



VIRGINIA INITIATIVE FOR  
**GROWTH &  
OPPORTUNITY**  
IN EACH REGION

COLLABORATION  
INSPIRATION  
SUCCESS

*September 9, 2024*

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## **Next Submission Deadline: September 20, 2024 by 5 p.m**

There is \$1.5 million available for Region 2 grants, with up to \$250,000 for planning grants.

Learn more on our website: <https://cece.vt.edu/GOVAR2/RequestforProposals.html>.

# Mark Your Calendar for Upcoming Meetings

**September 11, 2024:** GO Virginia Region 2 Applicant Q&A, 4-5 PM, Zoom  
Register for the webinar: [https://virginiatech.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_f4KI-754T6aBDq62jq21UQ](https://virginiatech.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_f4KI-754T6aBDq62jq21UQ)

**October 10, 2024:** GO Virginia Region 2 Executive Committee Meeting, 1-3 PM

**October 30, 2024:** GO Virginia Region 2 Council Meeting, 1-3 PM, Room G-101A&B, 4 Riverside Circle SW, Roanoke, Virginia 24016

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## Meet a GOVA Region 2 Grantee: Peter Sheldon, Educating Engineers for the Region 2 Workforce



*Peter Sheldon is a professor of physics and engineering at Randolph College and has worked there since 1998. He first started teaching physics in 1995 at Wake Forest University and Davidson College as a visiting professor. He has undergraduate degrees in mathematics and physics from Amherst College and a master's degree and Ph.D. in physics from the University of Massachusetts.*

*Shortly after he began his career at Randolph College (originally Randolph-Macon Woman's College) he restarted the dual-degree engineering program, which allows students to complete two degrees in the time it takes many to complete one. Students participating in the program take classes at both Randolph and one of the partner schools: University of Virginia and Washington University in St. Louis.*

*Sheldon has been active in developing programs on campus, the most recent being the robotics and mechatronics engineering degree program, which is starting this Fall Semester and is the focus of Randolph College's GO Virginia Region 2 project. Sheldon's first foray into engineering at Randolph College was developing a curriculum around a car created by Oliver Kuttner that won the XPRIZE in 2010.*

**1. What is your favorite part of your job as professor of physics and engineering at Randolph College?**

My favorite part of my job is getting to know the students and getting them excited about physics. Students often come to college saying they want to be an engineer. They come to realize that being an engineer requires a lot of academics – a lot of physics and math. So it's essential to get the students excited about their academics and keep them engaged. We're a small college of around 700 students. Because of that, we get to know the students well and work one-on-one with them. Also, because we're a small school, I have a lot of autonomy, and the college has given me the opportunity to engage in innovating and starting new programs. I've really enjoyed that part of my job as well.

## **2. What inspired your GO Virginia project?**

In various ways, we have been educating engineers ever since I've been here. I had always thought about starting an engineering major at the college. A number of things came together at the right time, but one day I was sitting down with an alum of Randolph College, Mark Patterson. He's an engineer, and he works for FANUC Robotics in Lynchburg and North Carolina. He told me about the shortage of manufacturing engineers and mechatronic engineers in Lynchburg. That was part of why we started this program, because of a workforce need in central Virginia for manufacturing engineers. There's a lot of manufacturing taking place in Lynchburg. We saw a need and we jumped at it.

## **3. How will this program help with talent retention in the region?**

The program won't be successful unless we partner with regional companies, businesses, and manufacturing. We are starting discussions with many different organizations, including Lynchburg nuclear energy companies Framatome and BWXT, along with FANUC. We are talking with these companies about how we can partner, create internships, and how they can help educate our students. In our experience, when students become engaged with local companies through internships or other work-based learning, more often than not they choose to stay with those companies. That's going to help talent retention in the region as long as we can form these partnerships and get students engaged with local businesses.

## **4. As you continue work on your GO Virginia project, what do you look forward to learning or doing?**

I look forward to forming these partnerships and getting to know the needs of the companies in the area. One of our plans is to form an oversight committee, which will be made up of high school educators and people from local companies to make sure this program is responsive to people's needs. Framatome has been on campus three times this summer already to interact with the engineering program. That's the kind of thing I think is going to be really cool.

## **5. How will the GO Virginia funding help you move forward with this project?**

We are using the GO Virginia grant entirely for equipment. It's allowing us to buy robot arms, PLC trainers, laser cutters, and 3D printers, helping our students learn by doing. The college has been so supportive of this program, but it only has so many resources. The GO Virginia funding is so important, as engineering equipment is very expensive. We would still do a good job educating our students without it, but having equipment students will actually use in the workforce will better prepare them for their futures.

