



*A Collaborative Model for Advancing Education, Health,  
& Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia*

*Annual Report  
FY2016*

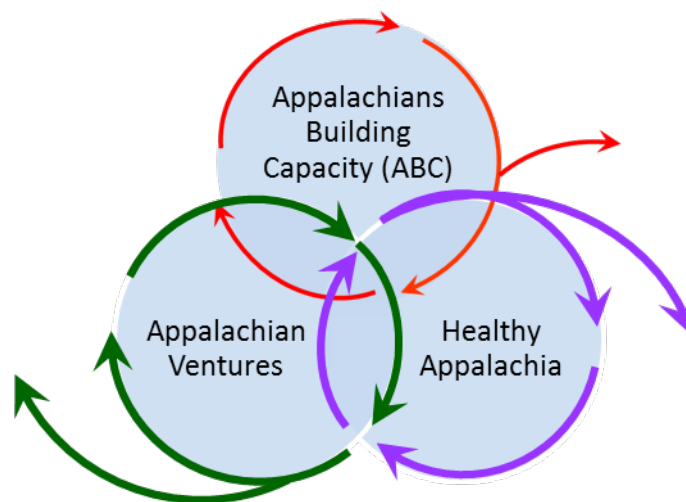


## Southwest Virginia Economic Development Partnership: *Appalachian Prosperity Project*

### UVa's Report to the Commonwealth, FY2016

---

The *Appalachian Prosperity Project* (APP) is a collaborative partnership among the University of Virginia (UVa), UVa's College at Wise (UVa-Wise), the Virginia Coalfield Coalition (comprised of Planning Districts 1 & 2), the private sector, and the Commonwealth. This partnership uses a systems approach to simultaneously advance the inextricably linked fields of education (*Appalachians Building Capacity*), health (*Healthy Appalachia Institute*), and prosperity (*Appalachian Ventures*).



*Appalachian Prosperity Project*

Whether the APP is bringing world-class executive education to Coalfield business leaders, piloting an innovative early language literacy intervention, or providing a bridge for engineering education, this multi-faceted partnership produces results. The partnership is unique and powerful because it widely encompasses disparate stakeholders while remaining coordinated and focused. The APP views issues from many perspectives by convening public, private, and government agencies that are not often at the same table. It provides the infrastructure to transform those conversations into initiatives today while maintaining a long-term commitment to the overall mission.

This mutually beneficial alliance applies academic rigor to UVa's outreach projects, expands student experiences, encourages the exchange of ideas, and creates new knowledge which will inform future community- and university-based shared research and partner activities.

The APP is an inspiring reflection of the spirit of the region's people who value trust, self-determination, and perseverance. The vision is to ensure regional collaboration, generate new ideas, and establish a process to engage the social, economic, and scientific issues that exist at the interface of health, education, prosperity, and Appalachian culture. Our collective mission is to position the region in the global economy while honoring its traditions and culture, using local assets, engagement by all partners, and true collaboration. <http://aproject.org/>

Leaders in the Coalfields are focused on transforming their historically extractive-based economy from one centered mainly on tobacco, coal, and timber to one built on information technology, education, health care, and energy. To attract companies, local leaders recognize that they must have an educated workforce, business acumen, and widespread access to medical care.

The *Appalachian Prosperity Project* builds on a formal commitment made in 2007 by UVa to the Commonwealth of Virginia to help stimulate economic development in Southwest Virginia. The initiative resides in UVa's Office of Strategic Initiatives; however, UVa-Wise is a critical and influential local presence. It serves as a translator, bridging the geographic distance between partners and opening the door to relationships that would otherwise not exist. The Virginia Coalfield Coalition is leveraging the resources of the APP to attain their regional economic development goals.

A unique aspect of this partnership is its foundation in a systems approach. This brings a diversity of organizations to the table to collectively solve problems. Virtually every school at the University is substantively involved, including the Engineering, Architecture, Business, Education, Nursing, and Medicine schools. Scores of regional partners are engaged from the public and private sectors. Representatives from health, education, and business are involved in every initiative since all play a role in tackling the intractable issues in Southwest Virginia.

The University's role is to listen to the needs of communities and their citizens, initiate conversations, support strategic planning, provide innovation and evidence-based research and evaluation, and collect and analyze data. The Coalfield community identifies challenges, infuses cultural understanding and history, sets the vision and strategic direction, and selects priorities. All partners are givers and receivers of knowledge; together they incubate ideas, generate resources, develop programs, lead, and execute projects. The APP has three co-directors,

representing UVa, UVa-Wise, and the Virginia Coalfield Coalition. Decision-making is shared and each partner is fully consulted before any actions are taken.

