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**2023 SIX-YEAR PLAN NARRATIVE (Part II)**

**INSTITUTION:**  University of Virginia’s College at Wise

**OVERVIEW**

The six-year plan should describe the institution’s goals as they relate to the Commonwealth’s goals as articulated in the *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*; the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 (TJ21); the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005; and the Governor’s objectives to prepare every graduate for success in life. Please use this opportunity to outline your institution’s plans and objectives, especially as they relate to the Commonwealth’s goals.

The instructions within the institutional mission and priorities section below ask for specific strategies related to affordability and access to quality postsecondary education that prepare students for success in life. Other sections offer institutions the opportunity to describe additional strategies to advance institutional goals and Commonwealth needs.

***Please be comprehensive but as concise as possible with responses; you are encouraged to use bullet points vs. prose. Consider this a starting point for the dialogue with OpSix; you will have the opportunity to further elaborate on the narrative in your review sessions later this summer.***

***Please save this narrative document with your institution’s name added to the file name.***

**SECTION A: MISSION & PRIORITIES**

***Key question: What is your institution’s unique strengths and how do those inform your strategic priorities?***

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| **A1. What is your institutional mission? Please share any plans you have to change your mission over the six-year period.** |

The mission of the University of Virginia’s College at Wise (UVA Wise) is:

*Through excellence in teaching, personalized attention, and commitment to individual growth, the University of Virginia’s College at Wise prepares students to be engaged citizens. Drawing upon its foundation as a public liberal arts institution in the Appalachian region of Virginia, the College strives to build a diverse community of learners with the drive to serve and lead in their communities, the nation, and the world.*

The mission statement for UVA Wise was revised during the 2020 Strategic Planning process. The new mission statement was approved by the UVA Board of Visitors in December 2021 and was presented by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) to the General Assembly and approved in early 2022. The new mission statement was written to be concise, but broad in scope, allowing for the growth of programs and degree level as analysis indicates the need exists.

The College’s strategic plan, *Your College for a Lifetime*, identifies 5 pillars to build on from 2020 to 2030.

* Re-imagine Our Core Requirements

*We want to encourage a deeper self-awareness in our students so that they respond to others with empathy, justice, and concern for their wellbeing.*

* Align Program Portfolio with Institutional Mission, Student Demand, and Regional Need

*By regularly analyzing existing data, as well as regional and state-level demand for specific employer needs, we will keep our programs aligned with our recruitment, retention, and graduation goals.*

* Invest in Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Development to Achieve Enhanced Diversity, Collaboration, and Satisfaction

*We aim for a campus culture wherein ALL employees know they are valued and believe they are important members of the team that nurtures the growth of our students. We are currently conducting a compensation study to ensure we remain competitive with our peers and retain faculty and staff.*

* Attract, Engage, and Retain Students Who Thrive at UVA Wise

*The very existence of UVA Wise is dependent on the successful recruitment and retention of students. Efforts to improve progress to degree are underway including the implementation of an Academic Success Center.*

* Update Systems, Policies, and Processes to Ensure Sustainability and Efficiency

*The UVA Wise Strategic Plan outlines ambitious goals and priorities that span all areas of the college – facilities, technology, budget, workflows, and communications.*

The College will achieve its goals and in turn fulfill the five pillars through 10 focal projects:

* Transformation Through the Liberal Arts
* Broadening Access and Closing the Gap
* Building Bridges and Pathways
* Equipping and Empowering Our People
* Building Community, Strengthening Ties
* Programs that Align, People that Lead
* Telling Our Story and Reaching New Audiences
* Bringing Technology, Innovation, and Economic Growth to Southwest Virginia
* Ensuring Health and Wellness for All
* Increasing Capacity Through Maturation of Leadership Structures, Preparation of Leaders, and Systems that Sustain Our Work

For additional details regarding the college’s strategic plan, please go to

<https://strategicplan.uvawise.edu/>.

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| **A2. What is your institution’s greatest strengths and areas of distinctiveness that it should continue to invest in? What is your institution’s greatest opportunities for improvement?** |

**Strengths:**

In an effort to grow enrollment and better meet the needs of the region and Commonwealth in recent years, the College has focused its resources and efforts on:

* streamlining the admissions process and adopting an omnichannel communication approach to attract prospective students through the use of salesforce;
* enhancing student retention, ultimately leading to improved graduation rates; expanding scholarship opportunities to make education more accessible;
* attracting and retaining high-quality faculty and staff;
* fostering a more diverse student population, encompassing various backgrounds, household demographics, and geographic locations;
* expanding online offerings to create flexible pathways for transfer students;
* implementing an early intervention system to support and increase overall student success;
* developing experiential learning opportunities to boost student engagement;
* establishing a course-sharing partnership with UVA's School of Continuing & Professional Studies to broaden online course offerings;
* advancing proactive advising and establishing a strong rapport with first-year students; and
* forming greater partnerships with the public schools, community colleges, and industry.

