

RURAL VIRGINIA RISING

Expanding
Horizons
Across the
Commonwealth

Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative

ONE COURSE. ONE VIRGINIA.

THE VIRGINIA FOUNDATION *for*
COMMUNITY COLLEGE EDUCATION



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*We must plant trees
today that will benefit
women and men
for years and decades
to come.*

*–Governor Gerald Baliles
Former Board Chair,
Virginia Foundation for
Community College Education*



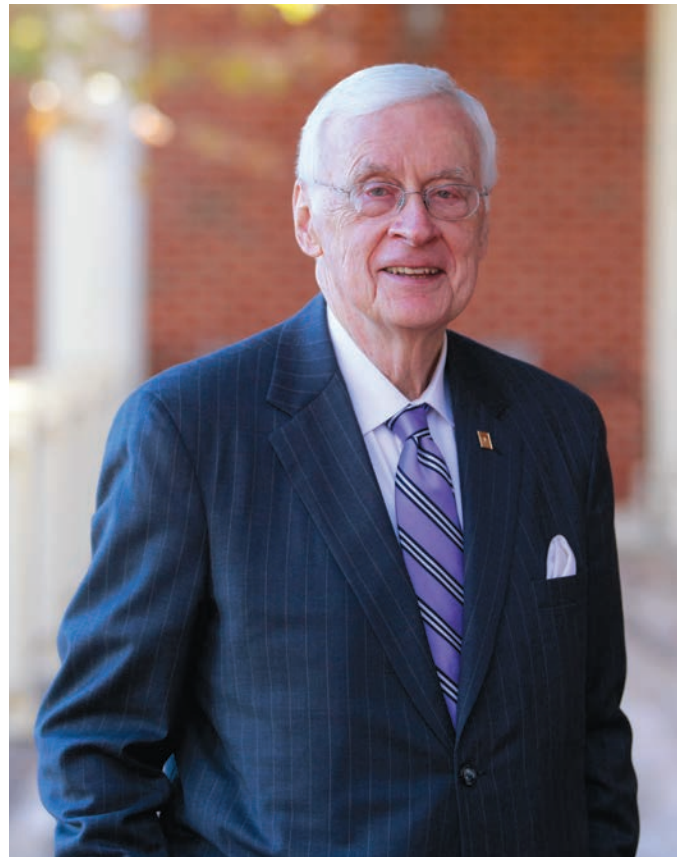
FROM THE EASTERN SHORE TO BIG STONE GAP, THE RURAL VIRGINIA HORSESHOE INITIATIVE IS CHANGING LIVES.

Since its founding in 2014, the program has increased the number of students who earn a college credential by investing in the state's 14 rural community colleges. The positive impact on rural families and communities is profound, with benefits extending throughout the Commonwealth.

“As Virginia seeks to expand its horizons, our community colleges must be part of our means for acquiring economic strength and intellectual growth.” This is the vision of the late Gerald Baliles, former governor and native of Patrick County in Southwest Virginia, who spearheaded the founding of the Rural Horseshoe Initiative.

Now, with a strong foundation backed by visionary donors, our goal is to expand the impact of the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative so our rural communities and the Commonwealth as a whole can prosper.

*Right: the Late Gerald L. Baliles, 65th Governor of Virginia
Cover: Loretta Reilly, Winchester Medical Center employee and
Lord Fairfax Community College student chosen for the
prestigious 2020–2021 Valley Proteins Fellowship*



COMMUNITY COLLEGES: ENGINES OF GROWTH FOR RURAL VIRGINIA

Fourteen of the state's 23 community colleges are located in Virginia's Rural Horseshoe, an arc of countryside stretching from the Eastern Shore to the far Southwest and up the Shenandoah Valley. The Rural Horseshoe is home to more than 2 million people and comprises 75% of the state's geography. If this region were its own state, it would rank 50th for educational attainment.

But a change is in the air. Virginia's community colleges are reinventing rural education by partnering with visionary donors to create programs targeted to the needs of 21st-century students. With degrees and credentials in technology, health care, education, and other high-demand careers, Virginia's community colleges are opening new opportunities for rural students, their families and communities.

The Virginia Rural Horseshoe Initiative (RVHI) is a collaboration between rural community colleges and philanthropists working to double the number of rural students who earn a post-secondary degree or certification.



Community colleges across our state are doing an outstanding job of providing career paths like the Power Line Worker Training Program and other initiatives that expand workforce opportunities for rural Virginians, and NCSC and CFC are pleased to be a part of those efforts.

