

# Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement

## *2020-2021 Annual Report*



# A Note to the Reader

Virginia Tech's Center for Economic and Community Engagement, formerly the Office of Economic Development, provides research and university connections that help organizations and communities think strategically and find their pathways to economic prosperity. Part of Virginia Tech's Outreach and International Affairs, the office was formed in 1996 and works to advance Virginia Tech's role as a national, state, and university-recognized champion and exemplar for economic and community engagement, applied economic and policy research, and community problem-solving. This vision encompasses the university's engagement, discovery, and learning missions and key strategic initiatives.

This magazine covers the Center for Economic and Community Engagement's work, featuring economic recovery efforts, initiatives such as Vibrant Virginia and GO Virginia, and projects that are making a difference in the commonwealth.

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# Wonder Universe: A Children's Museum

February 28, 2020

A local children's museum with big dreams for its future turned to graduate students in Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development for ideas that could help double its annual attendance — from 20,000 to 45,000 people a year.

Previously known as the Children's Museum of Blacksburg, Wonder Universe recently reopened in a larger space at the New River Valley Mall in Christiansburg, Virginia. As part of an economic development study project, students analyzed the market and recommended changes to fuel growth.

John Provo, director of the Office of Economic Development, part of Outreach and International Affairs, said, "As part of our ongoing partnership with academic departments, we have one project per year where students are the leaders and faculty are the support. This kind of real-world project lets students experience firsthand the kind of work economic developers do every day."

The student team urged the museum to develop exhibits that encourage hands-on engagement and collaboration, provide exhibits that are both adult- and child-friendly, and diversify partnerships to allow for more subsidized memberships and better access.

"We provided some idea of what should be in the upcoming exhibits and how they can help make it not just for the children but for the whole family. Our research found that museums where adults can participate and play with their children are more helpful for a child's early development," said Khushboo Gupta, who received her Ph.D. in the planning, governing, and globalization program in the School of Public and International Affairs.

The students worked to understand the value the museum brought to the New River Valley region, analyzing studies and data related to children's museums in order to determine best practices. Research showed that funding high-quality early-childhood programs is smart; a \$1 investment can yield \$4 to \$9 in return, according to the National Forum on Early Childhood Policy and Programs.

Research also highlighted the popularity of interactive exhibits that promote creativity and include problem-solving components. A set of blue cubes that children could stack and build whatever comes to mind was one of the most popular exhibits at the Children's Museum of Blacksburg. Students recommended that the museum create similar exhibits in the new location.

Students found the museum could attract more lower-to middle-income families by offering reduced-price memberships, certain days and hours, weekend packages, and parent-education programs.

Neda Moayerian, a doctoral candidate in the planning, governing, and globalization program, was interested in working on the project because of the positive impact it could have on future generations. "I think children's museums are a long-term, sustainable way of elevating society," she said.

*Written by Julia Kell*

# CARES Act Funding Helps Regional Recovery

*July 20, 2020*

**O**n July 20, 2020, the U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) awarded a \$300,000 Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Recovery Assistance grant to Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development (OED). The grant money will be used for activities that will help regions respond to the detrimental economic effects of the coronavirus crisis.

The mission of the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) is to lead the federal economic development agenda by promoting competitiveness and preparing the nation's regions for growth and success in the worldwide economy. EDA makes investments in economically distressed communities in order to create jobs for U.S. workers, promote American innovation, and accelerate long-term sustainable economic growth.

"The Office of Economic Development is a long-time EDA

University Center partner," said the office's director John Provo. "Since 2016 we have implemented the Virginia Regional Competitiveness Project (VRCP) through an EDA University Center grant that focuses on lifting up distressed regions in Virginia. With this new funding, we are eager to help the communities around us move forward after the pandemic."

The Virginia Regional Competitiveness Project focuses on three regions in Virginia, including southwest Virginia, southern Virginia, and Hampton Roads, with the goal of enhancing connection and diversification in the regions through commercialization, talent development, and entrepreneurial support activities.