As a result of these efforts, as detailed further below, the College has positioned itself as a vehicle for student success and economic growth.

From 2012-13 to 2021-22, as shown in the *Fact Pack*, new student enrollment (FTIC, transfer, and YiW students) declined by 26% or 157 students. Since bottoming in 2021-22, new student enrollment has increased to 476 and 527 respectively the last two years. In addition, new student applications increased 56% from 838 to 1,384 from 2021-22 to 2022-23.

Table 1 identifies all components contributing to or impacting the total number of degree-seeking students: applications, new student enrollment, retention rates, and the number of graduates. Comparisons can be made between the flow of new students entering and those exiting as graduates or withdraws. The data from the *Fact Pack* revealed that as the number of new students declined 26% from 2012-13 to 2021-22, total degree-seeking students fell by 31% or 501 students, with the number of degrees awarded decreasing by 62 students or 21%. The smaller cohorts, the lower fall-to-fall retention of first-time freshmen and first-time transfers, and the lower progression of continuing students, resulted in a decline in total degree-seeking students.

As illustrated in the *Fact Pack,* the tide began to turn in 2022-23.  At present, the outlook for Fall 2023 is even better. Table 1 provides a five-year comparison of the components referred to in the previous paragraph for consecutive fall terms at the same point in time as was for Fall 2023 (8:00 a.m., July 17, 2023). The number of new student applications are up 2,821or approximately 289%, and the first-time freshman and transfer retention rates for the Fall 2022 cohorts are currently 76% and 80%, respectively, increases of 5% and 3% from the Fall 2021 cohorts and 21% and 18% from the cohorts during the Pandemic. With fall cohorts and retention rates rising, the number of degree seeking students and thus, annual student FTE are expected to beginning with Fall 2023.

Table 1

*Student Applications and Enrollment*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Students1 | Fa19 | Fa20 | Fa21 | Fa22 | Fa23 |
| New Student Applications | 977 | 1,261 | 1,048 | 1,236 | 3,798 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FTF Applications | 939 | 1,041 | 885 | 1,035 | 3,468 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FTT Applications | 186 | 220 | 163 | 201 | 330 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| New Student Enrollment | 282 | 213 | 298 | 270 | 311 |
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| New FTF2 | 218 | 155 | 252 | 224 | 261 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| New FTT | 64 | 58 | 46 | 46 | 50 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Continuing | 704 | 719 | 689 | 474 | 545 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Total Degree-seeking | 986 | 932 | 987 | 924 | 985 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FTF Retention Rate | 66% | 68% | 61% | 72% | 76% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| FTT Retention Rate | 71% | 65% | 56% | 71% | 80% |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Degrees Awarded | 232 | 229 | 229 | 226 |  |

*1Data are for fall term at the same point in time (Fall 2023: July 17, 2023 at 8:00 a.m.)*

*2Includes Year in Wise students*

UVA Wise has made and continues to make changes in infrastructure, organization, academic curriculum, and talent acquisition in order to adjust and adapt more quickly to the goals of the Commonwealth and an everchanging global economy with evolving workforce needs. The results of such changes are reflected in the strengths detailed below.

* The first and only public college located in Southwest Virginia (location).

As shown by the numbers inside the red circles in Figure 1, there are 15 public institutions of higher education dispersed geographically across the Commonwealth. UVA Wise, number 11, is the only public institution in Southwest Virginia west of Radford University.

Figure 1.

*Colleges and Universities in Virginia*



(Taken from Virginia Education Wizard, <https://www.vawizard.org/wizard/college-and-university-in-virginia>)

Since the establishment of Clinch Valley College (now University of Virginia’s College at Wise or UVA Wise) as a two-year institution in 1954, which then transitioned to a four-year institution in 1970, the College has worked to provide higher education to the people of Southwest Virginia. UVA Wise is a consistent contributor of the region’s workforce, particularly increasing the supply of nurses and K-12 educators. As demonstrated in Figure 2, not having a college located in Wise would require some to travel approximately three hours to Radford University, the next closest public institution in Virginia, for a college degree. The diagram illustrates a radius distance of approximately 60 miles around each institution.

