Our final honoree this evening is a man whose life and work fully embodies the Georgia Tech spirit of “progress and service.”

An honorary alumnus, Dr. Homer Rice stands tall among those who have served this Institution, and who in so doing, also elevated this city and its people. But the impact of Homer Rice’s work extends far beyond Georgia Tech and Atlanta. The word “legendary” is widely used to describe virtually every aspect of Homer’s career.

Homer Rice grew up in Kentucky, where he literally fell in love with the game of football and found in it a potential that would reach far beyond the game itself. At the age of 12, his father gave him a book that inspired in him a life-long
commitment to a “positive system of belief” and using one’s personal goals in the service of others.

Dr. Rice’s legendary achievements – as a football player; a high school, college and professional football coach; a college athletics director; a teacher and mentor – offer a testament to his perfection of this system, as evidenced by: nine coach of the year awards for high school football; his development of the Triple Option Offense that dominated the 1960s; a track record as an athletic director who worked miracles; and the development in the 1980s of the Total Person Program for student athletes.

A dramatic example of Dr. Rice’s belief in following one’s dreams and goals was evidenced in his decision in 1980 to leave his prestigious and affluent position as head coach of the Cincinnati Bengals to take on one of the weakest and poorest college athletic programs in the country – the program here at Georgia Tech. In 17 years as director of athletics here, Dr. Rice transformed the Yellow Jackets into champions, earning national respect and number one rankings in football, basketball, baseball, and golf. Under his leadership, Tech
developed multiple women's sports teams and produced three Olympic gold medalists in track and field.

Further, Dr. Rice played a definitive role in shaping our modern campus by spearheading a fundraising campaign that raised $100 million for the renovation of our sports facilities.

He was also a leading influence in developing our modern approach to athletic performance. The Homer Rice Center for Sports Performance conducts research and development on the studies of human movement and houses the Total Person Program for Tech athletes. This program is the cornerstone of the Rice legacy, serving as the model for the NCAA Life Skills Program that is in place in more than 200 schools throughout the country.

Dr. Rice expressed his idea quite simply saying that nothing is more important than helping student-athletes to get a quality education.

I think there is a parallel here to the remarks that Provost Bras mentioned earlier – those made in 1910 by Georgia Tech president, Kenneth Gordon Mathison – that just as technical
man cannot reach his full potential without the liberal arts so college athletics must develop the whole life of its students. In striving to achieve his own dreams, Dr. Rice has always focused on lifting up others; helping them to believe in themselves; helping them to make value-based decisions, to set lofty goals, and to define success not simply by how far up the ladder they might climb, but by how many others they have lifted up along the way.

Now, Dr. Rice, I heard tell that you retired sometime in 1997, but I have to say that I’ve been at Tech since 2010, and, quite simply, I can fine very little evidence that you have cooled your burners—at all. You have longstanding record of engagement with the Ivan Allen College through philanthropy. You teach classes. You keep in touch with alums. You offer advice and counsel in the development of new programs, but these observations are not just mine. Let’s bring in now some other voices to share their perspectives as well.

Dr. Rice you continue a vibrant and ongoing relationship with Georgia Tech and with the Ivan Allen College. You give your
time and energy to our endeavors, and you continue to help us to shape a future for Georgia Tech students that is worthy and honorable. We know that those who take your leadership class each fall find it greatly inspiring, in fact, life changing, which is really saying something special about students who come to us already with exceptional skills and qualities, and already with outstanding experiences. Yet, in your class they find inspiration and value that they cherish and take with them for the years to come.

Clearly, your Total Person Program aligns quite well with the College’s commitment to emphasize the fullness of individual achievement, grounded in knowledge and engagement, but also in care and concern for others—in progress and service.

President Peterson’s schedule did not permit him to be present in person this evening, but he taped a message for you and I’d like to show that now.

Dr. Rice, your life and work exemplify the very essence of the Total Person Program. We are privileged that you chose to be a part of the Ivan Allen College family, that you engage so
enthusiastically with our enterprises, that you demonstrate so persistently your advocacy and affinity for the liberal arts. For all that you do, you have our eternal gratitude, our admiration, and our appreciation, and I take great pleasure in presenting to you the 2016 Dean’s Appreciation Award.