

GPC Clarkston opens doors to new student center

Community, business leaders hail facility as boost to area growth

Georgia Perimeter College student **Rahim Mawji** likes what he sees.

Scanning the room while speaking at the grand opening of the Clarkston campus' new College Center, Mawji couldn't help be a little proud.

"I'm originally from Kenya," he told the overflow crowd of provosts, pundits, professors and politicians. "Education is a luxury where I come from. But here we have that opportunity, and as I look around I see inspiration, the future, success."

Even on a gray blustery day the main hall of the center was suffused with light thanks to windows that reach floor to ceiling on the north- and east-facing walls.

The new center will house all student government offices, become a one-stop shop for all financial aid, enrollment and registration, and counseling services. It features a 300-seat dining area, coffee bar, café and large meeting rooms.

But community leaders hope the \$9 million, 50,000-square-foot facility will become much more than just a meeting place for students.

"This new College Center, outside of serving the students, is a much-needed boost for the community," said DeKalb County Chamber of Commerce President **Leonardo McClarty**, who used the center the day of the opening for the chamber's legislative reception. "Until now, there weren't a whole lot of options in this area of east Atlanta where business and community-based organizations could go to host meetings or receptions and events of this nature."

Clarkston Student Government Association President **LeAnise Jenkins**, standing with Mawji, said the building is symbolic of the campus transformation.

"This center is an indication of how much we've grown," she



Georgia Perimeter College Clarkston Campus opened its new \$9 million, 50,000-square-foot College Center Jan. 18.

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said. "It will handle all our needs."

According to GPC's President **Anthony S. Tricoli**, the college, which also has campuses in Decatur, Dunwoody and Rockdale, has an enrollment of more than 21,000 students, making it the third largest institution for higher learning in the state. The college is opening a new campus in Newton County this summer.

County Commissioner **Connie Stokes**, who attended classes at GPC

Decatur en route to Georgia State, said the Clarkston facility is ideally placed to help launch new growth.

"If it were not for GPC, many young people in this area would not have been able to make the transition to university life," she said. "And this new center is so important because it sends the message of economic development along the Memorial Drive corridor. We think it will be a beacon for the student and business communities."