 Figure 2.

 *Geographic Location of UVA Wise and Radford University*

 

*Note*. Produced using CalcMaps (<https://www.calcmaps.com/map-radius/>)

* **Committed to the SWVA Region.** UVA Wise has demonstrated a commitment to serving the region, leveraging resources and assets to aid in the revitalization of the region’s economy and support industry and community growth. The College has become the neutral convener and unbiased facilitator for Southwest Virginia and its communities, driving economic and community development. Its professionals bring together great minds from across our communities to ensure all voices are heard and stand for a community-informed, asset-based system of developing and completing regional goals to advance the region and Commonwealth. UVA Wise serves as the support organization for GO Virginia Region One, the Virginia Talent and Opportunity Partnership (VTOP) coordinator, and the regional entrepreneurial ecosystem coordinator.
* **Effective at Enhancing Awareness.** UVA is a globally-recognized brand. This has helped us spread our enrollment campaigns further and faster according to intel from some of our recent partners including Niche.com. Through a beta direct admissions program with Niche, UVA Wise has made its access and affordability more widely known. Barriers of size, monetary resources, and geographic location are eroded, allowing students and families to investigate and compare institutions side-by-side. The information available includes how to apply, what degree programs and financial resources are available, how many students are enrolled and who they are, including a view of campus life.
* **Established In-demand Degree Programs.** The existing portfolio of program offerings at UVA Wise addresses the needs of the region’s and the Commonwealth’s employers. This includes Nursing, Computer Science, Hospitality Management, Data Analytics/Science and other in-demand majors. The College at Wise focuses on the enhancement and future development of in-demand degree programs driven by industry.

UVA Wise offers seven of “the 10 most in-demand majors” according to Best Colleges in 2022 (<https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/most-in-demand-majors/>). The top 10 and those offered by UVA Wise (highlighted) are:

* + Engineering
	+ Business
	+ Nursing
	+ Hospitality
	+ Education
	+ Computer Science
	+ Architecture
	+ Pharmaceutical Sciences (UVA Wise offers pre-professional programs leading to careers in the sciences such as Chemistry, Biology, Bio-Chemistry, etc.)
	+ Information Technology
	+ Construction Management
* **Enhanced Safety and Security.** UVA Wise provides a safe and welcoming location for living and learning. Investment in campus upgrades is necessary to ensure that we continue to enhance safety and provide a campus community that facilitates learning and prevention of violence.

The UVA Wise Campus Police Department is recognized as a Virginia Department of Criminal Justice Services police agency. The Department maintains a 24-hour, seven-day-a-week service to the College community.

The Division for Advocacy and Opportunity (DAO) serves to promote compliance with applicable federal and state law, regulations, and policies and provides updates to the campus community regarding mandates and guidelines; and offers consultation, assistance, and resources related to diversity, inclusion, and VAWA crimes. In the 2023 academic year, DAO provided or assisted in more than 130 programs and initiatives for the campus around campus safety and inclusion.

The Title IX Coordinator requires and provides annual training to employees, including responsibilities for federal law and reporting instructions, definitions and considerations for building a campus culture centered on safety, transparency, response, resources and education for Title IX and its protections. New students and employees, as well as all of the campus community, are offered primary prevention and awareness programs. UVA Wise has developed deep subject matter expertise in this field and organizes training for the broader community including the community colleges.

The Counseling Center provides mental health treatment to help students work through a variety of issues that may interfere with learning and personal development. All services provided through the counseling center are offered at no out-of-pocket expense to students.

Several alert systems are offered to the UVA Wise campus community that allow information to be dispersed and posted. Emergency Alert System (EAS): up to six (6) numbers may be registered to receive alert calls and one (1) number to receive text messages. Other communication methods includes sirens, e-mail, website, and face-to-face notifications.

Within the Division of Student Affairs, students are encouraged to promote a fair and safe campus environment by serving in leadership positions within the student governance system of Honor Court, the Student Conduct Board, and the Student Government Association.

Residence Life has two full-time staff that live in campus halls as well as more than 20 student resident assistants. Community building activities are held throughout the academic year and there are two living and learning communities. From a recent Residence Life Quality of Life Survey (spring 2023), 88% of students surveyed agreed with the statement “I feel safe on my floor,” and 87% of respondents agreed with the statement “I feel safe in by building.” These findings are regularly analyzed in context with the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act, for which we submitted a 2022 Biennial Review Report.