—Sheldon Petersen, CEO
*National Cooperative Services Corporation and
National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation*

RVHI works with donors to develop workforce training programs that can launch students into sustainable and rewarding careers that also meet the needs of growing businesses.





Blair Wimbush, retired Norfolk Southern executive and lawyer, former VFCCE Board Member

DONOR PROFILE: BLAIR WIMBUSH

Blair Wimbush was born on a farm in rural Halifax County and grew up in Martinsville. A first-generation college student, Blair spent much of his career as an attorney working in rural Virginia for Norfolk Southern Railroad. “Rural communities need good-paying jobs, and employers need a skilled workforce. Growing Virginia’s rural workforce is more economical for employers and a

smart investment for the Commonwealth.” Blair and his wife, Jane, established a fund to provide emergency support to students to cover unexpected costs that could jeopardize their education. “For students on the economic edge, a small grant to cover necessary expenses like car repairs can make all the difference to them achieving their goals.”

“The desire for opportunity is great in Virginia’s rural communities, and our community colleges are the best way to the American Dream of a better future for rural families. But the barriers to education in rural Virginia are real, and we must do all we can to alleviate those challenges as a nation and as a Commonwealth.”

THE OPPORTUNITY IS HERE. THE TIME IS NOW.

RVHI was launched in 2014 with bold objectives to reduce the number of rural residents without a high school diploma from one in five to one in ten, and increase the number of rural Virginia residents with an associate's degree, diploma, or certificate from 26 to 52 percent.

In its first six years, RVHI has directed more than \$10 million in direct and matching funding toward these goals. To date, the population of the RVHI region aged 25 and over without a high school degree has decreased by 4.2% and those with at least an associate's degree has increased by 4.0%.

This progress results from investments by public and private sector donors working to support a range of programs. Successful efforts include:

STUDENT COACHING

Supporting adult learners, foster youth and the youth of rural regions

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Enabling students to build skills and earn credentials through scholarships and awards

ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

Assisting with college applications, financial aid and meeting basic needs

ACCELERATOR PROGRAM FUNDING

Developing new programs and growing existing ones

In just five years, RVHI served more than 37,000 students. Nearly half of these were high school students who received career coaching. One college, Dabney S. Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge, has seen a 40% increase in dual enrollment from area high school students, in large part because of the presence of an RVHI coach.

While college enrollment is critical, the goal is to increase the number of students completing a degree or credential. A community college credential can increase a student's income between 20 and 40%, providing the economic means to support a family. In many cases, this pay increase moves students off of public assistance and establishes a solid foundation from which to grow a career.

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DONOR PROFILE: J.J. & MICHAEL SMITH

Growing up in the family business, J.J. and Michael Smith saw their father regularly invest in college scholarships for employees. Now that they lead the Winchester-based company, Valley Proteins, Inc., the Smith brothers have built on the tradition with significant support of the community college system. In 2014, Michael Smith and Valley Proteins each provided gifts of \$1 million to launch the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative. They also created a Fellows

program that offers scholarships and leadership opportunities to high-potential students. “My parents taught us how important higher education is to rural communities, even though neither were college graduates,” says J.J. Smith. “We can give people an opportunity to go beyond high school, get a certificate, and make a good living that supports their family. That’s good for our people and our communities.”

“We are big believers and supporters of the community colleges for making higher education possible to so many people. It’s an excellent investment for rural families and for building a rural business.”



J.J. Smith (left) and Michael Smith (right), Valley Proteins, Inc.; Winchester, Virginia

DONORS AND COLLEGES UNITED FOR RURAL VIRGINIA

For many rural Virginians, higher education is a dream that goes unrealized. High school students do not get the critical adult support they need to continue their educations. Many adults are not aware of the training and credentials that could advance their careers. Without a solid foundation, too many rural Virginians end their education prematurely, leaving them with a lifetime of diminished opportunity. In 2014, RVHI brought colleges and committed donors together to begin solving Virginia's rural education gap.

BRIDGING STUDENTS FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE TO CAREER

RVHI places Career Coaches in rural high schools to guide students through the transition to college. These skilled, compassionate adults help students envision a bigger future and navigate the college application process. After enrollment, coaches support students through everything from course selection to managing a budget and troubleshooting personal challenges that could knock them off track.

REMOVING THE AFFORDABILITY BARRIER

The perceived cost of higher education is a significant challenge in rural communities. RVHI is reducing this hurdle through targeted scholarships for post-secondary degrees and certifications for students of all ages. When scholarships are paired with other financial aid, the costs of a community college credential are substantially reduced, leading to increased enrollment in rural communities.