Each of the interdigitated foci – education, health, and business – has a signature project that serves as a thematic guide for activities. In health, it is the APP's **Healthy Appalachia Institute** (HAI), created to energize a regional public, private, and government coalition that addresses the region's health disparities. An example of successful shared decision-making is the creation of *A Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity* (<http://www.healthyappalachia.org/our-health-blueprint>), a community-developed, detailed roadmap for a healthier population with specific goals and outcomes. Similar exercises have included the creation of the *Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity in Southwest Virginia*, the *Blueprint for Attracting and Sustaining Advanced Manufacturing in Southwest Virginia*, and *Prescription Drug Abuse in Southwest Virginia*. <http://aproject.org/resources/reports/#tab-blueprints>

These blueprints demonstrate to external funders and supporters that there is a vision for the region and important early groundwork has been accomplished. Since completion in 2009, the health blueprint has helped the region secure funding, develop regional health statistic data to measure progress, initiate an annual research symposium, mandate insurance coverage for telemedicine, and expand the number of telemedicine sites within the region.

The APP's **Appalachian Ventures** encompasses our initiatives to foster a robust economy. The APP has offered management training through UVa's globally-ranked Darden business program, with faculty traveling to the region and working directly with managers from the private and public sector. This allowed employers to build management capacity for their workforce, which is often promoted from within, and which has limited local professional development opportunities available.

*Appalachian Ventures* convened over sixty community organizations, business interests, and environmental groups as part of the Clinch River Valley Initiative (<http://clinchriverva.com/>) and the larger regional cultural heritage efforts, including The Crooked Road, 'Round the Mountain and Heartwood, to leverage the natural assets in the area and spur related startups. Five action groups are currently working on issues such as connecting downtown revitalization efforts with the Clinch River, developing river access points and trails, and enhancing water quality.

The APP's **Appalachians Building Capacity** (ABC) is building an educated workforce through innovative pre-K-12 programs. ABC also teams with the Southwest Virginia Public

Education Consortium (SWVPEC) to improve the knowledge base and capacity for teaching American history in the region.

## **FY2016 HIGHLIGHTS**

### **FUNDING**

- This past year UVa helped secure almost \$5 million in new funding to bring programs and services to the residents of Southwest Virginia. Over the past 7 years the total is \$16.8 million. This includes funding for creating *UVa's Cancer Center Without Walls* to extend UVa Health System resources into the region, downtown revitalization efforts in the Town of Appalachia, community development for the Town of Cleveland, and advancing the Clinch River Valley Initiative to bring new economies to the region.

### **RECOGNITION AND SUPPORT**

- The Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI) received the 2015 Scenic Virginia "Scenic Tourism" Award on October 9, 2015. The award was presented by Scenic Virginia to CRVI at the Scenic Awards Gala Reception & Ceremony held at the Virginia State Capitol in Richmond, Virginia.
- The APP continued to support the Southwestern Virginia Technology Council by sponsoring the Awards Banquet and Gala on June 16, 2016 in Abingdon, Virginia.
- The APP launched a new website in 2016. <http://aproject.org/>

## ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS AND RESEARCH

- The APP created a research center under the leadership of Suzanne Moomaw, a faculty member at UVa's School of Architecture. The center provides evidence-based research for Planning Districts 1 and 2 to guide community economic development strategy, inform priorities, assess impact, and create a compelling asset-based narrative that helps attract new jobs to the region. The center's goals are to:
  1. Serve as an academic anchor that will encourage APP scholarly research;
  2. Establish clear guidelines for working in Southwest Virginia with community partners;
  3. Encourage projects that deliver immediate impact and align with the principal goal of job creation.

The following are the center's accomplishments in FY2016:

- In the summer of 2015, the APP and UVa's Institute for Public History jointly sponsored a research fellow and an intern for an oral history project in the Town of Appalachia. Meredith McCool, a doctoral student at the UVa Curry School of Education, and Tessa McCoy Hall, an undergraduate student at UVa-Wise, conducted interviews with 22 townspeople about the heroes who strengthened the community of Appalachia. These interviews are now part of a local play project involving the Appalachia Cultural Arts Center in Appalachia.
- The APP actively seeks to create strong partnerships within the region. A concept paper drafted in 2016 for an Appalachian Community Studio proposed a partnership with the Community Design Research Center at the School of Architecture, the Appalachian Prosperity Project, and the Institute for Public History. The studio is intended to foster local partnerships, provide outreach to students and faculty, and help craft participatory design work in Virginia's Coalfield Counties. Funding for this concept is currently being pursued.

