Georgia Tech Restructures Its Business and Community Assistance Services
Reorganizing its assistance services, Georgia Tech aims to boost competitiveness and economic growth by fostering innovation throughout the state.

Age, Place, and Economic Growth
Research at Georgia Tech is profiling the retirement and elder-care sectors to help facilitate public and private investment in those rapidly growing economic areas.

A Q&A with IEDC’s Jeffrey Finkle
IEDC President Jeffrey Finkle relates how his organization supports the economic development profession.

Partnering for Metropolitan Development in South Georgia
Georgia Tech researchers analyzed metro Valdosta’s economy to help local leaders develop a suitable strategy for economic growth.

Results from research projects concerning Callaway Gardens and Arabia Mountain, plus reports on studies under way in Candler County and Warner Robins and updates on the Woodpecker Trail and the Altamaha River.

In this issue:
Recent developments concerning an inland port, IPOs and digital media, and industrial innovation.

Working to Boost Georgia’s Competitive Edge
The Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing helps school districts improve students’ skills.

Courses and Events
Knowledge-building for economic developers.
Georgia Tech Restructures Its Business and Community Assistance Services

The Georgia Institute of Technology has launched a sweeping restructuring of its business and community assistance programs as part of a new initiative designed to address global challenges affecting state, regional, and national economies.

The changes bring new and established Georgia Tech programs together into a broadly integrated initiative designed to help Georgia industry, entrepreneurs, economic developers, and communities become more competitive through the application of science, technology, and innovation.

The restructuring represents the first major reorganization of Georgia Tech’s economic development and business assistance programs since the Economic Development Institute (EDI) was formed in 1993. The changes affect all activities within Georgia Tech’s Office of Economic Development and Technology Ventures (EDTV), including the renowned Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC) business incubator, the VentureLab research commercialization effort, the new Commercialization Services initiative, and the former EDI that has housed Georgia Tech’s assistance for communities as well as businesses.

Supporting Georgia Tech’s goal of defining the technological university of the 21st century, the organization will expand the university’s focus on identifying and transferring key innovations likely to have a dramatic impact on local, state, regional, and national economies. Plans for the restructuring grew out of consultations with key Georgia Tech stakeholders, findings of the 2005 Georgia Manufacturing Survey, and recommendations from the National Innovation Initiative co-chaired by Georgia Tech President Wayne Clough.

“The rapid and dramatic changes taking place throughout the world mean U.S. companies can no longer compete just by reducing costs and boosting efficiency,” said Wayne Hodges, Georgia Tech’s vice provost for Economic Development and Technology Ventures. “Business is now global, and companies must compete on the basis of innovation. To succeed in the future, companies must be able to develop and commercialize innovative products, processes, and services ahead of others.”

To Our Readers

Fall is the season for change, and at Georgia Tech’s Office of Economic Development and Technology Ventures we are engaged in doing just that. Earlier this year, Vice Provost Wayne Hodges announced a refocusing of Georgia Tech’s economic development efforts to: (1) better align with Georgia Tech’s core strengths; (2) consider the evolving roles of our economic development partners; and (3) recognize how technology, innovation, and globalization have changed economic development.

What does this reorganization mean for your community? You will be better able to tap Georgia Tech’s vast resources for your businesses, local government, education, and economic development organizations. Georgia Tech is nationally and internationally ranked in engineering sciences, but it also is widely recognized for its programs in public policy and city and regional planning. The new program in Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy is tasked with creating a meaningful dialogue with economic development practitioners. The Community Policy and Research Services division will enhance linkages to these valuable resources for your community.

Our group remains committed to working with Georgia’s communities, and we will continue offering some familiar services, including LOCTM and WebFITM. Still other services will be tweaked to maximize our particular skills and eliminate duplication with state partners. For example, our tourism services will be based on how technology enhances tourism product development.

Our newsletters are changing, too, and we aim to make the content more relevant to you. This issue features a combined Focus on Communities and Focus on Tourism. Future editions will spotlight tourism initiatives within the broader Focus on Communities format.

We are excited about our revamped, community-oriented approach, and I encourage you to share your ideas with me about how we might better meet your needs.

Todd Greene, CEcD
Director, Community Policy and Research Services
todd.greene@edi.gatech.edu
A leader in science and engineering education and with a research program totaling more than $400 million per year, Georgia Tech is a major developer of science and technology innovations. Building on these new technologies and collaborating with like-minded organizations, Georgia Tech will work with stakeholders to apply such innovations to marketplace needs, Hodges said.

"Nations such as China and India that have long competed on cost are now competing with U.S. companies on innovation," Hodges noted. "The United States still has advantages in that area, but we must do a better job of commercializing innovation, spurring the growth of innovative entrepreneur-driven companies, and rapidly moving innovative products and services to market."

Beyond driving innovation into business, industry, and government, he explained, the merger of Georgia Tech’s assistance programs will also make the university’s services more customer-focused, more closely tied to its strengths, and better-positioned to take advantage of Tech’s experience and expertise.

"Because of its research and service programs, and participation in national competitiveness initiatives, Georgia Tech is uniquely positioned to help our state’s companies and communities both understand and meet the challenges ahead," Hodges added. "This is an area where we can work with our partners in the University System and state government to leverage resources."