The Office of Economic Development will use the CARES Act funding to benefit the surrounding communities by assisting regional entities, planning for regional recovery, conducting applied research, and offering educational or training events.





# CARES Act

## Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act

Scott Tate, associate director for OED, directs the Virginia Regional Competitiveness Project activities and helped secure the CARES Act funding. “The coronavirus crisis brings challenges and setbacks, but also new opportunities. Our proposed activities will help regions assess changing conditions, develop revised and informed recovery plans where needed, and pursue new projects with the support of university resources and expertise,” Tate said.

By having discussions with regional organization leaders, the office will pinpoint challenges and issues in the regions and identify ways to assist communities. The office will also provide customized assistance to development organizations and help create economic development plans for selected localities and sub-regions, allowing communities to chart a path for economic recovery post-pandemic.

Through the planning projects and outreach activities, the Office of Economic Development will also identify applied research or technical assistance needs in support of post-COVID19 economic recovery activities. These projects could include revising a regional approach to industry targeting, refocusing economic strategies around industry retention and expansion, or supporting entrepreneurs who have been adversely affected by the pandemic. The Virginia Regional Competitiveness Project events may highlight current economic conditions, recovery strategies, ongoing opportunities, and engage university and local knowledge.

*Written by Julia Kell*

# A Home for Fresh Food

October 13, 2020

In 2016, Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development conducted a study to look at the feasibility of a farmer's market in downtown Hillsville, a town in Carroll County, Virginia. Four years later, Hillsville broke ground on the structure for the farmer's market after getting approval to build in a historical district.

"I think this project was unique and refreshing in that we really got to focus on equity issues in the community. As a result, we got to take a nuanced and strategic approach in thinking through the development of a farmer's market, that would be, in the long run, more inclusive and equitable to low-income families and families of color," said Sarah Lyon-Hill, an economic development specialist who led the project in 2016.

When working on the feasibility study, economic development specialists analyzed other farmer's markets in the region, best practices, and the potential location of the farmer's market. Researchers suggested Hillsville start small with the farmer's market, recommending they set up a temporary market and take the time to grow and attract vendors and shoppers.

A few other key recommendations included reaching out to community partners to promote the market, partnering with other farmer's markets, targeting low-income families, and creating an inviting atmosphere with planned events.

A year after the completion of OED's feasibility study in 2017, Hillsville set up their farmer's market.

"We appreciate the feasibility study that OED conducted for us," said Retta Jackson, Town Manager of Hillsville, "as it helped us know what was possible."

The farmer's market started with half a dozen vendors on

average, a number that has now doubled. The vendors sell a wide variety of products such as honey, coffee, herbs, produce, eggs, crafts, and baked goods. Each week, the farmer's market has a food truck with food from local restaurants like Slider Kings and Taco 'Bout.

"It was very exciting to break ground on the structure," said Farmer's Market Manager Teresa Catron. "We had waited a long time for this to happen. Some of our vendors have been around since 2017 so it is great to see the vision for the farmer's market structure become a reality."

"I'm glad they started small and continued working at it because as you see today, they're going to get this beautiful structure to host their farmers market on a weekly basis with a great location," said Lyon-Hill.

The market offers Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) to low-income families. Consumers can redeem their SNAP benefits by swiping their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card in exchange for coins that they then use to make purchases at the farmer's market.

Hillsville used flyers and social media such as Facebook and Instagram to grow their presence and attract more shoppers and vendors to the market. The free events the town offers also draw in more people.

"We wanted to utilize the farmers market as a cultural center and use the space for some of our events. People may learn about the farmer's market from being in Hillsville for a certain event," said Jackson.

The town of Hillsville offers many free events, and just a few include the Summer Night Concert Series, Classic Car Cruise-Ins, trick-or-treating, a tree lighting on Christmas, a Fall Festival, and a Courthouse Tragedy play.