## HEALTH

The **Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity**, developed in 2009 in partnership with the Southwest Virginia Health Authority, outlined 20 goals and objectives, with timeframes divided into three timeline categories: Near (0-2 years), Intermediate (3-9 years), and Long-term (10+ years). The blueprint also outlined strategic goal categories (e.g., overall

health, health-related economic developments, etc.) and organizational goal categories, including development funding, advocacy, and operations. The blueprint has galvanized the region into action, increasing awareness and progress toward improving population health.

In FY2016, the Southwest Virginia Health Authority supported an update of the 2009 Blueprint for Health Improvement and Health-Enabled Prosperity. Healthy Appalachia Institute worked with the Virginia Department of Health and regional partners to develop a community-driven strategic planning process based on Mobilizing for Action through Partnerships and Planning (MAPP). The assessment phase, completed in October 2015, included 3 different MAPP assessments yielding 1,200 survey responses. The Southwest Virginia Health Authority approved 39 regional health goals and preliminary strategies on January 7, 2016. The approved goals will inform Southwest Virginia Health Authority decisions related to the regional merger of Mountain States Health Alliance and Wellmont Health System. A hardcopy of the updated blueprint will be published in August 2016.

### ***UVA's Cancer Center Without Walls***

To address the unique challenges faced by cancer patients in rural areas, communities and organizations throughout Appalachia and Southwest Virginia are partnering with the University of Virginia Cancer Center to advance a virtual hospital —UVA's Cancer Center Without Walls. This effort is designed to better provide patients with advanced cancer care and clinical trials close to home. Funding for the center comes from an 18-month, \$965,000 grant awarded by the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. This grant has resulted in progress on multiple fronts:

- Mammography services for 375 women and telecolposcopy for 119 women in FY2016.
- Expanded telemedicine capabilities at the Health Wagon and the Wise County Health Department. Needs assessment is ongoing to determine regional capacity for clinical research in SWVA.
- The development and deployment of UVA's *Understanding Cancer* program.
- Since September 2013, 4,717 individuals received cancer prevention training, screening information and resources, 530 individuals received care through Mountain Empire Older Citizens (MEOC) and 499 individuals attended 20 cancer workshops.

### ***UVa's Cancer Center Without Walls - Early Detection of Cancer***

Virginia's rate of adult smokers is above the national average at 19%, and in Southwest Virginia the range is between 28% - 30%. Smoking leads to higher rates of lung and bladder cancer, and it is not surprising that bladder cancer and lung cancer are overrepresented in the tobacco footprint. When detected early both cancers can be treated with curative intent. However, too often these cancers are detected too late, resulting in suffering, death, and costly medical expenses. The UVa Cancer Center is actively utilizing telehealth technology to detect these cancers at early stages among Southwest Virginia residents. These screening projects will result in reduced cancer morbidity and mortality. Grant funding of \$657,716 comes from the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission (TRRC). Funding began in March of 2016.

- Nursing students in UVa's Clinical Nurse Leaders program hosted a cancer screening and health fair in partnership with Mountain Empire Older Citizens near the Town of Big Stone Gap. The students trained health navigators on cancer screenings and screened 24 residents.



*UVa Clinical Nurse Leader students perform cancer screenings near Big Stone Gap, Va.*

- Assistant Nursing Professor Emma Mitchell received \$40,000 from the UVa Cancer Center and the National Cancer Institute for an 18-month study of at-home human papillomavirus (HPV) tests. HPV is a precursor to cervical cancer. Rates of cervical cancer are two to three times higher in Southwest Virginia than elsewhere in the



Commonwealth. Cervical cancer can be easily treated if detected early. For those who do not have access to clinics and health care practitioners, at-home testing may increase early detection of some cancers.



*UVa nursing professor Emma Mitchell is researching at-home cervical cancer testing.*

### ***Cancer Center Without Walls – Survivor Network***

As a result of innovative research, improved early detection, and effective therapies, the number of cancer survivors in the United States is constantly growing. The UVa Cancer Center continues to improve the lives of cancer survivors in the tobacco footprint by expanding access to high-quality healthcare. A "Survivor Network" is being created through partnership with the Healthy Appalachia Institute to collect information on survivors' needs, link individuals to improved survivorship services and follow-up care, and develop new targeted support services. Funding for the network comes from a three-year grant of \$560,710 awarded by the Virginia Tobacco Indemnification and Community Revitalization Commission. Funding began in September of 2014.

Additional health-related accomplishments in FY2016 include:

- A National Cancer Institute study identified five geographical clusters in the United States with elevated levels of cervical cancer morbidity and mortality. One cluster is in far Southwest Virginia. The UVa Health System, the Healthy Appalachia Institute, and the Virginia Department of Health have continued their partnership championing cervical cancer screenings in the region. A video-colposcopy program has already provided over 200 women with telemedicine connections to specialty care. It has also resulted in colposcopy training for five nurse practitioners in the area, increasing the number of local health care providers qualified to perform this procedure by a factor of five. Expansion

efforts continue within the video-colposcopy pilot to include more sites as an avenue to developing a robust, nurse practitioner-guided network throughout Southwest Virginia.

