



For Immediate Release

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**Southern Growth Policies Board Names
Boosting Educational Opportunity –
Scholarships and Loan Forgiveness
2010 Innovator Award Winner from Virginia**

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC – Southern Growth Policies Board is pleased to announce the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission's **Boosting Educational Opportunity – Scholarships and Loan Forgiveness** programs as the recipients of its *2010 Innovator Award from Virginia*. The purpose of these educational programs is to promote economic development in Virginia's tobacco region by increasing the education and skill levels of the region's residents.

The Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission is a 31-member body created by the 1999 General Assembly. Its mission is the promotion of economic growth and development in tobacco-dependent communities, using proceeds of the national tobacco settlement.

The Boosting Educational Opportunity program has two key components:

- The Southwest Burley Tobacco Scholarship Program assists current Southwest Virginia residents who were former Burley tobacco quota holders or growers and their direct descendants with up to \$2,500 for tuition and academic fees per year.
- The Southside Tobacco Loan Forgiveness Program encourages native Southside Virginians to complete a degree and then return to and settle in a locality within Southside Virginia. Current residents of Southside Virginia localities can receive up to \$3,750 for tuition and academic fees per year. Once completing their education, loan recipients are given one year of loan forgiveness for each year of documented full-time employment in one of the 24 Southside Virginia localities.

Innovator Awards are presented annually to one organization in each of Southern Growth's 13 member states in recognition of initiatives that are improving economic opportunities and quality of life in the region. The 2010 Innovator Awards were chosen from creative initiatives in the region that aim to help communities recover from the recession. One award winner per week will be announced in Southern Growth's e-newsletter, Southern Compass, leading up to an official recognition of all awardees at Southern Growth's Chairman's Conference, June 7-8, 2010 in Lexington, Kentucky. For more information on Southern Growth's Innovator Awards program or Chairman's Conference, contact Ted Abernathy, Executive Director, Southern Growth Policies Board, at (919) 941-5145 or tabernathy@southern.org.

About Southern Growth Policies Board

Southern Growth Policies Board is a regional public policy think tank based in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies by providing a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic and community development sectors. Southern Growth provides its members, and the region, with authoritative research, discussion forums and pilot projects in the areas of technology and innovation, globalization, workforce development, community development, civic engagement and leadership. To learn more about Southern Growth Policies Board, visit www.southern.org.