Program Summary

During the second quarter of 2008, the GSW Center for Business and Economic has participated in several initiatives in support of small businesses in the Americus/Sumter County service area. There have also been opportunities for Director Cheokas to work with other South Georgia communities as an area resource, representing Georgia Southwestern State University. Mrs. Cheokas attended the C2ER annual conference in Atlanta, served on the Entrepreneur Friendly Designation review community for Camilla/Mitchell County, and completed White and Yellow Belt Six Sigma training.

Activities in which Director Cheokas participated during the quarter were:

- **EFIF Implementation Grant (program progress), April 23rd** – Graduation luncheon held for all participants and special guest on the campus of SGTC. Each participant gave a “Two Minute Commercial” on their business to other class members. Director Cheokas had invited Dr. Dawn Valentine and Dr. Cecilia Maldonado to critique presentations for later discussion with business owners. This out-reach opportunity for the Center to bring together the academic expertise of the University with the business people in the community. Suggestions and recommendations were very much appreciated. Second offering of this special training class will begin in September 2009 on the campus of GSW.

- **Entrepreneur Friendly Committee Designation Review team** – Director Cheokas served on the committee to review the efforts of Mitchell County in Southwest Georgia to make their community more entrepreneur friendly. Invitation to serve on Review Team was extended by Georgia Dept of Economic Development Project Manager, Rebecca O’Neal. Cheokas used this opportunity to network with other economic professionals and to learn of ways to expand business growth in the GSW service area. (4th Review Team for Director Cheokas)

- **C2ER** – May 15th and 16th, Director Cheokas attended conference in Atlanta, GA. Summary notes forward to Dean Kooti. Opportunity to learn of innovative techniques being used in other regions of the county. Take away: GenY, how to appeal and connect with Millennials. Director Cheokas will incorporate new information into CE classes, client material, and Six Sigma training.

- **OneGeorgia Authority** – Several meetings and phone conferences with OneGeorgia office concerning Community Grant for infrastructure project; Hwy. 280W and 19S.

- **Lean Six Sigma** – White and Yellow Belt training completed. Director Cheokas has used skills/knowledge for internal training with “front office staff”. CS Training information below.
• Customer Service Training – Internal training provided by Director Cheokas to the “front office staff” members of the University. These included – Registrar’s office, OIIT, Student Accounts, Financial Aid, and Admissions. Class material outlines are attached. Three class series used as part of a process improvement exercise. Each module taught twice to accommodate number of attendees and scheduling requirements. Part of Chancellor’s Customer Service Initiative program.

• Customer Service Champion Meeting – CS Champion meeting held on the campus of Macon State. Director Cheokas attended with Stephen Synder (PR Director, GSW). Received update on best practices being used throughout the USG. CS Champion and Lean Six Sigma Champion are purposefully and strategically linked to serve as a means for improvement. Director Cheokas is the Six Sigma Champion for GSW. Continued training planned for 2009 provided funding is approved by BOR.

• Educare – Final Marketing Plan proposal presentation to client by Dr. Dawn Valentine’s marketing class. Students did an excellent job. The time and work was greatly appreciated by the Administrative staff of Educare. Realistic recommendations for low cost changes that will improve image and heighten profile in community were offered. Clients were very impressed with amount of research and quality of work. Another opportunity for community outreach and service; pulling expertise from the University into the community.

Program Measures Impact Statements

April - June 2008: A total of 26 new client files have been open during second quarter. Second quarter client profile:
  o Start-ups – 30%
  o Existing businesses – 70%
  o Total employment (existing companies) - 277
  o Capital investment of $ 7,000,000 (upon completion)
  o In-kind investment of $ 0
  o Grant funding $ 500,000 (OneGA)
  o Total investment $ 7,500,000

YTD Total Client Count: 51
YTD Total Consulting Hours: 249

Advocacy

The GSW Center for Business continues to collaborate with the Small Business Development Center consultants; identifying available resources for small business clients in our area. Upcoming Continuing Education classes for Summer 2008 include: Writing an Effective Business Plan, How to Start Your Own Small Business, Maximum Marketing.
**Human Interest**

The Center for Business and Economic Development at GSW provides support services to existing business in the area served by GSW. Assisting with the connecting of our institution with the business community is a central mission. This past quarter provided just such an opportunity.

Through our Entrepreneur Friendly initiative small business owners in our community expressed that additional training in the area of marketing was key to their sustainable success. Specifically, the focus should be on how to most effectively market and promote their individual businesses on “shoe-string” budgets.

Director Cheokas asked Dr. Dawn Valentine and Dr. Cecilia Maldonado, Marketing professors with the GSW – SOB, to critique the marketing “commercials” of local business owners during their Maximum Marketing class graduation. Both agreed and the response was most favorable. Having these two professionals critique their proposals was an invaluable service. Often times small business owners do not have the knowledge or expertise to successfully promote their products and/or services. Being able to offer them an opportunity to work with our faculty was certainly an added value; not only for business owners, but it also reinforced the partnership Georgia Southwestern State University has with the community at large.

**Looking Forward**

The City has requested assistance with the preparation of a second State grant funded application. The Department of Transportation offers grant funding for road improvement that will assist small business owners in growing and sustaining their companies in our area.