranchising those who weren’t in the “key areas.” Rather, we must focus on being a “liquid university” that can flow with the changing needs of the world.

Moon asked if the plan included ways of identifying areas in which we could engage policy, and Chet stated that the Institute is actively seeking partnerships, particularly those that will assist with curriculum changes, research, and public service. (Secretary’s note: he employed the sociological concept of the “strength of weak ties,” developed by Granovetter.) He stated that we are moving towards the “triple helix” model of government, industry, and the university working together as the drivers of innovation.
Chet referred to the top ten new initiatives that have emerged out of the strategic planning process, which include:

1. Prepare our students for global leadership.
2. Be the “Innovation Institute.”
3. Create an experimental college, the “X” College.
4. Pursue globally significant challenges as a test bed for research.
5. Explore the role of technology as it relates to law.
6. Expand and enhance programs dealing with technology and policy.
7. Create a virtual Georgia Tech campus.
8. Explore collaborative partnerships.
9. Provide an educational guarantee.
10. Establish best business and administrative practices.

Helena raised a question related to initiative #7—how do we improve electronic communications for students when we already have significant infrastructure problems (e.g., classroom software and hardware)? Chet suggested that we need to tie classrooms into a cloud, which would provide the software but would not solve hardware issues. Doug suggested that the primary on-campus school environment is no longer the dominant model, so the question will be how Georgia Tech will stay relevant in a world where education is increasingly being provided by entities such as the University of Phoenix and Strayer College. Tech will have to reach out with the use of distance learning and develop other strategies for this changing academic climate. In addition, Chet suggested that initiative #9 could assist with this, as the university would move towards providing guaranteed access to education for life (creating “students for life), but that there would still be room for “traditional” bricks-and-mortar universities that work with young adults after they leave high school. Chet also stated that, from the perspective of the students, expanding the curriculum to provide a larger diversity of opportunities and more flexibility is a major concern. This theme also came out very strongly in the classroom “Days of Engagement” discussions. The students and the SGA have been vocal and supportive of the SP, particularly with regards to initiatives #1, #3, and #7.

Chet then moved on to inquire what aspects the members of the Academic Services Committee consider the most important, and how ASC might be involved in the implementation of the new SP. Helena pointed out goal #5, strategy #1 (“Continuously improve all support functions and processes”) as a logical place for the ASC to fit into the SP. For example, students now use the library very differently than they did even a decade ago (i.e., it’s no longer used for accessing information), so how can we make the best use of the library space? Doug pointed out that the proportion of space devoted to individual studying is now much smaller, while the proportion devoted to electronic resources and group work is much larger. The question becomes how to do needed major upgrades to the space and technology while still being flexible enough to adapt to rapid changes. With regards to the technology that faculty use, particularly in the classroom, Doug suggested that it needs to be better communicated to faculty what is available in each classroom and that an explicit strategy for updating technology
(hardware and software) needs to be put in place. David suggested that the overarching question is how faculty, students, and OIT communicate with each other (or don’t) and Chet responded that this was discussed in the recent Provost’s meeting. There is currently no technology strategic plan for managing Banner, Peoplesoft, etc. and the university does not even know how much it’s spending on these. The Institute is in the process of creating an IT governance structure, with the input of the academic units. Hopefully the SP will be able to assist in mapping out how decisions are being made and by whom. Peter added that students are also bringing technology to the classroom (e.g., laptops, smart phones, iPads, etc.). Caitlin pointed out that this can help students in some ways (e.g., speed of note taking) but can also provide some major distractions to the learning process, suggesting that these types of technologies may highlight who the most focused and self-disciplined students are.

