



Impact Awards

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Celebrating 20 years of **IMPACT**

GVU *Impact Awards*

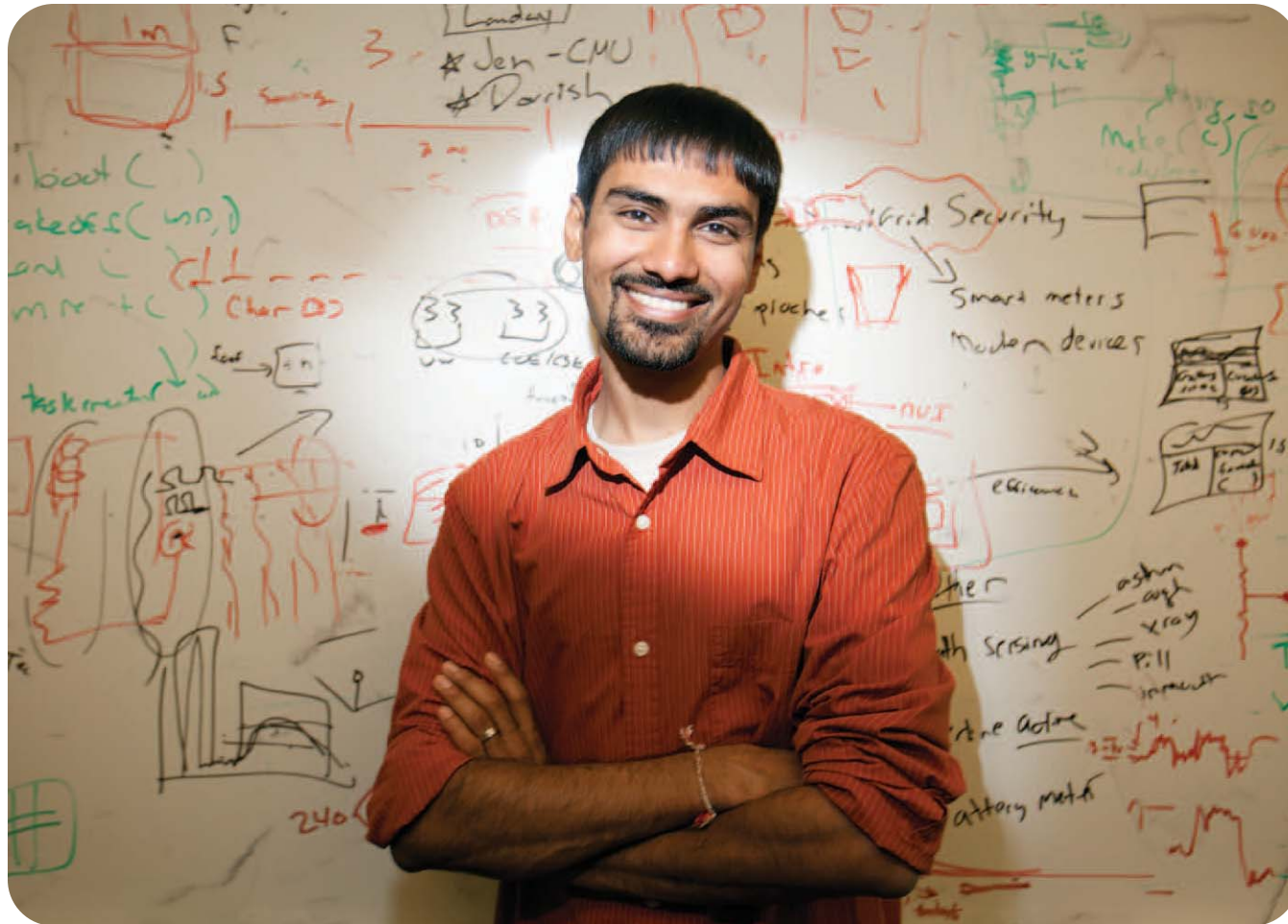
The GVU Center at Georgia Tech is a university-wide interdisciplinary research center dedicated to developing innovative interactive computing technologies to advance the human condition. Founded in 1992 as the Graphics, Visualization, and Usability Center, GVU has grown to include 75 faculty and almost 400 students who span all six colleges at Georgia Tech and bring together deep insight into human abilities, behavior, and culture; the technical savvy to invent cutting edge technologies; and the creativity to imagine and design the future.

