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Tech to honor Ivan Allen's legacy

Atlanta Business Chronicle - by [Maria Saporta](#) Contributing Writer

The legacy of former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. will live on at Georgia Tech in far-reaching ways that will cover the entire institution.

The centerpiece of that legacy will be the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize in Social Courage, which will be awarded to a national or international leader every year. That leader will receive \$100,000 along with the prize.

Tom Glenn, president of the Hilda and Wilbur Glenn Family Foundation, made the \$2 million gift to Georgia Tech in Ivan Allen's memory.

Allen is credited for being a progressive Southern mayor during the volatile days of integration and for helping keep the peace in Atlanta. He was the only elected official from the South to testify before Congress in favor of the Civil Rights Bill and the public accommodations provision.

It is such a lesson in leadership that Georgia Tech now plans to incorporate it through all its areas of study.

"We have been entrusted with the responsibility to perpetuate the legacy of Ivan Allen Jr., and we take that very seriously," Georgia Tech President Bud Peterson said. "This is an institute-wide initiative that will cut across all our fields of study."

Allen received his degree from Georgia Tech in 1933. Through a then-anonymous gift, Georgia Tech established the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts in 1998.

The Ivan Allen Initiative "will be broader than the boundaries of a single college," Peterson said.

Georgia Tech intends to have an Ivan Allen lecture series, public policy initiatives with visiting scholars-in-residence, public and community service opportunities for students, and enhanced work in the areas of quality growth and regional development.

"To have a role model that we can point to like Ivan Allen and an initiative like this makes me very proud," Peterson said. "It will require some resources, and we are committed to identifying those resources."

The "cornerstone" of the Ivan Allen initiative will be the Ivan Allen Prize in Social Courage, which will begin to be awarded in 2011 — the 50-year anniversary of the peaceful integration of Georgia Tech and the 50th anniversary of the election of Allen as Atlanta's mayor.

In a recent private gathering of Atlanta leaders, Glenn explained why his family foundation was so committed to honoring the former mayor.

"The Ivan Allen legacy is about many things: about the man's greatness as a leader, a civil servant, as a devoted husband, and as a kind and loving father. But the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage is about one specific quality: the man's courage," Glenn said.

"To understand just how courageous Ivan Allen was, we should begin by noting that there was a time when vast numbers of people hated him intensely because of his stand on integration, so much so that the Allens had police protection in their home for a time," Glenn added.

"And these feelings were not limited to the raw fringes of society. They were present at all social levels, up to and including the elite members of Atlanta's power structure of which Ivan Allen was a notable member."

Glenn went on to say: "It's one thing to do battle with a distant enemy when those around you are supportive. It is altogether different when those closest to you are against you."

Although Allen died in 2003, Glenn said the former mayor's legacy is too valuable to die with him.

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“His courage should continue to be a source of inspiration for others who are willing to stand up for their beliefs in a worthy cause,” Glenn said. “And that is the objective of the Ivan Allen Jr. Prize for Social Courage — to inspire others to display the kind of courage demonstrated by Ivan Allen Jr. for generations to come, long after those of us who can appreciate just how brave and selfless he was, are dead and gone.”

Inman Allen, son of the former mayor, believed Georgia Tech was the best institution to honor his father. Allen passed away 10 days after former Atlanta Mayor Maynard Jackson passed away. As a way to remember Atlanta's first African-American mayor, the airport was renamed in his honor to the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport.

It was important to many leaders in Atlanta that Allen also received a lasting tribute for his contributions to the city.

“It makes abundant good sense for Georgia Tech to take a leadership role in the legacy of Ivan Allen Jr.,” said Bill Todd, chairman of the Georgia Tech Alumni Association. “It is my hope that the University can teach, nurture and promote the style of courageous leadership that defines Ivan Allen Jr.”

Peterson said that while many Atlantans know the story of Allen's leadership and courage, many others do not. The goal of the Ivan Allen Initiative and the annual prize will keep the story alive.

“It's so important to continue protecting and expanding Mayor Allen's legacy because there's a whole generation that's not aware of what he did,” Peterson said. “We are trying to ensure that many of the things he stood for are not lost.”

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