



Center for Economic and Community Engagement Advisory Board Meeting
Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center
1900 Kraft Drive, Moss Research Building, Blacksburg
Curiosity Conference Room
March 30, 2026, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

- 10:00 AM Welcome and Introductions
Guru Ghosh, Vice President, Outreach & International Affairs
- 10:15 AM Director's Report and Board Actions
- *John Provo, Executive Director, CECE*
 - *Approval of September 11, 2025, Board Minutes*
- 11:15 AM Panel Discussion: Your year in economic engagement
- *John Provo (facilitator)*
 - *Alvaro Muñiz, Director in the Office for International, Community, and Economic Engagement, Association for Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU)*
 - *Ken Poole, CEO/President, Center for Regional Economic Competitiveness/University Economic Developers Association*
 - *Rebecca Robinson, Associate Vice President for Economic Development and Industry Relations, Oregon State University*
- 12:00 PM Lunch Served
- 12:15 PM 12:15 PM Group discussion/working lunch
- *APLU Innovation and Economic Prosperity reflection questions*
- 1:00 PM Adjournment

ZOOM

<https://virginiatech.zoom.us/j/85751546119?pwd=f1FA3NbnrWfycxxNtnLSnqXP3BAfam.1>

Meeting ID: 857 5154 6119
Passcode: 389326


CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
 Director's Report
 Spring 2026


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Our Charge

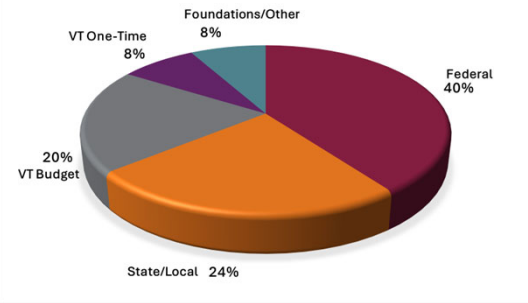
- Increasing the university's impact
- Elevating the *Ut Prosim* difference
- Maintaining a transdisciplinary focus
- Addressing the urban-rural divide



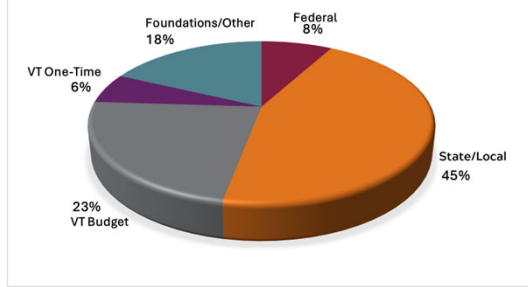
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Funding Landscape

Average Sources: FY 23, 24, 25



Current Sources



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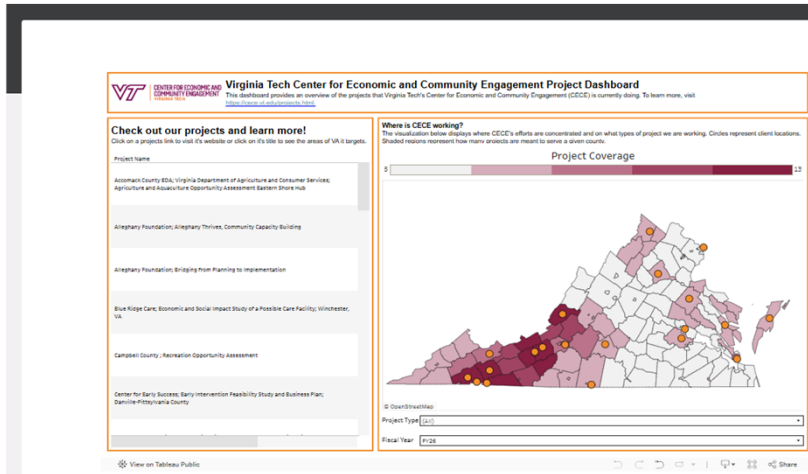
Program Updates



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New Tableau map



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Regional Transformation

GO Virginia

Region 2, New River, Lynchburg, Roanoke-Alleghany Regions

- Support Organization Services

Region 5, Hampton Roads

- Secure Energy Future Center; from Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center

Region 5 and 6, Hampton Roads and Coastal Virginia

- Promoting Careers in Aquaculture; Hampton Roads and Coastal Virginia; with Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research Center

Region 7, Northern Virginia

- Virginia Alliance for Semiconductor Technology; from Virginia Tech Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

US Economic Development Administration

- University Center Program; GO Virginia Region 1, 2, 3, parts of 4, 5, 6 and 8; with Virginia State University
- University Economic Development Association; National University Center Cohort Program

Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance

- Strategic Services, Roanoke and Blacksburg

Virginia Tech

- ARC and US EDA Industrialized Construction and AM2 grant development; Division of Research and Innovation



Students and teachers from the Northern Neck area of Virginia participate in the Promoting Careers in Aquaculture program.



