

## CHARTER

November 2020

### **Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)**

#### **Overview:**

Transitioning the Office of Economic Development (OED) to the *Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)* will increase its visibility and create a stronger campus presence and clearer identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders.

There are compelling opportunities that motivate OED to transition to a University Center. Economic development remains a central focus for Virginia Tech. The university is a critical resource to the commonwealth, individual communities around the state, and companies throughout Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners. In this area, OED has a university-wide role, spanning the colleges and institutes. OED serves as a gateway to the resources and intellectual assets of Virginia Tech, building teams and partnerships, and playing a leading role in projects and initiatives. Propelled by the university's focus on increasing multi-sector collaboration, **Beyond Boundaries**, CECE will be central to strategic approaches and practical models for economic and community engagement. The center will strengthen Virginia Tech's place as an exemplar in advancing its global land-grant mission helping to create, retain, and enhance the quality of economic opportunities around the commonwealth.

#### **Background:**

Under its current name established in 2004, the Office of Economic Development has provided essential support and resources to university faculty and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities. OED has received multiple projects funded by the U.S. Economic Development Administration and has led the university's successful certification as an economically engaged institution by the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities. Examples of other sponsors and partners include the Appalachian Regional Commission, the Ford Foundation, General Dynamics, the Kauffman Foundation, MITRE, the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Small Business Administration, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, and Volvo Trucks.

#### **Vision:**

The Center 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. This vision encompasses the university's engagement, discovery, and learning missions. CECE will make Virginia Tech the first and best stop for partners looking to define their pathways to prosperity, giving form to ideas and helping take ideas to action. CECE will connect the intellectual capital of Virginia Tech faculty, students, and other resources with public, private, and non-profit partners to improve economic, social, health, and environmental conditions across the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the well-being and shared prosperity of all of its citizens. CECE will provide strategic planning and analysis for national, state regional, and local partners, and conduct economic impact and market analysis, feasibility studies and business/operational plans for community and university partners. CECE will also translate work into published scholarship, providing opportunities for dialogue and learning, and advancing the field of economic and community development. CECE will be a critical resource to the commonwealth, individual communities around the state, and companies throughout Virginia .

## **Goals:**

### Land Grant Exemplar

- Support university efforts to be an exemplar of land-grant economic and community engagement.
- Provide opportunities and build capacity for the university's high-quality involvement in economic and community engagement in Virginia, the United States, and globally.
- Identify and promote high-priority themes and issues that will establish and leverage the university's expertise and excellence in economic and community engagement.
- Lead the development of innovative approaches to addressing economic, community, and industry challenges, and opportunities.
- Increase contributions to international engagement and economic development programs.

### Regional Partnerships

- Focus on comparative advantages at the intersection of talent, innovation, and place that inform new and enhanced partnerships with local, state, and national partners.

- Provide technical support and assistance to public, private, and non-profit partners.
- Forge strategic alliances that help faculty, departments, and centers across the university to partner with communities and companies in ways that grow Virginia Tech's capacity and the economy of the commonwealth .

### Thought Leadership

- Provide leadership for new ideas and support engaged scholarship including opportunities for publication, dialogue, and shared learning that advance the field of economic and community engagement.
- Generate and communicate information to internal and external audiences about the university and CECE's activities, successes, and expertise.

### Growth

- Increase and diversify funding sources with the goal of growing the Center's impact on the commonwealth and its program and project portfolio.

### **Clientele:**

The Center will operate at the university level, serving faculty, administrators, staff, and students involved in economic and community engagement. The Center's economic and community engagement work is central to the history and mission of Virginia Tech as a land-grant institution and the Center will be a critical resource to the commonwealth, individual communities around the state, and companies throughout Virginia. In this role, CECE will be a gateway to the resources and intellectual assets of Virginia Tech. CECE will operate university-wide, spanning the colleges and institutes.

As part of a public land-grant university with the mission to serve the needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Center recognizes mutually beneficial relationships with a wide range of agencies and citizens, and continues to expand and enhance those types of relationships. CECE is the university's primary point of contact for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, as well as economic and community development officials at both regional and local levels. CECE handles inquiries from state, county and city agencies when they are working with companies interested in locating or expanding in Virginia. The Center also works with public and private economic development stakeholders building relationships with industry sectors that are important to Virginia's future, such as autonomous systems, cyber security, and data analytics. CECE will also work with those

entities and other partners, such as non-profits and regional planning and workforce organizations, on development-related challenges, opportunities, and analysis.

