Tech named top research university for economic development support

Engagement an 'integral, critical component' of Institute’s mission

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Research News

Georgia Tech has perhaps the most comprehensive program to support state and local economic development among all research universities in the United States, reports a new Southern Growth Policies Board study of higher education economic development best practices. The study, “Innovation U: New University Roles in a Knowledge Economy,” profiles the economic development activities of 12 top universities chosen by development experts from among 164 institutions nationwide.

According to the study, Tech relies on a broad range of economic development programs and external partnerships to achieve its goals of boosting Georgia’s economy. “Perhaps more than any other research university in North America,” the study reports, “economic development is an integral, critical component of the mission of the Georgia Institute of Technology, and this has been true from its very inception, along with its commitment to exemplary academics.”

The study noted that while formal economic development activities are housed in the Economic Development Institute (EDI) and its parent organization, the Office of Economic Development and Technology Ventures, other units ranging from individual academic colleges and schools to the Georgia Tech Research Institute, research contracting office and continuing education program also support that mission. “The Georgia Tech culture, from president to academic units, is pervasively oriented toward outreach and engagement with the external world,” the authors write in the study. “This means that the economic development mission is often realized through a variety of partnerships, which may or may not involve EDI in a formal administrative role.”

The study credits President Wayne Clough with championing the economic development mission and being personally involved in many of its key components. Clough serves on advisory groups for Yamacraw, the Georgia Research Alliance and the Metropolitan Atlanta Chamber of Commerce — where he is credited for pushing a key technology component of the chamber’s strategy.

“Wayne Clough has been a frequent, vocal and visible advocate for Georgia Tech making an economic impact on Georgia and the world,” the study says. “He also plays a direct, personal role in large technology-oriented initiatives that illustrate the unique position of Georgia Tech vis-a-vis the state.”

The study began two years ago with a survey of 40 economic development practitioners, researchers and experts. The respondents were asked to rank 154 U.S. research universities and nominate the outstanding examples. The results identified Tech as perhaps making the most impact.

The study noted that Tech’s economic development mission has sometimes been criticized for its effect on the academic mission. “Tech—like all research universities—must balance the needs of the academic mission with the needs of the business community,” the authors write. “The Institute has attempted to do this in the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship.”

According to the study, Tech has a unique advantage over other universities in the Southeast, which is to clarify the policies and procedures as a means of expanding the already very active and successful technology transfer programs in the nation, and one that is closely attuned to the economic development mission and entrepreneurial culture of the institution.”

Committee stresses role of student in preventing academic misconduct

Despite recent occurrences of academic misconduct where “inappropriate collaboration” is the central issue, the Institute Committee on Academic Misconduct is planning not to recommend establishing an Institute-wide definition of appropriate collaboration on academic assignments.

Committee Chair Cheryl Contant, director of the City and Regional Planning Program in the College of Architecture, gave a preliminary report on the committee’s work at the April 25 Academic Senate meeting.

Although the committee was specifically asked to look at the issue of defining appropriate collaboration when it began its work in January, Contant said the committee feels that “it is neither feasible nor advisable to define appropriate collaboration at the Institute level” because of differences in educational methodology, instructor style, and course content across the Institute.

“The responsibility rests with the student to identify and prevent collaboration on academic assignments,” said Contant. “Having said that, we also feel that we must be able to recognize that faculty members must be able to determine the course syllabus what they consider to be appropriate and inappropriate collaboration for that specific course.”

In subsequent discussion of Contant’s report, Senate member Joseph Hughes expressed concern that the committee is offering no centralized form of guidance for faculty in determining what is inappropriate collaboration. In response, several Senate members expressed support for the committee’s approach because it calls for the student to...
'Green Guide' hopes to improve eco-friendly purchasing

A couple of Georgia Tech staff members are encouraging everyone to “think green” when buying office supplies. In 1953, the state of Georgia passed a law acknowledging “its responsibility to protect and enhance the quality of its environment,” and promising “to institute and maintain a comprehensive program for the procurement of products that contains recovered materials.” Since no standards or minimum requirements were set, government agencies were left to develop their own policies and procedures.

Last fall, representatives of the Office of Solid Waste Management and Recycling and the Institute for Sustainable Technology and Development started thinking about how to implement such a program on a campus where procurement is so decentralized. Their solution: an abbreviated reference guide intended to boost the percentage of “green” — a term that refers to recycled or remanufactured products — office supplies purchased on campus.

They partnered with Office Depot, the current state contract for office supplies, to develop a basic guide to encourage green purchasing. According to Office Depot’s sales reports, green products represent 5.5 percent of total purchasing statewide. Georgia Tech, it was discovered, currently falls below that average, at 4 percent.

So Cindy Jackson, who manages the Facilities Office of Solid Waste Management and Recycling, and Nancy Jones, ISTD’s administrative coordinator, are spearheading an initiative to create an environmental-friendly purchasing program that maximizes impact while minimizing effort.

“We wanted something that would be easy to give out, and would be available on the web, to get people to think about ordering green products,” Jones said.

Though not a complete listing, the guide was intentionally limited to the most commonly purchased items, as determined through a questionnaire Jones and Jackson circulated among staff responsible for purchasing across campus.

Intended to be a companion piece to Office Depot’s own catalog, the two-page Green Purchasing Guide lists products that are recycled or remanufactured (see sidebar). A representative of Office Depot pointed out that the company offers thousands of green products.

As market demand for these products continues to grow, Jones said, manufacturers are able to offer them at a cost comparable to — and in many cases lower than — products made of raw materials. To receive a copy of the Green Guide, contact Cindy Jackson at 894-2004 or Nancy Jones at 585-0384.

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dozen universities that the experts considered the best in the nation at contributing to state and local economic development. Georgia Tech topped the list.

