

Roanoke Higher Education Authority

Supporting Economic Development in the Greater Roanoke Region

Annual Report on the Roanoke Higher Education Center (FY 2004)

In its fourth year of operation the Roanoke Higher Education Center continued to provide expanded access to workforce and technology training and higher education to the residents of the Greater Roanoke Region through a partnership that includes the Commonwealth of Virginia, local government, business leaders, and the Center's member institutions and organizations. In late spring of 2003 the 5th District Employment and Training Consortium closed its doors after more than 30 years. The clients once served by the 5th District Consortium were served by another organization not affiliated with the Center. Total enrollments declined as a result of the loss of the Training Consortium, but the remaining members increased their enrollment over previous years as individuals in the region found opportunity at the Center to seek further education and training to cope with the slow economic recovery. Enrollments are about evenly split between workforce training and higher education.

Enrollment Summary – The total number of students enrolled through all Center members and in all programs offered at the Center.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Spring</i>	<i>Summer</i>	<i>Fall</i>
<i>2000</i>			2579
<i>2001</i>	2167	1603	2584
<i>2002</i>	2319	2476	3335
<i>2003</i>	2960	1073	2487
<i>2004</i>	2793	2091	

Program Summary – The total number of programs offered by major program category.

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Associate's Degrees</i>	21	9	12	13
<i>Bachelor's Degrees</i>	34	33	38	43
<i>Master's Degrees</i>	29	36	38	43
<i>Certificates</i>	31	33	38	39
<i>Other Programs</i>	25	41	48	57
<i>Total Programs</i>	140	152	174	195

Program Completions - Certificates and Degrees Awarded continued to increase in FY 2004. Growth in workforce training completions is indicated in the number of certificates and associates degrees awarded. Bachelor's degree completions also continued to grow dramatically. Blue Ridge Technical Academy also had its first high school graduates this year.

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>High School Diploma</i>	0	0	0	3
<i>GED</i>	102	105	85	92
<i>Certificates</i>	179	144	160	367
<i>Associates Degrees</i>	0	11	3	142
<i>Bachelors Degrees</i>	37	66	115	186
<i>Masters Degrees</i>	34	97	140	88
<i>Education Specialist</i>	0	0	10	1
<i>Total</i>	352	423	513	879

Conferences and Meetings - The Roanoke Higher Education Center also makes its classrooms available to community businesses and organizations, and to its members for meetings and conferences. The increase in clients served came primarily in the for-profit sector. These clients pay more for use of the facility than members and non-profit groups. There were fewer events and fewer participants than last year, but the revenue generated from conferences and meetings in FY 2004 reached an all time high of \$97,505.

<i>Fiscal Year</i>	<i>2002</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2004</i>
<i>Clients</i>	90	117	125
<i>Events</i>	337	930	613
<i>Participants</i>	12,757	21,908	14,951

The Center Library - The Roanoke Higher Education Center library strives to be a full service library and to be the information hub of the Center. Working within FY 2004 budget constraints the Center was able to make some significant improvements in the library. A full-time paraprofessional was hired to help maintain the level of service in the library and to enhance library coverage. The acquisition of print materials that began in FY 2002 continued to grow, with an increase of 71% from FY 2003. The number of registered library users also grew significantly and to-date there are more than 475 RHEC library cardholders.

The library continues to offer instructional services for the member institutions by request. More than 20 bibliographic instruction workshops were offered during FY 2004. RHEC library staff also actively participate in member student orientations. In April 2004, the RHEC library partnered with two local book clubs to host a literary discussion by C. Oliver Junior, a new local suspense author.

The library continues its membership in the Virtual Library of Virginia (VIVA), The Southwest Information Network Group (SWING), SOLINET, the Virginia Library Association (VLA) and the Roanoke Valley Library Association (RVLA).

Library Users

Fiscal Year	Total number of library users	Average number of users per month
2001-2002	2192	183
2002-2003	3676	306
2003-2004	5140	428

Items Added to the Collection

Fiscal Year	Number of items added to collection
2001-2002	478
2002-2003	253
2003-2004	355

Information Technology - RHEC partnered with the City of Roanoke, Downtown Roanoke, Inc, and the New Century Technology Council to bring wireless computer connectivity to the downtown market area and Elmwood Park. RHEC provided the installation and maintenance of required equipment (donated by CISCO Systems) and provides the Internet connection through the Center's broadband link.

RHEC also provide wireless connectivity to the Warehouse Row Business Center and to the Visitor Center operated by the Roanoke Valley Convention and Visitors Bureau. The IT Staff provided technical assistance to Botetourt County to extend wireless connectivity to the Greenfield Center.

With the assistance of Higher Education Equipment Trust Funds the IT department developed a new computer lab to support the needs of member institutions and the community at large

Other Highlights

1. The Virginia General Assembly added Virginia Intermont College to the membership of the Board of Trustees. Virginia Intermont has become a Center member and is working with the Center to bring its culinary arts bachelor's degree program to Roanoke. The Center has developed plans to renovate buildings adjacent to the Center's parking facilities for the culinary program, and is currently engaged in an effort to raise funds for the renovation from a number of public and private sources.