- In addition to cervical cancer screening UVa continues to be active in helping to reduce mortality from breast cancer by providing over 2,000 mammograms to women in Southwest Virginia over the last five years. UVa's mobile mammography van serves women in the most remote areas of the Coalfields who have extremely limited access to specialty care. The van began work in the region in July 2015 and will be used in a research initiative led by Dr. Jennifer Harvey to explore the impact of expedited review of mammograms in securing diagnostic follow-up. As of June 2016, 310 mobile mammogram patients have saved an estimated 184,760 miles to receive care. At \$0.54 per mile this translates to \$99,770.
  
- The University of Virginia Office of Telemedicine continues to provide specialty clinical services and health education throughout Southwest Virginia using an extensive network of telemedicine sites. With support from the Tobacco Commission UVa has updated the aging technology at three sites to establish what is emerging as a secure, state-of-the-art, high definition network. Additionally, sites for mental health services continue to expand with robust clinics in child and family psychiatry. The program's active pediatric telemedicine program, including services in child neurology and pediatric orthopedics, partners with Care Connection for Children.
  
- The **Appalachian Tele-Mental Health Network (ATMHN)** seeks to expand and enhance access to quality affordable mental health services in Appalachia. ATMHN envisions a multi-state consortium of hospitals, clinics, and education institutions working to create and implement a region wide tele-mental health network. Through a variety of access points the ATMHN advances the innovative use of telehealth as a solution for improved mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse outcomes, and increased access to providers, removing barriers of time, distance, and provider scarcities. Among the network's objectives are:
  - Establish current telehealth infrastructure and capacity.
  - Support and develop regional partnerships and pilot projects.
  - Provide evidence for telehealth policy change.

- Develop a readiness assessment tool for mental health providers and professionals.
  - Support telehealth and mental telehealth training opportunities for providers.
  - Assess market dynamics by state, including reimbursement rates, and payer source.
  - Create online referral network and resource center for providers and professionals.
- UVA's Faculty and Employee Assistance Program (FEAP), in partnership with the UVA Center for Telehealth, is creating a national model for the use of telehealth in a non-traditional setting, expanding FEAP services to increase access, convenience, and continuity of care for employees and their families. **Tele-FEAP** is built on a robust Cisco infrastructure, allowing for multi-point connections between users and endpoints. The standards-based system allows for multiple vendor platforms. The system is fully encrypted and compliant with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements for clinical encounters and high-definition technology allows a quality, seamless connection for all participants.
  - UVA-Wise contracts with FEAP to provide employees and their families access to individual and group encounters. Located in a region with widespread disparities both in health outcomes and infrastructure, access to mental health providers and counseling services is characterized by a lack of availability, acceptability, and accessibility. Using a workplace-based system increases access and reduces barriers to care including concerns about stigma, confidentiality, lack of transportation, limited payment options, and facility choices. Group workshops and individual counseling sessions are vehicles for service delivery.
  - Brenda Wilson, UVA FEAP Director, offered 2 on-site workshops in Wise and met with UVA-Wise staff, HR and other units to discuss continued and expanded collaboration opportunities.
  - Since 2008 the University of Virginia's Diabetes Tele-Education Program has served over 2,000 participants at 57 sites across the state. The program offers a series of four classes: *Basics of Diabetes and Medications*, *Nutrition Basics*, *Eat Smart - Change Your*

*Lifestyle, and Glucose Control, Activity, and Stress* through a videoconferencing platform. UVa-Wise, through the Healthy Appalachia Institute, offered this program for employees in June and September 2015 in the Winston Ely Health and Wellness Center. Collaboration among HAI, UVa Diabetes, UVa-Wise HR and the Winston Ely Health and Wellness Center at UVa-Wise continues in 2016 through a telemedicine Diabetes Prevention Program for UVa-Wise employees.

