



Columbus State University

Turner College of Business and Technology



The Butler Center for Research
and Economic Development

COCA-COLA SPACE SCIENCE CENTER

**Economic Impact Study
Columbus, GA**



THE BUTLER CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

We Serve With Care.

The Butler Center is dedicated to promoting sustainable economic growth in the Columbus Area and informing public policy and business decision-making.

We have been an invaluable resource for businesses, non-profit organizations, and local governments to find opportunities, bring new business and investment to the area, make effective data-driven decisions, and optimize returns on public spending for the workforce and economic development.

OUR SERVICE



Economic Research:

Informing local governments and the business community about recent regional and national trends. We investigate economic challenges, and find solutions.

Economic Impact Studies:

Assessing the economic impact of policies, events, and projects on businesses and communities.

Data Analytics:

Utilizing advanced analytical tools and techniques to derive practical insights from raw data.

Business Support:

We identify and solve business problems, assist in finding suitable locations for expansion or relocation, and help businesses make data-driven decisions.



Visit our website to access various data and economic indicators.

CONTACT US

 (706) 569-4650
 4225 University Ave, Columbus, GA 31907
 butlercenter@columbusstate.edu
 columbusstate.edu/turner/butler-center/



OUR TEAM



Fady Mansour, Ph.D.

Director of the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development
Sarah T. Butler Distinguished University Chair of Business & Finance
Associate Professor of Economics
(706) 507-8596
mansour_fady@columbusstate.edu



Jordan Mills

Research Assistant at the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development
Turner College of Business & Technology
(706) 507-8800
mills_jordan@columbusstate.edu



Nhi Do

Research Assistant at the Butler Center for Research and Economic Development
Turner College of Business & Technology
(706) 507-8800
do_nhi2@columbusstate.edu

CONTENTS

Overview	8
Introduction	9
The Monetary Impact on the Regional Economy	14
Fiscal (Tax Revenue) Impacts	16
Triggering Student Interest in Space and Science as a National Security Imperative	18
Historical precedent: education as a defense strategy	18
Why interest matters: evidence from education research	19
STEM talent and modern geopolitical competition	20
The role of space in STEM motivation and workforce development	20
Implications for CCSSC's and informal STEM learning	21
Quantitative Evidence: Student and Teacher Feedback	22
Qualitative Evidence: Illustrative Educational and Career Pathways	26
Interviewee Responses	28
Conclusion	44
References	47
Appendix	48

INTERVIEWEE RESPONSES

<u>Mayor Skip Henderson</u>	28
<u>Dr. David F. Lewis</u>	30
<u>Ashley Woitena</u>	32
<u>Cameron McCarty</u>	33
<u>Rontra Brown</u>	34
<u>John Hood</u>	35
<u>Benjamin Travers</u>	36
<u>Hunter Gore</u>	36
<u>Christi Scarbrough</u>	37
<u>Robin Stephens</u>	37
<u>Neal Garner</u>	38
<u>Wanja Ngugi</u>	39
<u>Eric Stephens</u>	39
<u>Shelia Baker</u>	40
<u>Steve Rutledge</u>	40
<u>Sarah Schmidt</u>	41
<u>Madeline Corrao</u>	41

THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE COCA-COLA SPACE SCIENCE CENTER

This study evaluates the impact of the Coca-Cola Space Science Center (CCSSC) in Columbus, Georgia, through four complementary perspectives that together capture its economic, educational, and strategic significance. First, it assesses the CCSSC's monetary impact on the regional economy by estimating how its ongoing operations and expenditures support employment, labor income, and economic activity in the Columbus, Georgia-Alabama Metropolitan Statistical Area, using a conservative framework that excludes visitor-related tourism spending. Second, the study presents quantitative evidence from student and teacher surveys to examine short-term educational outcomes, including students' interest and engagement among MCSD fourth-, fifth-, and sixth-grade participants and teachers' assessments of alignment with the Georgia Standards of Excellence. Third, it draws on qualitative testimonies from educators, community leaders, and former participants to illustrate plausible educational and career pathways shaped by early exposure to hands-on space and STEM programming. Finally, the analysis situates these findings within a broader context of national security and technological competitiveness, emphasizing the importance of early STEM engagement in sustaining the long-term workforce pipeline required for U.S. leadership in aerospace, defense, and advanced technologies amid intensifying global competition.



**“WE SERVE WITH
CARE.”**

Sincerely,



Fady Mansour



The Butler Center for Research
and Economic Development

2026

COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY
TURNER COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY



The Butler Center for Research
and Economic Development