



# STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-2024

**Approved  
February 19, 2019**



# **Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation, Inc.**

## **Strategic Plan**

**2019 – 2024**



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February 19, 2019

Members of the Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation Board of Directors:

The Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation Inc. (“Foundation”) Board of Directors moved in Spring 2018 to embark upon a strategic planning initiative for the Foundation to discuss, update and agree upon the Foundation’s mission and vision, strategy, and action plan for the next five years.

A dedicated Strategic Planning Committee was established, which included Foundation Board of Directors members and Foundation staff, Virginia Western Community College (“College”) administration, and College faculty and staff. The Strategic Planning Committee (“Committee”) engaged a facilitator and has met numerous times over the past six months. Our meetings have been detailed and our discussions have been robust.

What follows describes key points of agreement from the Committee’s discussions, recommendations of the Committee, and the resultant strategic plan.

**At its heart, the strategic plan recognizes that the Foundation, in partnership with the College, is uniquely positioned to:**

- 1. Dramatically transform students’ lives and increase social mobility,**
- 2. Meaningfully contribute to developing and improving our communities,**
- 3. Enable and amplify economic development efforts in our region, and**
- 4. Use innovative strategies and approaches to accomplish these goals.**

The strategic plan includes a focus on the Foundation’s partnership with the College, operations and staffing, governance and leadership, communications and outreach to our community and supporters, and funding and fundraising initiatives. We also pay special attention to fiduciary responsibilities.

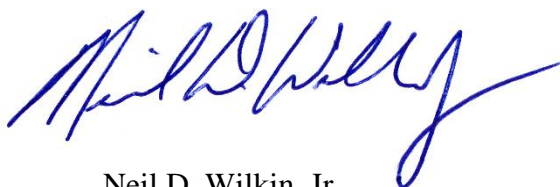
The strategic plan includes the Foundation’s mission and vision, and importantly measurable actions required by both leadership and operations to successfully accomplish key goals which support our mission, including fundraising, program, and innovation initiative goals for both short- and long-term sustainability.

I am grateful to the Strategic Planning Committee membership for the dedication, keen insight and critical expertise contributed to this important task. I also am grateful to the Foundation staff who, outside of our Committee meetings, provided open and relevant information, valued perspectives and essential preparation.

Finally, thank you to Mr. Preston Bryant of McGuireWoods Consulting, LLC for being our facilitator of this strategic planning process.

This report and strategic plan represents the consensus of our Committee. It is respectfully commended to you, our Board of Directors, for your consideration and approval.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Neil D. Wilkin, Jr.", with a stylized, flowing script.

Neil D. Wilkin, Jr.  
Chairman, Board of Directors  
Virginia Western Community College  
Educational Foundation, Inc.



**Virginia Western Community College  
Educational Foundation, Inc.  
Strategic Plan  
2019 – 2024**

## **Executive Summary**

### ***Authority and Directive***

The Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation Board of Directors decided in Spring 2018 to develop a new strategic plan. The Board established a Strategic Planning Committee, consisting of Foundation Board members, Foundation staff, College administrators, and College faculty and staff.

The Strategic Planning Committee consisted of the following members.

Neil D. Wilkin, Jr., *Chairman*

Dr. Robert Sandel, *College President*

Nicholas C. Conte, *Member At-Large*

Stacie Deaver, *Assistant Professor, Biology*

Christopher Desimone Esq, *Member At-Large; Co-Chair, CCAP2 Campaign*

Dale Dulaney, *Collection Development and OER Librarian*

Russell Ellett, *Member At-Large*

William J. Farrell II, *Board Treasurer*

W. Heywood Fralin, *Member At-Large*

Edwin C. Hall, *Chair, Scholarship and Foundation Grants Committee*

Marilyn Herbert-Ashton, *Vice President, Institutional Advancement*

Amanda Mansfield, *Philanthropy Director*

Josh Meyer, *Director of Marketing and Strategic Communications*

Deborah L. Petrine, *Member At-Large; Chair, Advocacy Council for the Endowment Initiative*

J. Kenneth Randolph, *Immediate Past Chairman; Co-Chair, CCAP2 Campaign*

Carole Tarrant, *Coordinator of Development*

Mr. Wilkin serves as chairman of the Foundation Board and served as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee.

The Strategic Planning Committee vested Foundation staff in securing the services of an outside facilitator. The staff procured the services of Mr. L. Preston Bryant, Jr., of McGuireWoods Consulting, LLC.

The Committee directed staff to work with the facilitator to establish a strategic planning process that would be inclusive and open to all ideas for advancing the Foundation and its mission in support of the College.

### ***Facilitation Process***

The Strategic Planning Committee engaged a certified mediator to facilitate the strategic planning process. The Committee met on four occasions: July 12, 2018; August 24, 2018; September 11, 2018; and October 24, 2018. Each meeting was held at the College.

Additionally, and outside of formal Strategic Planning Committee meetings, the Foundation staff met and had conference calls with the facilitator on numerous occasions. The facilitator also had conference calls with a number of Committee members and met with other Foundation consultants.

The Committee approached the work through a combination of directed and open discussions which enabled the free flow of ideas and historical perspectives. The discussions enabled the Committee to identify and prioritize focus on areas to address, ultimately building a consensus. Following identification of focus areas, the Committee collaborated to develop strategic initiatives for each, specifically designed to advance the Foundation and its impact. The goal was to reach unity on specific issues related to the strategic plan. The facilitator provided structure to the planning process – preparing all meeting materials, posing topics and questions to pursue, and drafting detailed summaries of each meeting. Committee membership drove the process and held all decision-making authority.