The Roanoke Blacksburg Innovation Alliance grows local tech startups through its mentoring program, RAMP.

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Community Innovations



Virginia Tech faculty visited Mt. Rogers to kick off the Maple Syrup Production Cooperative project.



A 35,000-square-foot facility in Accomack County will be the site of a feasibility study that will explore blue catfish processing.

- Accomack County EDA; Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services; **Agriculture and Aquaculture Opportunity Assessment Eastern Shore Hub**
- Allegheny Foundation; **Allegheny Thrives: Community Capacity Building**; Allegheny County and the City of Covington, Virginia
- American Farmland Trust; **Advisory Services**; Statewide
- Campbell County; **Recreation Opportunity Assessment**
- City of Roanoke; **Hope and Home Task Force Facilitation**; with Virginia Tech Roanoke Center
- Culpeper County; **Courthouse Scenario Planning & Facilitation**
- Mt. Rogers Fire and Rescue Squad; Wellspring Foundation; **Feasibility Assessment for Maple Syrup Production Cooperative**; Grayson County
- Virginia Cooperative Extension; **Community Economic Programming Development**, Statewide
- Virginia Tech College of Agriculture and Life Sciences; **Cultivating Rural Vitality in Virginia Food Systems**; from Virginia Tech Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation
- Virginia Tech Outreach and International Affairs; Vibrant Virginia; **Housing Security and Landscape Assessment, Roanoke**; with Virginia Tech Roanoke Center
- Virginia Tech Outreach and International Affairs and Virginia Cooperative Extension; **Vibrant Virginia**; Statewide

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Impact, Design and Evaluation

- Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC); **Evaluation of ARC Outdoor Tourism and Recreation Grants**
- Blue Ridge Care; **Economic and Social Impact Study of a Possible Care Facility**; Winchester
- Chesterfield County Economic Development; **Best Practices and Benchmarking Research**
- Middlesex County Economic Development Authority; GOVAR6; **Blue Catfish Feasibility and Strategic Growth Study**
- National Science Foundation; **EPIC: Evaluation Capacity Building for Leveraging Innovation to Grow High Tech and University Partnerships (LIGHT UP) collaborative**; with SUNY Canton, Kean University, Marymount University, Bowie College, and Alvernia University
- Virginia Cooperative Extension; **Landscape assessment and gap analysis for Community Leadership Programming**; statewide
- Virginia Cooperative Extension; Natural Resources Forestry, and Environment Initiative; **Impact Assessment**; statewide
- Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research and Extension Center; **Economic Impact Analysis**, Hampton
- Virginia Highlands Festival; Well Spring Foundation; **Economic Impact of the Virginia Highlands Festival**; Abingdon
- Virginia Innovation Partnership Corporation; **Innovation Districts Policy Paper**; statewide
- Virginia Tech Coastal Collaborator; **Program Strategic Planning**; Hampton, VA



Attendees at the arts and crafts show at the Virginia Highlands Festival.



Virginia Tech Coastal Collaborator

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Talent Development and Experiential Learning

New River-Mt Rogers Workforce Development Board, Southwest Virginia

- Appalachian Regional Commission; **READY outreach and community engagement plan**
- **Career Lattice Revisions**
- **Data Analysis**

Urban Alliance; **STEM Internships**, Northern Virginia

Virginia State Council of Higher Education; **VTOP Region 2 Institution Led Regional Partnership Grant**; New River, Lynchburg, Roanoke-Alleghany; from Virginia Tech Career and Professional Services

Virginia Tech Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering

- **Major Design Experience Projects**
- **Space @ VT; Industry Collaboration Development**

Virginia Tech; Translational Plant Sciences Center; **Symposium planning**

Wellspring Foundation; **K12 Teacher and School Needs Assessment**, Washington, Grayson, Russell, and Smyth Counties; with Virginia Tech SWVA Center



Associate Director for Impact and Evaluation Elli Travis facilitates the Translational Plant Sciences Center symposium.