“The market has made a difference in Hillsville by promoting local artists and talent and making the town more lively. It is a big draw for the town of Hillsville as people make a day of it and go there for lunch or to attend events,” said Jackson.

Due to the farmer’s market, the youth in Hillsville have been exposed to local growers and vendors.

“Hillsville plans to host a monthly Sunshine Market, where children in the community can set up their own tents and learn more about healthy eating and farmer’s markets,” said Catron.

The Healthy Kids Bucks Program, sponsored by Magellan Complete Care, and Virginia Cooperative Extension & Eat Smart Move More, also helps children learn about healthy shopping.

Plans for the future of Hillsville include having the farmer’s market structure completely built by next year and hosting the farmer’s market on more than one day a week, as well as on holidays. Currently, the farmer’s market is open on Thursdays from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m.

“The slogan of Hillsville is ‘A great place to visit and an even greater place to live,’” said Jackson. “We want to grow and expand the farmer’s market, attract more people, and help everyone see how great the town of Hillsville is.”

*Written by Julia Kell*

# Working to Address COVID-19

October 26, 2020



Virginia Tech's Office of Economic Development is helping university researchers, local businesses, and organizations secure state funding for projects addressing the economic and public health challenges during the COVID-19 crisis.

The office is the regional support organization for GO Virginia, a statewide initiative initially dedicated to creating higher-wage jobs in the commonwealth. Region 2 covers 13 counties and five cities, stretching from the New River Valley to Lynchburg.

A \$500,000 GO Virginia grant to Virginia Tech is helping to support full-time COVID-19 analysis positions in the

Virginia Tech Schiffert Health Center Molecular Diagnostics Lab at the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute at VTC and establish an internship pipeline for biomedical technology jobs.

Virginia Tech researchers developed a new COVID-19 test and facilities to help local health departments test patients suspected of having the novel coronavirus — a critical step to slow the pandemic and monitor the spread of the virus in Virginia.

A previous \$100,000 GO Virginia grant to the Molecular Diagnostics Lab enabled the launch of the testing program. Between April and September, the laboratory processed

more than 32,000 samples for local health departments and Virginia Tech.

Michael Friedlander, executive director of the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute and vice president for health sciences and technology at Virginia Tech, said the most recent grant will be primarily directed at the workforce component of the project.

A portion of the grant will provide paid internships to graduates from local colleges — including Virginia Western Community College and Radford University. Interns will learn to carry out RT-qPCR-based molecular diagnostic analysis of viral RNA for COVID-19.

Other projects in the region receiving funding include the New River Valley Business Continuity Team, a partnership between the New River Valley Regional Commission and the New River Health District-Virginia Department of Health that aims to help people feel at ease when returning to the workplace. In just a few weeks, the team has already provided consultation to firms in

all four of the targeted industry sectors for GO Virginia Region 2.

“The services delivered have resulted in companies remaining productive by limiting their downtime during the pandemic,” said Kevin Byrd, executive director of the New River Valley Regional Commission.

The Roanoke Regional Partnership received \$100,000 in GO Virginia emergency funds for its project to help regional companies in the targeted sectors — advanced manufacturing, food and beverage, technology, and health care — with immediate and long-term recovery.

“This program will enable us to benefit from experts with experience in crisis recovery and facilitation. It will also allow us to make connections that will provide us with what we need to craft a strategy for recovery,” Roanoke Regional Partnership Executive Director Beth Doughty said.

The GO Virginia board also recently approved a mobile app designed to help small businesses assess and improve their readiness to operate in the workplace. The Public Health Readiness Evaluation tool, proposed by the Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Sciences and led by Matthew Hull in collaboration with Josh Eckstein and Igor Linkov, aims to help small businesses return to normal operations quickly and safely.

The application presents a series of questions designed to assess a business’s readiness to minimize COVID-19 risks. A readiness score helps the business see where it can improve.

