

10-12-2015

## Business Innovation Group (BIG) News

Georgia Southern University

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### Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Business Innovation Group (BIG) News" (2015). *Business Innovation Group News*. 9.  
<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/cob-big-news/9>

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# BIG takes home GOLD Excellence in Economic Development Award in Entrepreneurship for GENIE program

October 12, 2015



Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group received a Gold Excellence in Economic Development Award for its 2015 project in the category of Entrepreneurship for communities with populations of 25,000-200,000 from the [International Economic Development Council](#) (IEDC).

The honor was presented at an awards ceremony on Tuesday, October 6, during the 2015 IEDC Annual Conference, which was held October 4-7, in Anchorage, Alaska.

“From localized community projects, to large scale endeavors, economic development efforts have played a vital role in the global economy,” said JoAnn Cray, CEcD, Chair of the International Economic Development Council and President of Saginaw Future Inc. “As we address new and longstanding challenges, these efforts continue to take on even greater importance. The award serves as a salute to pacesetting organizations like the Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group for leading the charge.”

In May 2012, Georgia Southern University’s Business Innovation Group (BIG) launched Georgia’s Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (GENIE) as a platform for a virtual incubator program. With a \$295,927 grant awarded by the U.S. Community

Adjustment and Investment Program (CAIP), GENIE offers services to entrepreneurs located in any of five designated eligible counties at no cost to the individual. The CAIP grant allowed the university to offer the services of the virtual incubator to any entrepreneur located in the five designated eligible area counties at no cost to them. These counties include: Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Lincoln, Telfair, and Wilkes.

GENIE advisors, community stakeholders, mentors, and clients have access to an online database to record communication and share valuable information such as business plan tools, webinar workshop schedules, procurement information, speaker videos, and more. GENIE staff visits rural area businesses and county leaders monthly to maintain these primarily virtual relationships.

“Though we are very humbled and honored to receive such a prestigious award,” said Dominique Halaby, Director of the Business Innovation Group. “This recognition simply highlights the strides we are making to help advance entrepreneurship throughout our great state.” Thus far, GENIE advisors have connected with over 40 businesses and are currently providing services to 23 businesses. In addition, more than 85 university students have assisted incubator clients by administering customer satisfaction surveys, developing employee handbooks, outlining a marketing assistance plan, and basic market research.

Recipients of IEDC’s Excellence in Economic Development Awards demonstrate to an experienced panel of judges that they are at the forefront of the economic development profession. They are recognized as the world’s best economic development programs and partnerships, marketing materials, and the year’s most influential leaders. These awards honor organizations and individuals for their efforts in creating positive change in urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Posted in [GENIE](#), [In the News](#), [Programs](#)

# BIG receives Excellence in Economic Development Bronze Award for City Campus project

October 12, 2015



Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group received a Bronze Excellence in Economic Development Award for its 2015 project in the category of Real Estate Redevelopment & Reuse for communities with populations of 25,000 to 200,000 from the [International Economic Development Council](#)(IEDC).

The honor was presented at an awards ceremony on Tuesday, October 6, during the 2015 IEDC Annual Conference, which was held October 4-7, in Anchorage, Alaska.

“From localized community projects, to large scale endeavors, economic development efforts have played a vital role in the global economy,” said JoAnn Crary, CEcD, Chair of the International Economic Development Council and President of Saginaw Future Inc. “As we address new and longstanding challenges, these efforts continue to take on even greater importance. The award serves as a salute to pacesetting organizations like the Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group for leading the charge.”

Since opening in 2011, Georgia Southern University City Campus has thrived in Downtown Statesboro. Made possible by the creation of a successful partnership between the City of Statesboro, Downtown Statesboro Development Authority, and the University, City Campus

was created to increase the economic competitiveness of southeast Georgia through programs that lead to new businesses and job creation.

The 19,000 square foot building, located adjacent to City Hall, had been a local car dealership more than 50 years ago and deteriorated significantly once the dealership moved out of downtown. The idea of transforming this downtown blight into an economic development hub gained extraordinary support. “The City Campus is quickly becoming a model in redevelopment,” said Dominique Halaby, Director of the Business Innovation Group. “Our partnerships with the City of Statesboro, Downtown Statesboro Development Authority, Bulloch County Development Authority, and others, are truly what make this initiative work.”

The facility now serves as the home to the Business Innovation Group (BIG). BIG comprises of the economic development and business outreach centers of the College of Business. Thus far, City Campus has secured more than \$3 million in public and private support. With the aid of a \$1.1 million grant from the Economic Development Administration, the partners are renovating an additional 10,000 square foot space for a Fabrication Laboratory (FabLab) and Innovation Incubator. Upon completion, there will be office space for 20 new businesses, creation space for 8 artists, and a cutting edge maker space.

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