The discussion continued regarding the issues in which the ASC could be involved. Helena asked Chet which issues were on the radar of the SP committee, and he stated that resources, UGA and Southern Poly being approved to create engineering degrees, the 120 program/initiative proposals submitted to the provost, and the “Top Ten New Initiatives” (see p. 3) were of top concern. He noted some projects related to the new initiatives that are already underway, including an undergraduate minor in leadership, the Innovation Institute, the formation of a business partners’ council, and some infrastructure projects. Regarding the ten initiatives, Helena inquired why #5 (explore the role of technology as it relates to law) and #6 (expand and enhance programs dealing with technology and policy) were not collapsed into one bullet point and discussion ensued on this issue. Peter asked if the “global” part of the various initiatives, particularly as it pertains to students, means bringing foreign students here or sending our students abroad. Chet stated that it was both, and that the larger vision is to have Georgia Tech and Atlanta seen as a “global village.” Helena argued that this would be difficult, given the moratorium on memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with entities outside the United States. Chet was not familiar with this policy, and pointed to a recent MOU with China as an example, and suggested talking to Steven Cross for clarification. Peter continued the conversation with an inquiry about whether there is a strategic plan for things like the Nanotech Building. Chet stated that there was not but, to be most effective, the SP has to link with the Capital Campaign to outline the implications for the top ten new initiatives on classroom/office/lab space and technology, particularly with new structures such as the CULC.

To summarize this conversation, Helena asked Chet to “capsulize” the main items with which the ASC could assist. Chet suggested that enriching the student experience, leadership, and innovation were areas in which he saw a role for the Academic Services Committee, with questions such as “how do we utilize old library space” and “what services do students need?” Moon asked what a committee member should do if (s)he was to have an “Ah Ha!” moment with an regarding the implementation of the SP. Chet suggested emailing the president directly to ensure that it was reached at the top and then filtered back down correctly through all the appropriate channels. For ideas being generated by the ASC as a whole, they should be vetted by the Executive Board and then send forward by the board to the president, who would then distribute it to all the
appropriate individuals and committees (e.g., the Academic Research Council, the Provost, etc.). This led to a discussion of the leadership structure of Georgia Tech, which seemed murky to members of the ASC and the faculty as a whole. Chet outlined the basic structure of governance at Georgia Tech (see page 6) and stressed the importance of picking the proper network/channel for sharing information. This is particularly important for the faculty if they want their voice to be heard, so they should pick “messengers” or “translators” appropriately. Committee members concurred that this structure is not well known among the faculty, and asked how we could communicate this structure and process more widely. Chet stated that, because it is so decentralized, the institute is hesitant to put out such a “roadmap” of governance. Instead, Chet suggested that faculty try to understand where resources come from and how much there are in order to find the “leverage points” for their voice, whether that is through deans, outside groups, etc. Faculty must work collaboratively to build support, find resources, and manage resistance to new ideas.

Helena closed the Q&A portion of the meeting by thanking Chet and asking him to get back to the committee on any more specific ways in which the ASC could help with the implementation of the SP. We are elected members, so we should be able to have some voice/authority in proposing new ideas.

The topic of the meeting then moved on to new business and a report from David on the Executive Committee. With regards to new business, Amy stated that she would contact Tyler on agenda item #5 (finalizing plans for the January 2011 ASC meeting). Helena will contact Steve Cross regarding the February meeting, and we can meet in the Carnegie Building if time is an issue for him. David reported that at the last Executive Committee meeting the president gave an update on the UGA/Southern Poly engineering degrees as well as the searches for a new VP for Communications (completed), VP for Diversity (completed), and director of GTRI (in process). Provost Bras added that a search firm has been hired for the new Dean of Engineering, and that airport interviews would be conducted in February. The SP was discussed, as was the issue of the reclassification of general faculty. There was a high degree of opposition to this change and staff from one office turned out en masse for the meeting (David was not at the meeting, but hypothesized that the opposition may have come from legal affairs). Concerns were expressed about disenfranchisement and inequality generated by the “grandfathering” process. David suggested that the process will probably move forward in the spring and that there needs to be better communication to/with the effected faculty members. Decisions, most likely, will not be put on hold until a VP of Human Resources is hired, as that process is a long way off.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:46 AM.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by,

Amy D’Unger
Secretary, Academic Services Committee
Rough Map of Governance at Georgia Tech

Executive Leadership Team

*Peterson
Bras
Cross
Swant

Decision Support Group

IT Governance

Provost

SGA

Academic Research Council

Faculty Senate

President’s Cabinet