

# College of Coastal Georgia Students Develop Plans for Economic Growth for Glynn, McIntosh, and the Golden Isles

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One of the most effective learning tools in higher education is to give students the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom out in the "real world." If that can happen while simultaneously benefiting the community in which the students work, so much the better.

Service-learning projects at the College of Coastal Georgia allow students to do just that, reinforcing classroom learning through real-world activities that benefit the Brunswick-Golden Isles community.

Students in Assistant Professor of Public Management Heather Farley's course, Managing State and Local Government, recently demonstrated just how thoughtful and creative students in service-learning courses can be. On May 3, three groups of students from Dr. Farley's class presented their semester-long service-learning projects to representatives of the Coastal Regional Commission of Georgia, Brunswick Downtown Development Authority, and Coastal Pines Technical College. The projects explored economic plans to help generate revenue for the City of Brunswick as well as Glynn and McIntosh Counties.



The first group of students focused on revitalizing Downtown Brunswick. The students decided that they wanted to see Brunswick become a destination spot. They discussed several ideas including the building of a convention center and hotel complex—which is set to break ground in the fall, beautification projects in Mary Ross Park, installing a promenade connecting downtown to the waterfront, and having more water activities such as boat tours, water taxis, and paddle

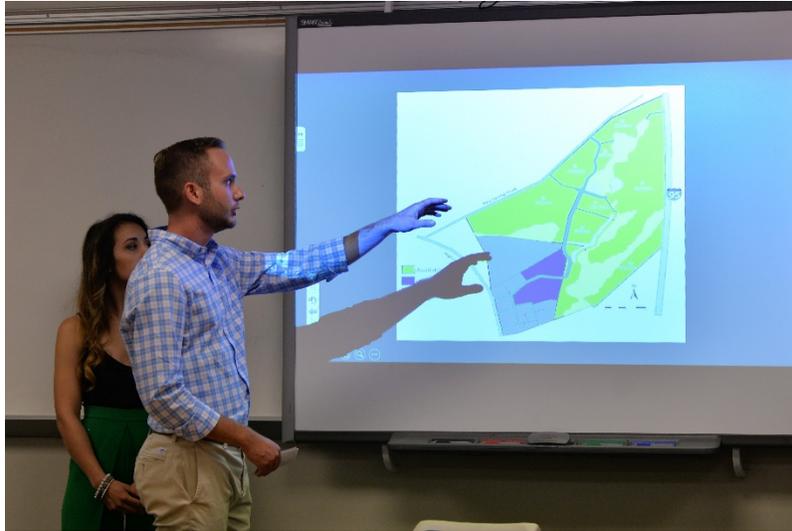
boat rentals available to locals and tourists alike. Students talked of revamping downtown to change the public's perception of the area and bring the city to life.

Wendy Lutes, chair of the Brunswick Downtown Development Authority, asked the class what would bring them to the downtown area. Students recommended music venues, restaurants, bars, and more stores catering to college-aged customers.

The second group explored the possibility of creating a public transportation system for Glynn County. The students identified several possible routes throughout the county for proposed bus system. Students argued that a transit system will be cost effective for residents travelling to work and will allow students without vehicles to frequent area businesses. They also discussed a starting budget, using eco-friendly buses, and recommended reduced fares for the disabled, elderly, and students.



The third group of students focused on developing an economic growth plan for McIntosh County that would increase its educated workforce. Students proposed creating a manufacturing apprenticeship program with McIntosh Academy to build solar panels at the Tidewater Industrial Complex. The plan involved having Hannah Solar, a Georgia-based solar company, build a facility in the industrial complex for manufacturing solar panels. McIntosh Academy students would then have the opportunity to be trained in the manufacturing process. Dr. Farley's students recommended the apprenticeship be offered through Savannah Technical College and Coastal Pines Technical College.



Students believed the apprenticeship will encourage students to complete high school and continue working in the area after graduation. They asserted that the solar panels manufactured on site could provide renewable energy for residents and future businesses. They also proposed incorporating a greenway or walking path for high school students to the complex.

Lonnie Roberts, provost of Coastal Pines, commended the students for their apprenticeship idea, saying the proposal was on target given the growth potential of the solar energy industry.

Lupita McClenning of Coastal Regional Commission said the three presentations exemplified the potential benefits of partnership between the College and community.

Through a collaboration with the Environmental Protection Agency's College/Underserved Community Partnership Program, students were given the opportunity to work directly with the Coastal Regional Commission and met with representatives from federal and local agencies to learn about community governance.

*"The most valuable part of this experience, I believe is that the students learned the struggles of working on a team, trying to effectively communicate with community organizations, and balancing priorities within the community," Farley said. "This was not an easy project and I was very proud of the hard work the students put into it."*

Farley hopes the projects will continue to develop through future classes and research.