For Georgia, Hodges said, the restructuring will also strengthen Georgia Tech’s collaborations with other state organizations such as the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD) and the Georgia Research Alliance.

The new organization provides assistance through four primary units:

**Business and Industry Services**, which focuses on industrial customers around the state. This unit includes the Georgia Tech Regional Office Network; Atlanta-based centers that focus on such productivity improvements such as lean enterprise, energy and environmental management, quality, and international standards; and federally supported programs such as the Manufacturing Extension Partnership and Georgia Tech Procurement Assistance Center.

**Commercialization Services**, which is broadly focused on moving technology out of the laboratory and into the marketplace. Commercialization Services identifies Georgia Tech innovations with potential commercial value and works with faculty to determine the best path to commercializing the technology;

**Entrepreneur Services**, which focuses on meeting the needs of entrepreneur-based technology companies around the state. The group includes ATDC, the Georgia Minority Business Development Center, the Centers of Innovation program operated for GDEcD, and the new SBIR Assistance Program for the state of Georgia that helps eligible companies win federal R&D grants.

**Community Policy and Research Services**, which brings innovation to local and state government entities while conducting technology-based research and policy projects that will help communities plan for the future. Among the group’s best-known services are WebFIT, which helps communities anticipate the fiscal impact of land-use and planning decisions, and LOCI, which assesses the economic impact of development.

A fifth new unit, **Strategic Partners**, will work with the other groups to involve industrial partners more closely in the efforts of Georgia Tech.

“We see a need for more strategic and comprehensive assistance to these companies that are forward-thinking and open to innovation,” Hodges said of the Strategic Partners effort. “Expanding our relationships with them will help create synergies between Georgia Tech assistance programs that will boost both their value and impact.”
When considering the growing 65-to-86-year-old segment of America’s populace, it is not a question of whether the growth is coming to Georgia, it is a question of what the state is doing to best manage and transform this growth into innovative economic development. Research indicates that this demographic segment will increase significantly, and this demographic surge suggests economic development opportunities for Georgia in the realm of elder care and retirement communities, especially in complementary subsets known as continuing-care retirement communities (CCRCs) and active-adult retirement communities (AARCs).

Neighboring states such as Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee have long had strategies in place for attracting retirees, Georgia less so. But Governor Sonny Perdue’s Strategic Industries Task Force has placed health care and elder care in its top six clusters, and some observers feel middle and southern Georgia could benefit from appropriate facilities sited there.

Supported by the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College, EDTV is conducting pioneering research to profile and analyze the industry inside and outside Georgia. Results will serve as a catalyst for the economic development community to not only develop strategies for attracting retirees to Georgia, but also to foster public- and private-sector development of these communities, according to EDTV’s Rick Duke, CEcD, who is leading the study.

As the name suggests, a CCRC offers a range of living and personal-care options at the same locale so that residents can age “in place,” that is, shift from independent to assisted-living to skilled-care situations without moving elsewhere. These generally serve ages 75 and over. The AARC typically encompasses those 55 to 75 and is almost exclusively a very large private-sector investment. CCRCs reportedly can require $100 million or more in initial investment, and they often employ more than 100 skilled health-care-related workers. But comparatively little is known, at least in terms of rural Georgia, about operational business models, site location criteria, markets, economic and fiscal impacts, and obstacles to their development.

Georgia currently houses 10 CCRCs, with four of them in metro Atlanta and the others in or near second-tier cities. By contrast, notes Duke, North Carolina has 40, and Birmingham alone has seven. Concerning AARCs, Duke reports that last spring saw national developers undertaking their first ventures in Georgia with announcements of 7,500 homes in five, mostly exurban Atlanta, communities.

Rural locales seem less likely to host such communities, and yet these are precisely the places that offer key advantages for the “quality of place” type of developments represented by CCRCs and AARCs. In addition to the potential impact on a community’s tax base, private facilities such as these can become economic catalysts, attracting still more health care enterprises and other relevant suppliers of goods and services and contributing to a better quality of life. Concerted effort along these lines is not without precedent. For example, a retirement development center called “Share Arkansas” has a goal of creating a network of local retirement development efforts in rural areas beyond that state’s well-known destinations.

Duke also points out that his study meshes with a broader EDTV interest in the health care industry and its economic development potential for Georgia. EDTV, he notes, is following the state’s identification of these sectors as a strategic industry and is working to engage in collaborative relationships with Georgia Tech’s partners, including other members of the University System of Georgia. “We can take our skill sets in technology, manufacturing, and distribution and innovatively apply them to these important sectors that already play a significant role in Georgia’s economy,” he says.

“The research will raise awareness of these industries, of what Georgia and other states have. If we understand the economic and fiscal impacts, as we do with manufacturing, for example, we can facilitate investment in them. It’s a win-win for the public and private sectors,” Duke says, adding that the study is scheduled to finish in March 2006.
A Q&A with IEDC’s Jeffrey Finkle

Jeffrey A. Finkle, CEcD, is president and CEO of the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in Washington, D.C. A former deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and a recognized expert in the economic development industry, he has helped expand IEDC’s influence and membership base. Here, he discusses IEDC’s role, services, and accomplishments.