Clientele and partners will include an array of national partners, such as the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the Kauffmann Foundation, the Association for Public and Land-grant Universities, and the University Economic Development Association. The Center is best characterized as a "Think and Do Tank" which performs both analytical work and helps to implement recommendations. A sampling of the Center's current projects and programs are included in the following narrative.

#### Economic and Community Development Program

OED's economic and community development work provides strategic planning and analysis for state, regional and local partners, as well as economic impact and market analysis, feasibility studies and business/operational plans for community and university partners. Some examples include:

- The U.S. Economic Development Administration funded **Virginia Regional Competitiveness**, a multi-institution Economic Development Administration University Centers program. The project strengthens regional economic ecosystems and develops innovation infrastructure and support systems by enhancing connection and diversification through commercialization, talent development, and entrepreneurial support activities.
- **Growth and Opportunity (GO) Virginia Region 2.** Regional Economic Growth and Diversification. OED functions as the state's designated support organization for the Region 2 GO Virginia Council, providing on-going and comprehensive administrative support, technical assistance, and project development for the council and for organizations and localities across the New River, Roanoke, and Lynchburg areas. To date more than \$1 million in Virginia Tech-led projects have been funded through this program.
- **The Rural Virginia Initiative.** OED led this multi-university partnership, chaired by President Sands, to build more efficient and effective engagement by higher education across rural Virginia on a number of economic and community development issues. Products include a state-mandated policy study, an ongoing inventory of university programs in rural Virginia, a series of partner working groups on key topics, and plans for a statewide engagement conference.
- The U.S. Economic Development Administration funded Regional Innovation Strategies program, **Catalyst**. OED oversaw the collaborative project in

conjunction with the Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology, Apex Center for Entrepreneurs, and the Office of the Vice President for Research and Innovation. The main components of the project include delivery of proof of concept and commercialization services; strengthening connections between the Virginia Tech and Roanoke-Blacksburg innovation ecosystems; and securing investment and job creation opportunities in the Roanoke-Blacksburg region.

- **Vibrant Virginia.** OED initiated and coordinates this new university-level initiative to enhance the economic engagement of Virginia Tech faculty and students working on issues critical to overlapping economic, social, and environmental challenges in society. The partners include Outreach and International Affairs, the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment, Virginia Cooperative Extension, the College Access Collaborative, and School of Public and International Affairs. The initiative supports faculty from across the university in conducting projects with community partners in both urban and rural regions of Virginia, strengthens strategic relationships between the university and regional stakeholders, and develops scholarly products about development policy -- a strategic expansion area for the university.
- **Entrepreneur Ecosystem Assessment and Development.** The Kauffman Foundation funded OED and partners from Urban Affairs and Planning in the School of Public and International Affairs, and the Discovery Analytics Center to conduct research on the nature and function of entrepreneur ecosystems in mixed urban-rural regions and how to measure their development. Building on a framework for metrics developed by Kauffman, this work included a partnership with stakeholders in Roanoke and Blacksburg to pilot a regional system of metrics and benchmarking. The work has resulted in scholarly products and an on-going relationship with the Kauffmann Foundation.
- **POWER and Rapid Response.** OED helped secure nearly \$4 million in U.S. Department of Labor funding to support economic diversification and dislocated worker training in southwest Virginia, in response to job declines in the coal and manufacturing sector. The work included comprehensive analysis of industry sectors, key occupations, supply chain relationships, supportive services gap analysis, employer engagement, and strategic planning.
- **Unmanned systems.** OED has played a key role in developing Virginia's place in this emerging sector, alongside partners like the Institute for Critical Technologies and Applied Sciences, Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership, and Department of Aerospace and Ocean Engineering. OED collaborated on a

report to the commonwealth that led to a \$2 million start-up package from the state to operate Mid-Atlantic Aviation Partnership's Federal Aviation Administration test site. Since that time, OED has helped this partnership identify its ongoing economic impacts. The Office of Economic Development has also partnered with university and industry leaders on the launch of a new chapter for the leading global trade group in this sector which highlights Virginia Tech's role for international audiences. OED recently completed a national study of economic and social impacts of drone delivery. Wing, a Google spinout company, made history when it launched the first U.S. commercial drone delivery service in Virginia. OED is currently working with Virginia Tech Aerospace and Ocean Engineering faculty on a National Science Foundation project focused on the impact of drone technology in critical infrastructure inspection across the United States.