“This tool will help the region’s smallest businesses help themselves and increase consumer confidence. The PHRE framework leverages a nanotechnology safety developed 15 years ago and represents a great example of the important interdisciplinary connections between the Office of Economic Development and Virginia Tech research units,” Hull said.

The Office of Economic Development, part of Outreach and International Affairs, was an important player in the inception of GO Virginia. The office accepts proposals for GO Virginia funding on behalf of the Region 2 Council, and its specialists help individuals and organizations develop and evaluate projects.

“The state has approved 100 percent of the Region 2 recommended projects, which I credit to the Office of Economic Development’s review and assistance to those seeking funding,” said Ray Smoot, vice president for finance and treasurer emeritus at Virginia Tech and chair of the Region 2 Council.

“GO Virginia has tried to pivot to be responsive in these changing times,” said John Provo, who leads the Office of Economic Development. “All these projects are examples of the kinds of regional partnerships that are so vital to navigating this crisis.”

*Written by Julia Kell*



# Launching Our Center

March 23, 2021

**U**nderscoring its global land-grant commitment to putting knowledge to work and improving the lives of people across Virginia and around the world, Virginia Tech is launching a new Center for Economic and Community Engagement, replacing the Office of Economic Development.

Part of Outreach and International Affairs, the new university-level center will engage with internal and external partners to drive economic growth, address workforce needs, and build resilience in communities across Virginia.

“Economic development and civic engagement are central to Virginia Tech’s service to the commonwealth and our land-grant mission,” Executive Vice President and Provost Cyril Clarke said. “The Center for Economic and Community Engagement will partner with communities to facilitate full participation of our citizens in economic development.”

The center will be led by John Provo, who has run the Office of Economic Development since 2010.

“John is the epitome of a ‘pracademic,’ bringing together the best qualities of a practitioner and an academic,” said Guru Ghosh, vice president for Outreach and International Affairs. “By building strong relationships with businesses and governments in every part of Virginia, he and his team help serve as the bridge between the university and the public and private sectors.”

Addressing the complex challenges relating to Virginia’s urban-rural ecosystems will be one of the center’s focuses. “This center will lead our efforts to address challenges rural Virginians face and how Virginia Tech can work with communities to promote greater opportunities in education, health, and job creation,” Ghosh said.

Provo said the new center will deliver technical assistance

and applied research projects to help people understand community change and identify opportunities.

“This transition will increase our visibility, creating a stronger campus presence and clearer identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders,” he said. “We look forward to connecting with and continuing to work with organizations and individuals committed to growing Virginia’s economy.”

He said the center will seek collaborations with every Virginia Tech college and institute, offering opportunities for applied research, experiential learning, and service to the commonwealth.

“The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development has a broad mission, one that is supported by the type of engagement, research, and forward-thinking ideas this center will advance,” said DHCD Director Erik Johnston. “We recognize the critical role universities have played and will continue to play in Virginia’s future — and the timing of this new center is critical as we work to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.”

Matt Hulver, director of the Fralin Life Sciences Institute, said, “We are thrilled to partner with the Center for Economic and Community Engagement. It is in conjunction with this center and leaders like John Provo that we can tackle the global challenges of our time like coastal resilience. We aim to improve the lives of all Virginians.”

The Office of Economic Development was formed in 1996 to help advance the university’s economic engagement mission. Throughout the pandemic, the office has assisted with Virginia’s economic recovery as the support organization for GO Virginia and as a U.S. Economic Development Administration University Center. The team comprises 16 people, with locations in Blacksburg, Richmond, Newport

News, and Arlington.

GO Virginia is a statewide initiative designed to encourage economic growth through the creation of high-wage jobs. Provo and his team provide fiduciary oversight and administrative services for Region 2, which includes the New River Valley, Roanoke-Alleghany, and Lynchburg areas.