Urban Alliance interns

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Pipeline - Under Review

Appalachian Regional Commission, **ARISE Implementation Grant; Setting Appalachia's Workforce on Track to Adapt to the Changing Construction Industry**; Virginia and Tennessee

GO Virginia Regions 2&3; **Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials Tech Hub Implementation Grant**; Danville, New River Valley, Lynchburg Region, Roanoke Valley, and Southern Virginia, with the New River Valley Regional Commission

Friends of Southwest Virginia; **Economy Assessment & Development Initiative**

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, **Cooperative Institute for Reducing the Seafood Trade Deficit Through Focused Strategic Development for Domestic Aquaculture**, from Virginia Seafood Agricultural Research Center

National Institute of Food and Agriculture; **USDA Participatory Food System Planning**; Virginia, from Virginia Tech Center for food Systems and Community Transformation

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education; **Farm labor sustainability and resilience**; Virginia & Texas; from Virginia Tech Center for food Systems and Community Transformation

Southwest Virginia Workforce Development Board; **Regional Youth Workforce Assessment and Strategic Road Map**

US Economic Development Administration; Disaster Supplemental Program; **Virginia's Additive Manufacturing and Advanced Materials Tech Hub**; Danville, New River Valley, Lynchburg Region, Roanoke Valley, and Southern Virginia with the New River Valley Regional Commission, Virginia Tech College of Engineering, Institute for Advanced Learning and Research, and Roanoke-Blacksburg Innovation Alliance



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Personnel Updates



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Yes, we are hiring!



Learn more:



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Other Business




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<https://cece.vt.edu/about/give.html>

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Other business

- Minutes
- Q&A
- Open discussion



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**Joint meeting of the Center for Economic and Community Engagement Advisory Board
and the Virginia Tech Council on Vibrant Virginia**

Virginia Tech Corporate Research Center
1900 Kraft Drive, Moss Research Building, Blacksburg
Curiosity Conference Room
September 11, 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

CECE Advisory Board In-person attendance: Guru Ghosh (Chair), Susan Short, John Capps, Kiyah Duffey, Omar Faison, John Provo, Pam VandeVord, David Devan, Isabel Bradburn, Karen Sanders, Monica Kimbrell (proxy for Laura Belmonte), Leanna Blevins

CECE Advisory Board in Attendance via Zoom: Blair Durham, Steve Harrison, Marc Nelson, Christina Winn, Mike Gutter, Catherine Amelink, Sandra McCutcheon (proxy for Conaway Haskins), Richard Gibson (proxy for Elizabeth McClanahan), Erik Johnston, Leanna Blevins, Lisa McNair, Tracy Krauchun

CECE staff in Attendance: Barb Reibsamen, Dylan Andrews, Holly Carroll, Kim Gray, Julia Kell, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Makenzie Mann, Afroze Mohammed (virtual), Ashley Posthumus (virtual), John Register, Jemma Sabokrouh, Caroline Buttemere, Elli Travis, Emmalee Wagner, Katie Lee, Scott Tate

OTHER ATTENDEES: Allison Mays, Kaitlyn Bare, Diane Deffenbaugh, Rich Mathieson, OIA Director of Marketing and Communications, panelist John Accordino (virtual), panelist Pace Lochte (virtual), panelist Jon Porter

10:00 AM Guru called the meeting to order; self-introductions were made.

10:15 Welcome – Guru Ghosh, Vice President, Outreach and International Affairs

There were discussions on workforce development and demographics as an overview as it paralleled President Sands' September 11, 2025, Council meeting discussion.

10:18 Director's Report – John Provo, Executive Director, CECE

John discussed CECE's charge, which includes increasing the university's impact, elevating the Ut Prosim difference, maintaining a transdisciplinary focus, and addressing the urban-rural divide. He touched on the strategic funding landscape and the typical sources of CECE funding. CECE's immediate response includes economizing, continuing strategic partnerships with groups supporting some faculty positions, focusing on ARC, US EDA, GOVA, AM2 Hubs, and accepting new business opportunities. New opportunities CECE is focusing on are Return to Roots internships for VT, industry-driven pipeline programs, regional economic development board training programs, and the Vibrant Virginia (VV) program.

Program updates included regional transformation, talent development and experiential learning, community innovations, impact, design, and evaluation of current or completed projects, as well as talent development and experiential learning. John discussed projects that are under current review.

New CECE personnel were introduced: Barb Reibsamen, Program Coordinator and GAs Caroline Buttemere and Victoria Blackham.