- **Community development and economic planning.** OED has also helped localities across Virginia with strategic planning and analysis, identifying opportunities and challenges for achieving prosperity. This work ranges widely and includes: the reuse of a historic depot in Rural Retreat; the creation of outdoor recreation programs across southwest Virginia; developing opportunities for information technology jobs in the New River Valley; sustaining agricultural in southern Virginia; and understanding the economic impact of drug courts across the state.

#### Regional Partnership Program

OED's Regional Partnership Program initiates and manages important industry, government and non-profit relationships that benefit the university and the regions of Virginia. This includes:

- Driving university economic engagement in Hampton Roads. Collaborating with the Virginia Tech Foundation on university and community engagement to support the launch of the new Tech Center Research Park and securing \$3 million in federal grant funding to support the foundation's investment in the Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center.
- Forging alliances with companies that provide research funding for faculty, career opportunities for students, and bring experiential learning and industry insights to the classroom. Examples include partnerships with the Aerospace Corporation, Capital One, General Dynamics, MITRE, NetApp, Northrup Grumman, and Octo Consulting. OED has also facilitated industry support for new degree programs, notably the successful Computational Modeling and

Data Analytics major and a new Behavioral Decision Science program in the College of Science.

- Building robust relationships with state and local economic development agencies, to strengthen ties with Virginia companies and recruit national and international companies. This work includes introducing companies to relevant departments, institutes and centers at Virginia Tech, to give companies confidence that Virginia can meet their workforce and research needs.
- Working with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, OED helped to create the MITRE University Innovation Exchange. In 2020, OED coordinated a response to MITRE research needs that resulted in awards of \$500,000 to diverse faculty in research areas including artificial intelligence, space science, and wireless communications. OED also helped connect Mack Trucks to faculty and students who assisted with the design of a truck that will be produced at a Roanoke County factory.
- Developing industry programs for specialized research groups to expand their relationships and geographic reach. This includes building new partnerships for the Discovery Analytics Program and working with leadership at the Center for Space Science and Engineering Research to find new funding opportunities and to expand and re-engage with its advisory board. OED collaborated with the Center for Power Electronics Systems on obtaining advice from relevant industry executives, helped the Center for Bioinspired Science and Technology with its outreach, and introduced the Virginia Center for Autonomous Systems to relevant companies.
- Initiating partnerships with non-profit and governmental organizations. Examples include Urban Alliance, a high school internships program that advances university priorities including diversity and inclusion and experiential learning. The Urban Alliance partnership has enabled 40 students from under-resourced backgrounds to have internships at Virginia Tech and partner companies. Working with the College Access Collaborative and university admissions, many of these interns have elected to attend Virginia Tech.
- Collaborated with the Virginia Tech College of Engineering, the University of Maryland, and George Washington University to implement a regional Innovation Corps (I-Corps) funded by the National Science Foundation. The \$3.75 million in funding enabled the three universities to provide training and mentoring to entrepreneurial faculty and students in order to bring university discoveries from lab to market. OED led efforts to collaborate with Hampton

University, Howard University and North Carolina A & T to support their applications for I-Corps sites.

### **Virginia Tech Partners:**

Through its broad mission of research, engagement, and learning, CECE will collaborate with most of the university's colleges and research institutes for expertise, including:

- College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
- College of Architecture and Urban Studies
- College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- College of Natural Resources and Environment
- College of Engineering
- College of Science
- Pamplin College of Business
- Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine
- Virginia Tech Transportation Institute
- Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine and Fralin Biomedical Research Institute
- Fralin Life Sciences Institute
- Hume Center for National Security and Technology
- Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science
- Institute for Creativity, Arts, and Technology
- The Institute for Society, Culture and Environment

Additional key university affiliated partners will include Virginia Cooperative Extension, the Virginia Tech Foundation, and the Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center. OED already serves as the home for an imbedded statewide extension specialist and, in partnership with the Virginia Tech Newport News Center, a position located in the Tech Center Research Park.



**Governance:**

CECE will be a university-level center housed in Outreach and International Affairs reporting to the Associate Vice President for Engagement. The Center Executive Director will plan and develop a program of work in consultation with the Vice President of OIA and the Associate Vice President for Engagement, including providing the annual center report, and other reports as requested.

As part of its governance structure, the Center will form a stakeholder/advisory committee to support and provide guidance to the aims and objectives of the Center, including serving as a conduit of information for university and other stakeholders on the Center's economic and community engagement work; generating new ideas and directions for the Center's future research and engagement; and identifying topics and target areas to further the Center's work and its capacity to contribute to the university's goal of becoming a leading global university and economically engaged exemplar.

