MEMORANDUM

To: President G. P. "Bud" Peterson

From: Lynn M. Durham, Chair of the Mental Health Task Force

Re: Action Steps for Mental Health Task Force Recommendations

After the Mental Health Task Force came forward with 11 broad recommendations, you asked for further feasibility studies on each recommendation. Your assignments were as follows: Items 1-4 to Dr. William Schafer, Vice President for Student Affairs; Items 5-10 to Dr. Rafael Bras, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs; and Item 11 to Mr. Scott Morris, Associate Vice President for Human Resources. I have carefully reviewed each recommendation and distilled them into this executive summary of potential next steps for your consideration. I will find time on your calendar for us to discuss as soon as possible.

1. *Design and implement a periodic comprehensive survey of undergraduate students, graduate students and post-docs that asks questions pertaining to mental health, quality of life, and faculty engagement and/or mentoring.*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- Establish a working group to design and implement a student survey. Suggested members are Brenda Wood (chair), Sandi Bramblett, Jon Gordon, Kathi Wallace, Julie Ancis, Kim Harrington, Teresa Snow and student SGA representative.
- This group would also develop the implementation plan and determine the frequency of the survey.
- Survey completion incentives should be explored and nominal funding requested.

Suggested long-term action steps:

- Formalization of this group as a standing committee with the goal of meeting at least once per academic year to review and potentially make changes to the survey, as well as to plan frequency and survey methods.

2. *Establish a Center for Student Wellness (similar to the Athletic Association's Total Person Program) that would be available to all students. The Center could be housed in the Campus Recreation Center or as a separate center, and would serve as a base for physical and mental health promotion and programming. It could also encompass complementary programs including a center for alcohol and drug recovery and research.*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- There is an immediate need for collaboration and synchronization of current services on campus.
- Enhance the scope of the Go T.E.C.H. (Teams Encouraging Campus Health) to undertake the inventory and coalition of all "wellness" components on campus, put forth a "GT Wellness Initiative" and create the infrastructure for marketing and branding.
- The working group suggests hiring an executive director to oversee and direct this wellness coalition. They also suggest having this person report to the Office of the President.

Suggested intermediate action steps:

- Establishing a fully functional "virtual" Wellness Center that will function as a clearinghouse of wellness resources for the purpose of marketing new and existing programs, proposals for new events, and potential funding source for resource development.
- Staff this with the executive director mentioned above and add three assistant directors and one administrative professional.
- This would integrate the Family Friendly Task Force recommendations for faculty/staff inclusion and would support broader interdisciplinary programming and support for populations with challenges for success, including individuals with addictions, Autism, or Attention Deficit Disorders.

Suggested long-term action steps:

- 10 year timeline for implementation
- Build a stand-alone wellness center to provide a physical space for wellness initiatives.

Additional recommendations regarding a campus recovery program:

- Pilot program has been successful and now they believe it is time to move forward with a campus recovery program
- Hire a director of the Campus Recovery Program
- Identify space for the center in or near the current Counseling Center
- Benchmark other programs to identify the best program format
- Identify funding source and potential benefactors

3. *Develop initiatives to centralize information about various services for students and identify a point agency (or person or group) that will be responsible for disseminating and updating this information. This should include:*

   a. *the development and maintenance of a portal that would combine this information with mental health resources;*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- Gather information on current wellness resources and events (begin with Go T.E.C.H.)
- Build GT Wellness webpage – would require web developer/team and funding to develop website

Suggested long-term action steps:

- Build kiosks in Georgia Tech buildings featuring GT Wellness information
- Place ads and videos on the Georgia Tech Cable Network (GTCN)

Develop initiatives to centralize information about various services for students and identify a point agency (or person or group) that will be responsible for disseminating and updating this information. This should include:

  b. *the development of videos and panel discussions and other health promotion activities aimed at identifying and dealing with stress;*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- Video development to create new or update existing videos
- Develop panel discussions to offer at key times during the semester

Suggested long-term action steps:

- A dedicated budget to support videos and panel programming

Develop initiatives to centralize information about various services for students and identify a point agency (or person or group) that will be responsible for disseminating and updating this information. This should include:

  c. *the development and training of a network of students, faculty and staff (RAs, faculty advisors, etc.) to help students access GT services and be a "first line" for identifying students in crisis ("Safety Nests" proposal, Appendix A), as well as facilitating student access to the entire range of support services on campus; and*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- Provide programming to campus beginning in Fall 2014 to educate students, staff and faculty to recognize the warning signs of suicide and use resources to respond appropriately to the student.
- Development or identification of current app that would assist both the student who is encountering a mental health crisis and concerned roommates or friends and connects them with emergency resources.

- Ensure that GT has appropriate policies and procedures for responding to suicidal students.
- Gain administrative approval for gatekeeper (i.e. safety net) training
- Train campus administrators
- Develop printed materials and other communications involving gatekeeper training
- Identify resources to pay for materials and communications campaign

Suggested long-term action steps:

- Expand breadth of gatekeeper training
- Evaluate training
- Begin website development

Develop initiatives to centralize information about various services for students and identify a point agency (or person or group) that will be responsible for disseminating and updating this information. This should include:

    d. the development of peer mentoring programs to better provide support to students with certain conditions such as Autism or Bipolar disorder to aid in retention.

Suggested short-term action steps:

- Establish "Burdell Buddies" peer counseling program along with a timeline for development and implementation
- Work with FASET, housing, GT1000, and student organizations
- Establish meeting spaces
- Develop advertising and training materials
- Develop special topics class to train Buddies

Suggested long-term action steps:

- Launch email or phone hotline
- Have a full-time staff and office space.

4. *Establish a working group of student leaders and staff who develop programs and events (e.g., Alumni Association, Athletic Association, Institute Communications, Residence Life) that highlight school spirit and a sense of belonging to Georgia Tech. The purpose would be to promote positive foundations for school spirit in contrast to the "love to hate" mentality prevalent on campus. Events should be inclusive for all students – undergraduate, graduate, and non-traditional – and give them opportunities to meet outside their cohorts/schools.*

Suggested short-term action steps:

- The work group came to an understanding that creating additional events or programs to increase the feeling of belonging and school spirit on Georgia Tech's campus could be counterproductive and redundant. Instead, there is a need for intentional efforts to encourage a culture of collaboration and celebration of Georgia Tech's unique, existing traditions and "quirks." This may mean redefining, expanding and focusing existing programs.
- Explore a platform to be used by student organizations, departments and event organizers to collaborate and create an interactive campus event calendar (to enhance collaboration and reduce competition).
- Collaboration should be encouraged and expected until the mindset of the community improves allowing allegiances to be set aside for the greater good. Opportunities may include Homecoming, Welcome Week, and the weeks leading up to GT – UGA athletic events.
- Representatives from across campus should develop a campaign-- working from the established "One Georgia Tech" and GT Athletics new "Together We Swarm" campaigns -- the Institute can promote an institutional environment that celebrates not just academics, research and accomplishments, but will display who we are and how we form community at Georgia Tech.
  - Highlight points of pride
  - Celebrate our quirks
  - Focus on pride – not on hate
  - Establish working group to develop campaign around "One Georgia Tech"
- Allocate resources to allow for more programming elements to provide international and non-traditional students a better understanding of campus and American culture.

(Items 5 – 10 are presented as a status report of ongoing efforts, along with future plans to implement initiatives)

5. **Create initiatives to promote awareness of the value and contributions of all academic majors and the potential value to students of a change of major.**

- The Center for Career Discovery and Development, which has coordinated the Major Fair in the fall for several years, will work closely with the Center for Academic Success and GTAAN to publicize the event more fully and to secure the involvement of key academic advisors from across campus. They are investigating the need for a second fair in the spring semester. Attendance at the fair(s) will be strongly encouraged in GT 1000 with the goal of helping students as early as possible in their academic career.
- A video is being planned that surveys the various majors available at Tech that will be used in the GT 1000 classroom to help initially motivate and direct students on the exploration of their (and other) majors. These will be organized with approximately equal time budgeted per college. To avoid an "infomercial" format, this is likely to adopt an engaging documentary style, in which students, faculty and administrators from diverse majors are interviewed with similar questions. Another related initiative that is being explored is the development of an "Alumni Resource Fair," likely in partnership with the Alumni Association in Fall 2014. This would provide GT 1000 students access to alumni to discuss career options with professionals in their areas of interest.

- The Center for Academic Enrichment is organizing a program of events to be held in the Clough Lounge to stress the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and respect for other majors and academic approaches. These events will likely include panel discussions with participants from initiatives such as Vertically Integrated Projects and Problem-Based Learning classes and will feature students.
- The Center for Academic Success will partner with the staff of the CORE desk in Clough Commons (which is widely ignored or misunderstood as a "concierge" desk by students) to provide information about majors to students who are considering a change. This could become a go-to place for initial questions, especially if linked with programming in the neighboring Clough Lounge as well as general advising services provided by the Center for Academic Success.

6. **Develop the following education programs:**
   a. **GT 1000 for transfer students.**

- One or two sections of GT 1000 will be offered to transfer students starting in Spring 2015.

   b. **GT 6000 class/seminar for graduate students.**

- During a planning meeting with the President of the graduate SGA, this idea evolved from the concept of a course to a workshop with plans to pilot the program in Fall 2014.
- Graduate SGA is seeking 8 to 10 graduate students to coordinate small participant groups, which will meet about 6 times per semester.
- Menu of topics could include ethics, time management, advisor relationships, work/life balance, career options and planning, financial management, networking/mentoring beyond the advisor, publication practices, learning Atlanta and campus support services.

   c. **Faculty development/mentoring to promote best practices in communicating with students in ways that facilitate healthy student-faculty relationships. This would include classroom protocols and informing students of their academic progress.**

- Graduate Studies has held two focus groups involving students and faculty graduate coordinators about mutual expectations in the advisor/advisee relationship. The points made during the discussion are being incorporated into a document to guide both the graduate students and the faculty.
- CETL held a very well attended faculty development workshop to share what students say they value about faculty in their "Thank a Teacher" nominations. CETL is also working with ODK on similar issues.

   d. **A series of programs for graduate students on promoting a balanced lifestyle.**

- This will be included in the GT 6000 topics.

7. *Review and recommend faculty awards to highlight faculty for their positive student interaction or mentoring.*

Prior to the 2013 academic year, the Office of the Provost reviewed all awards and added new faculty awards such as the Curricular Innovation Award, Innovation in Co-Curricular Award, and Innovation in Laboratory Instruction Award. The current awards were reviewed to ensure that the value of teaching and student engagement was apparent. Several awards exist to recognize faculty who excel in this regard:

- Outstanding Undergraduate Academic Advisor - Faculty Advisor
- Class of 1940 W. Roane Beard Outstanding Teacher Awards
- Faculty Outstanding Undergraduate Research Mentor Awards
- CETL/BP Junior Faculty Teaching Excellence Awards
- CETL Undergraduate Educator Awards
- Eichholz Faculty Teaching Award
- ANAK Award

At that time, the cash value of the awards was reviewed and some increased to reflect the Institute's value of teaching. The two primary selection committees for teaching awards – the CETL committee and the faculty honors committee were charged with paying special attention to faculty who foster positive relationships with students. This focus will be formally written into the guidelines for the appropriate awards before next year's cycle begins.

8. *Support the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid in conducting an inquiry into tools that could be used to help current and prospective students and families better understand aggregate debt levels in the context of Return on Investment (ROI).*

- Staff members in the areas of enrollment and financial aid are collaborating to include more information on the admissions website relating to costs of attendance and debt.
- Jennifer Mullins is developing a "recommended debt limit" for prospective families to consider in making an informed decision. Both should be available by Summer 2014.

9. *Support the Office of Scholarships and Financial Aid in developing a method to communicate a "warning" message to those HOPE/Zell Miller recipients who are below the required GPA at the end of each semester. Also, fund the creation of a web-based GPA calculator to be included on BuzzPort allowing students to quickly determine the impact of potential future grades on retaining/regaining the HOPE/Zell Miller scholarship.*

- OMED Educational Services and the Office of Information Technology each have a GPA calculator that can be provided on BuzzPort by Summer 2014.
- The calculator will be unable to address the complexity of the HOPE/Zell Miller scholarship eligibility at the individual level, but can provide preliminary information. Users will be encouraged to contact financial aid advisors to discuss their status.
- As is the current practice, the advisors proactively monitor HOPE/Zell Miller eligibility status and dispatch warnings as appropriate.
- Student feedback will be sought on current and planned tools to ensure students are able to understand their HOPE eligibility.

10. *Encourage the timely distribution of Graduate Teaching/Research Assistantship information to graduate students to allow them to explore other options if their department is not able to provide financial support for the upcoming academic year. Also, designate a point of contact in each school/department so graduate students know whom to contact with questions/concerns regarding financial questions.*

- A note has been sent to graduate program directors to strongly encourage the timely notification of GTA/GRA assignments to students.
- The notice will be sent each semester as a reminder.
- Each department has been asked to provide a financial point-of-contact; this contact information will be included on the newly-redesigned Graduate Studies site.

11. *Review Counseling Center allocations to ensure there are sufficient resources to meet staffing and space recommendations based on most recent International Association of Counseling Services accreditation site visit.*

- Data was collected and analyzed related to staff and compensation for the Counseling Center and Stamps Psychiatry.
- Compensation levels have been adjusted for current staff members to ensure we are paying competitive salaries.
- Adequate staffing levels have been determined and new counselors have been hired. We will continue to provide resources to provide additional counselors to conform with IACS staffing guidelines.
- Approval has been given for hiring a case manager.
- Counseling center is reviewing the addition of interns and/or practicum students.
- Recommended that one new FTE be added as a psychiatrist in the Stamps Health Service.
- Recommend that a partnership be explored with Emory University and Morehouse School of Medicine to develop psychiatry residency rotations.
- Develop a joint set of mental health metrics and organizational performance measures and develop an annual report on the state of their mental health collaboration for both the Vice Presidents of Student Affairs and Campus Services.