



NSBE Advisor Makes History

By Eric Addison

Gary S. May, Ph.D., new Dean
of Engineering at Georgia Tech

On May 6, 2011, the Georgia Institute of Technology announced it had chosen NSBE's own Gary S. May, Ph.D. as the next dean of the university's prestigious College of Engineering. For many NSBE members, the news didn't come as a complete surprise. Attendees of the Golden Torch Awards, at NSBE's 37th Annual Convention in St. Louis, heard an announcement from the stage in March that Dr. May was in the running. Still, his selection as head of one of the nation's top-ranked engineering schools sent a powerful wave of pride through the Society.

"Dr. May has for years been a great example of what young black engineers can achieve when they strive for excellence, and this recent appointment serves as yet another milestone that we can look up to," said NSBE National Chair Calvin Phelps. "Dr. May's appointment as dean of engineering at Georgia Tech is an inspiration to us all and a showcase for the talent that this organization has in its midst."

A longtime member of NSBE's National Advisory Board, Dr. May joined NSBE in 1981, when he was an undergraduate at Georgia Tech studying electrical engineering. He quickly moved to the leadership platform and served as NSBE national vice chair from 1985 to 1987 and as national chair from 1987 to 1989. Among his many contributions as a member of the National Executive Board, he started NSBE's journey from rented office space in Washington, D.C., to ownership of its first headquarters building in Alexandria, Va.

Dr. May earned his bachelor's degree from Georgia Tech in 1985 and went on to earn a master's and doctorate in electrical engineering and computer science from the University of California at Berkeley. He joined the faculty at Georgia Tech in 1991 and moved up the university's administrative ladder, becoming Steve W. Chaddick School chair of the School of Electrical & Computer Engineering in 2005. He left that post on July 1 to become dean of the College of Engineering.

Dr. May has authored more than 200 articles and technical presentations on integrated circuit computer-aided manufacturing. He has also established a national reputation with his work to increase diversity in engineering, through NSBE as well as Georgia Tech. In August, he was part of a high-level session hosted by the White House Council on Jobs and Competitiveness, in Portland, Ore. (Read more about the meeting at www.nsbe.org.)

In an interview with *NSBE Magazine*, Dr. May said he intends to lead Georgia Tech to address "the grand challenges" in energy, biology and biotechnology, security and infrastructure. "I think the more immediate areas of interest for me will be primarily in energy," he added. "That's clearly a national need, and that's clearly an area where technology can provide solutions."

He credits NSBE with giving him leadership skills in "relating to and managing people. NSBE is unique because everybody's a volunteer, and you're all essentially peers. And you can't really order people to do things and force them to do things. You have to learn how to negotiate and find out what their personal interests are and try to match those to the organizational needs.... That's really been helpful for me in academia, because it's very similar, where faculty members have tenure and you can't really order them around.... You really have to negotiate and incentivize more than you do order."

Being a role model is "an important part of everything I do," Dr. May said. And he added that he expects his increased visibility to be beneficial to NSBE.

"(At) predominantly white, large research institutions, I can only think of four African-American deans of engineering: Illinois, Maryland, Cornell and now Georgia Tech.... I think that my being in a leadership position at one of these places, in such a leadership role in such a high-profile institution, can only benefit NSBE's mission. It gives our students something they can aspire to."

For the full transcript of Dr. May's interview with *NSBE Magazine*, visit www.nsbe.org. ■