It was agreed that following the Committee's development of a consensus strategic plan, the Committee would submit this plan to the Foundation's full Board of Directors for consideration and final approval.

The final strategic plan recommendations are contained in this report.

### *Summary of Highlighted Strategic Plan Outcomes*

The Committee agreed that the strategic plan should be a five-year plan (2019-2024).

The Committee agreed to address 10 focus areas:

- 1. Foundation mission and goals**
- 2. Foundation and College partnership**
- 3. Foundation focus on community needs and partnerships**
- 4. Foundation initiatives**
- 5. Fundraising leadership and success**
- 6. Growing an endowment to perpetuate the Foundation's mission**
- 7. Foundation governance and leadership**
- 8. Foundation operations and staffing**
- 9. Stewardship of assets; measuring success; accountability**
- 10. Communications with stakeholders**

The Committee discussed the following matters as critical to the successful completion of actionable objectives identified for each focus area:

- The Foundation's governance and leadership begins with the commitment and influence of its Board of Directors.
- As has been the case, the Foundation Board can and should play an important advisory role to the College president.
- The Foundation can and should play a supportive role in the College's assessment of business and industry's workforce needs and also can play a supportive role in the College's development of business cases for new industry partnerships.
- The Foundation staff shall evolve staff responsibilities to focus on CCAP's continued success, the annual campaign, and growing the unrestricted endowment. This focus may require modest personnel investment in donor engagement and communications.
- The Foundation Board must lead the initiative to grow the unrestricted endowment to ensure the sustainability of the Foundation's mission, and the strategic plan should be complementary to the endowment campaign.
- The Board should continue its diligent work with the Foundation staff to advance best practices and continued improvements to operational and financial performance measures and oversight.



- Communication is at the heart of the Foundation's work, especially in outreach to key stakeholders and in philanthropic efforts.
- The Foundation and the College must continue collaborating on impactful external messaging that promotes the Foundation to and within the region.
- The Foundation and the College should engage in enhanced communication to all stakeholders regarding the Foundation's mission, operations, and its partnership with the College.

The above generalizes categorizations for focused activity. See further in this document under focus area headings for specific recommendations.

## **Introduction and Overview**

The Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation and Virginia Western Community College share more than a name. The Foundation and the College are inextricably linked by mission; dedication to students, faculty, and staff; and a determination to improve the lives of all who access the transformational benefits of higher education as they live and work in the greater Roanoke region.

The Strategic Planning Committee recognizes that the College—under the leadership of President Sandel and his team—is a forward-thinking institution that offers incredible opportunities to so many and is a unique and critical contributor to the advancement and improvement of our region and its communities.

Virginia Western’s recognized leadership as an institution of higher learning, a driver for workforce solutions, and as an instrument for social mobility and personal empowerment, make it an indispensable resource for the region’s civic and business communities.

The purpose of the strategic planning process is to assess the Foundation’s strengths, challenges, opportunities, and goals for the next five years. In doing so, the Committee necessarily focused its attention on the College and its strengths, challenges, opportunities, and goals. Acknowledging the synergistic relationship of the entities ensures the Foundation’s strategic plan supports the College’s strategic plan as much as possible. It is essential here to clearly place emphasis on the advancement and elevation of the Foundation itself.

The Foundation is a 501(c)3 Type II Supporting Organization honored to be led by a Board of Directors comprised of highly regarded regional civic and business leaders, engaged in advocacy that sets the bar high for advancement and growth.

It is a goal of the endowment initiative to significantly increase assets to maximally and perpetually sustain support for the College’s students, faculty, staff, and programs. Such investment will serve to support the College’s vital impact on the region’s workforce and economy.

In addition to its responsibilities under its bylaws, the Strategic Planning Committee believes that the Board can provide important strategic and business community insight to the College president - insight of value in advancing the College and its mission. The current College president wholeheartedly agrees that the Foundation Board provides a welcome and indispensable resource for strategic perspective, wisdom and input; and believes future presidents would be wise to see and accept the Foundation Board as a trusted advisor.

The staff of the Foundation, it was agreed, is its most important asset. The staff’s chief function is the cultivation and application of philanthropy. Its primary responsibility is to raise monies and support revenue to ensure the Foundation maintains sufficient yearly operational funds, stewards and increases scholarship funding, and boldly grows endowment opportunities.

The staff, while lean, has broad responsibilities. Staff constantly assesses how the Foundation can most strategically support the College; it works closely with the College to develop and execute complementary marketing and communications strategies; it engages students, faculty, staff, alumni, and community members; it carries out all administrative functions; it keeps abreast of its fiduciary and regulatory responsibilities; it plans events; it conducts data analytics; and it generates numerous business and financial reports.

In assessing strengths, the Strategic Planning Committee also recognized challenges. Of greatest import, it is clear that the Foundation's assets represent largely restricted funds. It is from the growth of unrestricted funds through endowment that the Foundation will enable increased support for faculty and staff development, more greatly focus on economic development and innovation, and give important early or launch support to strategic academic and workforce development programs.