In 2018, the office launched Vibrant Virginia, a statewide initiative that helps higher education have a higher impact on communities across the commonwealth, working to build connections between the urban and rural and improve the lives of all Virginians.

“Establishing this center helps us elevate the Ut Prosim difference, which has never been more important,” Provo said. “Only by working together across boundaries can we successfully address critical societal problems such as the current economic and health crisis and longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.”

*Written by Julia Kell*



*John Provo, Director of the Center for Economic and Community Engagement*



# EXPANDING OUR REACH RETURNS

CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ENGA



# CH, RANGE, AND

AGEMENT

The Center for Economic and Community Engagement will advance Virginia Tech as a global land-grant institution, serving as a national, state, and university-recognized champion and exemplar for economic and community engagement, applied economic and policy research, community problem-solving, and development-related thought leadership.



## Expanded Reach

- Operate university-wide, touching every college and institute with economic engagement, opportunities for applied research, experiential learning, and service to the Commonwealth.
- Deploy across all regions of Virginia, serving as the key gateway for state agencies like the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, as well as economic and community development stakeholders at the regional and local level.
- Work with an array of national partners, such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Kauffman Foundation, the Association for Public and Land-grant Universities, and the University Economic Development Association.

## Expanded Range

- Provide strategic planning and analysis, conduct economic impact and market analysis, feasibility studies, and other applied research projects for state, regional, and local partners.
- Build unique teams across disciplines within the university that provide high impact results for our external partners, and special opportunities for our faculty and students.
- Translate work into published scholarship, provide opportunities for dialogue between policymakers, practitioners, and scholars, and advance the field of economic and community development.

## Expanded Returns

- We will grow the economy of the commonwealth by connecting the intellectual capital of Virginia Tech with public, private, and nonprofit partners across all regions of the state.
- We will secure resources to support economic engagement of faculty and students; advancing their interests in research and discovery, as well as the university's Beyond Boundaries goals.
- We will elevate efforts at economic and community engagement underway across Virginia Tech, supporting and articulating the university's contribution across the state and nationally.

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# ASSISTING WITH ECONOMIC RECOVERY

**T**he Center for Economic and Community Engagement shapes university participation in key responses to the economic disruption surrounding COVID-19. At the state level, through the GO Virginia Emergency Recovery and Response program, the center supported communities with \$2.5 million in funding for projects responding to the crisis. This has included funding for Virginia Tech efforts led by the Fralin Biomedical Research Institute to accelerate test processing to ensure people can get back to work safely.

At the federal level, the center has received support from the U.S. Economic Development Administration for new Economic Resilience and Recovery Planning services that will be offered to communities around the state. The center will help these communities shape their responses to change and uncertainty in the economy. With a mix of private, state, and federal funding the center has also developed a relationship between LiteSheet in the Lynchburg region and faculty from the College of Veterinary Medicine and College of Engineering. Research faculty will assist the company in testing and development of an LED-UV sterilization cabinet effective against the virus.

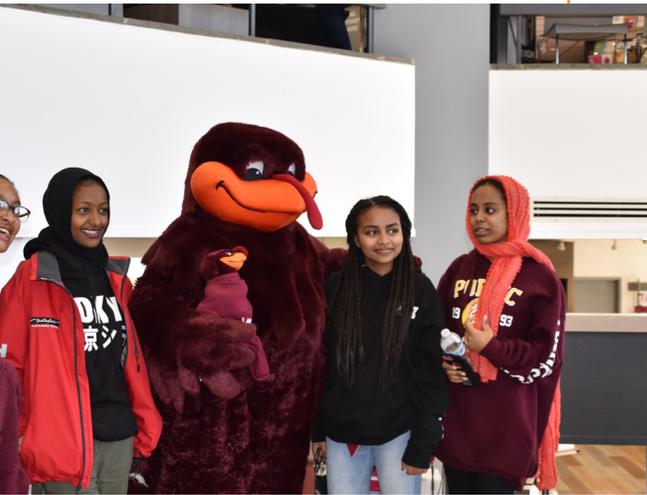
“Through the GO Virginia Emergency Recovery and Response program, the center supported communities with \$2.5 million in funding for projects responding to the crisis.”