The stakeholder committee will be comprised of the Executive Vice President and Provost or his/her designee, who will serve as the Administrator of the Center; the university Chief Financial Officer or his/her designee; the Academic Deans of collaborating colleges or their designees; Directors of collaborating centers and institutes; Heads of Departments and faculty who collaborate closely with the Center's work. The Center will invite distinguished and promising Virginia Tech faculty as well as external scholars and practitioners to become affiliated with the Center. External stakeholders will also be engaged and will draw on collaborating agencies and organizations like the U.S. Economic Development Administration, Virginia Economic Development Partnership, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, Virginia Economic Development Administration, as well as individual practitioners and community leaders who work closely with the Center.

**Anticipated Resource Needs:**

OED is supported by a combination of base university funding, sponsored projects, and returned overhead. The average annual budget over the past five years was \$1 million. This will provide adequate support to initially launch the CECE's planned activities.

**Forecast of External Funding:**

External support for university economic and community engagement is often counter-cyclical. For example, during the 2008-2010 recession, OED generated more than \$20 million in external grant funding for projects in western Virginia to combat the downturn that impacted the university and the state. During the expansion that followed, OED

received funding from agencies and industry partners to support proof of concept and faculty research projects involving expanding industries, as well as community partners looking to find their paths to prosperity. In the current recession, OED is supported by both state and federal agencies looking to address the needs of communities across Virginia. The Center anticipates this pattern will be sustainable for some time to come.

### **Anticipated Distribution of Funds to University Partners:**

Over the last decade, OED has provided more than \$8 million in direct project funding for university partners. In the past five years, the office has provided more than \$600,000 in direct support for graduate and undergraduate students. Additional funds are generated annually for economic engagement by others. Recent examples include OED-coordinated investment by MITRE of \$500,000 for faculty working on autonomy, cyber, and space, and the OED-led federal funding of \$500,000 for projects supporting faculty entrepreneurs in computer science, medical devices, and energy systems. The Center will continue OED's track record of securing funding to support the activities of Virginia Tech faculty collaborators and to boost economic engagement across the university.

### **Statement of Executive Director's Qualifications:**

John Provo will direct the Center. He currently provides leadership for the university in the design and implementation of its economic engagement mission. A "pracademic," he has more than 20 years of experience in higher education and government. He builds relationships between businesses, communities, and the university and leads a team that delivers applied research projects that create economic opportunities.

Provo received his Ph.D. from the School of Urban Studies and Planning at Portland State University. He received a master's degree in Urban and Regional Planning from Virginia Commonwealth University in 1999 and a bachelor's degree in government from the College of William and Mary in 1989. While in Richmond, he worked for Virginia's Secretary of Commerce and Trade on implementation of revisions to the state's workforce development system.

He presents regularly before scholarly and professional associations, serving as President-elect of the University Economic Development Association and maintains active affiliations with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities Council on Economic and Community Engagement, the State Science and Technology Association, and Virginia Economic Developers Association. Since 2005, Provo has taught a graduate studio course in economic development in the School of Public and International Affairs.

**Letters of Support** (see attachment)

Robert Stolle, President & CEO, Center for Innovative Technology

Erik Johnston, Director, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

Matthew Hulver, Executive Director, Fralin Life Sciences Institute

Karen A. Roberto, Executive Director, Institute for Society, Culture and Environment

Stefan Duma, Executive Director, Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science

Catherine Amelink, Associate Vice Provost for Learning Systems Innovation

Evan Feinman, Executive Director, Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission

Edwin Jones, Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension

January 20, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road, Suite 120  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you to share my excitement and commitment to the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement. Virginia Tech serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. The problems we work on together are increasingly connected with economic, social, health, and environmental issues that have bearing on the well-being and shared prosperity of all of the state's citizens.


The proposed center, created at no additional cost to the commonwealth, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have played key roles in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

CIT has a long and productive history with the Office of Economic Development (OED). For example, OED has been a valuable partner on federally- and Commonwealth-funded regional and state technology-based economic development studies. Our engagement resulting from OED's roles in GO Virginia, including OED's Region 2 leadership and the insightful reports it has prepared, is vital. Dr. Provo's leadership and continuing role in Virginia's important University -Based Economic Development (UBED) group is another important connection.

