Duke Kicks Off Duke Congressional Briefing Program with Entrepreneurship Panel

Duke officials discuss building a culture of innovation with public officials and entrepreneurs

TOPICS FOR THIS STORY: DURHAM & THE REGION, BUSINESS, CAMPUS NEWS, FACULTY, POLITICS & PUBLIC POLICY

October 6, 2011 | Landy Elliott

**DURHAM, NC** - Duke University officials, congressional staff members and entrepreneurs gathered in Washington, DC, Wednesday to participate in a congressional briefing, "The Research Triangle of North Carolina: The Innovation Ecosystem and Economic Development."

Wednesday's event, held in the Capitol Visitors Center, included a panel discussion on the relationship between universities, the federal government and the private sector and how to promote economic development by developing an environment supportive of innovation.

In her opening remarks, U.S. Senator Kay Hagan (D-NC) emphasized the economic successes of North Carolina's Research Triangle Park (RTP). "[North Carolina's] accomplishments are due to what I call the three-legged stool of economic growth: education, infrastructure and research and development. One need only to look at RTP to see how commitments to these three priorities have all converged to create a world renowned innovation center."

Kimberly Jenkins, who advises the Duke leadership on entrepreneurship, spoke about the partnership between The Blackstone Charitable Foundation and a consortium of major Triangle universities that is working to help North Carolina's Research Triangle become home to America's next high-growth companies.

Highlighting the role university research plays in driving this growth, Jenkins said, "Universities tend to be the engines of innovation and federal dollars are driving that innovation."

"With federal funding focused on translational research -- focused on getting it out of the lab to the marketplace -- we are able to provide some of the solutions that really transform not only our economy but address the most pressing needs of our society," Jenkins said.

Charles Hayes, president and CEO of Research Triangle Regional Partnership (RTRP), provided a regional view of the public-private partnership that underpins the Research Triangle's knowledge-based economy.

"The three-way partnership is what's made RTP what it is today. It's a strong partnership between government, business, and academia -- that's in our DNA. It's what's going to make us competitive globally. Basic research leads to applied research, leads to jobs. It's just that simple," Hayes said.

Aaron "Ronnie" Chatterji, an associate professor of strategy at the Fuqua School of Business, moderated the panel. In August 2011, Chatterji completed his service as a senior economist at the White House Council of Economic Advisors (CEA), where he focused on entrepreneurship, small business and innovation policy.

The briefing was timely, said Melissa Vetterkind, director of Duke's Office of Federal Relations. "It's hard to pick up a newspaper or turn on the TV without hearing someone talking about the
need to create more jobs. I think the panelists gave us great examples of how strong relationships between the public and private sector can lead to economic growth, something on many policymakers’ minds."

"The Innovation Ecosystem and Economic Development" was the inaugural event of Duke University Congressional Briefing Program. This program seeks to place knowledge in the service of society by educating congressional staff on selected policy topics by national experts from Duke and across the nation.