

CECE Advisory Board Meeting Meeting Minutes

December 13, 2021, 2:00 p.m.-3:30 p.m.

**The Inn at Virginia Tech, Solitude Room, 901 Prices Fork Rd., Blacksburg, VA
24061**

Board members in attendance: Guru Ghosh (Chair), Kiyah J. Duffey, Elizabeth Gilboy (substitute for Rosemary Blieszner), Ed Jones, Elizabeth McClanahan, Susan Short

Board members participating remotely: John Capps, Blair Durham, Omar Faison, Leah Fremouw, Steve Harrison, Tracy Krauchun, Melissa Lubin, Karen Roberto

Board members not in attendance: Deborah Flippo, Jon Greene, Eric Johnston, Bob Stolle

Staff in attendance: Sarah Lyon-Hill, Rachel Jones, Julia Kell, Rich Matheson, John Provo, Emma Ruby, Scott Tate, Mallory Tuttle

The meeting convened at 2:04 PM and adjourned at 3:32 PM.

Advisory Board Chairman Guru Gosh welcomed and thanked the advisory board for joining us. Gosh remarked that the making of this group was low overdue and the transformation of OED into a University Center has been a testament to an office that realized their work could be far-reaching. Gosh said we have to rely on broad networks, thus needing an advisory board to share in the importance of the work and the energy and mission of the Center. The role of CECE is take this university work and apply it to the communities. Gosh commended and shared appreciation for board members and faculty/staff over the last several years.

John Provo walked the group through packet materials and announced that the Center's Future of Transportation and Logistics proposal won a large, competitive planning grant. This proposal is one of 60 EDA grant finalists for Build Back Better Program. Partners on the grant stretch across the Commonwealth. From the 60 national finalists, the EDA will fund 20-30 \$75-100 million projects for regional economic change. The Center's proposal pursued transportation and logistics through autonomous vehicles and logistics of ground and air delivery. The grant would also develop a network of education institutions that offer opportunities, like connecting community colleges and four-year universities to build an ecosystem around automations.

Fiscal Year 2021 Center Report

John Provo began by connecting CECE's work to Virginia Tech's principles. We are one of the few new University Centers to take this advisory board step and wanted to ground

our work in university principles. John went over how CECE is connected to Virginia Tech's principles. One of the first duties as a new Center is to talk about the work and how CECE will operationalize that. John went over the mission, vision, and value statement. The values emulate the mission and vision for the Center.

John Provo highlighted a few details around the Center's annual report. COVID created an extra charge for the Center. GO Virginia has been a source of opportunity to focus projects on economic recovery or pivot projects during COVID. The Center and GO Virginia program were one of the first that put money together for Virginia Tech's lab that developed testing for COVID, and treats technology and innovation as important for economic recovery. While CECE feels good about what has been done, they are conscious of how much more work there is to do. Throughout the summer of 2020, equitable development came under a microscope and the Center remains committed to equitable approaches to development. John talked about the Center's partnerships around equity with Black BRAND, Urban Alliance, and Dr. Omar Faison at VSU. There is also a real interest in the innovation economy and intentionally developing ways to connect innovation with community needs. The Center thinks about how innovation can be imbedded in communities and meet needs.

John went over the Center faculty and staff. CECE covers all the ground in Virginia and has touchstones in Blacksburg, Newport News, and Arlington.

Discussion Topics

- **Advisory Board Roles**

Guru Gosh discussed how land-grants are about all of our lives. He sees the task of boards as to elevate what we are doing beyond aspirations. Guru noted that diverse representation is also important geographically and how important it is to invest in all regions equally. The board should be active and engaged in the broad mission and Guru called on the advisory board to inform decisions based on the different regional climates. Guru said we should be honest and upfront with each other about the challenges and possibilities for this work. There is enough talent in Virginia and Blacksburg to do anything, but not enough time and space to do everything. Virginia Tech, and the advisory board, need diverse perspectives to determine what to do next.

John Provo called on Hampton Roads participants to discuss how their regional perspectives inform the work.

Mallory Tuttle shared excitement around having people in the Hampton Roads region to inform the ways Virginia Tech can support. With more partners, the board can have

different pulses on issues leading to greater partnerships and intentional works. Virginia Tech can support ongoing work in the region by having boots on the ground.

Steve Harrison shared how much in Hampton has to do with the Department of Defense and maritime industries that do not create much economic growth for the region. The EDA in Hampton Roads is looking at innovation and technology as ways to bring new, high quality jobs to the Hampton region. Partnerships with Virginia Tech could help diversify their economy.

Blair Durham shared excitement and interest in Virginia Tech's commitment to equity and wonders how we can enhance that equitable development in their region.

John called on Melissa Lubin in the Shenandoah Valley (GOVA 8). Melissa shared that the experience in the Shenandoah Valley is similar to Hampton. The region is experienced in manufacturing and pursuing new opportunities around tech and innovation to generate economic growth. There is also an opportunity with remote work to bring talent to the region. In 2021, the Shenandoah Valley was one of the fastest growing rural areas in the country with small cities sprinkled throughout. The GOVA region 8 footprint goes up to Winchester and down to Lexington. There are ways to expand what is happening at VT and throughout the Commonwealth and find where the overlaps are statewide.

