



## UNCW professor questions economic impact of proposed port

By Shelby Sebens  
Staff Writer

Published: Thursday, January 22, 2009 at 10:12 p.m.

Southport | The economic analysis used by the N.C. State Ports Authority to support building a \$2.3 billion international terminal is superficial and paper thin, a UNCW professor announced Thursday night at a public meeting held by a group formed to stop the project.

Curt Stiles, associate professor of management at the Cameron School of Business at UNCW, commended members of No port/Southport for their own economic analysis of the N.C. International Terminal based on the Ports Authority's figures that shows it is not feasible.

"It's very convincing," he said of the organization's analysis.

Stiles is familiar with the analytical method used to determine the economic impact of the terminal and that which supported the Titan Cement Plant planned for New Hanover County. He said these analyses are superficial and simply conducted to support political decisions that have already been made.

But Karen Fox, spokeswoman for the Ports Authority, said in a phone interview before the meeting that NCIT would bring significant economic development to the area and that the business plan proves it's financially feasible. She also said it is a business opportunity that will boost the economy in these tough times. The first phase of the project is scheduled to open by 2017 and will be located on 600 acres near Southport.

Stiles, however, said the jobs NCIT is supposed to bring are "bogus." The state has said the port would support 477,000 jobs statewide.

Stiles, who spoke to a group of more than 200 people at the Southport Community Building, urged the state to conduct a more in-depth look at the port's potential economic impact on the region.

The grass-roots organization also gave a presentation stating they believe the project will cost around \$4 billion as opposed to the Ports Authority's projected \$2.3 billion price tag. The group argues NCIT would cause more of an economic burden on the region than a gain.

Stiles and other UNCW faculty members and graduate students recently conducted an in-depth study of economic development in the five-county Cape Fear Region.

They identified the base industries for the region, meaning they attract wealth and keep it here. The port of Wilmington was not one of those base industries.

"The port did not play any role in the prosperity of the region at all," he said.

Shelby Sebens: 264-8005

[shelby.sebens@starnewsonline.com](mailto:shelby.sebens@starnewsonline.com)

1

Copyright © 2010 StarNewsOnline.co