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Georgia Southern University names former FBI agent Director of Center for Fraud and Forensic Studies

JANUARY 15, 2008

The College of Business Administration (COBA) at Georgia Southern University has named former FBI agent Don Berecz as the first director of the Center for Fraud and Forensic Studies in Accounting and Business.

‘There’s no question that white collar crime has been, and continues to be, a major issue in corporate America today,” said Charles Harter, director of COBA’s School of Accountancy. ‘As a result, there is a strong interest in fraud and forensic accounting among our current and prospective students. Demand for courses in this area is growing not only among undergraduates, but among students in the Masters of Accounting program as well. Don Berecz not only has years of experience in this field, but brings a very real set of skills as a former FBI agent. Students will receive classroom instruction not only from someone with professional experience, but also from someone who has conducted a wide variety of investigations in law enforcement.”

Berecz, who is both a certified public accountant and a certified fraud examiner, joined the FBI in 1983 and retired in 2006. During 23 years of government service in Seattle, Illinois, and Washington D.C., he worked in the FBI’s white collar crime, foreign counterintelligence, and polygraph programs. In addition to serving as director of COBA’s Center for Fraud and Forensic Studies in Accounting and Business, he is teaching courses in white collar crime and in forensic interviewing and interrogation.

‘This center will give the University a way to reach out to Georgia and to the southeast to provide research, education, and consulting in this fast-growing field,” Berecz notes. ‘We want to be one of the region’s premier resource centers for identifying, analyzing, and disseminating effective anti-fraud practices.” One of the Center’s coming events is a Construction Fraud Seminar, which will take place March 6 in Atlanta and will provide a continuing professional education opportunity for practitioners.

Berecz has established an advisory board of practitioners to provide faculty guidance on future curriculum development, and that group’s first meeting is set for Jan. 30 in Statesboro. He is also developing student internships and is involved in planning COBA’s second Fraud and Forensic Accounting Education Conference, which will take place in Charleston, S.C. May 13-15.

More information about the Center is available on the Web at http://coba.georgiasouthern.edu/depts/acc/forensic_center.htm.

Looking to the future, Berecz is particularly pleased by the interdisciplinary aspect of Georgia Southern’s fraud and forensic accounting program.

‘Undergraduates in any program are eligible to pursue a minor in fraud examination,” said Berecz. ‘Those 15 credit-hours can make any program truly interdisciplinary, and it can open new job opportunities for any student who has an interest.

'Last year 'Parade'' magazine listed forensic accounting as the hottest job for college graduates,'" he said. 'I think that will continue to be true for a long time.'

Annual animal examinations are this weekend

JANUARY 15, 2008

Media Advisory:

Here is an upcoming event at Georgia Southern University that will provide members of the media with a unique coverage opportunity.

More than 100 animals at the University's Center for Wildlife Education will receive their annual physical examinations on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 19 and 20.

The physical exams will be conducted by a group of veterinary medicine students from the University of Georgia. They will be assisted by Georgia Southern students who work at the Wildlife Center. Students who are enrolled in the veterinary tech program at Ogeechee Technical College will also assist with the exams.

A wide variety of raptors, reptiles, amphibians and mammals will be examined by the students. The animals will range from eagles and hawks to pythons and rattlesnakes.

The physical exams benefit the Wildlife Center by helping to keep the animals healthy, and they benefit the vet students by giving them hands-on experience with exotic animals.

The physicals will be conducted from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday. The group will be breaking for lunch on both days, so please take that into consideration as you are planning your coverage.

If you are interested in covering this event, contact Center for Wildlife Education Animal Resources Manager Scott Courdin at (912) 486-7124 or (912) 681-0831.