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Connecting Employers and College Students: Meet Our Regional Internship Project Coordinator, Quina Weber-Shirk

The region that stretches from the New River Valley to Lynchburg and north to the Alleghany Highlands has more college students per capita than any other part of the commonwealth. But most of those students seek work elsewhere, and the region struggles to fill jobs.

The Center for Economic and Community Engagement, part of Outreach and International Affairs, is working to slow that exodus with a new program designed to connect students and young professionals to work-based learning opportunities in the region. Work-based learning can include internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, mentorships, training programs, and career expos.

“Work-based learning is essential for students today, helping to develop more confident and competitive college graduates who are ready for post-college work,” Director John Provo said. “The goal of this program is to raise awareness of the opportunities students have right here in the region.”

Tasked to lead the new Regional Internship Collaborative is Quina Weber-Shirk, who is joining the center from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, where she was a county extension agent for community and school gardens. For years, Weber-Shirk enjoyed tending to plants and ensuring they thrive. Now, she is helping talent grow and take root here.

[Read more.](https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/09/outreach-internshipcollaborative.html) <https://vtx.vt.edu/articles/2021/09/outreach-internshipcollaborative.html>

Region 6 At-A-Glance



Center for Economic and Community Engagement Holds Facilitation in GO Virginia Region 6 to Pinpoint Ways to Grow the Workforce

In a series of discussions with stakeholders from a variety of organizations including business, education, workforce development, and local and state government, staff with the Center for Economic and Community Engagement aimed to identify workforce and talent-specific goals, objectives, and actions to incorporate into GO Virginia Region 6's Growth and Diversification Plan.

[Read more.](https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2021/09/23/center-for-economic-and-community-engagement-holds-facilitation-in-go-virginia-region-6-to-pinpoint-ways-to-grow-the-workforce/) <https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2021/09/23/center-for-economic-and-community-engagement-holds-facilitation-in-go-virginia-region-6-to-pinpoint-ways-to-grow-the-workforce/>



Vibrant Virginia Book Focuses On Expanding Economic Vitality in the Commonwealth

The Vibrant Virginia Initiative started in 2018 as a way to help higher education be a better partner around the state and promote scholarship across Virginia's urban-rural spectrum. Now, the Vibrant Virginia team is preparing for the release of their new book: *Vibrant Virginia: Engaging the Commonwealth to Expand Economic Vitality*.

[Read more about the Vibrant Virginia Book Launch Webinar below.](#)

<https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2021/08/02/vibrant-virginia-initiative-launches-book-about-expanding-economic-vitality-in-the-commonwealth/>



CECE's Elli Travis Among Chamber's 40 Under 40

Elli Travis, economic development specialist at the Center for Economic and Community Engagement, recently received a 40 Under 40 award from the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce.

"We believe as a chamber of commerce, our business members should be celebrating the talent we have in our community," the chamber said on its website. "As a part of our 2021 Leadership Conference, we celebrated the fantastic young talent that live and work in our community for businesses that are making a difference right here. These young leaders can be ambassadors for our community and help attract and retain talent."

[Read more.](https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2021/09/16/ceces-elli-travis-among-chambers-40-under-40/) <https://blogs.tlos.vt.edu/cece/2021/09/16/ceces-elli-travis-among-chambers-40-under-40/>

Meet Our New Research Assistant, Anna Nagorniuk



Anna Nagorniuk joined the CECE team, first as a Graduate Assistant and now as a Research Assistant, shortly after graduating with her Master's in Urban and Regional Planning (MURP) from Virginia Tech in May of 2021. She also completed her undergraduate degree in Public and Urban Affairs at Virginia Tech in 2019. Anna initially engaged with CECE as part of the MURP Economic Development Studio where she worked with other graduate students on 2 projects: a redevelopment proposal for the City of Galax, VA in 2018, and the creation of a post-COVID-19 economic recovery toolkit in 2021. Anna has a background in architecture and land use policy, tailored with a focus in economic and community development. In her free time, Anna enjoys trying new foods, fitness, traveling to see friends, and spending time with family and pets (Rex the dog, and Winston and Kai, the cats).