Focus: What is IEDC’s mission?

Finkle: The International Economic Development Council’s mission is to provide leadership and excellence in economic development for our communities, members, and partners worldwide. IEDC is the world’s largest professional organization for economic development practitioners with more than 4,200 members across the United States, as well as Canada, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and other nations.

Focus: What do you see as the most critical issues and key challenges facing communities in the United States today? Do those differ from one region to another, and, if so, in what ways?

Finkle: American communities continue to struggle with the loss in manufacturing jobs and the challenges of globalization. The domestic decline in manufacturing jobs is once again garnering headlines as global pressures continue to squeeze U.S. manufacturers. The strength of our manufacturing sector is important to IEDC members because of the sector’s large impact on our economy. To illustrate this point, here are just two facts from the National Manufacturing Institute: 62 percent of all U.S. exports are manufactured goods, and every $1 in manufactured goods generates an additional $1.43 worth of additional economic activity.

Another critical issue is our nation’s dependence on a talented and productive workforce to grow and attract businesses. In an information economy, wealth is created through rapid and regular innovation. This requires higher levels of education and continuous training opportunities for people in all economic sectors, including entry-level positions.

Last but not least is the need to educate people in a continuum about the need for economic development and to promote sustainable development within communities. This touches upon the various fields of development, including real estate development, commercial revitalization, workforce development, infrastructure, and business finance, marketing, attraction, expansion, retention, and so on.

Focus: What services does IEDC provide to communities?

Finkle: IEDC supports communities first and foremost by assisting in the training of their economic developers. We do this through our training and certification program. The CEcD is the CPA of the economic development field. For more than 34 years, the Certified Economic Developer Program has been the “gold standard” for the profession. More than 1,100 applicants, now CEcDs, have mastered the professionally administered qualification and examination process.

IEDC also tracks legislation and funding that Congress authorizes and appropriates for economic development. Legislative Affairs’ mission is to shape policy that supports the economic development community. Tracking proposed changes to federal economic development programs, such as the Strengthening America’s Communities Initiative, has been another critical issue for the Legislative Affairs team.

IEDC, through its Advisory Services and Research department, assists communities in their economic development efforts through client-oriented technical assistance and helps advance the profession with customized research. Our technical assistance ranges from helping counties develop economic development strategic plans to assisting at-risk urban neighborhoods with small-scale revitalization and development efforts.

Focus: What have been IEDC’s major milestones of which you are particularly proud?

Finkle: In 2001, two national organizations merged to form IEDC—the American Economic Development Council (AEDC) and the Council for Urban Economic Development. This was a significant milestone for the field of economic development as it brought together two of the largest and most respected organizations in the industry. The merger allowed IEDC to expand its reach and influence, and to provide even greater support to its members and the economic development community.

Continued – page 6
Partner Spotlight

Development (CUED). The merger was very successful, and as a result IEDC is a very strong, prominent, and progressive organization—the leader in economic development in the United States and continuing to gain ground internationally. IEDC has partnered with organizations such as the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA), Economic Developers Association of Canada (EDAC), Economic Developers Association of New Zealand (EDANZ), World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), and many others to work collaboratively on issues facing economic developers today.

IEDC has successfully grown our professional certification program that is widely respected within the profession. There are now approximately 1,100 Certified Economic Developers (CEcD) in the United States. More recently, IEDC has expanded its professional training programs internationally into Mexico. Our education leg is rapidly growing with the demands of economic developers.

Focus: What do you see as Georgia`s key advantages for economic development?

Finkle: Georgia has several key advantages. It is for all practical purposes the capital of the South. It is geographically well-positioned and has great transportation access. It also has the advantage of having major corporations and significant universities located in Atlanta. The state is demographically diverse and has been drawing people from around the country and the world. Through Georgia Tech, it has been leading a significant training program to develop some of the best economic developers in the country.

Focus: What are some reasons why Georgia`s local economic development organizations should be interested in pursuing IEDC`s AEDO accreditation?

Finkle: The AEDO Program provides economic development organizations with independent feedback on their operations, structure, and procedures, and recognizes excellence in local economic development efforts. During the accreditation process, organizations receive critical evaluation and peer mentoring from industry experts, including a site visit and follow-up report containing analysis of the organization and recommendations for improvement. Accreditation brings national recognition to organization accomplishments and tells the community that a group meets the highest standard for organizations in the economic development profession. It adds credibility to your efforts to expand support and funding.

Georgia’s economic development organizations can take advantage of a partnership between IEDC and Georgia Tech. The latter helps Georgia economic development organizations prepare for the AEDO process through its Calibration Program and refers qualified candidates to IEDC.

Focus: What advice would you give to a local economic developer preparing his/her community for sustainable economic development?

Finkle: Sustainable development is a key strategy for attracting and retaining jobs. Unplanned or mismanaged growth can negatively affect a community’s quality of life, making it a less desirable place to work or have a business. Automobile congestion, pollution, and haphazard development are among factors that could drive business out of town. Sustaining growth, without upsetting the qualities that make cities pleasant places to live and work, requires careful visioning and planning. Examples of sustainable development strategies include brownfields redevelopment, transit-oriented development, land assembly and targeted area redevelopment, arts and entertainment districts, and commercial-corridor revitalization. These strategies improve quality of life while bringing in new jobs, investment, and business.

