

Georgia Tech Team Wins Public Policy Case Competition

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Assets supporting highly technical job opportunities as well as hourly jobs should be the target of the redevelopment of Fort McPherson according to the Georgia Tech's winning team at the first Public Policy Case Competition hosted August 26th by the Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts School of Public Policy.

Eight teams from four institutions - Georgia Tech, Georgia State University, the University of Georgia, and Kennesaw State University - participated in the event representing disciplines as diverse as public policy and administration, management, and conflict studies.

The competition case asked students to assess the redevelopment of the Fort McPherson military base in Southwest Atlanta which will be decommissioned in September. Some of the existing proposals for reuse of the site are being reconsidered because of the economic and housing crises. The competition teams prepared diverse sets of policy proposals ranging from incremental improvements to a re-envisioned development that would become a science and technology learning and research center and logistics hub.

Organized by graduate students in our School of Public Policy, the competition was designed to cultivate relationships between public policy students and teammates from related disciplines who are likely to be working with each other professionally, as well as to connect the students to the practitioner community. The competition afforded students opportunity to test their skills on a real-life situation before expert judges. The judges were representatives from IAC and Georgia Tech, and practitioner's from Georgia's public administration and policy community: Trey Childress, Partner, Purdue Partners; Jennifer Clark, Associate Professor, School of Public Policy, Georgia Tech; Darlene Hawksley, Director of Real Estate and Business Engagement, McPherson Implementing Local Redevelopment Authority; Marlit Hayslett, Director of The Office of Policy Analysis and Research Georgia Tech Research Institute; Racquel T. Jackson, Senior Urban Planner, City of Atlanta Planning Office; Dr. Xavier Le Faucheur, Associate, McKinsey & Company; Deborah Scott, Executive Director, Georgia Stand-UP.

Georgia State University, Kennesaw State University and University of Georgia each sent two teams face two Georgia Tech teams. The winning team was Randy Gibbs, Cecelia Shutters, and Carole Bryden from the IAC School of Public Policy. The team's recommendations also include a magnet school preparing K-12 students in the fields of science, technology and medicine. Team member Cecelia Gibbs said that redevelopment should be about "giving people in the local community the opportunity to stay in Atlanta and use their skills in our local economy."

Second place went to a GSU team. GT and GSU teams also won the runners-up slots.

Gordon Kingsley, Associate Professor, SPP notes that the competition was entirely student conceived and executed, and that it brought together talent that is not well recognized in Georgia, but is "quite powerful." Kingsley said, "Many of the judges commented on the real life nature of this competition which challenges students to present practical policy solutions in a professional way."

Kaspars Berzins, student organizer from Georgia Tech, and Chris Esposito, President, the student led Roosevelt Institute, worked together to select and develop the case about Fort McPherson. Esposito said that they chose Fort McPherson because it presents "a subtle complexity in the ways the planners could go and how they chart their policy."

Adam Smith, member of Georgia State's second place team, says their recommendations put a focus on the historic district and working with area residents. Their plan included renting existing buildings and other interim uses while the Base is prepared for full-scale redevelopment and the economy gains strength. Several team solutions sought to attract the market currently around Fort McPherson and to remain sensitive to neighborhood needs while providing new opportunities for neighborhood residents and others. For participant Brandon Williams, the competition generated valuable concepts because it was about "taking the best aspects of existing plans and combining them with the students' own creativity and the new economic situation to create something that is the best benefit for the community as a whole."

Competition judge Diane Hawksley, Director with the McPherson ILRA, said that she looks forward to staying engaged with the students and to considering some of the ideas they put forward. She says "the work they did is truly reflective of what this development could become."

The next Policy Case Competition is tentatively scheduled for January 2012 at University of Georgia.

Team presentations and summary memos from the competition will be posted on www.spp.gatech.edu.

Georgia Tech's Ivan Allen College of Liberal Arts is recognized nationally and internationally for teaching and research examining the human context of engineering, science, and technology. The College is comprised of six schools - Economics; History, Technology, and Society; The Sam Nunn School of International Affairs; Literature, Communication, and Culture; Modern Languages; Public Policy; and Georgia Tech's Army, Air Force, and Navy ROTC units. The College offers ten undergraduate degrees, six master's degrees, and six doctoral degrees. Students are prepared for professional leadership in government, business, public policy, international affairs, law, technology, and new media. Founded in 1990, the College is named in honor of former Atlanta Mayor Ivan Allen Jr. (1911-2003).