The establishment of the center will increase the visibility of the economic engagement function and create a stronger university presence and clearer identity for partners. Virginia Tech's mission of service has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

I look forward to continuing our work alongside of you, faculty, graduate students, and our colleagues in economic development, innovation and entrepreneurship to create greater impact throughout the Commonwealth. I will be pleased serve in a leadership, advisory capacity, as needed. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Robert Stolle  
President & CEO

cc: Nancy Vorona



Ralph S. Northam  
Governor

R. Brian Ball  
Secretary of  
Commerce and Trade

# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

## DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Erik C. Johnston  
Director

January 21, 2020

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road, Suite 120  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you to express my support for the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement. The university serves as a critical resource to the Commonwealth and communities across Virginia and the center holds promise to help us respond in bold new ways to the challenges we are facing.

I am confident that the center will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. We recognize the important contributions these offices have made in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic and community development activities.

The Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has a broad mission, one that is supported by the type of engagement, research, and forward-thinking ideas this center would advance. We recognize the critical role universities have played and will continue to play in Virginia's future - and the timing of this proposal is critical as we work to mitigate the economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

We value our partnership and are committed to collaborating to find solutions to these challenges. DHCD will be pleased to assist and partner in advancing this new endeavor. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Erik Johnston  
Director  
Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development



Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development | Partners for Better Communities  
Main Street Center | 600 East Main Street, Suite 300 Richmond, VA 23219

[www.dhcd.virginia.gov](http://www.dhcd.virginia.gov) | Phone (804) 371-7000 | Fax (804) 371-7090 | Virginia Relay 7-1-1



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hulvermw@vt.edu

January 20, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you today in support of the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement submitted to the University Council by the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs. The university serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners, both seeking to advance economic, social, health, and environmental conditions, and the well-being and shared prosperity of all of its citizens.

The center, created at no additional cost to the university, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have provided essential support and external resources to university faculty and students, and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

The establishment of the center will increase opportunities for faculty and graduate students as well as create a stronger presence and identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders. Elevating the *Ut Prosim* Difference has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

Specific areas of interest and investment by the Fralin Life Sciences Institute, that I believe align well with the mission of the Center for Economic and Community Engagement, include research and outreach efforts focused on grand challenges at the intersection of the environment and human health.

I fully endorse the establishment of a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to working alongside of you and colleagues in the new center to expand our economic engagement efforts on behalf of the university. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M W Hulver', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew W. Hulver, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Fralin Life Sciences Institute  
Professor, Department of Human Nutrition, Foods, and Exercise  
Virginia Tech



January 22, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road, Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am pleased to submit this letter of support of the proposal to establish a university-level **Center for Economic and Community Engagement (CECE)** under the auspice of Outreach and International Affairs. The university serves as a critical resource to the Commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners, both seeking to advance economic, social, health, and environmental conditions, and the well-being and shared prosperity of its citizens.

As I understand, the center, created at no additional cost to the university, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development (OED). Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have provided essential support and external resources to university faculty and students, and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

As a university research investment institute, the Institute for Society, Culture and Environment (ISCE) provides leadership and strategic support for faculty and Centers pursuing funding for innovative, interdisciplinary research and scholarship that address critical human and societal concerns. ISCE has supported OED in its previous efforts and several faculty members associated with ISCE have collaborated on projects with OED. The plans for CECE align well with the institute's mission and the work of the Policy Destination Area for which ISCE is the administrative home.

The establishment of CECE will increase opportunities for faculty and graduate students as well as create a stronger presence and identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders. Elevating the *Ut Prosim* Difference has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

I fully endorse the establishment Center for Economic and Community Engagement as a university-level center and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to working alongside of you and colleagues in the new center to expand our economic engagement efforts on behalf of the university.

Sincerely,



Karen A. Roberto, Ph.D.  
University Distinguished Professor  
Executive Director, Institute for Society, Culture and Environment



INSTITUTE FOR CRITICAL TECHNOLOGY  
AND APPLIED SCIENCE  
VIRGINIA TECH.

Stefan M. Duma, PhD  
Harry C. Wyatt Professor  
Director, ICTAS  
325 Stanger St  
Kelly Hall, Suite 410  
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061  
P: (540) 231-1929

January 20, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you today in support of the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement submitted to the University Council by the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs. The university serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners, both seeking to advance economic, social, health, and environmental conditions, and the well-being and shared prosperity of all of its citizens.

