The event is open only to invited guests; GPC students, staff and faculty, and select media. Attendees must RSVP to http://www.engage.gpc.edu/rsvp.html; media must RSVP to Beverly.james@gpc.edu. (Note: The deadline to RSVP has passed.)

February 8, 2010

For Immediate Release

For event information, contact: Beverly James
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39th President Jimmy Carter Opens the Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement & Service-Learning at GPC

In a bold step to enhance student learning and address needs of the community, Georgia Perimeter College will open the Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement & Service-Learning, an innovative initiative that national experts say is breaking new ground. To mark the official opening on Feb. 15, the 39th President of the United States, Jimmy Carter, will deliver the keynote speech and cut the ribbon of the Atlanta Center, which is housed on the GPC Clarkston Campus.

Civic engagement and service-learning allow GPC to enrich the educational experience of its students by applying the theory taught in the classroom to actual needs in the community. Through community service, students will see how curriculum fits into the real world, a practice that takes their learning to a deeper level while transforming them into student leaders and engaged citizens. At the same time, the work performed by students, faculty and staff—in conjunction with community partners and service providers—will improve communities and strengthen relationships, locally and globally.

“With the opening of the Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement and Service Learning, Georgia Perimeter College has made a commitment and investment to change the way that higher education transforms our communities, both locally and globally,” said GPC President Dr. Anthony S. Tricoli. “GPC is committing
resources to this initiative in spite of the economy and at a time when many people only see perceived obstacles. We are doing this because it is the right thing to do for our students and because the community needs it. The GPC faculty, staff, administrators and students are committed to this initiative in principle, practice and resources.

The Atlanta Center will be the central repository of information and resources for Georgia Perimeter College students, faculty, staff, other educational institutions and members of the community who are interested in addressing social issues through civic engagement, service-learning and volunteerism. Civic engagement includes efforts by an educational institution to develop the knowledge, skills, values and actions needed to positively impact the community. Service-learning connects academic learning with relevant service in ways that benefit the community and involve student reflection on lessons learned through service.

“AACC is proud that Georgia Perimeter College is moving to strengthen service-learning and volunteer opportunities for everyone on and beyond its campuses,” said George Boggs, president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges in Washington, D.C. “We applaud the college’s initiative. It is clearly in the forefront of civic engagement and education efforts nationwide.”

The Atlanta Center is a response to the community’s needs, Tricoli said. “We’ve heard President Obama’s call to service to make a difference in each community where our students study and live. The Atlanta Center will enable us to help our communities to identify and resolve their challenges by eliciting the assistance of the college’s students, faculty and staff.”

“Serving others is an experience that changes lives,” Tricoli said. “It changes the lives of those who provide service as well as of the beneficiaries of our services. When students go into the community locally and teach English to refugees or build homes, when they travel abroad to provide relief, they emerge from the experience with a greater understanding of others and of society.”

The Atlanta Center will focus on four areas of greatest need:

- Strengthening education and youth development.
- Overcoming poverty and promoting self-sufficiency.
- Forging partnerships for healthy communities.
- Protecting the environment.
“The Atlanta Center’s programs and services have been created out of the belief that lives are transformed when volunteers have a thorough understanding of the causes and effects of social issues and then are empowered to engage in relevant community service,” said Atlanta Center Executive Director Tracey Knight.

“The Atlanta Center will build a national pipeline of civic-minded student leaders, starting with 25,000 GPC students, reaching out to middle school and high school students, and working collaboratively with other colleges and universities to build a broader network of student leaders,” Knight said. “The students will become knowledgeable about complex social issues as they develop the skills and volunteer experiences to help address these problems in communities locally, nationally and globally.”

The Atlanta Center is a natural extension of the college’s existing programs, building on the service-learning and civic engagement programs already in place at GPC, said Deborah Gonzalez, GPC associate vice president for academic affairs, civic engagement and international education.

“Many of our faculty members already have well-established, service-learning and civic engagement initiatives in the classroom that connect our students with the community in meaningful ways,” Gonzalez said. “From tutoring adults and children to providing dental hygiene services at no or low-cost, to outreach helping the region’s homeless—these programs give our students concrete opportunities to connect their classroom learning in ways that can benefit the community. By establishing the Atlanta Center, we will be able to unite all of our resources under one roof and offer these opportunities to the greater community.”