* **Dedicated faculty, staff and local community.** The faculty and staff at UVA Wise help students pursue their passions and realize their dreams. Faculty continually engage in professional growth opportunities, including workshops and collaborative coaching cycles provided by our Center of Education Excellence and Innovation. UVA Wise nurtures a culture of open-mindedness, promoting active listening to diverse perspectives and encouraging reflective thought for deepened self-awareness.

We recognize and value the distinctive contributions of all community members and embrace a holistic approach to learning. Local businesses are key collaborators in our mission, providing invaluable opportunities for students through our experiential learning co-curricular activity. In fact, in fall 2022, our annual Student Activities Fair, at which campus clubs and off-campus organizations welcome students during their first week of classes, had record attendance by local nonprofits and businesses. This hands-on approach enriches the overall educational journey for students at UVA Wise.

As illustrated in Figure 3, the student’s journey is shaped by employees with a wide range of years of service and experience. With 332 employees, the years of service ranges from less than a year to 38. Thirty-nine percent or 131 employees have been with the college 5 years or less; 24% or 81 employees have served the college over 20 years. As a result, strategic planning for all aspects of the College is built upon fresh ideas from newly hired employees as well as seasoned ideas gained from those serving the College for an extended number of years.

 Figure 3.

 *Distribution by Employee Years of Service*



* **Renowned Social Mobility.** A mission that positively impacts social mobility and a family’s economic trajectory, as noted by *U.S. News & World Report* as well as other third-party endorsements for affordability from *Washington Monthly* and other reliable sources.
	+ In the category of national liberal arts colleges, UVA Wise was ranked eighth in 2022 by *U.S. News & World Report* for colleges in Virginia and 158 of all colleges across the U.S., an increase from the ranking of 166 in 2021 and 164 in 2020. In the category of social mobility, the College has been ranked as one of the top in the Nation since the category’s introduction in 2018.
	+ In the category of best bang for the buck in 2022, *Washington Monthly* ranked the College 87 out of the 288 colleges and universities located in the southeast.
* **Financial Accessibility.** Providing students and families with timely and transparent financial aid and scholarship awards that reduce out-of-pocket expenses for students and leverage available institutional resources.

More than 80% of UVA Wise students qualify for federal Pell or receive merit and need-based scholarships, so increasing endowed scholarships remains a top priority for the College. UVA Wise’s endowment totaled $158,937,233.94 at the end of May 2023. This includes approximately 440 endowed scholarships totaling $115 million, which represents 72.4% of endowed funds. Endowed scholarship funds provide support for tuition, fees, room, board and experiential learning scholarships.

At present, the College is working with Third Coast Consultants to automate updates between Jenzabar, the student information system, and PowerFAIDS, the college’s financial aid software. This will allow anyone in the office to run a process to see which students are ready for packaging and to automate packaging and communications so that large groups of letters can be put together in just a few minutes. They are also assisting with leveraging our financial resources to enroll students who will be successful. In addition, we will soon be hiring an Associate Director of Financial Aid who will be building on the work which has been done to streamline the packaging process and look for other opportunities afforded to us by technology. We are also beginning to shop for scholarship management software which will enable us to match more easily recipients with donor preference and to assist the Advancement Office with thank you notes.

* **Enhanced Retention Toward Graduation.** The College has a comprehensive approach to student success and retention that uses a guided pathways approach, beginning with an attentive orientation process, well-trained and assigned advisors for new students, a fall freshman seminar that focuses on equipping and engaging students, and an Academic Success Center that provides support and intervention for students as needed.
	+ UVA Wise’s Orientation process focuses on making sure that students who commit to the College are escorted through the admission, advising and registration process as fluidly as possible, using both electronic and in-person programming to match them to courses and advisors within the department.

The UVA Wise grant-funded TRIO program serves our students who are either first generation, low-income or students with a disability. Those students receive intensive services focused on their unique academic needs. A new Academic Success Center serves all students who need academic tutoring, academic coaching or peer mentoring in all subjects so that students who are in danger of not being in good academic standing can create academic recovery plans to move back into good standing.

