A Conversation Among Presidents

Compassion in Science and Technology

Wednesday, April 24, 2013

The Historic Academy of Medicine at Georgia Tech

Participating Institutes:

Agnes Scott College
Emory University
Georgia Institute of Technology
Morehouse College
Spelman College
The idea for “A Conversation Among Presidents” emerged from the confluence of two events: The presentation of the 2012 Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage to renowned epidemiologist Dr. William Foege, and Georgia Tech’s year-long conversation about science, race, and ethics, inspired by Georgia Tech’s 2012-13 First-Year Common Reading, *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. These events showcased the importance of compassion in all aspects of our work, whether it focuses on global health, undergraduate education in science and technology, or the university’s place in the larger community. This evening’s conversation among university presidents — featuring Elizabeth Kiss of Agnes Scott, Jim Wagner of Emory, G.P. “Bud” Peterson of Georgia Tech, John Wilson of Morehouse, and Beverly Tatum of Spelman — is an historic occasion. Never before have the presidents of these five universities shared a stage. That they have agreed to participate in this conversation highlights the degree to which they, as leaders, value compassion, and we look forward to hearing about the role it plays in the life of their institutions.
Elizabeth Kiss (pronounced “quiche”), PhD, is the eighth president of Agnes Scott College, a national liberal arts college for women in metropolitan Atlanta. Since becoming president of Agnes Scott in 2006, Kiss has led the college in developing Engaging a Wider World, a strategic plan guiding the college through the year 2014, and The Roadmap to 2020, a plan for financial sustainability. Her achievements include the launch of Agnes Advantage, supporting study abroad, internships, and mentored research; new undergraduate programs in neuroscience, public health, and environmental and sustainability studies; the fielding of the first women’s collegiate varsity lacrosse team in Georgia; and the largest first-year class in college history. Under her leadership, Agnes Scott students have garnered Marshall, Truman, and Goldwater scholarships, and the college has been named a “Top Fulbright Producer,” with four students awarded Fulbrights in 2012.

A 1983 graduate of Davidson College, Kiss received a B.Phil. and D.Phil. in philosophy from Oxford University in England. A Rhodes Scholar, she has held fellowships at the Harvard Program in Ethics and the Professions, the National Humanities Center, and Melbourne University’s Centre on Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics. Kiss specializes in moral and political philosophy and has published on moral judgment and education, human rights, ethnic conflict and nationalism, feminist debates about rights and justice, and justice in the aftermath of human rights violations. She co-edited and contributed to Debating Moral Education: Rethinking the Role of the Modern University (Duke University Press, 2010).

Before coming to Agnes Scott, Kiss was the Nannerl O. Keohane Director of the Kenan Institute for Ethics and an associate professor of the practice of political science and philosophy at Duke University. As the founding director of the Kenan Institute for Ethics, Kiss helped to build a university-wide initiative to support the study and teaching of ethics and to promote moral reflection and commitment in personal, professional, community, and civic life. Previously she taught at Princeton University, Randolph-Macon College, and Deep Springs College.

Her husband, Jeff Holzgrefe, is an academic whose focus is international relations and ethics.
G.P. “Bud” Peterson, PhD, became the 11th president of the Georgia Institute of Technology on April 1, 2009. Under his leadership, the Georgia Tech community has developed and begun the implementation of a 25-year strategic plan, Designing the Future. Launched in conjunction with the strategic plan was the public phase of Campaign Georgia Tech, with more than $1.2 billion of a $1.5 billion goal raised over the past several years.

Peterson came to Georgia Tech from the University of Colorado at Boulder, where he served as chancellor. Prior to that, he served as provost at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He served on the faculty and in leadership positions at Texas A&M University for 19 years. He has worked for NASA and the National Science Foundation and is now serving, by U.S. presidential appointment, as a member of the National Science Board.