The Strategic Planning Committee narrowed its analysis to address the critical relationship between the Foundation and College, operations and staffing, communications, civic and business community engagement, and funding and fundraising priorities. The Committee also underscored its commitment to fiduciary responsibilities.

### **Developing Strategic Plan Focus Areas**

The Strategic Planning Committee identified the following key focus areas, highlighted to enable the Foundation to assess and accentuate its strengths, define and address its challenges, identify and build support for opportunities, and set forth clear goals.

- 1. Foundation mission and goals**
- 2. Foundation and College partnership**
- 3. Foundation focus on community needs and partnerships**
- 4. Foundation initiatives**
- 5. Fundraising leadership and success**
- 6. Growing an endowment to perpetuate the Foundation's mission**
- 7. Foundation governance and leadership**
- 8. Foundation operations and staffing**
- 9. Stewardship of assets; measuring success; accountability**
- 10. Communications with stakeholders**

To frame the strategic plan, the Committee agreed, by consensus, that the Foundation's mission should encompass opportunities for the following. These items speak to ultimate purpose.

- Scholarships
- Faculty and staff development
- Economic development and innovation
- Program development (early support for new, strategic programs)
- Long-term investment in support of the College

The above focus areas and mission and purpose served as the drivers for the Committee's discussion and debate over its several months of work.

### **Strategic Plan – Recommendations**

That which is to follow provides a synopsis of the Committee's discussion and reasoning for the recommendations developed under each of the nine focus areas. For a more detailed review of the Committee's discussion under each focus area, see Appendix B for each Committee meeting's guidance documents and summaries.

#### **1. Foundation Mission and Goals—A revised mission statement focused on stakeholders and philanthropy**

The Foundation's current mission statement:

“The Virginia Western Community College Educational Foundation, Inc., is an independent not-for-profit foundation dedicated to enhancing community awareness of the college; securing private and public funds for student scholarships, faculty development, and capital projects; and providing prudent fiscal management of monies and properties submitted to the foundation.”

The Committee concluded that the Foundation's current mission statement, while certainly adequate and properly reflecting the Foundation's legal and fiduciary responsibilities, was more inward-looking and a bit sterile. It does not look outward to the College's students, faculty, staff, and alumni, nor to the region's civic and business community. It also could be clearer in its focus on philanthropy.

The Committee believed that a revised mission statement must be efficient, focus on resources, look outwardly and inclusively, and be a catalyst for the Foundation's chief aim – to raise funds to strategically support the College, particularly in areas identified in this strategic plan. It also must speak to specific audiences who are approached for philanthropic support, whether other foundations, individuals, businesses, or governments.

#### **Recommendation**

The Committee recommends a revised mission statement. Key concepts and points were extensively discussed by the Committee and the Committee suggested with the proposed draft of a new mission statement be crafted by the Foundation staff and the Chairman of the Committee incorporating the key concepts discussed.

The proposed new mission statement of the Foundation is as follows:

**Mission:**

To drive a thriving culture of innovative support and philanthropy that enables Virginia Western to dramatically transform individual lives, strengthen communities, and advance economic development.

**Objectives:**

- Foster lifelong relationships, partnerships and collaborations with all stakeholders
- Support access to lifelong learning opportunities
- Attract and soundly steward financial resources
- Advocate and enact innovative initiatives
- Enhance awareness of the Foundation and the College

2. **Foundation and College partnership—Inextricably linked for the good of the College and community; communications to be strengthened to deepen everyone's understanding of the partnership**

The Foundation and College are separate legal entities with separate governing authorities. The College is a state government agency; the Foundation is a nonprofit organization. But, purely and simply, the Foundation exists to strategically support the College's mission and goals. The Foundation's Board and staff have direct and collegial working relationships with the College's Board and administration. And the Foundation's Board and staff seek to be an integral part of the College's mission and goals in order to maximize the effectiveness of that strategic support.

By virtue of their shared purposes and linked relationship, the Foundation and College must closely collaborate.

The Committee recognizes that communication outreach with internal stakeholders is essential to the Foundation's support for the College, and to garnering the College community's understanding, appreciation, and reciprocal support for the Foundation.

As close a working relationship as exists between the Foundation and College, it is mostly at senior administration, faculty, and staff levels that the Foundation's mission and work are most completely understood. It is likely that many, if not most, faculty and classified staff do not have true working knowledge of what the Foundation is, who comprises it, how it raises money, and how those raised dollars are dispersed. The same general lack of mission and operational awareness of the Foundation is likely true of the vast majority of students, even of those who receive significant scholarship support.

The Foundation and College have a strong relationship, much to celebrate, and ambitious plans to pursue for the good of the community. To deepen this relationship, to celebrate

more successes, and to join together in pursuit of greater excellence, there must be deliberate focus on strategic marketing and messaging to key stakeholders.

### **Recommendations**

- Maintain vigilance in aligning key elements of the Foundation's strategic plan with the College's strategic plan. The Foundation's strategic plan needs be continuously informed by the College's strategic and enrollment plans. This may be the most important undertaking to ensure an ongoing complementary Foundation-College partnership.
- College administration to continue clearly articulating to the Foundation its priorities, especially in areas such as retention, program quality, student success, and post-graduation assessment.
- College administration to continue clearly articulating its essential focus on assessing the business community's needs and developing workforce development programs and initiatives to meet those needs.
- College and Foundation to collaborate in developing innovative strategies to more effectively reach out to College faculty and staff – important stakeholders not only for what they do to improve students' lives, but as an arguably underutilized link between the College and Foundation. The more faculty and staff are brought into the Foundation-College fold, the more they inherently understand the valuable Foundation-College partnership.
- Foundation Board and staff to develop strategies in collaboration with the College's administration and marketing/communications staff to more effectively communicate and celebrate the Foundation's good work and support for the College's students, faculty, and staff. This is general strategy.
- Foundation Board and staff to develop in collaboration with the College's administration and marketing/communications staff strategies to more effectively communicate with College alumni, who in turn may well increase their life-long loyalty to the College and increase support to the Foundation.

### **3. Foundation Focus on Community Needs and Partnerships—Laser-like focus on supporting solutions to meet the skills gap; developing business cases for partnerships**

In managing relationships in support of the College and the region, the Foundation is in a unique strategic position to assist both in community needs assessment and the creation of business, locality and funding partnerships. The Foundation is able to assume this role in no small part due to its Board being comprised of key civic and business leaders and to the cultivation of long-nourished community relationships.

To make best strategic use of this Foundation capability, the Committee sought to determine whose responsibility it is to lead such assessment of need, particularly in workforce development areas, and in partnership development. In both cases, the Committee determined that the College is chiefly responsible, with the Foundation playing a support role.

First, the Committee acknowledged that it is the College's responsibility – not the Foundation's – to assess the business community's workforce development and related program support needs. Indeed, the College, both as an individual institution and as part of the larger state system, has access to data identifying growth markets for current job opportunities as well as uncovering industries suffering for want of skilled employees.

It is already fully known that local industries face a critical "skills gap" – i.e., where medium-size and major employers, almost regardless of sector, have trouble filling key jobs with sufficiently skilled workers. The College sees filling the skills gap as the most important and immediate workforce development task at hand.

The College assesses industry and workforce needs via one-on-one engagements with major employers, through periodic manufacturing summits and in various business community forums. On occasion, the College has engaged in more formal, scientific surveys; however, the Committee believes that the College (and the Foundation) may wish to consider using deeper, more probing scientific methodologies to survey industry needs in the development of a more formal and evidentiary baseline.

Second, the Committee made clear that when it comes to developing a "business case" for potential workforce development programs and College-industry partnerships, this responsibility also falls to the College, particularly its workforce solutions division.

The Committee believes that it is the Foundation's role to serve as a facilitator for the College and its workforce division in determining and developing cases for new partnerships, especially given its expertise in needs funding and analytics in measuring success.

Last, the Committee recognized the valuable roles many faculty and staff play in College-industry partnerships and strongly believe faculty and staff should play more consultative roles with industry partners. Once again, the Foundation is uniquely poised to facilitate and enhance such consultations.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation should deliberately collaborate with the College to determine opportunities to best play a role in support of the College's ongoing assessment of industry needs. Activities could include Foundation assistance in developing updated survey methodologies, especially those focused on more scientifically

measuring the skills gap.

- Foundation to engage with the College to determine opportunities to best play a facilitative role in support of the College's work to develop business cases for new workforce development programs, especially those focused on providing solutions to the skills gap.
- The Foundation and College should remain mindful that key faculty and staff can be valuable resources and can play critical roles in College-industry partnerships. The Foundation and College should further develop strategies that increasingly engage faculty and staff with industry.

#### 4. **Foundation Initiatives—Focus on CCAP; focus on strategies to build unrestricted endowment**

In many respects, this strategic plan addresses funding Foundation initiatives. It is this section that provides detailed focus on what the Strategic Planning Committee suggests as priorities in operations and growth in philanthropy. And it is here that the Committee provides direction to staff for organizational strategy and development.

The Committee underscored that the Foundation's principal mission is funding access to higher education through scholarships, especially through Virginia Western's transformative Community College Access Program - the Foundation's flagship initiative. Maintaining strong, professional relationships with the local governments who fund the CCAP program is a priority. Indeed, any significant reduction in local government funding of CCAP could be a major disruptor to the Foundation's work. Part of a strategic plan is identifying major threats, and cuts to CCAP funding is one such major threat.

The Committee also envisioned that at times the Foundation may receive proposals to fund partnerships, programs, or other initiatives that are clearly part of the College's plan and mission but may or may not be seen to reflect the Foundation's mission or fit into its traditional funding criteria. In some cases a request for Foundation funds or other support may be truly outside of the Foundation's mission or otherwise inconsistent with its bylaws or other governance documents, and in such cases Foundation support may be denied. At other times, however, a request to the Foundation may represent an innovative approach, a new venture, or a unique path which may indeed offer an opportunity for the Foundation. Regardless, and whether a proposal may present a tough-to-get-around conflict or a unique opportunity, the Foundation and its Board needs must develop guidelines – a vetting process – to aid the Board and staff when formally considering proposals to justify the Foundation's decision to support or to deny support to an application for funds.

The Committee also has made clear that the Foundation must increase its unrestricted



cash and endowed funds to flexibly meet Collegiate need. At present, unrestricted cash is less than 2 percent of the Foundation’s total assets – and it is this very 2 percent that is called upon to do so much.

More particularly, it is the acquisition of increased unrestricted funds that will, in due course, better sustainably fund the elements this strategic plan prioritizes – faculty and staff development (especially in the form of additional “innovation grants”), economic development and innovation initiatives, and the provision of early or launch funding to new, strategic programs.

Therefore, the Committee recommends that the Foundation further refine strategies to build the unrestricted endowment so that its vision for more effectively supporting the College in key areas can be realized.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation Board of Directors to clearly communicate to staff its commitment to support its work to build the unrestricted endowment. Foundation Board involvement is key to fundraising for unrestricted funds.
- In order to target existing unrestricted funds and in anticipation of having additional unrestricted funds as fundraising successes are realized, the Foundation staff should remain abreast of what new College programs may be in development or how existing College programs may be redesigned. As the Foundation remains abreast of the College’s program changes, it can provide relevant Foundation-related advice to the College as well as begin anticipating how such program changes might impact the Foundation’s work.
- Foundation should develop guidelines to aid the Board and staff in assessing proposals or initiatives to ensure consistency with the Foundation’s mission and to provide defensible justification for funding decisions.
- Foundation staff to assess current staff responsibilities and realign as necessary to meet the goals of the strategic plan, especially in terms of focusing on increasing the unrestricted portion of the endowment. Potential investment in additional fundraising personnel, i.e., a new full-time gift officer, will make this especially necessary (see Focus Area 8).

### **5. Fundraising Leadership and Success—Board leadership is a must; focus on growing unrestricted endowment**

The Foundation Board accepts responsibility for fundraising success. Its members are civic and business leaders and have important relationships with fellow civic and business leaders as well as with local government and state government leaders. The Board can further existing relationships, create new ones, and solicit dollars in ways that

staff often cannot.

The Foundation maintains a professional staff whose respected members have long been a part of the region's educational, business, and nonprofit communities. Its leanness against its broad responsibilities and workload necessarily focuses it. The staff wastes no resources.

The staff's fundraising focus should and must be on its annual fund campaign, CCAP growth and administration, and the endowment campaign. These three fundraising focus areas cut across the Roanoke region, and it will be important that the Foundation collaborate with other regional organizations – local governments, businesses, nonprofits, etc. – to highlight the Foundation's successes to encourage others to confidently invest.

This strategic focus requires prioritizing operational funding and focusing communications to key stakeholders; nourishing and deepening relations with key prospective donors; making planned-giving an elevated part of long-range development; placing more emphasis on alumni communications and giving; and strategically expanding the staff and providing sufficient resources to aid in success.

Together, the Foundation Board and staff combine to form an effective team to grow the endowment – especially its unrestricted funds – and advance the Foundation's support for the College in strategic areas.

The Strategic Planning Committee focused attention on the Foundation's most important task – increasing the endowment's unrestricted funds.

In evaluating the Foundation's past decade's success – in which its endowment more than quadrupled – the Committee cited both the College president's community stature and engagement and the Board's development and engagement as driving factors. For the Foundation to achieve its ambitious fundraising goals over the next five years, the College president and Board need to do no less than what they have been doing – and likely more. In particular, the College president should increase time dedicated to the Foundation's fundraising efforts. And the Board must anticipate increased dedication as well.

Further, the Foundation's focus on scholarship support means that it must intensify its relationship-building with local governments as it boosts its efforts with the regional business community. In both cases, it is important for the Foundation staff to continue generating analytics that positively underscore donors' continued support for scholarships and workforce development. As outcomes of these analytics should be at the core of the Foundation messaging to existing and prospective donors.

Last, the Committee stressed the importance of donor appreciation as a key element of cultivation and stewardship. Saying "thank you" in meaningful ways is essential.

## **Recommendations**

- Foundation should continue marketing the Foundation as one of the region’s premier “opportunities” for charitable giving. Such is consistent with the prominence and community standing of the Foundation’s Board.
- Foundation Board members must even more fully commit to personal, one-on-one fundraising with both existing and prospective donors. When it comes to major gifts, there is no substitute to peer-to-peer engagement.
- Foundation Board members also must continue close coordination with its professional staff. Collaboration engenders trust as the Board relies on the staff’s lead to inform decision-making. The staff is charged with prospect research, review, and evaluation as well as developing donor-specific engagement strategies.
- Foundation priorities focus attention on the annual fund, CCAP growth and administration, and growing the unrestricted endowment (especially as part of the public endowment campaign).
- Foundation staff to rely in part upon data analytics to aid in developing compelling outcomes-based messages for philanthropy.
- Foundation staff should remain mindful of instituting meaningful, creative, cost-effective ways to demonstrate donor appreciation.

## **6. Growing an Endowment to Perpetuate the Foundation’s Mission—Strategic plan to support campaign plan; goal is to “fund excellence”; main focus is on boosting unrestricted endowment**

The Foundation’s strategic plan addresses fundraising and other funding components. That said, the strategic plan is a wholly separate document from the endowment campaign plan. The strategic plan should be complementary to and supporting of the endowment campaign plan, but should not encroach upon it.

The Committee also recognized that the Foundation Board must lead and fully participate in the endowment campaign – and all that entails. The Committee further recognized that the Foundation must work closely with staff on developing prospective donors and, most important, soliciting them.

The Committee also placed emphasis on the annual fund as part of the endowment campaign initiative.

## **Recommendations**

- The Foundation's strategic plan – especially regarding its focus on growing its unrestricted endowment – is to be complementary to (and in no way inconsistent with) the endowment campaign plan. The Foundation should take care not to see this strategic plan as encroaching upon the endowment campaign plan.
- Continue developing Foundation fundraising strategies focused on growing the unrestricted endowment, emphasizing its critical support for workforce and economic development initiatives.
- Foundation Board to commit to fully leading the endowment campaign and supporting it to the extent possible.