* + The College’s new student advising process uses an intrusive advising to help students succeed. A proactive approach, this method includes advisors reaching out to students before they encounter problems. At UVA Wise, advisors identify potential issues and develop strategies to help students stay on track and achieve their academic goals.
* **Enhanced transferability.** The College works to leverage students’ credits taken prior to enrollment, and has thus invested time and effort into the Transfer Virginia initiative. Students seeking a four-year degree in Virginia will be able to access UVA Wise information regarding programs and pathways to help them achieve their goals. In addition, the College revised their AP, IB, and Cambridge scores to enhance opportunities for students to earn credits for prior learning.
* **Proven Retention Tools.** Tools that keep students on the path toward graduation, such as the degree audit and my.uvawise.edu (the student portal at the College), are accessible 24/7. Financial aid, documents, student statements, enrollment, certifications, course planning, and more provide access to information that students need to plan their degree path. The degree audit shows them a clear path to completing the credits needed for the bachelor’s degree, and also include details about the liberal arts core as well as major and minor coursework. Students can access documents and videos that provide them quick tips to find information as well as a series of icons to quickly access, the most important features of our student information system.
* **Professional partnerships.** UVA Wise has builtstrong relationships with employers including long-term internship partnerships, placements for clinical and practicum activity related to specific disciplines of study and occupations, hosting employers on campus for recruitment events or as guest speakers in classrooms, as well as customized training programs designed to meet employer’s needs.

**Opportunities:**

* **Become more transfer friendly** with an explicit focus on timely and affordable degree completion, including for adult learners who have stopped out and seek opportunities to attain a bachelor’s degree.
* **Further strengthen partnerships** with the corporate, health, and governmental sectors, the continue to develop and resource undergraduate degree programs that meet and anticipate the needs of the region and Commonwealth.

* **Continue to invest in new graduate degrees** that build upon existing undergraduate programs that will enable students and the region’s professionals to continue their education in in-demand occupations thus increasing the knowledge capital to support regional businesses and economic development.
* **Upgrade and renovate on-campus housing** to meet the needs of first-year, upper-level, and graduate students.
* **Upgrade parking and campus facilities** by addressing aging classroom buildings, expanding classroom capacity with a new technology classroom building, and building wayfinding access in collaboration with state and local government agencies.
* **Invest in ongoing development for faculty and advisors** to increase classroom excellence, enhance student support and increase retention and pass rates.
* **Increase efficiency and improved customer service** through adoption of enterprise software that automates and standardizes processes.
* **Incentivize and reward front-line staff** by improving opportunities for merit pay and bonuses to facilitate employee excellence and retention.
* **Enhance accountability processes** for Vice Chancellors and campus managers.
* **Provide internal professional development opportunities** for all employees to support overall operational effectiveness.

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| **A3. What are the top 3-5 strategic priorities you are currently pursuing or planning to pursue in the next six years? Please explain how each strategy relates to the strengths and/or opportunities for improvement mentioned above and will ultimately drive better outcomes for students.**  |

**Strategic Priorities**

1. **Increase enrollment**, continuing to build transfer student enrollment strategies in collaboration with community colleges. Efforts to improve recruitment success are underway, including support from UVA to create an Office of Marketing and Communication at UVA Wise. We have increased new student enrollment for fall 2023, including increased retention of continuing students as noted in the strengths above.
2. **Develop additional new programs**.
* Positively impact the region through certificate programs to facilitate workforce development and preparing students for careers in growing fields, including Hospitality and Tourism (HTM) and Data Analytics.
	+ With the addition of the Bristol Casino (last year) and expansion to Hard Rock Casino and Resort (summer 2024), we will be prepared to support burgeoning workforce needs. We are currently working with Hard Rock leadership to develop apprenticeships for student in the HTM program.
* Continue the development of graduate programs, growing the recently launched Master of Education (M.Ed.) program and completing the plans and requirements to offer a graduate program in nursing.
1. **Enhance systems to develop a more robust research program** with a focus on applied research in collaboration with UVA to develop knowledge, expertise, and experiential opportunities for students in areas of study important to our region.
2. **Enhance the classroom experience** with opportunities to empower/train faculty to focus on teaching, encouraging, and resource-brokering for students.
3. **Improve campus infrastructure and physical presence**. Of note in our strategic plan: we have digitized our enrollment planning (bullet 1, strategic pillar 5); we have debuted our first living-learning communities (bullet 4, strategic pillar 4); and we have earned Apple Distinguished School status (bullet 3, strategic pillar 5).