Ask GPC sophomore Keshia Garay what service-learning means, and she’ll tell you about her positive experience tutoring elderly refugees at Clarkston Community Center. “Working with these elders made an impact on me, and it helped me understand the real issues inside our community. It helps us (students) to think and act differently,” she said. “I would never have the opportunity to participate in this type of program without my professors at GPC making service-learning a part of their course objectives.”

As a physical hub and virtual meeting place, the Atlanta Center also will offer a full resource library and several databases and will sponsor workshops for students, educators and the community. Its reach will extend beyond GPC’s immediate communities, providing information and training for educators nationwide who want to enrich student academic experiences and strengthen learning through civic engagement.
“We’ll be the go-to resource for anyone who needs relevant information or wants to connect with a community partner who needs their help,” Knight said.

Additional resources will include a Faculty Academy for Service-Learning, overseen by Service-Learning Coordinator Angela Bonet. The Center’s Faculty Academy for Service-Learning will be recognized at its inaugural induction ceremony, which also takes place on Feb. 15.

Other Atlanta Center services include student leadership programs, civic engagement and service-learning grants, awards and recognition programs and technical assistance in course development. The Atlanta Center also will offer training, workshops and conferences for local and nationwide participants.

Tricoli said he is thrilled that President Carter is participating in the Atlanta Center opening because of his international reputation for championing civic engagement and humanitarian efforts. President Carter and his wife, former First Lady Rosalynn Carter, were awarded GPC’s Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Individual Humanitarian Award in January.

The Atlanta Center will allow GPC to expand its service to the community, Tricoli said. “It is our desired goal to help build our communities, to strengthen the education our students receive, and to make a significant difference in the world in which we live. Through the Atlanta Center, we intend to create a legacy of service to the communities we serve.”

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*Georgia Perimeter College, the third largest institution of the University System of Georgia, serves more than 25,000 students through four campuses and several sites in metro Atlanta. For additional information, visit [www.gpc.edu](http://www.gpc.edu).*
THE ATLANTA CENTER FOR CIVIC ENGAGEMENT & SERVICE-LEARNING

WHAT SETS US APART?

- The Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement & Service-Learning takes a comprehensive approach, offering a full set of programs and services with broad impact.
- The Center is accessible to the community and open for use by national and global participants. It is not restricted by geographic boundaries.
- The Center is building a pipeline of student leaders, starting with college students but extending to high school and middle school students as well.
- The Center is connecting to other colleges around the nation to enhance students’ academic experiences and ultimately strengthen student learning through civic engagement.
- The Center provides training to faculty and educators through the Faculty Academy. Training is open to local and national participants.
- The Center offers a Student Fellows program.
- The Center is connecting students in classrooms to community projects through a variety of service-learning courses in all content areas.
- The Center offers mini-grants for faculty and students to support local, national and global community projects.
- The Center serves as a physical hub and virtual meeting place and provides a full resource library and several databases, available for use by participants across the nation.
SCHEDULE: All events are on GPC’s Clarkston Campus, 555 North Indian Creek Drive, Clarkston, GA 30021

- **8:30 a.m.**: Security clearance check-in
- **9 a.m.**: Atlanta Center ribbon cutting at the College Center (Building CN).
- **9:30 -10:30 a.m.**: President Carter is guest speaker at Cole Auditorium, Fine Arts Building.
- **10:30 -11:30 a.m.**: Reception and tours of the Atlanta Center for Civic Engagement and Service-Learning.
- Media parking will be provided in designated areas of **Lot # 3** (behind the Jim Cherry Learning Resource Center). Check with parking security officers on site for further direction.

PROTOCOLS:

- All media attendees **must RSVP** to [Beverly James](mailto:Beverly.James@gpc.edu) at 678-891-2686 by Feb. 10 to be credentialed for the ribbon cutting and the official opening programs.
- Names of media attendees will be submitted to Secret Service for prior approval.
- Security clearance and media check-in for the ribbon cutting will begin at 8:30 a.m. at the College Center (Building CN) on Clarkston Campus. A separate security clearance and media check-in is required for the official opening program. It begins at 8:30 a.m. at Cole Auditorium. Members of the media planning to cover both events may want to consider bringing a second person or team because of the limited time between the end of the ribbon cutting and the start of the official program opening.
- **No flash photography** will be allowed.
- **No roaming photography** will be allowed.
- **No day-of-event interviews with President Carter** will be allowed.