- Since 2006, the **Healthy Appalachia Institute Fellows Program** has mentored 32 students who have a strong interest in solving health care challenges in the region. More than 80% of the students are now in graduate school, medical school, graduate nursing education, or are practicing health care professionals.
  - Tara Greear was selected as the 2016 HAI Research Fellow. She will work with faculty mentor Renee Stanley on a research project titled, “Self-Efficacy and Social Networking Among Individuals with Diabetes Residing in Central Appalachia.” Greear has partnered with the Virginia Cooperative Extension in Wise and Dickenson Counties. Funding for Tara’s mentor was provided by Appalachian Prosperity Project.
  - In collaboration with the UVa Center for Global Health, HAI has funded seven UVa-Wise students to participate in global health research since 2010. This summer, the Healthy Appalachia Institute funded Global Health Scholar Bailey Helbert. Bailey will travel to St. Kitts and Nevis to spend 10 weeks researching youth diabetes with the Minority Health International Research Training Program.
  - In the spring of 2016 HAI supported three Practice Fellows who worked to further the growth and development of HAI. Karina Ruffino, Communications Practice Fellow, provided ongoing website maintenance and social media presence. Connie Little, Research and Grant Writing Practice Fellow, researched relevant grant opportunities and wrote grant proposals. Allyssa Sluss, Public Health Practice Fellow, supported the SWVA Tobacco-Free Campuses Initiative, Med-Match and the FEAP programs at UVa-Wise.
- The Med-Match Program launched in FY2014, pairs UVa School of Medicine students

with UVa-Wise pre-med students in a yearlong mentorship program. UVa School of Medicine students assist undergraduates in navigating the medical school application process, including MCAT preparation, personal statement development, and interview practice. In FY2016 15 UVa-Wise students participated, more than doubling the program size.

- A public health course, **Introduction to Public Health: Appalachian Perspectives**, introduces students to the field of public health, including historical development, foundational principles, and contemporary issues focusing on the challenges of rural public health and health disparities in central Appalachia. The course presents a broad overview of many factors which influence health, including behavior, history, culture, geography, society, environment, and policy, and their relationship to disease, prevention, health promotion, and successful public health interventions. Students identified and examined health issues and associated risk factors specific to the college student population. Students proposed an intervention using current data, literature, and evidence-based best practices. Course enrollment doubled in one year and will be offered again in Spring 2017. HAI is expanding public health education at UVa-Wise through the development of a Public Health Minor curriculum.
- UVa-Wise, through its Healthy Appalachia Institute, works to reduce tobacco use on college campuses through the **Southwest Virginia Tobacco-Free Campuses Initiative**. In August 2014 UVa-Wise adopted a new tobacco policy eliminating the use of all e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco and tobacco products in all campus buildings and facilities. In the fall of 2015, UVa-Wise conducted a campus-wide survey on tobacco use, behaviors and attitudes. Over 520 people completed the survey, 60% of whom were students. Survey data will be compiled and shared with senior staff and the campus community to support future tobacco-free programming.
- HAI received funding from the County Health Rankings & Roadmaps (CHR&R) to partner with Buchanan County Youth, Inc. (BCYI) to strengthen multi-sector partnerships in Buchanan County. This funding increases capacity to advance evidence-based practices and policies, tobacco education and programming in schools, and supports tobacco policy change and enforcement.

- The Healthy Appalachia Institute in partnership with the Tennessee Institute of Public Health and South Carolina Institute of Medicine & Public Health hosted the **Health Across Borders: Tobacco-Free Youth World Café** on April 22 in Bristol, Virginia. The event focused on prioritizing regional tobacco-free youth policies. Twenty-one counties from the central and southern Appalachian region of the United States were represented.
- The Healthy Appalachia Institute **Health Policy Fellows Program** engages community leaders and decision makers, offering evidence-based, health policy information in a non-partisan environment to inform policy, and programming, and support a culture of health in the rural communities of far Southwest Virginia. Multi-sector participation from town governments, education, law enforcement, outdoor recreation, and economic development highlights the importance health considerations in policy decisions. HAI Fellows participate in workshops, training, and site visits to Richmond. During the program, they develop policies and propose program interventions to create “Culture of Health” town models. HAI plans to seek funding for this program from the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust and Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.
- As part of the DentaQuest Foundation's **Oral Health 2020** efforts, HAI provides public health expertise and project organization support for the development of the LENOWISCO Oral Health Landscape and Engagement Strategies. HAI will develop a project timeline, facilitate stakeholder meetings, analyze and compile data from the community oral health survey, facilitate the development of engagement strategies, gain community input and draft a priorities plan which will drive community-based efforts to improve oral health.
- In partnership with Tennessee Institute of Public Health, HAI received a \$5,000 grant from the National Network of Public Health Institutes. The primary goal of the grant is to develop a common definition of population health through stakeholder engagement. A key outcome will be a roadmap for the development of collaborative networks to improve population health in the region. The Community Mobilization Advisory Board will be charged with developing recommendations for establishing sustainable collaborations between key agencies for the improvement of population health in southwest Virginia and northeast Tennessee.