Invite residents, public officials, developers, business owners, and potential financiers to participate in a visioning process. Use this process to educate stakeholders about the benefits of sustainable development and to collect ideas for projects, policies, and opportunities. A visioning process helps establish buy-in and sets the stage for a sustainable economic development plan. ✤
Partnering for Metropolitan Development in South Georgia

Growing knowledge-based jobs and businesses is a primary concern for leaders in the metropolitan area of Valdosta. Valdosta’s leadership is working to develop higher-wage industry clusters that best leverage the region’s assets and provide quality jobs, while also offering opportunities for area college graduates. Such efforts demand thorough analysis of the local economy and the cooperation and motivation of community stakeholders. Earlier this year, EDTV supplied the former, and metro Valdosta’s leadership is doing the rest. Considerable activity is already under way.

In 2004, the Valdosta region formed a task force to devise a new economic development strategy for the region, which hugs the Florida line. The aim was to identify business sectors that drive the economy, offer the best opportunities for producing higher-wage jobs, and can utilize graduates of Valdosta State University (VSU).

Over a four-month span in 2005, EDTV researchers undertook an asset inventory and an examination of existing industries to determine higher-wage sectors. The former covered factors such as workforce, education, and information technology (IT) infrastructure. The latter entailed compiling metrics, such as the number of establishments, total jobs, average weekly wages, and projected U.S. job and output growth, and calculating location quotients. Researchers also determined which industries have occupations requiring degrees offered by VSU. The top business sectors were divided between manufacturing and non-manufacturing, and the partnership has begun to put much of its energy into the latter. Based on findings from the research, Valdosta has elected to focus on further developing assets and business development opportunities among three key individual but interrelated sectors—information technology (IT), environmental technology, and medical technology.

Among EDTV’s action step recommendations were: (1) get to know targeted businesses, (2) foster networks in the selected industries, (3) designate “industry network managers,” (4) create a technology alliance, and (5) push VSU intellectual capital into local businesses and promote entrepreneurship among university graduates.

Local leadership created a program to focus on these efforts known as the Targeted Business Expansion Program. According to Myrna Ballard, president of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce, an IT network has been formed and is focusing on IT-related challenges, resources, awareness, and opportunities. The network is increasing business community awareness of how technology can improve business productivity and profitability and is exploring formation of a technology alliance with assistance from EDTV’s Albany office. It is also working to connect would-be IT entrepreneurs with key resources.

The region’s newly formed environmental technology network is educating the community on business resources available locally, such as a Valdosta-based company that conducts brownfield remediation along the East Coast. This network includes members representing hospitals, agribusiness, local government, and Moody Air Force Base.

Also, a medical services and support network, encompassing regional medical centers, physician groups, instrument manufacturers, and others, is identifying services and supplies needed by businesses within this cluster and will work to develop home-grown businesses, as well as expand existing and recruit new businesses to meet their needs.

“One of the smartest things our region has ever done is to listen to the community and economic development experts at Georgia Tech, who advised us to ‘think big’ about our future, and to systematically develop a new economic development strategy that could take us where we want to lead our communities,” says Ballard. “The research conducted by Georgia Tech to identify business clusters that have high growth potential, are well-suited for success in south Georgia, and have the potential to create jobs for our college graduates, and helped us refine our economic development strategy to foster entrepreneurship and business development efforts in those targeted clusters,” she adds.
Development Blooms at Callaway

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f one of a county’s largest employers said it planned to expand, investing $276 million, creating 278 jobs, and attracting 25,000 new visitors each year, then said it needed some assistance to make that happen, most economic developers and public officials would want to know what those numbers mean for their local government’s finances.

That was the situation facing Harris County and Pine Mountain recently when Callaway Gardens’ management announced expansion plans. Callaway, long a mainstay of the Harris County economy, is among the top five employers in the county, according to the Georgia Department of Labor. Although many think of Callaway primarily for its gardens, a full-service hotel and conference center are key generators of the revenue that allows the not-for-profit gardens to continue operating. The existing hotel had aged to the point that it was no longer competitive in the meetings and conventions market, and Callaway management planned to construct a new resort hotel and spa to replace it. In addition, the master plan included a new 611-home resort residential development, as well as numerous improvements to existing facilities.

To determine the plan’s fiscal and economic impact on the county and on the city of Pine Mountain. From data provided by the city and county, as well as extensive information from Callaway management, researchers estimated the net fiscal impact of the facility using Georgia Tech’s proprietary LOCI™ model, and its economic impact using the IMPLAN® model.

Based on projections provided by Callaway management and data from similar facilities, the study team estimated that new overnight visitors will spend a daily average of $123 per person. This would generate an estimated $13 million in visitor spending, which, coupled with the impact of the resort residential homes, would provide local businesses with an additional estimated $18 million in annual revenue. The bottom line for Harris County is expected to be a net benefit of almost $3 million in annual tax revenues, while Pine Mountain would be expected to gain just over $1 million annually. Armed with this information, the two governments are now in a better position to determine exactly how much assistance each can afford to help make the project succeed.

