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**Georgia Institute of Technology Collaborates with
Morehouse College and PRENEURology Global
to Boost Minority Innovation in Metro Areas**

*Initiative is part of a federal push to strengthen entrepreneurship, growth,
and sustainability for minority business owners across the Southeast.*

The Georgia Institute of Technology has partnered with Morehouse College and PRENEURology Global to launch the Southeast Minority Business Development Agency (MBDA) Business Growth Hub to serve entrepreneurs and innovators in eight southeastern states.

The two-year pilot is funded by a \$1.4 million cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Commerce MBDA to establish a collaborative support network for minority entrepreneurs in the Hub, which, along with Georgia, includes Alabama, Florida, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee.

The Southeast MBDA Business Growth Hub will be a valuable resource for programs serving minority business enterprises (MBEs). As a pilot effort, it could serve as a model yielding sustainable economic wealth for minority entrepreneurs in other regions of the country. (For more information about the Hub, please visit: businessgrowthhub.gatech.edu.)

Led by the Atlanta MBDA Centers at Georgia Tech's Enterprise Innovation Institute (EI²), the Southeast MBDA Business Growth Hub will operate virtually and in-person as a regional, blended network of entrepreneur spaces, education pathways, and engagement programs. The Hub will also serve as an access point to corporations, financing, and other government programs. This cohesive, blended network will foster MBE participation in ecosystems. It is designed to overcome the limited participation of minorities in local innovation ecosystems while giving them access to a broader regional network of connections, experiences, and expertise in the eight-state region.

The Hub will operate as a collective partnership of the Atlanta MBDA Centers, Georgia Tech's Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC), the Morehouse Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC), and PRENEURology Global.

“The goal of the Hub is to connect the ecosystems throughout the Southeast in a way that will provide greater access for all MBEs and entrepreneurs regardless of the stage of their business,” said Donna M. Ennis, C.P.F, EI² director of diversity engagement and program development and the Atlanta MBDA Centers. “We realized while there are highly effective ecosystems throughout the Southeast, minority entrepreneurs often struggle with making viable, long-term connections to enable the acceleration of their products and services to the market.”

ATDC, Georgia Tech’s statewide technology incubator, will host the MBDA@ATDC to attract technology startups and innovators with diverse backgrounds to the program. “The Hub is designed to enhance the reach of services available to entrepreneurs of color by connecting nodes or services like ours together in a more dynamic way through broader regional connections,” said John Avery, ATDC director. “This gives us an opportunity to enhance ATDC’s presence in communities of color while bringing our access to resources and expertise.”

The Morehouse Innovation & Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC) at Morehouse College will help the Hub identify minority-serving institutions (MSIs) — Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and other institutions of higher education with predominantly Latino or other minority populations — that have programs and resources aimed at fostering entrepreneurship and building wealth for people of color. “We will form a Southeast cluster of MSI innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems to connect and stimulate the growth of each MSI, said Tiffany Bussey, DBA, executive director of the MIEC. “This partnership will further help us accelerate entrepreneurship among students and faculty at MSIs.”

PRENEURology Global will establish the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Pathways for new relationships within and among MBEs, collective workspaces (traditional and non-traditional hubs), state, regional, and local governments, corporate partners, financing resources, and accelerators/incubators. This approach will create an integrated network of resources to help MBEs grow and scale their businesses. “We’re seeing a lot of business activity in these ecosystems but there is lack of connectivity,” said Le’Kiesha French, CEO of PRENEURology Global, “Our goal is to create more efficiency by eliminating barriers of access to opportunities and resources within the Southeast region for Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) business entrepreneurs so they can experience equitable pathways to starting and growing their businesses.”

About the Atlanta MBDA Centers

As part of a national network of over 40 centers and special projects, the Atlanta MBDA Business and Advanced Manufacturing Centers help MBEs access capital, increase profitability, and scale their businesses. Funded by the U.S. Department of Commerce Minority Business Development Agency, the Atlanta MBDA Centers are part of Georgia Tech’s Enterprise Innovation Institute, the nation’s largest and most comprehensive university-based program of business and industry assistance, technology

commercialization, and economic development. To learn more, visit mbdabusinesscenter-atlanta.org.

About the Advanced Technology Development Center (ATDC)

The Advanced Technology Development Center at Georgia Tech is a startup incubator that helps technology entrepreneurs in Georgia launch and grow successful companies. ATDC is one of the oldest and most successful research university-affiliated incubators in the United States and was named by Forbes as one of the "Top 12 Business Incubators Changing the World." Founded in 1980, ATDC has fostered innovation and economic development by graduating more than 150 companies, which together have raised over \$2 billion in outside financing. To learn more about ATDC, visit atdc.org.

About Morehouse Innovation and Entrepreneurship Center (MIEC)

MIEC is a global model for higher education and industry collaborations to foster innovation and entrepreneurial leadership by promoting local and regional economic growth and development with people of color on and off-campus. The Center was established as a unit of Morehouse College in 2004 and has secured grants and contracts worth more than \$20 million, impacted over 2,100 students, partnered with more than 17 large mentoring corporations, and assisted over 120 technology growth companies nationwide. The MIEC also serves as the lead institution in the JP Morgan Chase Small Business Forward Ascend Atlanta program, where it has accelerated 80+ minority tech startups over the past three years and helped them raise more than \$5.5 million in funding. Visit mcecenter.com for more details.

About PRENEURology Global

As a Social Enterprise serving entrepreneurs around the world, PRENEURology Global has worked with organizations, educational institutions, corporations, and government agencies across the globe for more than 15 years, to support emerging innovation and entrepreneurial ecosystems through a human-centered approach. With its team of bilingual professionals (English and Spanish), PRENEURology revolutionizes mindsets within communities at risk by empowering people with tools for innovation and economic growth. For more information, visit preneurology.org.