## EDUCATION

- DreamWakers, a nonprofit organization founded by UVa alumnae, uses free videoconference technology to bring career speakers into regional public schools. The organization has virtually connected hundreds of 4th-12th grade public school students in Abingdon, Gate City, Hillsville, Nickelsville, Norton, and Jonesville with vetted public and private sector employers such as: U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Jean Georges Restaurant NYC, Boston Consulting Group, BBC News, Time Magazine, The Baltimore Sun, NFL and Whole Foods Market. Since 2014, co-founder and CEO Monica Gray spoke to approximately 150 SWVA teachers about DreamWakers' free services at the Celebration of Success Conference. On July 25, 2016, Gray spoke with Advisers of the Virginia College Advising Corps about ways to connect their SWVA students with DreamWakers' professionals in the 2016-17 academic year.



*DreamWakers' co-founders, Monica Gray and Annie Medaglia*

- The Virginia College Advising Corps (VCAC) hired two advisers for Central High School in Wise County, and Burton High School in the City of Norton for the upcoming school year. The advisers are recent UVa-Wise graduates. VCAC is a public service program based at UVa with the mission of increasing college access for low-income, underrepresented, and first generation students across the Commonwealth. On average, VCAC partner high schools see an average increase of 20% in their post-secondary matriculation rates. Joy Pugh, Director of the Virginia College Advising Corps, will speak to the Region VII Superintendent's group on August 19th, 2016, in order to cultivate more high school partners in the region. Two additional school districts, Carroll

County and the city of Galax, have already expressed interest in the program for subsequent years.

- Professor Frackson Mumba of UVa's Curry School of Education received a \$200,000 grant from the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to provide professional development in science for K-12 teachers in the Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium (SVPEC). This partnership among the University of Virginia, Southwest Virginia Public School Education Consortium and 19 high-need school districts in Southwest Virginia is aimed at improving science teaching and learning in partner schools through a teacher professional development program on content, pedagogy, vertical teaming, technology integration, and science instructional leadership. Three technology integrated inquiry-based courses in life science, physical science, and earth science will be offered to 75 middle-school teachers, with summer workshops and follow-up sessions during the school year. Outcomes are: increased teachers' content and pedagogical knowledge, improved instructional practice, and increased student achievement in science. UVa's Center for the Liberal Arts is contributing planning, design, and matching support for this effort.
- UVa, UVa-Wise, and the Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium (comprised of 16 school systems) have been working together for a decade to improve knowledge of traditional American history on the part of the region's teachers and children, funded by a series of federal "**Teaching American History**" grants. We continue to seek new opportunities to sustain this work. The Curry School, the Center for the Liberal Arts, and the Miller Center submitted a pre-proposal inquiry to the Teaching Primary Sources program of the Library of Congress for program support.
- Through a connection with professor Thomas Costa, Chair of the History Department at UVa-Wise, UVa's Center for the Liberal Arts (CLA) played a central role in a \$1.6 million grant application submitted in mid-July 2016 to the United States Department of Education's American History and Civics Academies Program. In the proposal, CLA includes a number of the region's teachers in the grant's professional development activities. The lead applicant is the non-profit Journey Through Hallowed Ground Partnership.



- In July 2016, the Curry School of Education, the Miller Center for Public Affairs, and the Center for the Liberal Arts submitted a proposal to the Library of Congress Teaching With Primary Sources program to offer professional development for history teachers in the region.
- Dark Skies Bright Kids, a science education program through the UVa Astronomy Department, received a three-year grant from the David and Lucile Packard Foundation to run week-long summer astronomy programs targeting rural communities in southern Virginia.
- The Central Virginia Writing Project offered new professional development opportunities in writing instruction to teachers in the region.

## **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

The **Blueprint for Entrepreneurial Growth and Economic Prosperity**, published in 2012, creates a roadmap for promoting entrepreneurial activity. The Blueprint was cited by Virginia's Rural Jobs Council as a model for the state and the APP, through Appalachian Ventures, is leading several initiatives. My SWVA Opportunity, the entity formed to implement the Blueprint, inspires collective action, examines policies, fosters regional networks, builds on the region's assets, and seeks new investments. My SWVA Opportunity was awarded a \$50,000 Building Collaborative Communities Grant through the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Appalachian Regional Commission, enabling the initiative to pursue the following efforts in FY2016:

### ***Establish infrastructure and governance for the My SWVA Opportunity Initiative***

- Initially serving Virginia Planning Districts 1 and 2, My SWVA Opportunity expanded efforts by collaborating with Planning Districts 3 and 4. The inclusion of these planning districts increased the scope of the initiative, adding additional members to the steering team. The steering team, now serving the 19-county, 4-city region, consists of 34 members from 23 small business and community development organizations.
- Given the growth of the initiative, the steering team implemented a formalized infrastructure to facilitate additional initiatives and provide a process for managing projects. The larger steering team now operates in smaller action groups, focused on

specific projects, with action team leads that provide updates at bimonthly steering team meetings.

- My SWVA Opportunity will transition to a new name and logo, “Opportunity SWVA,” in coordination with the release of a new regional Southwest Virginia brand.