Building on this 20-year heritage of interdisciplinary research, GVU has established itself as one of the U.S.'s preeminent academic research centers. Its research focus areas have expanded to include virtually every facet of the human use of interactive technology, spanning augmented reality, civic engagement, collaborative work, digital media, educational technologies, gaming, graphics and animation, health informatics, technology for international development, information visualization, mobile and ubiquitous computing, music technology, social computing, and user experience.

To commemorate the 20th anniversary of the founding of the GVU Center, we are honoring and celebrating the contributions of a handful of passionate, skillful, and committed individuals through GVU Impact Awards. Each of the individuals featured in this booklet has played a key role in our 20-year history, and embodies the interdisciplinary mindset and commitment to real-world impact that is a hallmark of GVU's identity. Through their leadership, service, or research excellence, they have changed the way we use computing technology, advanced the frontiers of knowledge, and strengthened the GVU community at Georgia Tech.

It's my great honor to recognize and thank each of our Impact Award winners for their contributions and accomplishments; I look forward to seeing their stories inspire new generations of the GVU community.

Keith Edwards
GVU Director
GVU Alum, 1995



Shwetak Patel

Shwetak Patel is being recognized for research excellence and broader impact. Patel, who earned a BS and Ph.D. in Computer Science from Georgia Tech, has been an Assistant Professor at the University of Washington since 2008, where he has pioneered ubiquitous computing sensing and feedback technologies for sustainability and health. He holds a dual appointment in Electrical Engineering and Computer Science & Engineering, and he studies everything from low-power sensors to novel interaction techniques. In 2011, Patel was recognized for his work by the MacArthur Foundation—the so-called “genius grant.” Patel is one of only a few computing researchers to garner the MacArthur Fellowship.

Patel’s research approach is unique: he focuses on the ‘whole stack’ of computing, from the low level innovation required to create new chips and sensors to designing and studying new interaction techniques enabled by his technologies. He also lives comfortably in both the research and startup worlds; his startups include his home energy conservation company Zensi (developed at Georgia Tech and acquired by Belkin in 2010) and a new venture: WatchFrog, a startup focusing on low-power home sensing technologies.

The MacArthur Fellowship has allowed Patel to have an even greater impact. “It’s a very ridiculous door opener,” says Patel. “One example: I had been trying to get a meeting with [Secretary of Energy] Steve Chu for some time to talk about residential home energy monitoring. I was trying for about a year to get on his calendar, and literally the day

after the MacArthur Fellowship Announcement I get a call saying he’s ready to meet. I’m the same person!”

Patel cites the GVVU Center as an inspiration for his own career. “One of the things that I didn’t realize until after I graduated is that GVVU is really unique. It’s a true interdisciplinary environment,” says Patel. He especially values the collaborative nature of GVVU, among both students and faculty. “GVVU research transcends Computer Science, and as a grad student I took that for granted. Everybody says that they’re collaborative, but GVVU actually does it.”

Patel has consciously tried to spread the GVVU spirit in his role as professor and advisor. “At GVVU you could work anywhere up and down the computing stack and still make a contribution,” says Patel. “I’ve tried to carry that over to the group that I run.” Patel believes he owes a lot to Professor Gregory Abowd, his Ph.D. advisor at Georgia Tech. “He was great about providing the right level of mentorship and guidance, and he gave me the ability to explore. I owe a lot of the stuff I’m doing to Gregory, that’s clear to me.” Patel specifically cited the Personal Audio Loop (PAL) project as an example of the kind of research he tries to continue. “That was one of the first projects where almost every single individual in the lab collaborated on that project, and nobody really cared who was first or second author, we just wanted to make it work.” In his own lab, Patel regularly sets what he calls ‘PAL projects’ that the whole group works on to foster the kind of collaborative environment he experienced at Georgia Tech.

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