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| **A4. What support can OpSix provide to help you achieve those strategies? Please include both budget and policy requests and reference Part I of your submission where appropriate.**  |

* Create policies whereby new compliance mandates at the state and federal level are accompanied by funds that would enable colleges to compete. These mandates use precious resources for small schools and take away from other work opportunities to enhance student success.
* Fund a strategic enrollment and retention general fund request. As the College begins to increase enrollment, it is important to continue investing in strategies that have proven effective in changing our enrollment trajectory. It is equally important to retain students by providing the academic support and student support services needed to be successful. The College must also work to recruit and retain the highest quality employees.
* Fully fund salary increases to aid in keeping tuition and fees as low as possible.
* Continue to expand workforce development initiatives by strengthening new initiatives and existing programs, including graduate programs.
* Invest in the expansion of research opportunities at the College.
* Support the College’s capital and maintenance reserve requests to ensure the proper facilities are in place to support the new programs and growth.
* Support the policy change for permanent reprieve from the mandate to recover indirect costs from auxiliary operations to educational and general programs.

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – ENROLLMENT VOLUME & COMPOSITION**

***Key question: How is your institution managing enrollment in light of state and national trends, and what are the financial implications?***

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| **B1. What do you see as the primary drivers of recent enrollment trends for your institution? Please reference any specific academic programs that have had a significant (positive or negative) effect on enrollment, if relevant.** |

**Enrollment Drivers:**

New processes and policies in College’s Division of Enrollment Management have increased opportunities to reach more students, and provide expanded and clearer student financial aid packages that make college more affordable and provide greater access to higher education. Additionally, recent investments by the Commonwealth of Virginia have enabled the creation of new, in-demand degree programs (both undergraduate and graduate) which enable UVA Wise to support ongoing educational attainment of students and the region’s professionals. Other drivers of the College’s enrollment growth include:

* Technology investment to improve student experience with automated application process (accessibility).
* Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) Tuition Reduction (accessibility).
* Marketing investment across the Commonwealth of Virginia and through the key territories in the Appalachian Region where we are growing enrollment and encouraging a brain gain in the region.
* Eliminating application and enrollment barriers (application fee, enrollment deposit).
* Partnering with local/regional high schools for providing direct admission (Principal’s Opportunity Program).
* Adding recruitment staff.
* Increasing student awareness of UVA Wise is proving to yield more interest.
* Prioritizing enrollment initiatives for multiple years, including through the pandemic.
* Partnering with Third parties to provide direct admission programs.

**Academic Impacts (Positive)**

Plans to provide more opportunities for online degree completion for transfer students for strategic populations will meet affordability and access pressure points. Enabling working students and students with fewer resources to take courses that will enhance promotion opportunities or gain education that will move them toward the completion of a four-year degree are chief goals of:

* Nursing Online RN to BSN program;
* 2+2 Business Administration online program; and
* Emerging programs such as the online Administration of Justice program.

**Academic Impacts (Negative)**

UVA Wise analyzes enrollment trends to make data-informed decisions related to new and declining programs. As an example, due to declining student interest the College has made the strategic decision to reallocate funds designated to fill a vacant faculty position in foreign language to other growing programs.

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| **B2. Please summarize your enrollment management strategy moving forward and the specific actions (if any) you are taking to implement that strategy.** |

The following enrollment management strategies have been and are being implemented beginning this past fiscal year:

* New programs (Data Science, M.Ed., Hospitality and Tourism).
* Transfer pathway programs with local community colleges
	+ 2 + 2 programs
	+ More flexible core requirements
	+ Reduce time to completion
	+ Enhanced academic advising
	+ Financial literacy training for all new students
* Assess the first-year experience for all new students and make necessary improvements to increase student persistence.
* Improve financial aid packaging and better communicate to prospective students the actual cost of attendance.
* Target specific populations for enrollment, particularly local and regional students, who may believe that they are priced out of the opportunity for a four-year degree.
* Streamline processes that will allow students to move through the admission steps faster, getting information and enrollment sooner.
* Improve onboarding and registration processes.

Soon, UVA Wise will propose a reduction to out-of-state tuition to increase new student enrollment, reduce unfunded discounting, and reverse brain drain for the Commonwealth while equipping students to meet employers’ needs.

**B3. How ambitious/realistic/conservative are the enrollment projections you most recently submitted to SCHEV? What are the greatest unknowns or risks that could lead enrollment to differ significantly from your projections? Please reference national and statewide enrollment trends/projections and cite any other data (e.g. regional trends, performance of prior enrollment strategies) that informed your projections.**

The enrollment projections were conservative, based on the historical review of enrollment trends and the implementation of new admissions strategies and processes, as outlined below.