### ***Encourage Entrepreneurial Competitions***

- My SWVA Opportunity designed and hosted the My SWVA Opportunity Cup in the fall of 2015. Modeled after the 2013 Entrepreneur Challenge, the Cup is a higher level entrepreneur challenge for existing businesses seeking to expand in Southwest Virginia. The Cup accepted businesses that competed in qualifying regional business challenges in Planning District Commissions 1, 2 and 3. Fifteen businesses completed the program to win \$35,000 in business investment grants.
- In an effort to expand the culture of entrepreneurship in the region and encourage localities to host entrepreneur competitions, My SWVA Opportunity partners hosted a business plan competition seminar in April 2016. The free workshop provided insight on successful regional competitions, benefits from the participant and community perspectives, best practices and steps to organize a competition, and the various resources available to assist with implementation. Attendees received the [Entrepreneur Challenge Toolkit](#), a detailed instruction manual with tips and helpful forms for coordinating an entrepreneur competition.
- Since 2012, Southwest Virginia has hosted 32 competitions with over 250 program graduates aimed at increasing entrepreneurial activity and providing opportunities for new ventures and existing businesses.

### ***Build Community Leadership Capacity***

- Rally SWVA is a community leadership development program that was launched in summer 2015 with the towns of Cleveland, Damascus and Dungannon. The program is designed to build community leadership capacity and reinforce collaborative communities across the region. Throughout the program teams learn and develop vital leadership skills needed to carry out community strategies. By granting modest funds the Rally program provides communities with resources to accomplish a meaningful community development project while molding a cohesive team of energetic leaders.
- Phase 2 of Rally SWVA continued in February 2016 with the towns of Haysi and Pocahontas. The program has funding to award mini grants to seven additional communities in the region, allowing them the opportunity to strengthen leadership capacity.



*Town of Pocahontas receives a Rally SWVA mini grant.*

### ***Increase Capital to Small Businesses***

- The My SWVA Opportunity team has identified over \$6 million in micro and revolving loan funds in the region. The steering team surveyed local fund holders, assessed the need for a loan loss reserve and determined how it should be structured. Survey results revealed that 100% of funders would use the loan loss reserve if it was available to them, and they would be comfortable with a 10% guarantee. The action group is seeking potential funders for the loan guarantee.

### ***Increase UVa-Wise Entrepreneurial Capacity***

- UVa-Wise engaged the community, alumni, and current students in a Start-up Weekend focused on enhancing regional entrepreneurship capacity in spring 2016. The event was preceded with entrepreneurial workshops to prepare student entrepreneurs with skills such as concept development.
- UVa-Wise hosted serial entrepreneur, Miki Agrawal, in March 2016. Agrawal's presentation was part of the Alfred and Shirley Wampler Caudill Lecture in Entrepreneurship Series, and drew an audience of more than 150 from the college community. She provided insight on her own entrepreneurial journey and offered advice for aspiring entrepreneurs. Students also had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with her at a book signing following the lecture.
- The UVa-Wise Entrepreneurship Cup Concept Competition was held in fall 2015. Seven students participated in the competition. The students pitched their concepts to a panel of judges and competed for \$3,500 in awards. In November, following the competition, students traveled to UVa to observe the UVa Concept Competition with the goal of bringing best practices back to UVa-Wise.
- The Collegiate Entrepreneur's Organization (CEO) traveled to Charlottesville in April 2016 to attend the Tom Tom Founder's Festival. Students had the opportunity to hear notable entrepreneurs at the Founder's Summit, attend luncheons focused on Virginia's economy, and watch the UVa Launch! and Galant competitions.
- Over 350 participants attended the SWVA Economic Forum held on May 12, 2016 in Wise. Through interactive breakout sessions 6 action teams were formed to identify regional projects in the areas of youth, health and wellness, entrepreneurship, agriculture and regional promotion.
- UVa-Wise submitted a Building Entrepreneurial Economies Planning Grant proposal in May 2016 for *The Nest* concept, which received significant interest at the 2016 SWVA Economic Forum. *The Nest*, "where ideas are hatched", is an idea proposed by the Collegiate Entrepreneur's Organization (CEO) at UVa-Wise and further explored through a UVa-Wise student marketing research project. *The Nest* will be a pre-

incubation, collaborative work space for UVA-Wise students and community members to work on business concepts and strategies. The space will provide aspiring entrepreneurs access to resources that are critical to launch their businesses. *The Nest* will also provide permanent working space for UVA-Wise entrepreneurship students and meeting space for CEO.

- UVA-Wise has been working with a local entrepreneur and investor to coordinate a technology-based student entrepreneur competition. The entrepreneur, who owns several local businesses throughout the region, will be providing the winner with a cash award as well as mentorship.

