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Project spotlight

Collaboration identifies opportunities for Tazewell populations navigating recovery and reentry



(From left) Scott Tate, associate director of community innovations, Ema Johnson, director of development for Project13Three, and Makenzie Mann, graduate assistant. Photo by S. Tatum Photography.

A partnership between the Center for Economic and Community Engagement and Project13Three in Tazewell, Virginia, is helping people in recovery from substance use disorder and those reentering the workforce after incarceration connect with the resources they need.

[Read more about Project13Three.](#)

Where was CECE this year? Explore our new magazine



Check out what CECE has been up to! Our new magazine provides an overview of the 43 projects and programs our faculty and staff worked on across all regions of the state in the past year.

[View the magazine.](#)

November trivia question

This issue's economic development trivia question is:

What is the biggest agriculture industry in Virginia?

- a. Cattle and calves
- b. Broilers
- c. Corn

[Submit your guess here.](#) We'll reveal the correct answer in our next newsletter.

You can also submit your guess on our [Instagram](#) story!

August Trivia Question

Cyrus Hall McCormick is mentioned in some history books as the father of modern agriculture. Where in Virginia was he born?

- a. Natural Bridge
- b. Goshen
- c. Raphine

Answer: C. [Cyrus Hall McCormick](#) was born in Raphine, VA.

Meet a CECE Advisory Board Member: Karen Eley Sanders, Virginia Tech College Access Collaborative



Karen Eley Sanders serves as the associate vice provost for college access at Virginia Tech. She has bachelor's and master's degrees in psychology from Virginia State University, a Ph.D. in adult and developmental education from the University of Arkansas, and a developmental education specialist certificate from the Kellogg Institute at Appalachian State University.

Sanders has worked at Virginia Tech for 24 years, specializing in student success for undergraduates. In her role with college access, she works with Virginia Cooperative Extension, 4-H programs, 24 partner schools around the state, and other colleagues across Virginia Tech. Her work specifically focuses on increasing academic preparation, access, and affordability for first-generation and low-income students from rural and inner-city communities.

1. What is your proudest achievement over the course of your career?

The achievements I'm most proud of are the student success and scholarship programs I've helped to create and lead. These programs have helped to increase college access, affordability, and student success at Virginia Tech.

2. What do you like most about your role as associate vice provost for college access at Virginia Tech?

What I like most is being able to make a difference in the lives of young people, assisting them to and through college, and then helping them do something meaningful after they graduate.

3. What projects are you currently working on at Virginia Tech?

The project taking most of my time right now relates to State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) funded projects that fall under the Pell Initiative for Virginia umbrella. All of the projects focus on attracting students to Virginia Tech, enrolling low-income students who receive the federal Pell grant, and working with colleagues on campus to plug students into the success structure to ensure they will graduate from Virginia Tech.

I also work with our 24 partner schools on planning and implementing outreach, engagement, and enrichment experiences for students. Though College Access' focus is on high school students, we also engage with middle school students and partner with folks on and off campus who provide enrichment and college exposure activities to elementary school students.

4. What do you like most about serving on the Virginia Tech Council on Vibrant Virginia?

I enjoy connecting with like-minded professionals who want to uplift all Virginians. I have made some good connections that help to facilitate the success of my work as well as the work of the other people I engage with.

5. What projects would you like to work on with CECE in the future?

I would like to identify more opportunities to connect to CECE council members and CECE work around the commonwealth that aligns with our efforts to enhance educational access and educational equity in Virginia.

[Read more about Karen Eley Sanders.](#)

News roundup

[Area projects awarded tobacco funds](#) (The Farmville Herald)

[CECE board meeting highlights how economic development and higher education have converged in uncertain times](#) (VT CECE Blog)

[Economic development officials: The next governor's economic plan belongs on July 4](#) (Cardinal News)

[From first slurps to future careers at Oyster Day](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[High schoolers dive into Virginia's growing aquaculture industry](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[See How Roanoke Is Using Your Tax Dollars to Fight Homelessness](#) (The Current)

[Strategic planning support helps popular Spearhead Trails chart its path forward](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[Three events with one goal: Grow Virginia's manufacturing future](#) (Virginia Tech News)

[Tobacco commission approves 18 funding requests while gathering at VIR](#) (The Gazette-Virginian)

Support our work

Your investment in the Virginia Tech Center for Economic and Community Engagement means more access to resources for communities across the Commonwealth.

CECE provides expertise, resources, and project support to catalyze action that benefits local communities and economies, specifically in economic, community, and workforce development. CECE's evidence-based research and university connections help to address needs identified at the local level through strategic partnerships and direct services.

Every dollar you donate allows CECE faculty to bring their knowledge and experience to communities from Abingdon to Arlington, Covington to Chincoteague, Damascus to Danville, Melfa to Martinsville, New Market to Newport News, and Radford to Richmond, ensuring that every region in Virginia can thrive.

Together, we can build stronger communities and brighter futures across the Commonwealth.

[Visit our Giving Page.](#)

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