



OUTREACH & INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS CENTER FOR ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT VIRGINIA TECH.

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In This Issue:

- CECE faculty and staff visit Richmond region for fall staff retreat
- Meet a CECE Advisory Board Member: Laura Belmonte, Dean of Virginia Tech's College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences
- Blog Post Roundup: Catch Up On Our Latest Posts

CECE faculty and staff visit Richmond region for fall staff retreat

In October, Center for Economic and Community Engagement faculty and staff headed to the Richmond region. They visited Virginia State University to meet with Omar Faison, associate vice provost for research and economic development, and VSU deans to discuss future ideas for collaboration.

The team also toured Virginia State University's Randolph Farm, a 416-acre agricultural learning center, home to a multitude of agricultural related research, demonstration and instruction activities.

Staff learned about the town of Hopewell on a Riverwalk led by Heather Lyne, executive director of the Hopewell Downtown Partnership.

The Hopewell Riverwalk, which follows the shoreline of the Appomattox River, will eventually be part of a 25-mile network of trails that connect Hopewell with Dinwiddie County.

The following day, the team worked on strategic planning and had conversations with local economic developers including Ebonie Atkins, managing director of the Henrico Economic Development Authority; David Devan, vice president of economic competitiveness for the Virginia Economic Development Partnership; Matt McLaren, senior project manager at Chesterfield Economic Development; and Leonard Sledge, director of the Department of Economic Development for the City of Richmond.

On the way home, staff based in the Blacksburg and Roanoke area stopped to get ice cream at La Michoacana in Chesterfield.



Meet a CECE Advisory Board Member: Laura Belmonte, Dean of Virginia Tech's College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences



Laura Belmonte became Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences in August 2019. Prior to that, she was at Oklahoma State University for 23 years where she served as a faculty member in the Department of History, Director of the American Studies program, Head of the History Department, and Associate Dean for Instruction and Personnel for the College of Arts and Sciences. She is currently serving as the president of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations.

1. What is your favorite part of your job at Virginia Tech?

Being around brilliant, energetic, and caring people who share the commitment to making VT a premiere global land-grant.

2. What are you looking forward to doing most as a member of the CECE advisory board?

Learning from colleagues and determining how CLAHS might contribute to the center's mission.

3. Who is one of your greatest mentors and what did you learn from them?

Dr. Mel Leffler, my PhD advisor at UVA. In addition to being one of the world's preeminent historians of international relations, he is a humane, supportive, and demanding mentor. I cannot imagine my career without Mel's lifelong guidance and inspiration.

4. What activities or hobbies do you like to do in your spare time?

My wife Susie and I love to travel more than about anything and about 33 countries into a life goal list of visiting at least 50 countries. We also love to hike, kayak, golf, and spend evenings with good friends over great food and wine.

5. What is the most memorable place you've ever visited?

So many possible choices. The Namib Desert, Stellenbosch, Botswana, and New Zealand are a few.

Blog Post Roundup



[Graduate students on the move: Analyzing agribusiness in the West Piedmont Planning District](#) - William N. Ferris and Kit Friedman



[From the verge of decline to reclaiming its image as the 'pottery capital of the US': lessons learned from the pottery town Seagrove](#) - Sadhana Manthapuri



[A summer at the United States Department of Transportation](#) - Jason Schwartz



[Regional Internship Collaborative hosts Lynchburg-Region workshop to help employers and educators hone internship programs](#) - Julia Kell

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