Economic development activities at those universities were then profiled in the study, done by Louis G. Tornatzky and Paul G. Waaaman, senior fellows with the Southern Technology Council, and Dennis O. Gray, professor at North Carolina State University. The Southern Technology Council is the technology policy arm of the Southern Growth Policies Board, based in Research Triangle Park, NC.

The high ranking in the study reflects Tech’s concerted effort to fulfill its economic development mission, says Provost Jean-Lou Chameau.

“Since Georgia Tech’s formation, economic development has been a vital part of its mission,” he said. “Georgia Tech actively pursues partnerships with industry, state government agencies and other organizations that help fulfill that mission. The Southern Growth Policies Board study shows that these collaborative efforts produce an impressive return for Georgia taxpayers.”

Beyond President Clough and the Economic Development Institute, the study also profiles the Advanced Technology Development Center, Georgia Tech’s nationally known technology business incubator, and the new VentureLab program designed to help faculty members commercialize technology they have developed. EDI, ATDC and VentureLab are part of the Office of Economic Development and Technology Ventures, headed by Associate Vice President Wayne Hodges.

“A key finding of this study is that Georgia Tech’s economic development focus extends throughout the institution into numerous units that do not have a formal economic development mission,” Hodges said. “This could not have happened without a strong economic development commitment that begins at the top with the president and provost.”

Also described are the Georgia Tech Research Institute, numerous partnerships with industry, the Industry Contracting Office, Technology Licensing Office, Continuing Education efforts, Co-op Program, Career Services Office and the College of Engineering — whose strategic plan is cited for its support of entrepreneurship. Other institutions profiled in the study include: North Carolina State University, Ohio State University, Pennsylvania State University, Purdue University, Texas A&M University, University of Wisconsin, Virginia Tech, University of California at San Diego, University of Utah, Carnegie Mellon University, and Stanford University.
T he Georgia Tech Business Plan Competition is fast becoming a vehicle for students and faculty to become young entrepreneurs. Led by the DuPree College of Management, the annual competition offers an opportunity for teams to develop a business plan and receive advice from faculty, business people and industry experts. Most teams are composed of a mix of graduate-level students from both management and engineering.

"I think the most important feedback from the different competitions is learning how the judges perceive what we are saying," says Daniel Erdahl, a doctoral student in mechanical engineering. "It has definitely been a switch from presenting to technical audiences to business-minded people who don't challenge the technical details. Tailoring the message we are trying to get to the audience has been very challenging."

This year four Georgia Tech venture teams — Cupel Technologies, MetroMEMS, Radar Technologies, and XenoHammer Video Game — who honed their business plans through the annual Georgia Tech Business Plan Competition have moved on to national competitions.

Also, Dickson feels the cross-disciplinary nature of the teams is the key to their success. "This cross-fertilization of technology and market knowledge and interests has served the ventures well. While we work to facilitate the forming of teams, it is left completely up to the students to form their own teams. These groups wisely chose to reach out for a wide range of skills," he said.

In at least one case, this kind of diversity has been an important component of success. "I'm from Iran, Greg is from France, Lorenzo from Mexico and Boris is from Colombia," said Ali Razavi, a postdoctoral student in mechanical engineering with an M.S. in aerospace engineering. "With different backgrounds, we've been able to work as a team and represent Georgia Tech such a great school!"

"What does the future hold for these entrepreneurs?" "Just keep watching," Dickson said. "These guys are just getting started. I believe that all of these venture plans will eventually become operating companies."


gatech.edu/Committee_Minutes_01-02.

Undergraduate research awards

Some 21 projects were judged this year in the fourth annual UROC (Undergraduate Research Opportunities in Computing) Research Symposium, marking it the largest symposium in College history. The symposium is designed to encourage and promote undergraduate research. "Not only were there more projects entered than ever before, but the quality of all the projects is much much greater," explained Jeff Strane, director of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program (GTREP). GTREP will provide an administrative structure for the new program.

The initiative will also provide new opportunities for collaboration by educational institutions and existing industry in the area.

"We have also considered that the role of the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program is to collaborate with both academic and industry partners in Northeast Georgia," said GTREP Director David Frost. "The initiation of this technology business development center provides a critical vehicle to facilitate some of those collaborations."

"CyberGeorgia," an economic development program from the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism, in conjunction with the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC). The initiative is centered on the growth of technology-based start-up businesses and the location of high-tech companies based on unique community strengths.

The Savannah initiative will serve as a model for other Georgia cities interested in developing innovative economic development programs focused on their own community technology strengths. "In Savannah, we are creating a framework that will allow one to look at their technology assets and develop a plan for them," explained Jeff Strane, director of GTDIT's Office of Science & Technology. "The story will be somewhat different in each community, but the process should be pretty much the same."

Funds for the new initiative will come from a partnership of ATDC and GTDIT. They will support hiring a full-time director experienced with start-up companies, as well as office and incubator space.

The government's interest in the Georgia Tech Regional Engineering Program (GTREP) will provide an administrative structure for the new program.

Students honor faculty and staff

Last week's annual banquet of the Student Government Association recognized several members of the faculty and staff for their work on behalf of the student body. Provost Jean-Lou Klemis won the Gary Beringhause Government Association Faculty Member of the Year award. Economics professor Stephen Ziliak was presented with the Dean Dell Faculty Member of the Year award.

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Also, the Senate approved a number of motions from the Graduate and Undergraduate Curriculum Committees and other faculty committees. Those can be viewed at www.facultysenate.gatech.edu/Committee_Minutes.

President Wayne Clough agreed with Contant's assessment of problems with the investigation and adjudication process as intractable and expressed confidence that her committee's work will ultimately lead to significant improvements. Content said she expected the committee to complete its work "sooner rather than later."

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