John Provo moved into the room. Ed Jones shared that VCE has high visibility and his role manages VCE for the whole state. VCE's strategy is to ask communities what their most pressing need is, not just agriculturally. VCE then thinks about how they can help or if they can. Some problems are bigger than what VCE can do alone. The advisory board presents an opportunity for big problems to get many eyes and hands.

Karen Roberto shared that the advisory board presents an opportunity to bring faculty to the table and help identify faculty with strong areas of interest. They have content and faculty expertise that can join a more collaborative team as they address these problems.

Kyah Duffey shared that Fralin Life Sciences Institute has been talking about ways they can use Virginia Tech faculty to make a difference on problems that communities in this area have been facing. Fralin Life Sciences Institute wants to bring experts and investment into communities to address complex problems.

Elizabeth McClanahan introduced herself and added information about her background – came from the world of 4H and rural communities to now be the CEO of the Virginia Tech Foundation. Elizabeth remarked that we have everything in VA, mountains, ports, railroads, natural resources, etc., but there is a lack of education between urban Virginians and more rural Virginians. If this group can think about the industries that are already connected, it would be interesting to center them around economic development. Elizabeth also shared that a win for one region in Virginia can be a win for every region

in the state, particularly if we leverage partnerships well. Virginia Tech could be the entity that calms the waters with different economic development entities and shows the benefit to every part of the state.

John Provo said that there are around 20 economic development groups in the state and more economic development work is moving to the GO Virginia level of nine regions. The winning Virginia Tech Build Back Better proposal came from three GO Virginia regions. John asked broad questions of the board -- how do we reach a broader audience than just leadership? how do we train collaboration or bake that in to economic development? is this a piece we can talk about as a group?

Guru Gosh applauded Elizabeth McClanahan and talked about holding a rural summit at Virginia Tech with CECE (sponsor) and VCE. Virginia Tech could call people here and begin to have those conversations in place at the Inn and have a bigger role in the state. John appreciated this idea and suggested an event where urban meets rural.

- **Advisory Board Membership**

John asked, “who is missing in this room and who do you know who should be here?” to the advisory board. Due to time limitations, this item does not get discussed, but John asked that board members continue thinking about membership and how we can grow.

FY2022 Goals

Scott Tate shared an overview of the Center’s current activities. The Center is working on strategic framework, partnership mapping, branding and marketing, and business structures. Throughout the process of becoming a new Center, and internal strategic planning, the Center is able to lift their heads up from their work and look at the big picture of the center. The Center will have a draft strategic plan by June 2022. They are revisiting the work, the partnerships, our branding and marketing, and how to best tell the stories of our partners, how do we best organize ourselves moving forward.

Current Projects

Scott Tate went over a few examples of this work at the Center currently. The Center was just awarded another EDA University Center designation and will be partnering with Dr. Faison and VSU. The previous EDA University Center grant cycle led to new positions, new partnerships, and new work. ARENI, an example of a national project, helps build higher education networks and connect to share best practices. The Center also works on local projects, like the Newport News Seafood Market. The Center was awarded EDA funding for economic resiliency post-COVID.

Sarah Lyon-Hill shared more about enhancing effectiveness and economic opportunities, and supporting people- and place- based development. Ability One is a cost-benefit analysis of the impacts and benefits of Melwood's Ability One program. Lost Province Cultural Center, in far Southwest VA and North Carolina, looked at the feasibility of offering a cultural center. Supporting people- and place- based development centers talent development as well. The SCHEV internship collaborative program focus on connection and talent development. CARES Act funding led to the Roanoke County Strategic plan. The Center has worked with 3-4 workforce development boards since 2014/2015.

Project Pipeline

Sarah Lyon-Hill and Scott Tate went over current and upcoming projects for the CECE. The Center is moving forward with Vibrant VA, looking at community conversations and how VT and anyone on the steering committee can help the problems communities are facing. The Center is developing a proposal with the Northern Neck Electric Cooperative for an impact analysis, going back to Northern Neck Electric's founding in 1913. With supporting people- and place-based development, the Center is working on VCEDA's strategic plan out in Lee County. This will result in an organizational strategic plan to better serve their area.

Spring Showcase

John Provo and CECE would like to reconvene this group as part of a later community showcase here in Blacksburg. Members were charged to think about what they are interested in seeing and sharing?

Vibrant VA Community Conversations

The Center is developing their first post-COVID community conversations. They use community conversations as opportunities to get in the community and generate more opportunities and partnerships. The Center asked the advisory board to think about if they could help host a community conversations.

Guru Gosh's offered a few last thoughts; he was inspired by listening to the CECE side of the table and the breadth and depth of the work CECE is doing. It was invigorating to hear about CECE's work. Elizabeth McClanahan provided an important reminder of the reality of Virginia. There is huge diversity. It is important to have subsequent convenings in different places across the state with VT mediating that conversation across the state.