Discussion was opened and John Capps asked about CECE's capacity to do additional work. John Provo talked of strategic planning for various positions. Susan Short spoke highly of Scott Tate, Afroze Mohammed, and Mallory Tuttle's work. Susan also spoke of Omar Faison's work with CECE and the communications department work on the Center's magazine. In addition, she acknowledged the work being completed by Allison Mays and Kaitlyn Bare in the SWVA Center.

Guru Ghosh questioned whether we are having regional and national discussions about the gaps in the needs of industry.

John Provo explained matching regional drivers with individuals in various communities. He expanded on CECE's work in Tazewell with a focus on those returning to the work force following addiction or incarceration.

10: 54 Minutes from 2024 were approved unanimously

10: 55 Panel discussion on the economic and policy landscape and its impact on our work

Panelists included:

- John Accordino, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University;
- Pace Lochte, Assistant Vice President for Economic Development, University of Virginia, Board Member, Virginia Economic Development Partnership;
- Jon Porter, Associate VP, Strategic Research Alliances, Virginia Tech;
- Pace Lochte, Assistant Vice President for Economic Development, University of Virginia, and Board Member with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership; and
- John Accordino, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, Virginia Commonwealth University.

As part of his reflection portion, John Provo introduced the panel. John Accordino was asked what was different in his economic/community development for him now than it was for last year. John indicated that we should not rely on federal funds. The uncertainty at the federal level has forced convergent development. This concept is the intersection of traditional economic-based development to build traded sector competitive industries with community development in proximity. He expanded at length on the case study with Danville, Culpeper and Harrisonburg that has been working for 25 years towards convergence development.

Pace Lochte indicated that GO Virginia was created to have less reliance on the federal government. Talent, energy, and housing are the top three things that companies are mentioning that help make decisions about how to solve these issues. Higher education can be a participant in this work and needs to be a better partner to VEDP.

Jon Porter said what is different today than compared to a year ago is the funding cuts by the new administration. With every administration, there are funding cuts, private cuts, and changes in priorities. The immediacy surprised some people and workforce reductions seemed random. His network of contacts was decimated by such reductions in force. He indicated that developing new priorities and new initiatives are needed to capitalize on what the new landscape will look like.

John Accordino indicated the state must set markers and Go Virginia is doing that. Go Virginia focuses on traded sector industries. David Devan provided feedback on this topic. The universities can share applied research by solving a regional issue as CECE does. Long-term relationships like those between CECE and Go Virginia are critical.

Pace Lochte has seen lots of investment in life sciences, digital, IT, and national security. He indicated they are working on a strategic road map to focus on what they are good at and what assets they have. He emphasized that relationship building is a huge component. Discussion continued about the importance of such relationships.

12:00 Vibrant Virginia (VV), accomplishments, and plans; Scott Tate, Associate Director for Community Innovations, CECE

Scott spoke of the positive returns for the past year. OIA invested \$20K in Vibrant Virginia program initiatives, which resulted in nearly \$163K in additional funding for Vibrant Virginia program activities along with \$260K in leveraged funding for other community activities across the Commonwealth. Vibrant Virginia's vision is to encourage vibrant and flourishing places in every part of the commonwealth. The vision is carried out through place-based partnerships and exploration projects, faculty-initiated micro projects, and civic well-being initiatives.

Place-based partnerships and explanatory are in a specific place, including an anchor partner, issue or challenge of Vibrant Virginia –relevance, and sustained engagement opportunities.

Examples include Project 13Three in Tazewell County with a theme of recovery and re-entry into the ecosystem and the Harvest Foundation in Martinsville-Henry County with a theme of youth flourishing.

Faculty-initiated micro-projects helped over a dozen faculty explore Vibrant Virginia project ideas. Four projects were identified for \$10K seed funding awards. One of these awards went towards supporting the creation of community-focused exhibits and events along Route 76 in Virginia to promote recreation tourism along a historic cycling route.

The community well-being initiative has a working group, a landscape assessment and Gap analysis of community leadership and civic involvement programming in Virginia, and VCE program team development of program-related ideas and resources.

Discussion ensued to include the topic of the drone industry and how Radford now has a company collaborating with drone parts as 95% of drone parts are currently made in China. Guru Ghosh suggested we explore how to nuance and impact Virginia in different ways within this industry.

12:51 PM meeting adjourned

Respectfully submitted,

Kim Gray, Recording Secretary