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Entrepreneurial Zone Opening

June 11, 2011



From the Dean's Update

Thursday evening we celebrated the grand opening of Georgia Southern University's downtown "City Campus" during the Chamber of Commerce's "Business After Hours" monthly networking event hosted by the Downtown Statesboro Development Authority.

It was a packed house, folks!

Almost two years ago at an innocent breakfast meeting at Snooky's, Todd Manack, Jamey Cartee, Allen Muldrew and I brainstormed ideas for ways to better connect Statesboro to the University. What came out of that meeting was an idea to develop a "city campus" where students would take some classes downtown, where soft goods from the bookstore could be sold, and where we could incubate innovate ideas coming out of faculty/student research into real, live businesses.

[youtube=<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5mUgMWb-5Ro>]

In short, we wanted to strengthen the town/gown relationship and to promote economic development in the region.

It's been a long and bumpy road, but this week that vision became a reality as we opened the City Campus at 58 E. Main Street in Statesboro, Georgia.

The City Campus will feature five segments. First, as you walk in off Main Street, will



be the "University Store at the City Campus," an annex of the campus bookstore that will focus on selling soft goods (clothing) and Eagle Nation

merchandise. A big THANK YOU to Mehmet Samiratedu for taking the risk and moving some operations to the new location. (NOTE to Statesboro residents: Please help support Mehmet – shop locally!!)

The second part of the City Campus will be the offices for the Bureau of Business Research and Economic Development (BBRED). This research arm of COBA is responsible for the many economic impact studies, consumer confidence surveys, and Holiday shopping surveys that have gained media attention. BBRED also is in business to do customized studies and research for non-profits and small businesses. New BBRED Director Dominique Halaby will be front-and-center with his operations in this new location.



Next we move to the back part of the building where we have a 30 seat-classroom and an intimate conference room. These facilities are available for public use (for a small fee!) and offer great meeting possibilities for local groups. Sponsorships are available for \$250 per year, which entitles the sponsor to unlimited use of the facility.

The conference room is private and offers complete video conferencing capabilities – sending (should you want to broadcast your own webinar) and receiving (if you need to touch base with remote parties).

Finally, our crown jewel is the Entrepreneur Zone (the “E-Zone”) where we intend to incubate technology-based start-ups. For entrepreneurs who merely have a concept, we offer a pre-business membership that includes mentoring and business plan consulting. For more advanced entrepreneurs we invite them to apply for a business membership.

The advisory board of the Center for Entrepreneurial Learning and Leadership will judge business memberships on suitability and congruency to the mission of the E-Zone and, if accepted, these businesses will enjoy office space, a physical address, a landline that will be staffed from 9-to-5 daily, access to support services, mentoring, and optional locker space to store valuable documents and/or equipment as well as use of the conference room and classroom.

It is probably correct to say that COBA is now in business to grow businesses.

I want to thank Allen Muldrew for his support throughout this project, the Statesboro-Bulloch Chamber of Commerce, and Dr. Luke Pittaway, his advisory board and his Center for spearheading this initiative.

Hopefully, in the years to come, I will be reporting on our successes in graduating new ventures into the world of free enterprise. A new start-up is truly the “headwater” of free enterprise. This is where a new job is created and where economic development begins. Wish us luck!

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The City Campus and E-Zone must have resonated with the news media as this “grand opening” story spread like wildfire. Below is the list of outlets that picked up the story – throughout Georgia to Tennessee to South Carolina to Texas! (Special thanks to Betsy Noland and Jamie Lane for helping us get such great visibility.)

Written by Dean Ron Shiffler