The center, created at no additional cost to the university, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have provided essential support and external resources to university faculty and students, and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

The establishment of the center will increase opportunities for faculty and graduate students as well as create a stronger presence and identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders. Elevating the *Ut Prosim* Difference has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

I fully endorse the establishment of a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to working alongside of you and colleagues in the new center to expand our economic engagement efforts on behalf of the university. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Stefan M. Duma, PhD  
Harry C. Wyatt Professor of Engineering  
Executive Director, Institute for Critical Technology and Applied Science  
Editor-in-Chief, Annals of Biomedical Engineering

January 20, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you today in support of the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement submitted to the University Council by the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs. The university serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners, both seeking to advance economic, social, health, and environmental conditions, and the well-being and shared prosperity of all of its citizens.

The center, created at no additional cost to the university, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have provided essential support and external resources to university faculty and students, and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

The Office of the Executive Vice Provost, Learning Systems Innovation has worked with the Office of Economic Development to increase connections with communities to advance the commitment of the Destination Area initiative to advance solutions to complex problems that impact the human condition. Partnerships have yielded funded transdisciplinary research and learning opportunities for faculty and students that range from local to global in impact.

The establishment of the center will increase these opportunities as well as create a stronger presence and identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders. Elevating the *Ut Prosim* Difference has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring. I fully endorse the establishment of a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to working alongside of you and colleagues in the new center to expand our economic engagement efforts on behalf of the university. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,



Catherine T. Amelink, Ph.D.  
Associate Vice Provost for Learning Systems Innovation  
[amelink@vt.edu](mailto:amelink@vt.edu)



# *COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA*

*Office of the Governor*

*Secretary of Commerce and Trade*

January 20, 2020

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road, Suite 120  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you to share my excitement and commitment to the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement. The university serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, the problems we work on together are all more connected with economic, social, health, and environmental issues all contributing to the well-being and shared prosperity of all of the state's citizens.

The center, created at no additional cost to the commonwealth, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have played key roles in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

As a frequent partner in - and funder of - the Center's work, I am confident that this evolution will benefit both the work of the Center and all Virginians.

The establishment of the center will increase the visibility of the economic engagement function and create a stronger university presence and clearer identity for partners. Your mission of service has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

I fully endorse the establishment of a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to continuing our work alongside of you, faculty, graduate students, and our colleagues in economic development to create greater impact throughout the commonwealth. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Evan Feinman".

Evan Feinman  
Executive Director  
Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission



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**Office of the Director**  
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[www.ext.vt.edu](http://www.ext.vt.edu)

January 20, 2021

Guru Ghosh, Vice President  
Outreach and International Affairs  
902 Prices Fork Road  
Blacksburg VA 24061

Dear Dr. Ghosh:

I am writing you today in support of the proposal to establish a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement submitted to the University Council by the Commission on Outreach and International Affairs. The university serves as a critical resource to the commonwealth and communities across Virginia. Increasingly, those relationships are more holistic engagements, representing a mutually beneficial exchange between the university and its partners, both seeking to advance economic, social, health, and environmental conditions, and the well-being and shared prosperity of all of its citizens.

The center, created at no additional cost to the university, will build on the long-standing mission of Outreach and International Affairs and the Office of Economic Development. Working across a range of economic and community issues, these offices have provided essential support and external resources to university faculty and students, and played a key role in conducting analysis and assistance in support of local, regional, and state economic development activities.

Virginia Cooperative Extension has had a long-standing relationship with the Office of Economic Development. In fact, we have effectively shared a faculty member in ensuring our efforts are connected, complementary and synergistic. The Office of Economic Development has frequently worked with local VCE offices in conducting projects, and Agency 229 has contracted with OED in the past for development of impact documentation of VCE and VAES programs.

The establishment of the center will increase opportunities for faculty and graduate students as well as create a stronger presence and identity for external clients, partners, and stakeholders. Elevating the *Ut Prosim* Difference has never been more important, addressing critical societal needs such as the current economic and health crisis, along with longer-term post-COVID economic restructuring.

VIRGINIAPOLYTECHNICINSTITUTEANDSTATEUNIVERSITY

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I fully endorse the establishment of a university-level Center for Economic and Community Engagement and will serve in a leadership, advisory capacity as needed. I look forward to working alongside of you and colleagues in the new center to expand our economic engagement efforts on behalf of the university. If I can be of further assistance, please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edwin J. Jones". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edwin" and last name "Jones" clearly distinguishable.

Edwin J. Jones  
Director, Virginia Cooperative Extension  
Associate Dean, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences