Dear Colleague,

As we begin Year Two of Virginia Tech’s Rural Virginia Initiative (RVI), I need your assistance in documenting the university’s work in rural parts of the commonwealth.

Please share the following survey link with the faculty and administrators in your area: https://virginiatech.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2n7dSZILzyg2IDj. The survey is a critical part of an inventory we are developing of rural initiatives across Virginia’s higher education institutions. Your participation will help elevate the visibility of your work and ensure it is included in this important document that will help inform future rural development efforts.

The Rural Virginia Initiative began in 2018 when the Virginia General Assembly asked the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State University to consider the challenges and opportunities facing rural Virginia. We began by surveying the policy landscape, and exploring new ways to approach this well-researched terrain, including a commitment to self-assessment by higher education. RVI’s Year One report was submitted to the legislature last fall, summarizing past research into five policy areas: Innovation and Job Creation, Education and Talent, Civic Innovation and Leadership Development, Community Economic Development and Place-making, and Healthcare and Community Well-being. You can view the full report here: https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2018/RD374.

For Year Two, we have committed to organizing workgroups that will focus on those five policy areas. First, we want to document our activities, develop an inventory, and raise awareness of higher education projects and initiatives across rural Virginia. Second, we want to align and strengthen our efforts by connecting faculty, communities, and funding around shared interests. This will improve the efficiency of existing commitments and help identify new resources and opportunities. Finally, we want to look beyond higher education and encourage our cross-sector partners to utilize their unique experiences and resources to develop ambitious new ideas for rural development.

Thank you in advance for participating in this important survey. There are also immediate opportunities for individuals in your area to participate in the workgroups currently being organized. Please contact John Provo, Director of Virginia Tech’s Office of Economic Development, at jprovo@vt.edu with any questions or comments.

Sincerely,

Timothy D. Sands
President
Chair, Rural Virginia Initiative