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GEORGIA TECH AND SHEPHERD CENTER AWARDED \$4.75 MILLION GRANT

Atlanta, GA (October 19, 2011) -- The Georgia Institute of Technology and Shepherd Center have been awarded a \$4.75 million, five-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education's National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research (NIDRR) for research and development of wireless technologies aimed at enhancing the lives of people with disabilities. The grant supports the continuation of a decade of innovative research and engineering at the Wireless Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center (RERC), a collaboration between Shepherd Center and Georgia Tech.

"This funding will allow us to move into new and emerging areas and leverage our relationships with the wireless industry, disability organizations, governmental agencies, and other researchers and engineers to promote equitable access to wireless technologies and to develop new assistive technologies built on wireless platforms," said Helena Mitchell, executive director of the Center for Advanced Communications Policy (CACP) at Georgia Tech's School of Public Policy and principal investigator and co-director of the Wireless RERC grant. "This award affirms the growing importance of wireless technologies for those who have disabilities."

The award is the third consecutive five-year grant awarded to this team of researchers and engineers.

"We are pleased that NIDRR continues to support the Wireless RERC's important work," said Mike Jones, director of Shepherd's Crawford Research Institute and co-director for the Wireless RERC grant. "The rapid pace at which wireless technology has evolved over the past several years – a pace that is expected to accelerate in the future – requires ongoing effort to ensure that the accessibility needs of people with disabilities are incorporated into new technologies."

In technology development, the Wireless RERC will launch a new incubator to develop software applications ("apps"); the Apps Factory will fund innovative internal and external ideas on a competitive basis to provide apps to people with disabilities across a wide range of platforms. This work will enhance accessibility to this critical wireless technology and build new assistive tools

based on these “smart” wireless platforms. Additionally, the Wireless RERC will continue its work developing solutions to enhance the effectiveness and accessibility of emergency alerting and access to 9-1-1 emergency services.

The Wireless RERC will also continue its focus on consumer and public policy research, including wireless use and usability by consumers with disabilities and studies that may shape the development of public policy primarily related to general accessibility and emergency communications.

“Our public policy work is a critical component of the Wireless RERC,” Mitchell noted.

Over the years, CACP has submitted 29 filings for proposed rulemakings before the FCC and other regulatory agencies pertaining to issues of telecommunications access and emergency communications. CACP filings have been referenced or cited more than 60 times in ongoing rulemakings, including final rules and orders regarding advanced technologies and accessible mobile alerts.

The Wireless RERC is one of more than 20 RERCs in the United States. Other RERCs are devoted to fields such as aging, hearing impairment, visual impairment, public transportation, workplace accommodations, universal design, wheeled mobility and information technology access.

Georgia Tech participants in the Wireless RERC also include the Center for Assistive Technology and Environmental Access (CATEA), College of Computing (CoC), Interactive Media Technology Center (IMTC), School of Public Policy (SPP) and the School of Psychology.