# ADVANCING DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

**T**he Center for Economic and Community Engagement continues to advance the university's diversity and inclusion goals by expanding our partnership with Urban Alliance (UA), a group that organizes paid internships and college readiness assistance to youth from under-resourced backgrounds. The center manages a strong Greater Washington collaboration with UA, hosting seven interns this year in STEM labs and with business groups. The center collaborates with the university's College Access Collaborative, organizing a day on campus in Blacksburg for 23 Urban Alliance students. In 2019, the center's diversity and outreach initiatives also included mentoring several fellows in the Mandela Washington Fellowship for Young African Leaders, a program run by the School of Public and International Affairs. The center has also launched several partnerships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities, hosting an American Council on Education Fellow from Virginia State University, and exploring partnerships opportunities through several grants.

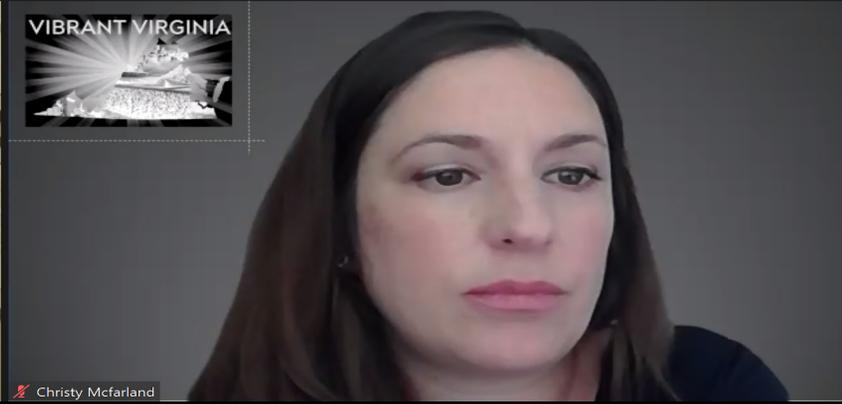




*Urban Alliance interns visit Virginia Tech*



Stephen Moret



Christy McFarland



Leslie Boney



Lisa Peyton-Caire

2020-10-30 10:49:20



Beth Doughty



Buddy Rizer



# VIBRANT VIRGINIA

The Center for Economic and Community Engagement completed a series of face-to-face community conversations under the university-supported Vibrant Virginia program. This effort was merged with a state-inspired Rural Virginia Initiative, a partnership including the University of Virginia (UVA), UVA's College at Wise, Virginia State University, and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service. Together we have launched a high-profile Virtual Forum Series, and a book, with national and state contributors from academics, business, and government on topics including university contributions to economic recovery, models for community resilience in the face of economic disruption, and actions we can take to strengthen urban and rural communities to form a more vibrant Virginia.



Stephanie Landrum



Charlotte Baker



Christopher Zobel

# Vibrant Virginia was one of 15 finalists for the UEDA's Awards of Excellence.

*August 24, 2020*



**H**igher education institutions from across North America submit nominations annually to the University Economic Development Association's Awards of Excellence for innovative programs that focus on developing economic prosperity in their communities and beyond.

Started in 2018, Vibrant Virginia has funded seven grantee projects dealing with such topics as substance abuse disorder and tribal preservation, held 15 community conversations in four regions, and hosted three campus conversations widely attended by members

of the Virginia Tech community.

The program also developed a virtual conference series with the goal of gaining a deeper understanding of the economic challenges and opportunities in Virginia and the partnership role of higher education.

"It is an honor for our program's practices to be viewed across the country and gain acknowledgment and recognition from our peers," said John Provo, director of the Center for Economic and Community Engagement. "Vibrant Virginia has examined important issues affecting the commonwealth and seeks to elevate the voices of community leaders, local governments, small businesses, nonprofits, and K-12 and university educators."