Preservation Georgia Online, the weekly newsletter of the state’s Historic Preservation Division, is a fount of information on grants and programs related to communities’ historic preservation and heritage/cultural tourism. To subscribe, contact Helen Talley-McRae (Helen_Talley-McRae@dnr.state.ga.us).
A Mountain to Climb

Often, it is the assets in our own backyard that can offer uncommon economic development opportunities if properly managed and promoted. An ideal respite in the middle of an urban setting is one of the many benefits DeKalb County and Rockdale County leaders hope to provide with designation of the Arabia Mountain National Heritage Area. To help make their case, and to help generate additional local, state, and federal support, the Arabia Mountain Heritage Area Alliance asked Georgia Tech to assess opportunities for tourism development, should Arabia receive designation as a national heritage area.

Key components of the study included: (1) documenting and evaluating the tourism assets in the heritage area and within a five-mile buffer, (2) surveying other national heritage areas to learn from their experiences with tourism, (3) identifying and profiling the region’s highest potential market segments, and (4) evaluating the potential economic impact of the heritage area on DeKalb and Rockdale counties.

Two themes are readily apparent among the area’s tourism assets – nature and history. Among the assets are Stone Mountain Park, Davidson-Arabia Mountain Nature Preserve, Panola Mountain State Conservation Park, and Old Town Conyers. Collectively, the heritage area’s assets, if properly packaged and marketed, have the potential to attract a variety of visitors.

Discussions with other national heritage areas were particularly helpful in identifying factors important to their success. Among the most important were fostering local support and participation and developing and maintaining partnerships with organizations sharing the heritage area’s goals.

Researchers collected visitor information from several state parks, including Panola Mountain, and others that share Arabia’s conservation theme, then used the Claritas PRIZM™ lifestyle segmentation system to determine the top market segments the heritage area would likely attract. The best targets appear to be middle-to-upper income, urban and suburban families with children. Various sub-segments range in age from mid-30s to mid-50s. To aid in marketing to them, the report provided extensive detail on their media habits, hobbies, and interests.

Finally, how much impact will these visitors have on the two counties? Very little research on impact has been done by the other national heritage areas, and no two heritage areas are precisely alike, making generalizations about visitation difficult. Researchers addressed this by identifying other public lands (not national heritage areas) of similar size and characteristics as the Arabia Mountain area, then calculating an average attendance per acre. This resulted in an estimated attendance for Arabia of 250,000 to 1.3 million annually. The annual net new visitor expenditures—after factoring out existing attendance at the parks within the heritage area—should be between $8.5 million and $19.7 million.
Made in Georgia

Travelers going back and forth between Macon and Savannah may soon have something more to look forward to along the way. To better capture interstate travelers and their dollars, Candler County officials envision a retail outlet on I-16 that would feature local and Georgia products, such as quilts, pottery, apparel, and food items ranging from pecans to Vidalia onions. Supported by the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center at East Georgia College, EDTV researchers are conducting a feasibility study to examine the potential for such an outlet and the factors that would contribute to its success.

The study has three main components: (1) estimating the size of the market and possible revenues, (2) calculating the cost of building and furnishing the store, and (3) figuring its operational costs. Addressing these requires several tasks. For example, a team of EDTV tourism specialists and Candler business leaders have visited several existing retail outlets that could represent models for the proposed store. Assisted by representatives of the chamber and the county Extension Service, researchers are also working to identify appropriate products to sell at the outlet. And using traffic-count data and information gleaned from similar establishments elsewhere in Georgia, they will determine anticipated customers and revenues. They will examine entrepreneurship and e-commerce potential, as well.

The county already has a moderately developed exit on this Macon-to-Savannah route, replete with fast-food restaurants, motels, and service stations, so it would not be “starting from scratch.” According to EDTV’s Ann O’Neill who is leading the study, “Because the proposed store will attempt to carry as many Candler County products as possible, it will help support local farmers and craftspeople, as well as create retail jobs. This should enhance the facility’s economic impact by retaining a higher percentage of visitor dollars in the community.”

The project is scheduled for completion in January 2006.

Where to Stay in Warner Robins

Event planners take note. Stakeholders in Warner Robins, working to develop a hotel/conference center in this central Georgia destination, requested EDTV’s assistance to assess fiscal and economic impacts of the complex on Houston County and the entire state from the hotel/conference center. EDTV’s state fiscal impact model (SFIA) to project revenues and expenditures for state government over the same 20-year horizon.

Researchers are first gathering data on potential visitors, their expenditures, and length of stay by tapping sources that include a previously completed feasibility study; similar centers in communities such as New Bern, N.C., and Valdosta; and proprietary databases. They then will utilize EDTV’s widely applied tool, LOCI™, to assess community impact over a 20-year span, drawing on already-available county inputs and the data derived from the previous task.

The next step entails developing data for the economic impact model, IMPLAN®, which will estimate multiplier effects in Houston County and the entire state from the hotel/conference center. IMPLAN® results will be used in EDTV’s state fiscal impact model (SFIA) to project revenues and expenditures for state government over the same 20-year horizon.

