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President Keel Speaks in Entrepreneurship Classes

April 29, 2011

During two weeks this semester (April 14th and April 28th) the President of Georgia Southern University Dr. Brooks Keel has been speaking to Jim William’s (Chair of the Center’s Advisory Council) Entrepreneurship classes about the role of the University in economic development. President Keel commented, “This has been a great opportunity for me to get out from behind the desk and back into the classroom. I rarely get to do this type of thing now”. Jim Williams when introducing President Keel said, “One of the reasons I had invited President Keel to visit with the students is because of his proven interest in different areas of study at Georgia Southern joining together to create new ventures while partnering with the private sector to commercialize opportunities. In this economic climate, the University needs to operate more entrepreneurially in the future.”

In the two sections of the class President Keel talked about how Georgia Southern can have an impact on economic development. He started his talk by pointing out the significant impact that the University has on the region via its traditional activity of teaching and learning. Explaining how investment in the local community came about because of the inward migration of students, the tuition fees they generate and the money they spend in the community. President Keel then explored the role of research and explained how both theoretical and applied research can impact on local economic development. He explained that it was much more about developing relationships with industry than trying to protect the University’s intellectual property. Also, that it was these relationships that could lead to interesting new technologies and
new businesses being created. During his talk he provided examples of his experiences from Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge), he was the Vice Chancellor for Research and Economic Development, and while there he encouraged entrepreneurial activity and broadened the University’s technology transfer operations and partnerships with businesses in support of long-term economic development and job creation. In particular he highlighted LSU’s relationship with EA Sports and how this had progressed into the development of a 9000sq ft building as a collaboration with the company. As President Keel pointed out, “Bringing EA Sports quality assurance onto campus certainly helped to make the over 200 students who were employed to play video games very happy!”

Students asked a range of interesting questions about the Downtown City Campus and the Entrepreneurial Zone, the role of academic entrepreneurs and about student’s intellectual property, as well as, about the new College of Engineering.

[slideshow]
Students Closing in on $5000 targets

April 29, 2011

Students on Dr. Luke Pittaway’s Applied Small Business Management class are undertaking their final events and entrepreneurial activities this week. Both groups seem to be closing in on their $5000 targets. On the evening of Wednesday April 27th entrepreneurship students were engaged in events all over Statesboro.

The New Venture Planning class were involved in venture panels at Sea Island Bank in Downtown Statesboro, presenting their business plans and being interviewed by a panel of investors (full report to follow).

The Campbell’s Soup ‘Let’s Can Hunger’ team, who are trying to raise 5000lbs of food for the local food bank, were doing a fundraising event at the Pizza Mill on Northside Drive. The students promoted the event and helped to make and serve pizza. They received 10% of the evening’s proceeds and tips. The funds raised will be used to buy canned food adding to the total already collected for the Food Bank.

On campus, at the Russell Union, the Hearts & Hands group organized a major benefit concert for the charity. Over 250 people attended and a series of different groups performed, ranging from a string quartet to a rap group. The event was a significant success and got the group to within $200 of their target for the project.
Students Learn How to Pitch

April 29, 2011

On April 26th 2011 Georgia Southern University students tried pitching their business ideas to a panel of ‘prospective investors’. The students in two sections of Jim William’s (Chair of the Center’s Advisory Council) Entrepreneurship class developed a business idea, undertook basic market research and conducted a ‘stadium pitch’.

The ideas ranged from a casino on a plane to a drive through convenience store. Frank Goforth, judge and Professor of Electrical Engineering, commenting on the students’ efforts said, “There were some great ideas presented but really I was impressed with the students’ ability to summarize a business idea in a compelling way and in such a short time-frame”.

About the Entrepreneurship class

There is an important underlying human story to starting a new venture and this provides a focus for the course. Although many people at some time express a desire to ‘work for themselves’ or to ‘be their own boss’ only a minority do so. Moreover, of those that do, not everyone finds it an enjoyable experience or indeed makes a success of it. On the course we examine a variety of research findings that focus on the behaviors, motivations and business strategies of entrepreneurs, and we will consider how these issues may relate to the types and performance of new ventures created.

The second focus of the course is the ‘entrepreneurial process’ – the activities and issues involved in the creation of new ventures, their subsequent growth and eventual closure and failure. We also examine entrepreneurial behavior in a broader context than the small or growing business and assess the primary issues associated with entrepreneurial activity.

Frequent use is made of illustrative case histories and several visiting speakers share the reality of their entrepreneurial experience with the class. Class seminars focus on activities that increase students’ entrepreneurial skills and insights into the practice of entrepreneurship.