CREATING HIGH-SKILL TRAINING FOR IN-DEMAND CAREERS

Virginia's workforce is changing as jobs require more advanced skills, many of which are attainable without a four-year college degree. RVHI works with donors to develop workforce training programs that can launch students into sustainable and rewarding careers that also meet the needs of growing businesses. Many of these programs are in fields that are well suited to a rural workforce, including: Computer Technology, Health Care, Advanced Manufacturing, Technical Trades, Education and Business Management.

Graduates of Piedmont Virginia Community College employed at Medical Facilities of America's Albemarle Health & Rehabilitation Center, Charlottesville, Virginia: (Left) Havyarimana Regina, Certified Nursing Assistant; (Center) Shaqwana Booker, Certified Nursing Assistant; (Right) Taylor Roberts, Licensed Practical Nurse





The Honorable William Fralin, President & CEO, Medical Facilities of America; Corporate Office, Roanoke, Virginia

DONOR PROFILE: WILLIAM FRALIN

Education has long been a priority for the Fralin family of Roanoke. As Virginia's economy shifts to knowledge-based work, the Fralins have made significant donations in support of STEM and health care scholarships. "Virginia's population is aging and health care is both a need and

an opportunity for the Commonwealth," said William Fralin. "Given the resources, the community colleges have the flexibility to develop training programs that deliver skilled and motivated people who can enrich our communities."

"Virginia's Community Colleges help us create programs that not only meet the workforce needs of a growing business, but provide rewarding careers for bright, capable people."



Richard Gilliam and Julia Gilliam Sterling, The Richard and Leslie Gilliam Foundation; Ms. Gilliam Sterling is a VFCCE Board Member

DONOR PROFILE: RICHARD GILLIAM & JULIA GILLIAM STERLING

One in four children who enter Virginia's foster care system will not find a permanent home before turning 18. With help from donors, including the Richard and Leslie Gilliam Foundation, Virginia's rural community colleges are stepping in to help. The Gilliams' gift supports scholarships,

coaching and housing stipends for foster students attending three community colleges in southwest Virginia. "Our family's roots are in southwest Virginia, and we are pleased to work with the community colleges to increase student success and completion," says Julia Gilliam Sterling.

"The community colleges provide access for everyone and anyone seeking higher education, and we are proud to support their work."

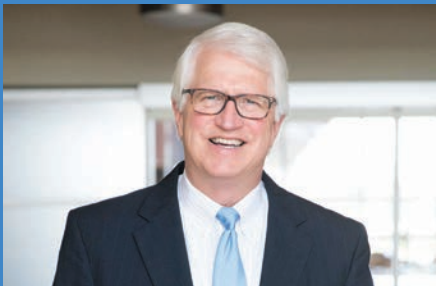
JOIN US IN CHANGING THE COURSE IN RURAL VIRGINIA.

Our goal is to expand opportunity and transform the educational and economic landscape of rural Virginia. We are seeking visionary donors to help advance this essential work.



GLENN DUBOIS
Chancellor, Virginia's Community Colleges

“We see it again and again in the 21st century: jobs and opportunities go where the talent resides. With more than half of our colleges located in rural Virginia, we are working hard to ensure that everyone has access to the skills and knowledge they need to reach their potential and have a rewarding career, earning the pay and benefits capable of supporting a family.”



STEWART ROBERSON
Chair, Virginia Foundation for Community College Education

“The evidence is unequivocal. Investments in the community college mission, specifically aimed at those in rural Virginia, are transformative. If you are committed to your dollars lifting the condition of communities across the Commonwealth, the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative will offer you, and particularly those you generously aim to support, the return you expect.”

TO SUPPORT OR TO LEARN MORE, CONTACT:

Dr. Jennifer Gentry, *Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement*
Virginia's Community Colleges
jgentry@vccs.edu | 804.955.7358 | vfcce.org

More than 2 million Virginians live in the state's "rural horseshoe." Virginia's Community Colleges are bringing the power of higher education to these communities.

JOIN US.

Blue Ridge Community College
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College
Danville Community College
Eastern Shore Community College
Lord Fairfax Community College
Mountain Empire Community College
New River Community College
Patrick Henry Community College
Paul D. Camp Community College
Rappahannock Community College
Southside Virginia Community College
Southwest Virginia Community College
Virginia Highlands Community College
Wytheville Community College



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