In all cases, researchers will explore three scenarios based on a range of visitor projections—low, medium, and high. This will enable stakeholders to better understand the impact of the center in both good times and bad.

The project is expected to be completed by year’s end.
Soul of the South

New signage for the revived Woodpecker Trail was unveiled in Hephzibah in mid-September at a dedication of the trail, which once was a main route to Florida. Now, the 10-county Woodpecker Trail Association hopes it will become a top tourist track for those desiring a more scenic route instead of the ordinary interstate.

At the ceremony, Governor Sonny Perdue called such scenic heritage trails “the soul of the South” and indicated this 204-mile stretch of State Route 121 shows promise for boosting tourism.

Metter Mayor Billy Trapnell, who chairs the association, called it “economic development at a low cost,” adding that, “It can and will benefit even the smallest communities.”

EDTV researchers were instrumental in assessing the revived trail’s tourism potential with a 2002 feasibility study. The research determined that the trail’s assets should constitute a considerable attraction for visitors and recommended the reorganized association begin developing and marketing the trail.

The new signage, which replaces the formerly used cartoon character Woody Woodpecker, was designed by University of Georgia landscape architect William Shealy.

Rollin’ on the River

Proactive collaboration continues among communities along southeast Georgia’s scenic Altamaha River. The latest involves a $15,000 federal Resource Conservation and Development grant to the Altamaha River Partnership (ARP) to fund marketing and promotional activities associated with tourism on the river.

The largest portion of the grant will go toward producing a calendar featuring scenic photos of the river. Approximately 5,000 copies will be produced and distributed to tourists through Georgia visitor centers and welcome centers in the region, informing them about the Altamaha and inviting them to experience local river-based events. A portion of the production cost will be covered from advertising sales to river outfitters, lodging properties, and other area businesses.

In 1999, EDTV researchers undertook a comprehensive feasibility study of the river corridor’s potential to attract nature-based tourism. Favorable findings helped spur development of the ARP, which represents 11 counties along the river. In recent years as recounted in Focus on Tourism, the ARP has seen an increase in signage, funding, collaboration, events, and publicity relating to the Altamaha.

Some Do’s and Don’ts for Marketing Your Community

Do...
Solicit citizens’ input and buy-in for your community’s economic development “vision.”

Don’t...
Restrict the vision to that of your board and elected officials, or a few movers and shakers.

Do...
Identify and target your potential market segments.

Don’t...
Take a shotgun approach and hope you’ll bag “something.”

Do...
Identify your community’s competitive advantage based on your specific assets.

Don’t...
Try to be all things to all people.

Do...
Include entrepreneurs, private investors, talent/workforce, local businesses, and tourists in your marketing plan.

Don’t...
Rely on industrial recruitment as the mainstay of your plan.

Do...
Involve professionals in writing copy, designing Web sites, and shooting photos and video. Consider qualified volunteers, talented retirees, or students if you’re on a tight budget.

Don’t...
Assume quality, professional marketing materials will cost too much or are not really necessary. Let marketing materials, especially Web sites, become outdated.

Do...
Enlist the expertise and help of your statewide and regional economic development partners in crafting and selling your marketing message.

Don’t...
Operate in a vacuum.

To learn more about successfully marketing your community, contact:

Ann O’Neill
404.894.3113
ann.oneill@edi.gatech.edu

Ed Lindsey
912.634.4860
ed.lindsey@edi.gatech.edu

The Metter Advertiser

Metter Mayor Billy Trapnell (L) shakes hands with Gov. Sonny Perdue.
EDTV Interns Cast an Eye on Innovation

Often, innovation in economic development is enhanced by new perspectives. This became evident through recent efforts conducted by student interns at Georgia Tech’s Office of Economic Development and Technology Ventures (EDTV). In addition to providing confirmation of Georgia’s recent focus on growing and expanding its own through entrepreneurship and supporting existing industry, the student researchers uncovered several specific action items for the state to pursue.

Two presentations given Sept. 9 at the Georgia EMC office in Midtown Atlanta culminated 10 weeks of work by three graduate Tech students interested in economic development. Wenbin Xiao, a doctoral candidate in a joint program of the School of Public Policy and Georgia State University, reported on his study of initial public offerings (IPOs) in Georgia. Jonas Titas and Phaedra Tucker, master’s degree students in City and Regional Planning, examined the burgeoning digital media industry and analyzed Georgia’s assets and opportunities in it.

Xiao’s research showed that Georgia underperforms in issuance of IPOs and ranks 12th among the top 15 most active states in this arena, but this ranking drops significantly when the number is adjusted by the state’s economic size. In addition, Georgia’s IPOs have lower net proceeds, and on average its small high-tech firms have launched less successful IPOs than have companies elsewhere.

He also determined predictors for IPO issuance. For example, most are backed by venture capital (VC), and those backed by local VC entities reach IPO status faster. Also, firms with an academic scientist in the management team are more associated with IPO success than are companies without; however, professor-founded small high-tech firms, on average, are less successful, perhaps due to lack of business experience.

Among his recommendations for the state are to: (1) improve Georgia’s overall technology infrastructure; (2) help local firms compete for venture capital; (3) integrate entrepreneurship education into existing training programs; (4) strengthen programs that attract scientists to the state, such as the Georgia Research Alliance; and (5) promote university-industry collaboration, with a focus on the biotech industry.

