



Center for Economic and  
Community Engagement  
400 Stanger St., Suite 109  
Blacksburg, VA 24061

**Joint Meeting:  
Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE) Advisory Board,  
and Virginia Tech Council on Vibrant Virginia**

Inn at Virginia Tech, 901 Prices Fork Rd, Blacksburg, VA 24061

Solitude Room

*(Remote connection information available on request)*

May 23, 2022, 1:00-4:00 PM

Board Members in Attendance: Guru Ghosh (Chair), Kiyah J. Duffey, Rosemary Blieszner, Susan Short, John Capps, David Denan (virtual), Eric Johnston, Deborah Flippo, Bob Stolle (virtual), Leah Fremouw, Jon Greene (virtual), Blair Durham (virtual), Karen Roberto

Vibrant Virginia Council Members in Attendance: Karen Eley Sanders, Tracy Krauchun, Catherine Amelink, Leanna Blevins

Staff in Attendance: John Provo, Scott Tate, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Maggie Cowell, Julia Kell, Afroze Mohamad, Anna Nagorniuk, Dianne Deffenbaugh, Ashley Posthumus, Emma Ruby

Speakers in Attendance: Dwayne Yancey, Andy Alden, Brett Malone, Jon Porter

1:00 Welcome and Introductions

- Guru Ghosh, Vice President Outreach & International Affairs

Meeting began at 1:03 PM and adjourned at 3:51 PM. Guru Ghosh gives a welcome. This is the first meeting of VV and the Advisory Board coming together.

1:30 Director's Report and Board Actions

- John Provo, Director, CECE
- Board minutes for approval: [12.13.2021-CECE Advisory Board Meeting-Minutes.pdf \(vt.edu\)](https://www.vt.edu/cece/advisory-board/minutes)

Advisory board meeting minutes are approved by the Board with an edit to Guru Ghosh's name.

John Provo went over the Board and CECE's charge and CECE's revised mission statement and values. John discussed current and recently closed projects organized by the project's geography. At the national level, John highlighted an economic impact assessment of unmanned systems and a market analysis for steam treatment of export logs. At the multi-regional level, CECE published an economic recovery toolbox, a product of student engagement through their studio class and ongoing conversations with communities around the COVID-19 crisis. In the greater Washington area, CECE is finishing up a cost-benefit analysis of the Ability One program for Melwood, a D.C. based nonprofit organization, in partnership with the Institute for Policy and Governance. In Hampton Roads, CECE partnered with Black BRAND, the Regional Black Chamber of Commerce for the Hampton Roads and Dan River Regions, on a data dashboard accompanying their 150 year plan, engaging Virginia Tech Computer Modeling and Data Analytics capstone students in the project. In the New River and Roanoke Valley regions, CECE finished developing a strategic plan for Roanoke County. In Southwest and Southside Virginia, CECE is beginning work on a GO Virginia Region 3 controlled environment agriculture planning project in partnership with IALR and VT's School of Plant and Environmental Sciences.

John Provo updated the board on CECE's move into the CRC (1900 Kraft Dr) in Spring 2023 and provided

personnel updates for Sarah Lyon-Hill, Anna Nagorniuk, Holly Carroll, and Doris Waddell. John discussed the proposed Center Fellows program for distinguished and emerging Virginia Tech faculty as well as external scholars and practitioners.

Guru Ghosh presented an action to discuss Margaret Cowell as the inaugural designee to help develop and sustain the Center Fellows program. Cowell went over her background and history of collaboration with CECE, stating that she worked with the Center extensively over the past 11 years and considered the Center her “go-to” collaborator. Board members noted that, as the program is designed, it should provide a focus on diverse voices and equitable opportunities. Through design of the program, the Board can work together to define its priorities and goals.

John Provo provided a look ahead to the next Advisory Board convening in Fall 2022, CECE’s annual report, and Vibrant Virginia Community Conversations starting in the summer.

#### 2:00 ACE Cluster Coalition, US EDA Proposal

- John Provo (facilitator)
- Andy Alden, Program Leader, Demonstration and Deployment Research, Division of Freight, Transit, and Heavy Vehicle Safety, Virginia Tech Transportation Institute
- Jon Greene, Associate Director for Strategic Development, Institute for Critical Technologies and Applied Sciences, Virginia Tech
- Brett Malone, Chief Executive Officer, Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center
- Steven McKnight, Vice President for Strategic Alliances, Virginia Tech
- Pamela VandeVord, Associate Dean for Research and Innovation, College of Engineering, Virginia Tech

Jon Greene, Brett Malone, Andy Alden, and Jon Porter discussed the ACE Transportation Cluster Coalition, created through the U.S. E.D.A. Build Back Better Regional Challenge Planning Grant, with John Provo moderating the conversation. John asked Andy and Jon Greene to discuss what the submitted proposal means to their organization.

Andy Alden described the proposal as a culmination of many VTTI initiatives over the years and a much-needed next step for the region given Volvo, Mack, Torc-Daimler, and VTTI’s presence in the ground transportation space. With VTTI’s experience developing the Smart Road and Interstate 81’s diverse topography, weather, and prominence of large trucks, a test corridor focused on technical transportation innovation to develop industry 3.0 was crucial for the project and the region.