Vibrant Virginia helps focus Virginia Tech's approach to regional engagement by listening and responding to the needs of citizens across the commonwealth, said Susan E. Short, associate vice president for engagement in Outreach

and International Affairs. "This is one of the key ways our faculty and staff are connecting with urban and rural communities and developing meaningful partnerships to help these communities address challenges and find opportunities."

Vibrant Virginia hosted a virtual forum in October 2020 and three book webinars in Summer 2021 that were focused on chapters from the upcoming Vibrant Virginia book. The Vibrant Virginia book is set to be published in September 2021.

**"Vibrant Virginia has examined important issues affecting the commonwealth and seeks to elevate the voices of community leaders, local governments, small businesses, nonprofits, and K-12 and university educators."**

The University Economic Development Association awards are designed to encourage the adoption of innovative programs by other institutions and communities. Finalists are chosen through a nationally peer-reviewed process.

"In today's uncertain economic environment, it is more important than ever for higher education institutions to engage with local economies and build infrastructures that can not only withstand but also thrive in an uncharted economic environment," said Tim Hines, UEDA executive director. "This year's finalists represent some of the best university-led programs across North America and contribute to much of their local and state economic success."

*Written by Julia Kell*

# INDUSTRY PARTNERSHIPS

Unique industry partnerships in 2020 included Virginia Tech's expanding partnership with the McLean, Virginia-based MITRE Corp. At the request of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, the center helped to shape its University Innovation Exchange (UIX), with members that include Virginia public university experts. Associate Director of Strategic Alliances Afroze Mohammed developed a proposal for the MITRE UIX for Space, bringing Virginia Tech, GMU, ODU, and UVA together to focus on solving Virginia challenges in areas such as river health and transportation through space-based research and data. The center's work with MITRE enabled five faculty members to secure substantial research funding during the challenging fiscal year. Other partnership opportunities in Greater Washington include Aerospace Corp, Excella, Grant Thornton, General Dynamics, and REHAU. These partnerships delivered close to \$400,000 in funding for faculty research and student capstone projects, further setting the stage for future opportunities. The center also assisted the College of Science in securing support from companies and regional organizations for their proposal to SCHEV for an undergraduate degree in Behavioral Decisions Sciences. In the Blacksburg-Roanoke region, the center continues work with a corporate partner of the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership on the economics of unmanned systems.