2. In response to the needs of the regional health care industry Virginia Western Community College expanded its LPN and CAN programs at the Center including the creation of a nursing laboratory and additional classroom to support the programs.
3. With funding from the Roanoke City Schools the Center reconfigured space within the building to accommodate expansion of the Blue Ridge Technical Academy.
4. Local government funding was made available to the Center for the first time by Roanoke County (\$10,000). This funding was of particular benefit to the Center as State funds were reduced over the course of the biennium.

Current Needs

During the 2004 Session of the Virginia General Assembly final budget action provided the Roanoke Higher Education Authority with an increase of \$100,000 to the annual state appropriation bringing the annual total to \$718,075. This increase has given the Authority new capacity for forward progress on its mission of providing workforce training and higher education opportunities to the people of the Greater Roanoke Region in support of regional economic development, but the Authority continues to operate with a funding and staffing level that is below the level needed to accomplish the mission stipulated by the Virginia General Assembly at the Authority's inception. Four key areas are in need of additional financial support from the Commonwealth.

1. The Center must have the ability to communicate effectively with its external constituents to promote the use of the Center and to raise funds from additional external sources. The Center's role in fostering economic development and expanding educational opportunity requires a well-executed communications and fund development plan. A communications director is needed to keep the business community and individuals apprised of the opportunities available at the Center, and to develop sources of outside funding.
2. Counseling and advising prospective students to assist them in determining the best available program and providing information to the member institutions to identify the need for new programs has from the beginning been another high priority for the Center. The number of institutions and the variety of programs available often makes the navigation of the opportunities challenging for the constituents served by the Center. A counselor/advisor is needed to work with the increasing number of people seeking career guidance and program advising.
3. Continued expansion of the library and related academic support services are important goals for the Center. Additional funding is required to purchase books and other instructional materials, and to sustain the extended hours of operation required to meet student and faculty needs.
4. Ongoing operation of the Center's advanced technology infrastructure is critical to the effectiveness of the Center as an accessible teaching-learning facility. An increase in

funding for the Center's technology budget will contribute directly to the success of the training and educational programming that is made available at the Center.

Even with the recent increase in State funding the Authority is not meeting its full potential to recruit and serve larger numbers of people from the region who are in need of workforce training and higher education. The business community is looking to the Center to assist with training and sustaining a regional workforce. This is a particular time of need, and the Center is not able to respond fully to that need. An increase of \$200,000 will provide the critical funds needed to sustain the Roanoke Higher Education Authority.

Historical Context of the Current Funding Request

It became clear during the early planning phase of the Roanoke Higher Education Center project that significant support from the Commonwealth of Virginia would be required to create and to sustain the kind of educational center that was envisioned. Precedent had been set by the development of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, and its ongoing operational appropriation of approximately \$1.4 million annually.

During the 2000 Session of the General Assembly, in anticipation of opening in August of 2000, the Authority submitted a budget request of \$992,000 for year one (2000-01) and \$995,860 for year two (2001-02). Unfortunately, the amount appropriated was reduced to \$662,500 for each year of the biennium. This one-third reduction was based on the theory that the localities would pay one-third of the operating expenses, although this was never a realistic prospect.

This one-third reduction in operating funds, just as the Roanoke Higher Education Center was opening, left the Authority with the inability to implement its full operational plan for the Center. The subsequent budget cuts during the last biennium had a more debilitating impact on the Authority than would have been the case if the initial funding request had been met. The Authority has been resourceful in seeking out other sources of revenue through day rental of its rooms to outside groups, limited commercial leases, vending machine receipts, technology support services to its members, and library income from classes and special projects. The City of Roanoke has continued to support the Center by assisting with the funding of small capital projects, and Roanoke County has contributed \$10,000 to the Center for the current fiscal year. These funds have made a positive difference in the Center's ability to survive, but they cannot make up for the funding required from the Commonwealth.

The Center cannot fully accomplish its mission at current levels of funding from the Commonwealth of Virginia. The financial model around which the Center was created included a substantial, steady stream of funding from the State supplemented by lease of Center space to participating institutions and agencies, and other smaller revenue streams. Given the impact of the Center after four years of operation it is clear that the funding provided by the Commonwealth is generating a substantial return on investment. The Roanoke Higher Education Authority Board of Trustees is concerned that the Center will not be able to meet the goals for which it was established, and will not be in a position to assist the Commonwealth with education and workforce training that will support the

State's economic development goals without an additional increase in State funding. In fact the Center is not now meeting its full potential to recruit and serve larger numbers of people from the region in need of workforce training and higher education.

Roanoke Higher Education Center
Participating Institutions and Agencies

Averett University
Bluefield College
Blue Ridge Technical Academy
Ferrum College
Hampton University
Hollins University
Jefferson College of Health Sciences
Mary Baldwin College
Old Dominion University

Radford University
Roanoke College
TAP – This Valley Works
UNC – Chapel Hill
University of Virginia
Virginia Intermont College
Virginia Tech
Virginia Western Community College
Western Virginia Workforce Dev Board

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