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USG Report Shows Payoffs for AASU Graduates, Chatham County, and the State; Highlights Disciplines in Demand

Savannah, GA—November 3, 2003—The University System of Georgia (USG) has announced that a college degree is worth an average of \$14,000 a year more than a high school graduate could expect to make in the state of Georgia. Over the course of a working career, the average public college or university graduate in Georgia can expect to earn nearly \$1 million more than a high-school-educated neighbor.

These findings were released as part of the “Value of University System or Georgia Education,” an Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP) study conducted by the Georgia Institute of Technology. The study shows that overall increased earnings resulting from college degrees added \$1.25 billion to the state’s economy during 1998. It also confirms that about half of all Georgians who hold recent post-secondary degrees were educated by a USG institution. The ICAPP study may be found at www.usg.edu.

According to the report, USG graduates employed in Chatham County earned \$28.4 million more than they would have with a high school education. Approximately 34% of the wages of a worker with a bachelor’s degree can be attributed to the earning of the bachelor’s degree. Chatham County ranks fifth in the state in increased wages attributed to education by USG institutions. Graduates of Armstrong Atlantic State University earned an average wage of \$30,551 — an average of \$9,912 per year more than high school graduates.

“Although the wage premium for college graduates working in the Savannah area is lower than the state average, much of this difference can be attributed to differences in the cost of living between Savannah and other urban areas of the state,” said Rick McGrath, associate professor of economics at AASU.

The ICAPP report also highlights the importance of USG institutions in providing education and training in high-demand occupations. In particular, the ICAPP study indicates that computer and information sciences, nursing, and health administration were among the top education programs that had the greatest economic impact in 1998. During the year studied, AASU graduated a total of 123 students from these programs. AASU also prepares graduates in five of the top seven programs with the greatest total economic impact statewide, and prepares students for six of the thirteen most difficult to fill occupations.

The study also highlighted the occupations that will be in the most demand during this decade (2000-2010). Topping the list were registered nurses, computer support specialists, computer software engineers, network and computer system administration, preschool teachers, elementary school teachers, computer systems analysts, and secondary school teachers. Because of its leading role in computers, health professions, and education, Armstrong Atlantic is a major regional provider of nine of the top ten occupations in expected job growth in Georgia for this decade.

During this decade, AASU's School of Computing expects to graduate approximately 400 students from its bachelor degrees in computer science and information technology, and master's degree in computer science. In addition, the School of Computing offers an engineering studies program that is a part of Georgia Tech's Regional Engineering Program. AASU and Georgia Southern University are partners in an ICAPP Advantage grant to educate Java software developers, who can engineer sophisticated cellphone billing software for VeriSign Savannah.

The College of Health Professions expects to graduate approximately 1,200 students from the Bachelor of Nursing and Master of Nursing programs during this decade. This would result in an estimated wage gain of \$12.1 million per year thereafter. The school anticipates a surge in the number of nursing graduates thanks to the fast-track nursing program that was implemented in 2002. The program is made possible through an ICAPP Advantage grant, which helps employers meet immediate educated workforce needs.

During this decade, the College of Education expects approximately 1,400 students to graduate from its early childhood and middle/secondary programs. The early childhood education program has experienced a 157% increase in the number of students as a result of the new fast-track teaching program—Georgia Teacher Alternative Preparation Program. The program was established to help schools meet critical staffing needs resulting from a significant shortage of qualified teachers in the state.

"Because of its strength in computers, health professions, education, and the liberal arts, Armstrong Atlantic State University is a driving force in productivity and wages in Southeast Georgia," said McGrath. "By providing education in high-growth fields and hard-to-fill occupations, AASU is a crucial component of the economic activity in this region of the state."