According to Titas and Tucker, whose efforts produced an industry database, the modeling and simulation sector alone is estimated to reach $5.3 billion internationally in 2007. Gaming—which ranges from entertainment to training to advertising—may hit $54.6 billion globally in 2009.

And wireless could total $2 billion worldwide by 2010.

Industry clusters exist elsewhere, including Virginia and Florida in the simulation sector, but Georgia has some strengths, as well, including 94 identifiable firms, some 75 relevant college degree programs, 19 digital media research centers, and five networking associations. And these do not exist only in metro Atlanta. Also, the Georgia Entertainment Industry Investment Act provides incentives for attracting relevant firms.

Titas and Tucker found that most of the successful digital media clusters were locally fostered by local community action and developed through sub-state regional efforts, and they recommended such organization and coordination for Georgia. They also advised making resources available for existing and potential firms and further developing Georgia’s digital media assets.

The three students, picked on the merit of their proposals, were selected by a committee comprising Dr. Cathryn Meehan, president of Southeastern Technical College; Kerry Campbell, director of community development for Georgia Power Company; and Gilda Watters, director of the Small Business and Innovation Division at the Georgia Department of Economic Development (GDEcD). The program itself was conceived by Todd Greene, CEcD, director of EDTV’s Community Policy & Research Services; Dr. Jan Youtie; and Ann O’Neill.

According to Watters, the program is beneficial from a GDEcD perspective. “It enables us to tap

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into students’ fresh, new ideas,” she said, adding that their recommendations are timely, and can be incorporated into efforts planned or under way. “We were pleased to be included in the process.”

Dennis Chastain, Georgia EMC vice president for economic development, said of the interns’ projects: “I thought the presentations were excellent. Both projects provided insights into areas I’ve not concentrated on as viable strategies for economic development, and I’d like for us to further explore the data to see how we might possibly incorporate these efforts into our work for the state.”

Greene is interested in seeing selected students next summer work in local communities rather than at Tech’s Atlanta campus. “We believe that the program will have even better benefit if the students are linked to and work in Georgia communities for the summer,” he said. “Several communities have expressed interest in tapping this exceptional student resource to provide recommendations for innovative economic development strategies and solutions. This program could provide a resource and talent to boost the efforts of Georgia’s communities.”

For more information on this program, contact Todd Greene, CEcD, (404.894.4595; todd.greene@edi.gatech.edu).

**Epworth Gets Wired with Wireless**

When James Thompson, Georgia’s Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) representative, approached EDTV with an opportunity to fund broadband wireless, Greg Laudeman, who handles EDTV’s technology-based economic development efforts in north Georgia, was hard-pressed at first to find a community without broadband.

But he learned that Epworth, an unincorporated community in Fannin County tucked up against the Cohutta Wilderness Area just south of the Tennessee line, had a critical need for broadband because the community houses Appalachian Technical College and Toccoa Falls College, as well as a county workforce development center. Local people expressed their need for broadband, too.

Kristin Gunia, executive director of the Fannin County Development Authority, then spearheaded the effort. Working with Tri-State EMC and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, she developed a plan and a proposal for establishing a wireless link into the community, leaping over several mountains in the process. She then brought in Laudeman to facilitate discussion between parties, particularly regarding the interface between technical and business issues.

Given good partnerships and a clear need, the proposal proved perfect for ARC funding, and in mid-July the system went live with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Since then, it has been used to support education and business applications. BellSouth, spurred by the enthusiastic response to the wireless project, began offering DSL broadband in Epworth, too.

According to Gunia, “The Epworth wireless project has had a huge impact on the campus and has been a great resource for a community that previously did not have broadband. It has really shown demand for high-speed Internet and encouraged other providers to bring their services to the area.”

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**New Look for LOCI**

EDTV has recently revised its pricing policy for LOCI™ services. Due to limited resources to conduct these analyses, EDTV has recruited a retired staff member to fulfill many of the grant-related requests for LOCI™ analyses. Pricing now will be based on how extensive the analysis is, and each project will be priced separately. In general, a basic analysis (one jurisdiction, two scenarios) will now cost between $1,200 and $1,400 regardless of a county’s tier. To obtain LOCI service, contact your nearest Georgia Tech regional office.

Also, EDTV continues its efforts to create a Web-based version of LOCI™, which could be available in spring 2006.
A Port Not Near Water: Regional EDOs Explore Innovative Strategy

Increasing container shipments through Savannah’s deepwater port may be adversely impacted in the near future if it doesn’t relieve congestion through its gates and reduce empty-container storage on-site. The Georgia Ports Authority (GPA) is working on these problems, and a study by Georgia Tech researchers may help GPA achieve its goals through an inland solution.

So-called “inland ports” provide many of the services occurring at a container port. These are usually intermodal facilities that receive containers by rail and distribute them elsewhere by truck. One rule of thumb says that intermodal facilities serving ports must be at least 500 miles from the port to make economic sense.