## PLACE-BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## CLINCH RIVER VALLEY INITIATIVE

- The **Clinch River Valley Initiative** (CRVI) is a multi-partner effort to build local economies in Southwest Virginia by leveraging the natural assets of the Clinch River. <http://www.clinchriverva.com/>
- UVA's Institute for Environmental Negotiation (IEN) serves roles as convener, facilitator, recorder, administrator, researcher, fund-raiser, and advocate for the Clinch River Valley Initiative (CRVI). Informal surveys indicated that the institute's involvement has been highly valued by CRVI leadership and participants.
- Monthly CRVI Steering Committee phone meetings and quarterly in-person meetings continued to guide the future direction of the Initiative with this 25 member consensus-based Committee. Each of the five CRVI Action Groups meets regularly to plan and measure progress. The Steering Committee's recent efforts focused on fundraising, potential CRVI incorporation, coordination and communication, and marketing and logo development.

Five action groups continue to work to address key areas: Clinch River State Park; Access to the Clinch; Water Quality; Environmental Education; and Downtown Revitalization and Entrepreneurship. CRVI Action Group accomplishments include the following:

- **Clinch River State Park**

- \$2.5 million in initial planning funds for the proposed Clinch River state park was approved by the Virginia House of Delegates during the 2016 General Assembly session. <http://www.timesnews.net/News/2016/03/16/Bond-funds-to-flow-for-Clinch-River-State-Park.html>
- Tazewell County offered the Cavett's Creek Park property for the first phase of the park. A number of landowners along the Clinch River are interested in selling their properties for the park, and the Action Group is maintaining contact with the landowners to keep them informed on the status of land acquisition.

- **Access to the Clinch**

- The access point launch in Cleveland has been completed and is ready for use.
- The Action Group is having discussions with the town of Dungannon about a VDOT easement to provide another access point to the river.
- This group is actively looking for possible access points in the Miller Yard area.

- **Water Quality**

- CRVI was the recipient of Scenic Virginia's 2015 "Scenic Tourism" Award. The award was presented on October 9, 2015 to honor CRVI for re-imagining the Clinch River Valley as a global tourism destination. The award was publicized in newspapers throughout the region.
- The second Youth Summit was held on March 19, 2016, and attracted students from around the Clinch Valley.

○ **Environmental Education**

- The Ecological Center received \$100,000 in funding to develop a feasibility study and curriculum guide, as well as significant developments in finding a permanent physical home for the Ecological Center.
- UVa-Wise announced plans to establish a cybersecurity accelerator in the Oxbow Center that will house faculty, students and corporate researchers working to develop software for the world's fastest growing technology sector. In addition, UVa-Wise plans to use a portion of the building as an ecological center to bridge environmental education and economic development efforts by serving as a hub for environmental education.
- The 4th Annual Clinch River Environmental Education Symposium was held on May 14, 2016 in St. Paul to assist educators in the development of hands-on learning techniques that focus on Virginia SOLs and the Clinch River ecosystem.

○ **Downtown Revitalization**

- The Towns of Dungannon, St. Paul, and Cleveland were designated as "Hometowns of the Clinch" on April 14th, 2016. The "Hometowns of the Clinch" program was launched in February 2015 by the Downtown Revitalization Action Group to integrate the communities along the Clinch into an interconnected network with a cohesive brand identity. The Action Group is working with Clinch Valley towns to develop thresholds that must be met to be designated as a Hometown.
- Dungannon received a \$700,000 Community Development Block Grant to help with its revitalization. Cleveland and St. Paul also received investments from the Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development.

Other highlights:

- The Clinch River Valley Initiative launched a new website to provide an updated look and easier navigation. <http://www.clinchriverva.com/>
- Opportunity SWVA has begun publishing a regular newsletter to provide information and tips to local entrepreneurs and businesses. The first edition was July 2015. <http://www.myswvaopportunity.org/node/182>
- AmeriCorps VISTA member Willie Dodson collected oral histories which aired on Mountain Community Radio WMMT 88.7. These oral histories are a part of the Special Collections archives at UVa-Wise.
- Southwest Virginia Citizen Science Initiative, a student-led group at UVa-Wise, created an interactive map and website on Clinch River biodiversity and recreation. Residents and visitors to the region can learn about the region's remarkable biodiversity and connect with distinctive communities.
- Clinch River brochures are now available at sites around southwest Virginia, including Heartwood in Abingdon and information centers in the towns along the Clinch River.

---

*For more information contact:*

Pace Lochte  
Assistant Vice President for Strategic Initiatives  
University of Virginia  
[Lochte@virginia.edu](mailto:Lochte@virginia.edu)  
434-924-7566