

**Virginia Western Community College**  
**Smith Mountain Lake Focus Group Meeting**

**The Westlake Golf & Country Club**  
**Friday, April 6, 2007**  
**12 Noon – 1:30 p.m.**

**Participants:**

Ms. Karen Burks, BB&T  
Mr. Bob Camicia, Smith Mountain Lake Association, Inc.  
Mr. Frank Chrzanowski, Hometown Bank  
Mr. Roger Elmore, W.E. Skelton 4-H Educational Conference Center  
Mr. Roy Enslow, Bridgewater Marina  
Mr. Chris Finley, The Westlake Golf & Country Club  
Ms. Vicki Gardner, Executive Director, Smith Mountain Lake Chamber of Commerce  
Dr. Gary Garst, Chirocare, Inc.  
Ms. Joan Griffith, Long & Foster  
Mr. Phil Hager, Phil Hager Insurance Agency  
Ms. Lisa Ison, The Venture Center  
Mr. James A. Pilversack, CEO Focus  
Ms. June Poczatek, First Market Mortgage  
Mr. Mike Ryan, Morton Buildings, Inc.  
Ms. Karen Smith, Fallon's Restaurant

**Other Attendees:**

Moderator – Katherine F. Strickland, VWCC Educational Foundation  
Recorder – Mike Greer, VWCC Workforce Development  
Recorder, Erik W. Williams, VWCC Educational Foundation

**Question 1**

From your perspective, tell us what have been the most significant economic development changes in our community in the last five years?

**Response**

- Explosive growth
- Transformation from tourism to development
- Lot more permanent lake residents
- Growth of off-water communities
- Growth of chamber members/businesses
- New dynamic to look for employees
- More sense of community and involvement; more needs for permanent jobs
- Growth disparity between lake and rest of county
- 70.0% of kids fall under malnutrition definition
- Rapid explosion of service and retail; can not meet all needs
- Need larger employment base
- More focus on bringing young people to jobs and the lake
- Trouble keeping young people in area
- Trouble finding employees
- Looking at bringing exchange students in to meet community needs for employers
- Young people returning later in life in some cases

- Customer service skills needed
- Lots of seasonal positions
- School system does not recognize needs of seasonal positions
- Needs more skilled trade workers
- Concern for bringing in better healthcare
- Began somewhat as retirement community, but is moving to being more diverse
- Emphasis on SOLs handicap students who want to focus on a trade rather than going for a 4-year degree.
- Lack of emphasis on trades/vocational education in high schools

### **Question 2**

Rank these changes by the impact each has had on the community. Has the change been positive or negative?

#### Response

- Residential and commercial explosion
- Lack of affordable housing
- More younger people moving to area
- County government not recognizing value of lake area
- Not much unity in area around the lake, i.e. Botetourt County side vs. Franklin County side; huge divide, but growing population is helping this
- No local people moving to lake, mostly outside of Western Virginia
- Still concerns with unity in the community – getting worse
- For years county received benefits of the lake without much investment, but now situation is changing

### **Question 3**

Over the next five years, what do you think will be the key areas of change in our community?

#### Response

- Transportation infrastructure is concern
- Headed towards bottleneck; roads, rescue squads, medical infrastructure
- Lake not getting back its share of taxes
- Lake needs better infrastructure; needs government support
- Concern for lack of 24-hour healthcare; should happen in next five years
- Needs governmental investment in lake to sustain growth; counties not investing; no way to change perceptions of county governments
- Major communication issue with elected officials and county leaders
- More thought process into infrastructure needs of lake needed
- 2025 comprehensive plan; must recognize regions restrictions and potential
- Roads are a concern
- No plans to expand infrastructure of roads
- Development came in and infrastructure was overwhelmed
- Not enough money to even repair roads; must build new ones
- Development tax/fee to pay for these improvements

**Question 4**

A. What, in your opinion, are community colleges best known for?

Response

- Steppingstone to something else
- Affordability
- Industrial training
- Market specific skills
- Flexibility
- Adult training
- Increase in distance learning
- Off-site offerings
- Articulation agreements with universities
- Dual enrollment
- Helping to fill educational gaps; learning additional skills
- Close to home
- Good certification programs
- Specific training
- New culinary arts program
- Community outreach
- VWCC is best known for
  - Relationships with Chambers
  - Workforce development is moving too much; who is the go to person now?
  - No strong identity in workforce
  - Employer related career training
  - Lifelong learning
  - Good nursing program

B. If you were to hire a VWCC Grad (or a community college graduate in general)...

Response

- Motivation
- Knowledgeable
- Career savvy
- Diversity – age
- Students remaining in area is important
- Understanding of what it takes to work in business world/ work ethics
- Understanding how seasonal employment works
- VWCC looks at local community to start new programs that help community
- Lack of understanding for the basic life skills; banking, soft skills, money management

**Question 5**

Thinking back over what we discussed earlier about economic development changes in the past five years and those projected for the next five years, what role can Virginia Western play in our region's future?

Response

- Where do we go to find your qualified graduates? VWCC front line person told inquirer to place jobs on Monster.com...that VWCC had no such way to help us

- Put employment section on chambers website
- Entrepreneur training; how to start a business; regulations/codes
- Classes on customer service VERY IMPORTANT
- Evening course offerings in lake area; not during summer
- Lack of understanding of services College offers; advising for lifelong learners
- How to market your business; create a business plan
- Need a mentoring program; regular ongoing process
- Customer service certification; one-day seminar
- Need to develop regional customer service mentality
- Training for employees
- VWCC being flexible and responsive to community needs; flexibility on what we can do and where
- First time home buyers need information on how to buy a home
- A “train the trainer program” for supervisors to train their employees
- Region needs 4-year college/university; good for economy
- Mike Greer should be in the community at certain times during week; provide services here at lake
- Technology available at 4-H Center
- Career and Professional Development Center at the lake by VWCC; provide services
- Career Center is best kept secret
- Lack of emphasis on vocational/trades options for students
- Perception of a community college OK, but stigma still attached to attending in some cases
- Stigma from high school counselors about community college
- Average age in trades is mid to late 40s; so trades will be hurting in a few years
- Too much emphasis on SOLs
- Lots of trade workers learned from non-traditional methods (their parents)
- Emphasis currently on attending 4-year academic college at high schools; not trades
- Two-year college is perfect method for teaching learning skills and how to be a businessperson