## **6. How many students are involved in the Mechatronics program at Randolph College?**

There are 31 students in our intro engineering class this fall. That is far and above what we had imagined we would get. Our goal is to graduate 20 a year, so starting with 31 in the first year is a good start.

## **7. What hobbies and activities do you like to do in your spare time?**

I'm a runner and was a competitive marathoner for much of my life. I used to serve as assistant coach for the NCAA team here on campus. I run every day, and I now mentor the track and cross-country team here.

## **8. What was the last book you read that you would recommend?**

I read a lot. I'm currently reading *Boys in the Boat* by Daniel James Brown, which is about the 1936 Olympic rowing team from the University of Washington. It's a great book.

### **9. If you could invent anything, what would it be?**

My wife and I have been married 27 years, and we always joke about flying cars. Flying cars really do exist; they just don't have a market. So maybe flying cars. But the one thing that I really want, that I haven't been fully satisfied with, is a plug-in hybrid car. Until they revolutionize battery charging or get more charging stations, the plug-in hybrids, while a great invention, are just not as good as they should be and don't go as far as they should.

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## **Meet a GOVA Region 2 Council Member: Kimball Payne, Berkley Group**



*Kimball Payne has a bachelor's degree in botany from Duke University and master's degrees in public administration and urban and environmental planning from the University of Virginia. After graduating from Duke University, Payne was commissioned as an ensign in the Navy, where he spent almost eight years on active duty as a naval flight officer, including three years as a naval ROTC instructor at the University of Virginia. After leaving active duty, he served in the Navy Reserve for 12 years, retiring as a Commander. His first job in local government was as the assistant county administrator in Spotsylvania County. He then took on the role of county administrator in Spotsylvania County, where he stayed for 14 years. In 2001, he stepped into the position of city manager for Lynchburg and retired in 2016. Since 2017, Payne has held a part-time role as an executive manager with the Berkley Group, a consulting firm with offices throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia and North Carolina. The firm specializes in administration, community development and planning, education, human resources, and public safety.*

### **1. What is your proudest accomplishment over the course of your career?**

In both communities where I worked as a local government manager, I was proudest of developing a team of public servants who worked for the betterment of the community, delivered services to its citizens, and were dedicated to public service.

## **2. What made you interested in public administration?**

When I knew I was going to get off active duty, I was looking for something to do next, and continuing to be of service to my community was my main goal. I was in graduate school for public administration at that point, which was part of what led me in the direction of local government. I knew the county executive for Albemarle County, and I met with him to talk about his experience working in local government management. He got me interested, and the rest is history.

## **3. What is your favorite part of your job as executive manager of the Berkley Group?**

My favorite part is I get to travel all over the state and consult with local government managers and governing bodies to help make local government better in Virginia.

## **4. What do you look forward to seeing GO Virginia Region 2 do more of in the future?**

I'd like Region 2 to think about how we work on our regional identity. Region 2 is a big area with a lot of differences, but it will be important to continue to develop a shared vision for the region moving forward. Also, it is important to focus on workforce development, as in the end, one of the main goals of the GO Virginia program is to have employment for people so they can live in the communities they want to live in.

## **5. Who has been your greatest mentor and what did you learn from them?**

Throughout my career I've had lots of colleagues in local government who I could go to for assistance. Sometimes you're dealing with a problem you think is intractable, and you find out somebody else is dealing with either a worse problem or they dealt with the same one, resolved it, and moved on. That group of colleagues was a great support network for me.

## **6. What is one of your favorite parts of living in GO Virginia Region 2?**

The mountains, the rivers, the streams. The outdoors. The cities in Region 2, including Roanoke, Lynchburg, and Salem are great smaller cities. There's a lot of variety, culture, and opportunities there.

## **7. What activities and hobbies do you like to do in your spare time?**

I'll be learning to fly fish for the rest of my life. I love fishing up on mountain streams and on the river. I garden, and I read when I can. And I have 12 grandchildren, so any time I can spend with them is fun.

## **8. What is the most memorable place you've ever visited?**

The most spectacular place I've visited is the Grand Canyon, so maybe that makes it the most memorable. But the most out of the way place I've been was Ascension Island, which is in the South Atlantic Ocean. It's a unique place. Turtles hatch there. There are fields of obsidian, and there's a big volcano in the middle of the island.

The island was prominent for two reasons – it was settled by the British, and they build a fort there to guard Napoleon when he was exiled to Saint Helena, the closest island to it. It also has an airfield there that the U.S. ferried aircraft from during World War 2.

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## **Region 2 In the News**

[A program developed in SWVa will serve as a statewide model to address a shortage of health care workers](#) (Cardinal News)

[Get2KnowNoke Launches Transformational Tool for Talent Attraction and Community Connectivity](#) (The Roanoke Star)