Key Trends and Emerging Issues

Population

Compared to Virginia and the Nation, Roanoke MSA has a smaller percentage of the younger population. While the population will continue to grow over the next 25 years, the growth from 2010 to 2020 is in the 25-34 year and 55+ age groups. The 25-34 age group will increase by over 4,000 (from 11% to 12% of the population). The 55+ age group will increase by over 21,000 (from 30% to 35% of the population.)

Within this growth is a projected 65% increase in Asian population (from 1.6% to 2.5% of the total population) and 75% increase in Hispanic or Latino population (from 3% to 5% of the total population).

Nearly 100,000 residents live and work in the area. More than 50,000 commute into the area for work with just over 30,000 commuting out of the area. Most commute out to Montgomery County or Lynchburg city with the largest amount commuting in from Bedford, Montgomery and Henry Counties.

Education

45% of the area’s population has no education beyond high school or a GED. This is indicative of a less educated population than Virginia (39%) and the US (42%). While 8% of Roanoke residents have an Associate’s degree compared to 7% in Virginia and the US. Asians and Pacific Islanders are among the highest educated ethnic groups, while Hispanics, American Native and Blacks are among the least.

Economy

Unemployment rates have stayed below the US, but above Virginia rates over the past 10 years. However, since 2010, the unemployment rate has been dropping in the area. In January 2015, the unemployment rate in Roanoke of 4.9% matched Virginia and was below the 6.1% national rate.

Industries with the largest number of new hires include Accommodation and Food Services, Health Care and Social Assistance, Administrative and Support and Waste Management, and Retail Trade.

Manufacturing is near the top of the list in terms of new hires and has a low turn-over rate. It also has one of the largest aging populations, with approximately 33,000 jobs held by workers age 55+. However, by 2022 employment in this area is expected to decrease by nearly 3%.

From 2012 to 2022 there are several projected large growth industries including Health Care and Social Assistance (30.77%); Professional, Scientific and Technical Services (31.22%); and Construction (26.48%).

The largest areas of growth are in Computer & Mathematical Occupations and Office & Administrative Support Occupations. These areas also have a large number of projected replacement needs as do Business and Financial Operations Occupations, Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations and Transportation and Material Moving Occupations.

Growth Occupations include several health fields such as dental hygienists, EMTs, Sonographers, and Phlebotomists. Information Security Analysts and Atmospheric and Space Scientists are also included. Declining occupations include Word Processors and Typists, Postal workers, Data Entry positions and textile related occupations.
Completion and Success Initiatives

Presidential Initiatives

Of the 30 fastest growing occupations, more than half require postsecondary education. With the average earnings of college graduates at a level that is twice as high as that of workers with only a high school diploma, higher education is now the clearest pathway into the middle class.

In higher education, the U.S. has been outpaced internationally. In 1990, the U.S. ranked first in the world in four-year degree attainment among 25-34 year olds; today, the U.S. ranks 12th. While more than half of college students graduate within six years, the completion rate for low-income students is around 25 percent.

President Obama challenged every American to commit to at least one year of higher education or post-secondary training. The President has also set a new goal for the country: that by 2020, America would once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world.

Governor McAuliffe Initiative

Executive Order 23 – by 2022 it is estimated that 500,000 new jobs will be created in Virginia and 930,000 workers will be needed to replace the state’s retiring population. Many of these jobs are in scientific, technical and health fields. Jobs are available, but there is not a trained workforce to meet the needs of the economy. Governor McAuliffe set a goal of attaining 50,000 STEM-H credentials, licenses, apprenticeships, and associate degrees that meet the immediate workforce needs in the next three years.

Complete 2021

The VCCS strategic plan with one goal: to triple the number of credentials earned by students in the commonwealth by 2021. Credentials include associate degrees, certificates, career studies certificates and industry recognized credentials.

Performance Based Funding

By 2017-18, 20% of Virginia Western’s operating budget from the state (8% of the overall operating budget) will be funded based on performance factors including graduation rates, gatekeeper course completion rates, transfer rates, and bachelor’s completion rates.

Completion by Design

The goal of the Completion by Design (CBD) initiative is to boost completion rates for most students, with a focus on comprehensive institutional transformation. Through this project, community colleges undergo a formal process of inquiry and design, aimed at systemic changes in policies, programs, and practices that strengthen pathways to completion for students, without increasing costs, diluting educational quality, or undermining community colleges’ historical commitment to open access.

CBD addresses the full continuum of the student experience from start to finish— integrating research and lessons from prior reforms and demonstration projects simultaneously rather than investing in isolated best practices. CBD also directly addresses a spectrum of organizational and administrative process and capacities that can make or break a serious effort at reform.