**7. Foundation Governance and Leadership—Governance is important; leadership is indispensable**

Virginia Western Community College was founded in 1966, and the Foundation was founded in 1980. The Foundation did commendable work in its early years, opening a door for the Roanoke region to begin support of its young but growing community college.

By most all accounts, however, it has been the most recent 10 to 15 years that have dramatically propelled the Foundation to greater stature – in recognition, asset growth, and accomplishments. Indeed, in the last decade that the Foundation's assets have grown from just over \$4 million to approximately \$20 million. The Foundation's assets currently rank it in the top handful among Virginia's 23 community college endowments.

The Strategic Planning Committee attributed the Foundation's heightened community stature, advancement of its restricted and unrestricted endowment, and achievement of accomplishments to two things: a College president who is highly regarded, exudes leadership, and is dedicated to the College and the Foundation; and a Foundation Board of Directors that has become among the preeminent nonprofit organization boards in the region. The Board membership includes key civic and business leaders who take extraordinarily seriously their Board duties and who are committed to the Foundation, its work in support of the College and to the College's mission to the community.

If past is prologue, the Foundation's success is dependent, in no small part, on exemplary governance and leadership. Future College presidents must continue raising the bar, as must future Foundation Board members.

The Committee made clear its expectations regarding Foundation Board responsibilities: work with staff to raise funds and encourage philanthropy; advise the College president on community and business needs and associated program development; and remain fully attentive to governance and fiduciary matters.

The Committee also identified areas for improvement, mostly regarding new Board member recruitment and orientation.

First, the Committee committed to remaining mindful that the Foundation Board's composition should be, to the extent practicable, reflective of the Roanoke region. The region's civic and business community is a talented and diverse one. It will be up to the Nominating Committee in consultation with other Board colleagues to cast a wide net when considering new Board members.

Second, it was observed that while Board members are committed to the work of the Foundation, their "on-boarding" process provides an opportunity for a deeper immersion into awareness of the College – on everything from student body composition to faculty and staff disciplines and expertise to operations, facilities, and programs. Simply put, the better Foundation Board members know the institution, the better they can articulate the breadth of its work and accomplishments to potential supporters. A better, deeper understanding of the College also allows Board members to be better advisors to the College president.

The Strategic Planning Committee also reviewed the Foundation's current committee structure. At present, all agreed, the committee structure functions well, and Board members are dutiful in the execution of their committee responsibilities. However, with the new strategic plan – and with the Foundation's clearer, more focused aims springing from the new strategic plan – Committee members agreed that it would be useful to review the committee structure and committee descriptions to ensure that it properly supports new strategic plan tasks and goals.

Last, the Committee underscored the Foundation Board's commitment to fiduciary oversight to the Foundation's operations, funding, and philanthropy. It is of positive note that third-party annual auditors have consistently found no material financial and operational deficiencies, which is testament to the professionalism of Foundation staff and Board attentiveness and diligence.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation to remain mindful of the Roanoke region's diverse talent pool across civic and industry sectors when actively recruiting new Board members.
- Foundation staff should develop a new and/or improved orientation for new Board members – one that provides a deeper immersion in all aspects of the College mission and activities. Such will give Board members a greater understanding of the College and of the Foundation's supporting work, and it will allow Board members to be more articulate advocates for the Foundation and its support for the College.
- Foundation to review and, if necessary, update the Board committee structure and committee descriptions to ensure that the Board functions in the most supportive way possible for the staff, the new strategic plan, and the upcoming endowment campaign.

- Foundation Board of Directors must continue placing maximum emphasis on fiduciary oversight to the Foundation's operations, funding, and philanthropy. Board should ensure that staff has all resources necessary to stay abreast of and comply with all regulatory rules and responsibilities.

**8. Foundation Operations and Staffing—More clearly define and focus its work; make modest investments**

The Foundation's current staff is highly regarded by the Foundation Board, the College board and administration, and the region's civic and business leaders who are most engaged with the Foundation's work.

The Foundation currently has 5.3 full-time equivalent (FTE) employees, and their salaries are covered solely by the Foundation, solely by the College, or in part by the Foundation and College. The staff's responsibility includes administration (including fiduciary and regulatory reporting responsibilities); marketing, communications and event planning; and philanthropy and all that entails, including research, donor outreach, programs, and grant writing, etc.

Additionally, Foundation staff also has principal responsibility for two high-profile and important initiatives: the Community College Access Program (CCAP), which is the Foundation's public/private partnership to provide scholarships for eligible students, and the Regional Acceleration and Mentoring Program (RAMP), which is the Foundation's and College's partnership with the City of Roanoke and the Roanoke-Blacksburg Technology Council to provide support to high-potential start-ups in the science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health fields.

CCAP and RAMP are important, successful, signature programs, and the Foundation staff has lead administrative responsibilities for each. Indeed, since 2010, CCAP has grown from two localities and 117 students to 500 students and \$1 million in scholarship support; student growth is at 327 percent, and scholarship growth is at 900 percent. As a result of growth and expansion, CCAP and RAMP administration requires significant dedication of staff time and attention.