Throughout his career, Peterson has played an active role in helping to establish the national education and research agendas, serving on numerous industry, government, and academic task forces and committees. He serves as a member of the Department of Commerce National Advisory Council on Innovation and Entrepreneurship, as well as on the Advanced Manufacturing Partnership steering committee.
Beverly Daniel Tatum, PhD, has served as president of Spelman College since 2002. Her tenure as president has been marked by a period of great innovation and growth. Spelman College, long recognized as the leading educator of women of African descent, is now ranked among the top 100 liberal arts colleges in the nation. An accomplished administrator, Tatum is also widely recognized as a race relations expert and leader in higher education. A Fellow of the American Psychological Association, her areas of research include racial identity development and the role of race in the classroom. In 2005 Tatum was awarded the prestigious Brock International Prize in Education for her innovative leadership in the field. Her best-selling titles include *Can We Talk About Race? And Other Conversations in an Era of School Resegregation* (2007) and *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? And Other Conversations About Race* (1997). She is also the author of *Assimilation Blues: Black Families in a White Community* (1987).

An active member of the Atlanta community, Tatum currently serves on several national boards including the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Teach for America, the Institute for International Education, and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. She is also on the corporate board of Georgia Power.

Tatum holds a BA in psychology from Wesleyan University, and an MA and PhD in clinical psychology from the University of Michigan. She also holds an MA in religious studies from Hartford Seminary. Prior to coming to Spelman, she enjoyed a long career as a professor of psychology and then served as dean and acting president at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts. President Tatum is married to Travis Tatum, a retired college professor. They are the parents of two adult sons.
James W. Wagner, PhD, an award-winning teacher and scientist, became the 19th president of Emory University on September 1, 2003. Born and reared in Silver Spring, Md., Wagner earned his bachelor’s degree in electrical engineering in 1975 from the University of Delaware and a master’s degree in clinical engineering in 1978 from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. In 1984, he completed his PhD in materials science and engineering from Johns Hopkins. Following a distinguished tenure on the faculty of Johns Hopkins, Wagner served as dean, provost, and interim president of Case Western Reserve University.

Throughout his administrative career, Wagner has worked closely with faculty, students, alumni, and staff to enhance the undergraduate educational experience, grow research, and foster more effective partnership between the academy and local institutions, including government and industry. Out of a firm devotion to the ancient university mission of liberal education — which he defines as mastering a discipline and developing a thirst for new knowledge — Wagner has been able to forge collaborations among a diverse array of schools and programs. In 2009, Wagner was elected as a Fellow in the American Academy of Arts & Sciences. That same year he was honored to be appointed by President Barack Obama to serve as vice-chair of the Presidential Commission for the Study of Bioethical Issues. At the close of 2012, Wagner joined with the Emory community in celebrating the successful end of the University’s $1.69 billion comprehensive financial campaign.
John Silvanus Wilson Jr. is the 11th president of Morehouse College, the nation’s only private liberal arts college dedicated to educating African American males. Previously, he served as executive director of the White House Initiative on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, a position to which he was appointed by President Barack Obama.

From 1985 to 2001, Wilson served the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, ultimately as the director of Foundation Relations. Beginning in 2001, he worked for eight years at George Washington University, where he held various leadership roles including executive dean of the Virginia campus and associate professor of higher education in the Graduate School of Education.

A graduate of Morehouse College, where he earned a bachelor of arts degree, Wilson also earned two master’s degrees in theological studies and education, as well as a doctorate in education, with a focus on administration, planning, and social policy, from Harvard University. Wilson is married to Carol Espy-Wilson, an electrical and computer engineering professor at the University of Maryland, College Park, and the founder and CEO of OmniSpeech, a speech technology company. They are the parents of three children.
Bill Todd (moderator) is Professor of the Practice in the Georgia Tech Scheller College of Business, teaching healthcare management. He also serves as executive director of Health Care Initiatives at the Institute.

From 1990 to 2011, Todd served as CEO of the Georgia Research Alliance, the Georgia Cancer Coalition, and Encina Technology Ventures. He began his career at Emory, in the university’s hospitals, clinics, and School of Medicine, where he held a variety of administrative posts over two decades, ultimately serving as assistant vice president for Medical Administration. A 1971 graduate of the (then) College of Management at Georgia Tech, Todd attended the Institute for Educational Management at Harvard University. In 2000, he received an Honorary Doctor of Science degree from the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland. He has been active as a volunteer for many years, serving as chairman of the board of the Georgia Tech Alumni Association and president of the Rotary Club of Atlanta.