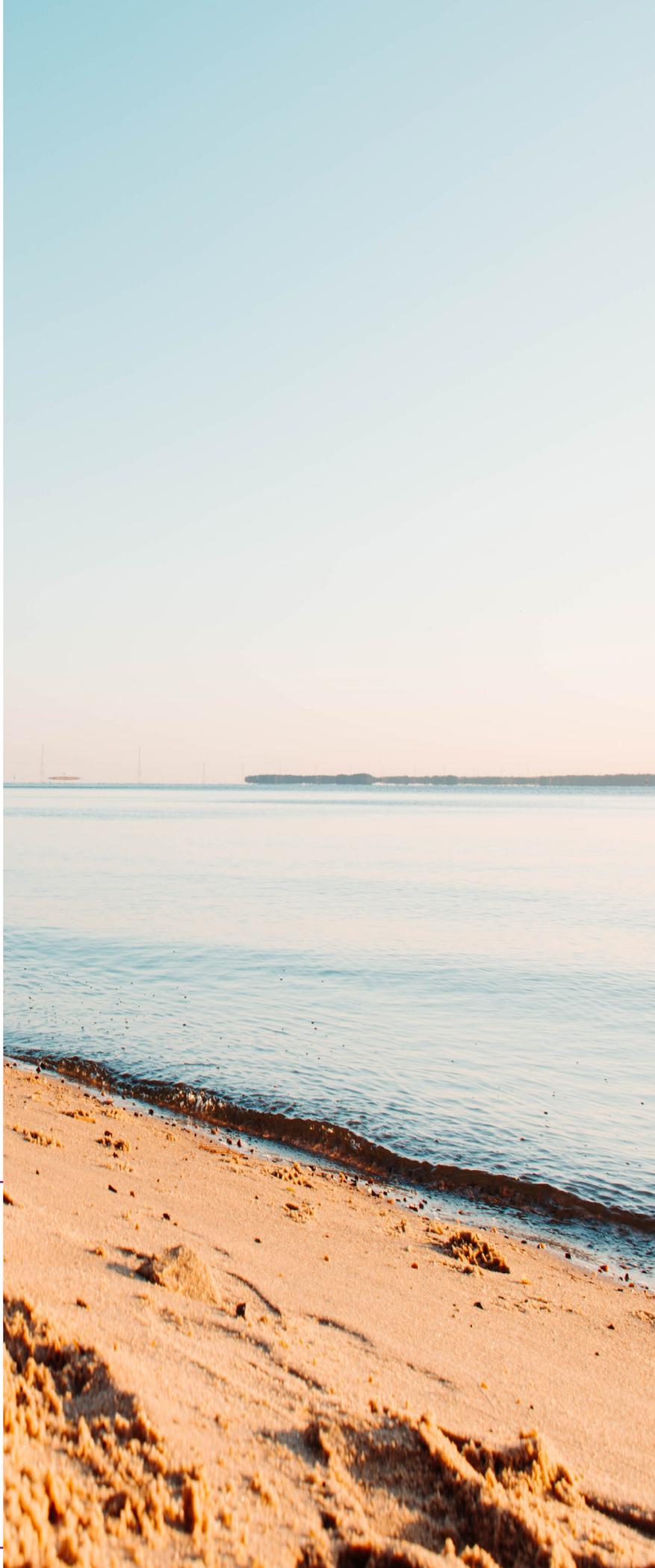




# CECE IN HAMPTON ROADS

The Center for Economic and Community Engagement increased its presence in Virginia's urban crescent. The center supports the associate director for the Newport News Center, Mallory Tuttle, who is based at the Tech Center Research Park. Hampton Roads develops myriad project proposals, including federally and state supported economic development planning and industry internship initiatives. Some of the projects the Center for Economic and Community Engagement has underway in the Hampton Roads region include the Hampton Roads Robotics Innovation Hub Feasibility Study and the Newport News Seafood Market Study, a feasibility assessment and business plan for a seafood market and commercial kitchen in conjunction with Hill Studios and other partners. The Newport News Seafood Market Study is one component of the city's efforts to catalyze development in the Marshall Ridley neighborhood. Also, in 2020, Virginia Tech was represented for the first time on the region's off-shore wind consortium. Other work embarked upon in the region include a regional GO Virginia ERR Fast Access Grant (Small Business Rental Assistance Project), and Data Science for Public Good, a partnership between Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia State University, Virginia Tech and Black BRAND that focuses on the development of a data dashboard to amplify and centralize systemic issues facing Black communities in Hampton Roads.





# ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH

The Center for Economic and Community Engagement provides strategic planning and analysis for national, state, regional, and local partners, and conducts economic impact and market analysis, feasibility studies, and business/operational plans for community and university partners. This was supported by more than \$1.1 million in new funding directed to the center in 2019. This includes a significant regional effort to determine the economic impact of drug diversion programs and a number of locally significant research projects, some of which represented new markets for the center. The center also translates this work into published scholarship, engages in academic and professional service, and provides opportunities for dialogue and learning, advancing the field of economic and community engagement at the national, state, and local levels. In 2020 that included an academic journal article drawn from *Vibrant Virginia* and several national workshops on evaluation. Moving forward, CECE will continue to work to benefit communities in the Commonwealth, forming new partnerships and building on current ones.





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