For Jon Greene and the Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership (MAAP), the project allowed MAAP to continue their work assessing and mitigating risks for unmanned systems. With more use cases, businesses can go to the FAA with a plan for how companies will use unmanned aircraft systems. One of the barriers for unmanned systems is going beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS). For example, when Wing flies over 460-Business, they need a visual observer a mile or two out to make sure there isn’t anything interfering with the unmanned aircraft. With current technology, we can do BVLOS in a safe manner. Through this project, MAAP can further develop use cases like delivering parts to Volvo and delivering parts from Carter Machinery.

For Brett Malone and the CRC, this project has already paid off with clearing their focus on technology clusters in the CRC. The CRC now has a much stronger recruiting message of what they are doing across the spectrum of electrified vehicles, unmanned systems, and other technologies. There is energy around a hub and the CRC is intentional about, in phase 2 of CRC development, co-locating technology hubs near each other. One of Brett’s charters with CRC was expanding its partnership with the university to commercialize technology and boost economic impact of the university and this project pushes them closer to that goal.

Jon Porter discussed how the Strategic Research Alliances Office seeks to grow the university's research portfolio through strategic partnerships with federal funders and large organizations in the greater Washington region to fund research at Virginia Tech. Their office sees an increased interest in use-inspired research and a desire to translate university research and silos to solutions the nation has. Projects like the ACE Transportation Cluster Coalition push research to solutions. Porter discussed another opportunity with the National Science Foundation to fund regional innovation.

Jon Greene and Andy Alden discussed the "technology heavy, but job focused" direction of the EDA grant as a challenge for their institutions given their extensive background in grant-funded research. Convening diverse collaborators, from the university to communities in the region, industry leaders, and economic development experts, was crucial to the coalition's success and completion of the grant proposal.

VEDP and VIPC were both heavily involved in proposal creation. VEDP's strong cost share showed a commitment to recruiting businesses, producing marketing materials, and conducting industry research to support the ACE Coalition. Along with the EDA funding, the Coalition is pursuing additional funding, like the NSF grant and GO Virginia funding. The EDA proposal was a unique opportunity to build the coalition. If it were a DOT, NSF, or any more research focused opportunity, the coalition may not have been so built out and broad.

#### 2:30 Vibrant Virginia

- Impact Fund Projects Update, John Provo and Julia Kell, Communications Specialist, CECE
- "Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality," Maggie Cowell, Associate Professor Urban Affairs and Planning, Virginia Tech, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Associate Director for Research Development, CECE
- Vibrant Virginia 3.0 Proposal, Scott Tate Associate Director, CECE and Tracy Krauchen, Director of Foundation Relations, Link + License + Launch, Virginia Tech

The Board watched the Vibrant Virginia impact fund video.

Sarah Lyon-Hill and Maggie Cowell presented on the Vibrant Virginia book, which was based on Vibrant Virginia 1.0. The book had authors from VT as well as other universities and institutions. As of May 15<sup>th</sup>, there were 3000 copies downloaded or purchased. Through the Vibrant Virginia program, Sarah and Maggie ran a series of webinars in 2021 pairing chapter authors with practitioners or industry experts to talk through what is going on the ground. Sarah did an interview with Business Matters out of Roanoke. Sarah and Maggie drafted an op-ed on urban-rural divide in Virginia.

Scott Tate presented on the Vibrant Virginia program and proposed Vibrant Virginia 3.0. Tate reported out on Vibrant Virginia 1.0, which created the Vibrant Virginia book, a state policy report, built external community relationships, started a Campus Communities of Practice, project seed funding, and established Beyond Boundaries Vibrant Virginia project goals. Tate reported out on Vibrant Virginia 2.0, which started a virtual conference series, the VT Council on Vibrant Virginia, and the Vibrant Virginia Impact Fund. As each phase has built on each other, Tate presented the proposed plan for Vibrant Virginia 3.0, proposed to continue the VT Council on Vibrant Virginia and start the Vibrant Virginia Community and Faculty Fellows Program with a proposed co-investment opportunity. Tate discussed the need, proposed funding structure, and proposed timeline for the Community and Faculty Fellows program.

#### 3:00 A Commonwealth of Contradictions: a discussion about government, media, and community voice

- Dwayne Yancey, Executive Editor, Cardinal News

Dwayne Yancey, the editor and founder of Cardinal News, a nonprofit news site focused on Southwest Virginia, discussed government, media, and community voice. While the scope and size of government has

grown over the years, there has been less scrutiny of government due to shrinking newspapers. News and news readers have moved online, but advertisers have not moved with newspapers. Advertisers have moved online but to Facebook and Google where they can tailor their advertisements to specific geographies and populations. With more tailored options for advertisers, newspapers have not been able to compete and garner the necessary advertisements to fund their work.

With the shrink of newspapers due to the lack of advertisement revenue, local newspapers cannot afford to cover topics like politics and education, or to give in-depth reports. At the local level, this has led to less context and information around local conflicts. With less information distributed to communities about the implications of local policies, there could be less of a community voice in decision making.

As newspapers become more difficult to maintain, more and more family-owned papers are selling to a handful of large companies. Without local voices in rural areas, rural communities are easy to stereotype and complex situations in communities are reduced to soundbites or stories that fit stereotypes.

Meeting adjourned at 3:51 PM.

4:00 Adjournment and reception follows