* Enrollment trends (Fall 2016 – 2022)
	+ Degree seeking students
		- New students (first-time freshmen and transfers)
		- Continuing and readmitted students
	+ Non-degree seeking students
		- On-campus
			* Students not seeking to complete a baccalaureate degree, such as dual enrollment students, students working on a library media endorsement
			* Students simply enrolled in a course out of interest – activity course, such as aerobics, visual and performing arts course, such as ceramics, or an economics course, such as personal finance.
		- Off-campus
			* YiW (Year-in-Wise) students – students who were in-state, University of Virginia waitlisted students, but admitted to the College at Wise. These students can transfer to UVA their sophomore year, provided they are successful in meeting certain requirements at the end of their first year in Wise.
			* Center for Teaching Excellence students – adult students who are public school teachers seeking recertification or seeking teacher licensure
			* Library Media students - post baccalaureate students seeking an endorsement/minor in library media

* Admissions data for first-time freshmen (FTF), first-time transfers (FTT) & Year-in-Wise Students (YiW): applications, admits, and enrollment (2018-19 through 2022-23)
	+ New student applications increased 548 students or 66% from 2018-19 to preliminary 2022-23 data.
	+ New student enrollment increased by 41 students or 9% from 2018-19 to preliminary 2022-23 data.
	+ At present, new student applications are up 2,821 or 289%.

* Community College Historical Enrollment
	+ VCCS
		- decrease of 34,443 in student headcount or 15% in the last five years; decrease of 80,044 in student headcount or 29% in last ten.
	+ Chief Feeder Community Colleges
		- Mountain Empire Community College – decrease of 672 or 19% in student headcount in the last five years; decrease of 1,237 or 30% in the last ten.
		- Southwest Virginia Community College – decrease of 286 or 9% in student headcount in the last five years; decrease of 1,231 or 30% in the last ten.
		- Virginia Highlands Community College – increase of 64 or 2% in student headcount in the last five years; decrease of 463 or 13% in the last ten.
* Local, Chief Feeder Public School Divisions
	+ Wise County
		- PreK-1st: increase of 198 or 19% in students in the last five years; increase of 29 or 2% in the last ten.
		- Seniors: decrease of 64 or 14% in students in the last five years; decrease of 52 students or 12% in the last ten.
		- Total: increase of 158 students or 3% in students in the last five years; decrease of 279 or 5% in the last ten.
	+ Norton City Schools
		- PreK-1st: decrease of 8% or 13 students in the last five years; increase of 10% or 14 students in the last ten.
		- Seniors: increase of 28% or 15 students in the last five years; increase of 17% or 10 students in the last ten.
		- Total: decrease of 3% or 27 students in the last five years; decrease of 3% or 26 students in the last ten.

**In addition, factors impacting future enrollment include:**

* Taxpayer outmigration
* Birthing rates decrease
* Industry changes in SWVA
* National economy (recession concerns)
* Competitor impact, external influencers that drive enrollments away from one institution to another
* Need for more online and flexible learning options for students
* Job market and employer demand

The biggest unknown that really cannot be estimated is how the enhancements we are making to drive internal student-centered culture and streamline processes will impact the student experience as it relates to retention.

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| **B4. Explain the implications of your enrollment strategy on your institution’s financials. Please consider impacts on both revenues (e.g., discounting, financial aid, net tuition revenue) and expenditures (e.g., costs to implement enrollment management strategies, costs of enrolling more students or students with different needs, cost-per-student impact of flat/decreased enrollment).** |

* Inflation has increased the cost to recruit and retain students.
* Increased student enrollment will result in increased revenue; expenses are somewhat mitigated by economies of scale.
* Alignment of out-of-state costs to students would significantly reduce discounting.
* Strategic marketing initiatives will increase expenditures and cost per student if flat/decreased enrollments are experienced.

The College experienced growth over the past six months that has allowed it to strategically reinvest in small projects, such as internal professional development. However, Commonwealth support is still vital to support projects and needs detailed in Part I.