The Committee assessed the demands – current and growing – of the Foundation's 5.3 FTEs, and it assessed via this strategic plan future staff activity with an eye to how easy or difficult it will be for the current staff to execute its duties to the Board's – and their own – satisfaction. The Committee also assessed, to the extent it could in a strategic planning process, operational efficiencies, including outsourcing of certain tasks or functions.

In the end, the Committee found the Foundation staff to be efficient – it must be given its lean size and many responsibilities – but in need of modest investment, namely in donor

engagement and in marketing and communications. The Committee also refined – indeed, narrowed – the staff’s focus as a directive to achieving the aims as laid out in this strategic plan.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation staff should align its focus to be in keeping with this strategic plan and its fundraising goals for scholarships, faculty and staff development, economic development and innovation, and early support for new, strategic programs.
- Foundation staff should in its daily operations place greater emphasis on effective marketing and communications to key stakeholders – students, faculty and staff, alumni, and donors.
- The Foundation should hire one additional full-time staff person – a gift officer. The gift officer likely will focus on donor solicitation, and gift processes and donor services. The gift officer will report to the Foundation’s director of philanthropy. The gift officer’s salary will be supported by the Foundation. This additional full-time staff position should be hired by third quarter of 2019.
- It is recommended that the Foundation hire one additional part-time staff person – a marketing specialist.

### **9. Stewardship of Assets; Measuring Success; Accountability—Fiduciary oversight is of primary importance; risk assessment is important; review committee structure; focus on financial and program performance measures**

The Strategic Planning Committee agreed that the Board has been sufficiently engaged in operational oversight and stewardship of assets. The Foundation can be rightly proud that its annual third-party audits have routinely demonstrated no material operational or financial deficiencies.

The Committee reviewed the extent to which the Board is engaged via its committees. All agreed that the Board is indeed sufficiently engaged (and the audit results support this).

The Committee also agreed that, in terms of asset stewardship, the Foundation via its Finance and Audit Committee should continue carefully oversee the management of funds in a manner consistent with the Foundations short-term and long-term goals.

In terms of actions, the Committee agreed that the Foundation Board should focus on two measures: financial performance and program performance. For the former, the Committee agreed that the general measure should be return on investment per the risk willing to be accepted. For the latter, the Committee agreed that the appropriate measure would depend on the program; Board in conjunction with staff would further consider

how to appropriately measure a program.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation Board must place primary focus on fiduciary oversight and responsibilities.
- Foundation Board (Finance and Audit Committee) should update definitions to risk assessment and acceptance as it pertains to asset management.
- Foundation Board (appropriate committees) should define measures for financial performance and program performance.

#### **10. Communications with Stakeholders—Focusing on workforce development, student successes, faculty and staff achievements and industry collaborations**

The Strategic Planning Committee found “communications” was a common denominator throughout planning discussion. That is because, in many ways, it is at the heart of what the Foundation does. And so much regarding engaging donors and other stakeholders – messaging – depends on effective communications.

The College’s marketing and strategic communications department is overburdened. As the Foundation works closely with Marketing as a fellow team-member department in Institutional Advancement, its staffing (in terms of its Foundation-related work) should be reviewed. It has already been suggested that one part-time communications specialist should be hired to support the Foundation’s work. (See, “Foundation Operations and Staffing; Recommendations.”)

The Committee also agreed that among the many communications strategies (which are best left to the Foundation and College professionals to develop) to be considered, celebrating student success stories is an important one. If one of the Foundation’s primary focuses is scholarships, and if the goal is to underscore and demonstrate the value proposition of investing in scholarships, then highlighting student successes – peer tutoring, certificate and degree completions, career placements and advances, etc. – is important, as it speaks to positive outcomes.

Where student success is concerned, the Committee stressed the need for the Foundation to work with the College’s Institutional Effectiveness office to receive data on student outcomes - transfer data and the acquisition of good-paying jobs upon completion of certificates and degrees.

Faculty and staff achievements also are important to share, especially as faculty and staff development are aspirational areas for additional Foundation investment. It is also important to highlight their successes in research, teaching, industry engagement and collaboration, and more.



Last, the Committee felt strongly that communications strategies should include a focus on workforce development, as this is of primary importance to the College, the Foundation, and the entire region.

### **Recommendations**

- Foundation and College must continue its close working relationship in developing complementary communications strategies and messaging. The Foundation's continued partnership with the College's marketing and strategic communications department is essential to branding and messaging continuity.
- Foundation should pay special attention to highlighting workforce development in its communications.
- Foundation should focus in no small part on highlighting and celebrating student success stories. It is important, as it speaks to positive outcomes.
- Foundation should work with the College to highlight faculty and staff successes, especially in terms of workforce development and industry collaborations.