Six chambers of commerce and development authorities along I-16 between Macon and Savannah see an inland port as an opportunity for regional economic growth. To evaluate this idea, the Georgia Rural Economic Development Center funded Georgia Tech to study the economics of an intermodal, inland port facility somewhere along I-16. Later, the project team learned that the port’s most pressing problem is that roughly 2,000 empty containers go through its gates, creating congestion and delays in getting goods to and from the port. Half of these are returning to the port from importers and half are going out to be used by exporters. The research team then added a container-matching facility component to its study of the inland port concept. Such a facility could also meet regional economic development goals.

The team is examining similar facilities around the country and interviewing importers and exporters, trucking companies, and steamship lines to determine how a container-matching facility might work in middle Georgia. The container-matching facility would enable exporters to pick up empty containers from a location closer to their operations than the port and importers to leave their empty containers rather than haul them back to the port. Developing a cost model to examine the financial feasibility of this operation requires data on the number and origin/destination of container shipments to and from Savannah.

The project is slated to be completed during the first half of 2006.

Innovation Has the Edge

A recent survey of some 650 Georgia manufacturers underscores the importance of innovation as a competitive strategy and serves as a call to action for Georgia’s manufacturers and the local economic developers who support them.

The 2005 Georgia Manufacturing Survey from Georgia Tech shows that companies basing their competitive strategies on developing innovative products or processes enjoy higher returns on sales, pay better wages, and have less to fear from outsourcing than do firms relying on certain other strategies, such as competing on low price. The survey defines innovation as the entire process through which new knowledge is created and disseminated into the market.

Those companies relying on innovation for their edge reported returns on sales 50 percent higher than firms competing by providing low-cost products—a gap that grew substantially since the last survey in 2002. Also, innovative firms paid their workers a third more than did the average Georgia manufacturer and were 40 percent less likely to lose work to outsourcing than were companies competing on low cost.

Innovation isn’t limited to products and processes. Companies can also compete using innovative marketing strategies and organizational approaches.

Georgia Tech conducts the statewide GMS every two to three years to assess the business and technological conditions of Georgia’s manufacturers. To see results of the current survey, visit www.edtv.gatech.edu.
Economic developers around the world know that the competitiveness of nations, regions, and communities depends more on the ability to grow a knowledge-based workforce than just about any other factor. An effort that began 15 years ago to retain freshmen and sophomores at math- and science-intensive Georgia Tech has morphed into an ambitious, multi-pronged program to enhance the math, science, and technology skills of K-12 students throughout the state. By doing so, it aims to give Georgia students the educational edge they need to fill expanding jobs in today’s global economy that is driven by science, technology, and innovation.

This effort is called CEISMC—the Center for Education Integrating Science, Mathematics, and Computing—which is headquartered in Midtown Atlanta’s Technology Square. CEISMC not only has vital ties to the main Tech campus, it also has a reach that runs from north Georgia to the coast. It partners not only with school districts but also with corporations, the Georgia Department of Education, and the University System’s Board of Regents.

Companies, says CEISMC Director Paul Ohme, are concerned about future workforce capabilities, and he feels CEISMC is a major contributor to economic development in Georgia by focusing on and facilitating good education in various areas of science and math.

His center counts 22 full-time staff, but each year also employs up to 150 Georgia Tech students as mentors to middle and high school students and works with 75 to 80 Tech faculty members who contribute to local education. CEISMC has nearly two dozen programs or components, with a considerable emphasis on facilitation, says Ohme.

One program, GIFT (Georgia Internships for Teachers), takes a different tack, annually placing some 80 middle and high school math and science teachers in summer fellowship positions with business, industry, and research labs; county or municipal agencies are possibilities, too. This experience exposes them to the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare students for 21st-century jobs.

CEISMC cultivates outreach via math and science coordinators in various school districts. “We establish relations with a school district and seek to improve its instructional plan, identifying where Georgia Tech resources would fit with it,” Ohme says. That could involve facilitating a training course, offering presentations by Tech faculty, lining up mentors, or other activities.

CEISMC’s impact has been extensive. For example, seven years ago when Clay, Quitman, Randolph, and Stewart counties couldn’t get broadband service due to a lack of vendors, CEISMC assisted them and Andrew College in writing a grant to obtain funds for putting in a wireless link between the college and the communities, thereby providing an Internet connection. Last year in Gwinnett County, CEISMC helped arrange for graduate students from Tech’s School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences to teach on-line classes in topics such as meteorology and earth structure to 6th grade teachers who then participated in a summer camp for students. And among several other efforts, CEISMC is collaborating with the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Leadership Institute to develop the 21st Century Model School Program focusing on integration of effective classroom technology around the state.

“The heart and soul of what we do is content knowledge,” says Ohme, but he notes that content alone is not enough. Teachers’ experiences must be content-rich and packaged in good educational practice, and CEISMC delivers on both counts.

What’s down the road for CEISMC? “We want to solidify our existing partnerships with school districts and extend into more of them, and we want to document and publish best practices,” Ohme says. “We want to be an influence on policy and curriculum, and increased recognition of our efforts will help us do that.”

For more information about CEISMC, contact Dr. Paul Ohme paul.ohme@ceismc.gatech.edu 404.894.0777 www.ceismc.gatech.edu.
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