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Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group Receives Excellence in Economic Development Awards from the International Economic Development Council

October 15, 2015

Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group (BIG) received a Gold Excellence in Economic Development Award for its 2015 project in 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 Monday, October 5 during the 2015 IEDC Annual Conference in Anchorage, Alaska.

Through the launch of Georgia's Enterprise Network for Innovation and Entrepreneurship (GENIE), a platform for a virtual incubator program, BIG received nearly \$300,000 in a grant awarded by the U.S. Community Adjustment and Investment Program (CAIP). GENIE offers services to entrepreneurs located in five eligible counties (Jeff Davis, Jefferson, Lincoln, Telfair and Wilkes) at no cost to the individual, and the CAIP grant allowed the university to offer the services of the virtual incubator to any entrepreneur located in those five counties free of charge. Since its inception in May 2012, GENIE advisors have connected with more than 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 conducting basic market research. This hard work allowed BIG to win the highest award in the entrepreneurship category.

"Though we are very humbled and honored to receive such a prestigious award," said Dominique Halaby, director of BIG, "this recognition simply highlights the strides we are making to help advance entrepreneurship throughout our great state."

In addition to receiving the Gold Award for Entrepreneurship, the Georgia Southern City Campus was recognized with a Bronze Excellence in Economic Development Award for its 2015 project in Real Estate Redevelopment & Reuse for communities with populations of 25,000 – 200,000 from the International Economic Development Council on Tuesday, October 6 in Anchorage, Alaska. Having secured more than \$3 million in public and private support and an additional \$1.1 million grant from the Economic Development Administration, the City of Statesboro, Downtown Statesboro Development Authority, and the University are renovating an additional 10,000 square foot space for a Fabrication Laboratory (FabLab) and Innovation Incubator. Once completed, there will be office space for 20 new businesses, creation space for eight artists, and a cutting-edge maker space.

"The City Campus is quickly becoming a model in redevelopment," said Dominique Halaby. "Our partnerships with the City of Statesboro, Downtown Statesboro Development Authority, Bulloch County Development Authority, and others, are truly what make this initiative work."

"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 pace-setting organizations like the Georgia Southern University Business Innovation Group for leading the charge.”

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.

About the International Economic Development Council

The [International Economic Development Council](http://www.iedconline.org) (IEDC) is a non-profit membership organization serving economic developers. With more than 4,600 members, IEDC is the largest organization of its kind. Economic developers promote economic well-being and quality of life for their communities, by creating, retaining and expanding jobs that facilitate growth, enhance wealth and provide a stable tax base. From public to private, rural to urban, and local to international, IEDC’s members are engaged in the full range of economic development experience. Given the breadth of economic development work, our members are employed in a wide variety of settings including local, state, provincial and federal governments, public private partnerships, chambers of commerce, universities and a variety of other institutions. When we succeed, our members create high-quality jobs, develop vibrant communities, and improve the quality of life in their regions. www.iedconline.org.

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