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# **Appendix A**

## **Schedule for Strategic Plan Focus Area Action Items**

## Schedule for Strategic Plan Focus Area Action Items

Focus Area	Goal	Action Item	Timeline
<b>1 Foundation mission and goals</b>	Revise mission statement; focus on stakeholders and philanthropy	Strategic Planning Committee to share input; revisions by Chair and staff	Winter 2019
		Adoption of mission statement by Board of Directors	February – April 2019
<b>2 Foundation and College partnership</b>	Strengthen communications to deepen stakeholder understanding of the partnership	Align key elements of Foundation strategic plan to the College's strategic plan	Fall 2018, ongoing
		College administration to clearly articulate College's priorities to Foundation	Ongoing
		Continue to collaboratively develop actionable plan for more effective outreach to College faculty and staff	Spring 2019, ongoing
		Foundation and College communications/marketing staff to develop strategic outreach program to alumni	Summer 2019, ongoing
<b>3 Foundation focus on community needs and partnerships</b>	Focus on supporting solutions to meet the skills gap; develop business cases for partnerships	Collaborate with College on program strategies focused on meeting the skills gap	Winter 2019, ongoing
		Collaborate with College on support role for assessing industry workforce development and other needs	Summer 2019, ongoing

		Collaborate with College on support role for building business cases for new partnerships	Summer 2019, ongoing
<b>4 Foundation initiatives</b>	Prioritize major giving campaign achievement	Foundation Board to focus on its lead role in soliciting funds to achieve \$6.5 M (\$3.25 Foundation) CCAP2 Campaign in 2021	Ongoing
		Foundation Board to focus on its lead role in soliciting funds to grow unrestricted endowment	See #5 and #6 for expanded detail
	Develop process for evaluating/vetting proposals for new initiative funding opportunities	Foundation staff to remain abreast of College's development of new programs or redesigns to existing ones in anticipation of impacts to Foundation work	Ongoing
		Collaborate with Executive Committee to establish matrix for proposal evaluation, ensuring consistency with the Foundation's mission and to provide defensible justification for funding decisions	Spring 2019
<b>5 Fundraising leadership and success</b>	Maintain and grow funding for annual and programmatic campaigns	Prioritize major and annual giving appeal activity	Ongoing
	Continue developing and refining annual fund strategies	Foundation staff to conduct prospective donor research, review, and evaluation; develop donor-specific engagement strategies	
		Position messaging with opening of STEM facility	Fall 2019

		Foundation staff to develop Foundation Board member involvement in key donor solicitations	Manage solicitation/cultivation through CCAP2 Campaign Cabinet and Advocacy Council	Ongoing
		Foundation staff to develop data analytics to aid in developing compelling outcomes-based messages for philanthropy	Continue deep analysis into CCAP outcomes, highlighting success rates, retention strategy and completion, as impacted by challenge data. Provide annual updates to the Board.	Ongoing
		Foundation Board and staff to explore additional meaningful, creative, and cost-effective ways to express donor appreciation	Create enhanced benefit options and cost-effective merchandising benefits for alumni giving	Winter 2019
			Add second targeted alumni giving solicitation for a bi-annual appeal	Spring 2020
6	Growing an endowment to perpetuate the Foundation’s mission	Pursue the funding of excellence through \$15 million unrestricted endowment initiative	Ensure Foundation strategic plan complements endowment initiative plan	Ongoing
		Continue developing fundraising strategies focused on growing unrestricted endowment fund	Begin execution of fundraising plans for STEM facility naming and support opportunities (already in place)	Summer 2019
			Enhance planned giving awareness through targeted informational/direct mail	Annually, beginning Summer 2019
			Schedule visiting tour to residential communities	Fall 2019

<b>7</b>	<b>Foundation governance and leadership</b>	Continue to attract and recruit Board membership at the highest level of business and civic leadership	Foundation Board to continue consideration of Roanoke region's diverse civic and business community's talent pool when actively recruiting new and influential Board membership	Ongoing
		Foundation staff to develop new/improved orientation protocols and materials for onboarding, greater immersion in understanding the College's operations	Revise orientation materials and presentation to include evaluation opportunities	Winter 2020; ongoing
		Foundation Board and staff to review committee structure and committee descriptions to ensure they enhance and functionally support priorities of new strategic plan	Collaborate with Executive Committee to begin process	Spring 2019
		Foundation Board to place maximum emphasis on fiduciary oversight to operations, finances, and philanthropy	Uphold policy and reporting to a rigorous standard	Ongoing
<b>8</b>	<b>Foundation operations and staffing</b>	More clearly define and focus responsibilities	Foundation staff to adjust positions and responsibilities to align with strategic plan, as necessary	Ongoing
		Make modest investments in personnel to increase capacity and capability	Hire one full-time gift officer, funded by the Foundation	Fall 2019
			Hire one part-time communications specialist	Spring 2019

<b>9 Stewardship of assets / monitoring and assessing progress</b>	Foundation Board and staff must continue placing primary importance on fiduciary responsibilities	Finance and Audit Committee to review financial policy and reporting and adjust if needed to maintain best management practices	Ongoing
	Foundation finance committee to establish definition of risk assessment as it pertains to asset management	Risk management definitions defined as pertaining to asset management consistent with short-term and long-term goals of the Foundation.	Spring 2019
	Foundation Board (appropriate committees) to define measures for financial and program performance	Measures for financial and program performance defined by Foundation Board.	Spring 2019
<b>10 Communications with Stakeholders</b>	Foundation and College to collaborate on complementary stakeholder communication strategies	Strategize with College Marketing Department on overall, scholarship and opportunity messaging	Ongoing
	Foundation to pay special attention to workforce development in communications strategies	Through Workforce/IA summits and business engagement, establish key opportunities for communication; collaborate with Marketing on strategy and execution	Ongoing
	Highlight student success stories, faculty/staff achievements, workforce development programs in communications strategies	Collect alumni and CCAP alumni stories through online portal/collect stories from Hall Associates Career Center/collaborate with Marketing to share in e-news and social media	Ongoing
		Collaborate with Marketing to elevate profile of announcements	Ongoing