**SECTION C: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – PROGRAM ALIGNMENT & PERFORMANCE**

**COMPLETION OUTCOMES**

***Key question: How is your institution supporting all students to succeed in completing their degree in a timely manner?***

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| **C1. What are your highest-priority completion outcomes targets, both overall and for particular student segments? Please include aspirational targets, realistic expectations, and qualitative targets and specify by when you are aiming to meet those targets (e.g., X% 6-year graduation rate for Pell students by 2030).** |

* The highest-priority completion outcomes targets for the Academic Success Center (ASC) at UVA Wise center on two primary metrics:
	+ First-year students' fall-to-fall retention and graduation rates. Our first-year students’ fall-to-fall retention is 76%, and we aim to grow this retention to 80%. We aspire to see an improvement of 1-2% over the next three years, which will elevate our retention performance to align more closely with top-performing institutions.
	+ For our six-year graduation rates, we are currently at 44%. We aim to increase this rate, representing a significant achievement for our institution and, more importantly, our students' futures. These targets are overarching, emphasizing improving outcomes for specific student segments, particularly our Pell Grant-eligible students, who comprise around 80% of our full-time student body.
* The Pell Peer Mentoring Program is a critical part of our strategy to enhance student success, specifically designed to support our Pell Grant-eligible students. This program will match first-year Pell-eligible students with experienced upper-level students, providing a supportive community and guidance as they navigate college life.
	+ The goal is to increase our Pell-eligible students' retention and graduation rates, thereby narrowing the achievement gap. Recent approval of a grant from SCHEV will allow this enhancement. We are confident that the Pell Peer Mentoring Program will significantly contribute to achieving our retention and completion outcome targets by 2030.

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| **C2. What specific strategies/actions are you planning to take to achieve those goals? How will you draw on successes/challenges from your prior completion outcome improvement strategies?** |

* Improve the engagement and utilization of all academic support resources within the newly formed Academic Success Center. Strategies include: proactive student outreach, leveraging early alert systems, role verification, care reporting, and open communication with faculty and staff to provide timely and effective academic support.
* Ensure sufficient tutors to support our current student population and future increases.
* Drawing from successful models, we will continue to provide top-tier tutoring and mentoring services tailored to specific student populations like first-year students, students in recovery, and athletes.

The improvement of classroom, student, and faculty experiences as listed above will have exponential cultural effects across campus.

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| **C3. How will you use existing/recently provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please state the request and rationale and explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template.** |

* Utilize the University’s Strategic Investment Fund to set up and improve the Academic Success Center, offering a financial cushion for 12 months and facilitating our online and peer-to-peer tutoring models.
* Part I of our planning template includes a request for additional resources reflects our commitment to ensuring high-quality academic support for all students and the necessary infrastructural growth. Using existing funding, we plan to continue to expand peer-to-peer tutoring, mentorship and other academic success programming as we experience enrollment growth.

**POST-COMPLETION OUTCOMES**

***Key question: How is your institution preparing all students for success beyond completion (e.g., career preparation)***

**C4. Please explain how you monitor post-completion outcomes (e.g., employment rates, wage attainment, debt load, upward mobility). What data do you collect? What metrics are you monitoring most closely? What does the data reveal about your institution’s greatest strengths and areas for improvement with respect to post-completion outcomes? Please include any relevant data/reports in the appendix or as a separate attachment, including any data that captures outcomes by school/department/program.**

The Office of Career Discovery and Planning (CPD) surveys graduating students according to protocol and standards set by the National Association of College and Employers (NACE). First-destination surveys are administered to those achieving an undergraduate degree from UVA Wise.

Recent findings include:

* **Graduate employment:** Student employment increased from 26% in 2020 to 36.4% in 2021 and 47.06% in 2022, and is currently trending toward positive improvement in 2023 (currently at 36.1%). The percentage of students applying for employment and graduate school was at 32% in 2020, 52.6% in 2021, 58.82% in 2022, and are at 61.4% in our data collection for 2023.
* **Admissions to Graduate School**: Students planning to attend graduate school increased from 6% in 2020, 16.2% in 2021, 11.76% in 2022 and are trending higher (currently 25.3%%) for 2023.
* **Key programs**:
	+ Nursing**:** The licensure pass rates for the BSN program are as follows. The data is reported in a Jan-December format. And the data is sent to us from the Board of Nursing. These rates are at or above the national average.
		- 2022: 88.88%
		- 2021: 88.2%
		- 2020: 85%
		- 2019: 100%
		- 2018: 87.5%
		- 2017: 85.7%
	+ Education: 100% of our program completers passes all VDOE assessment requirements and 100% of program completers received a 10-year VDOE collegiate professional teaching license specific to their area of study.
* **Graduate Debt**: UVA Wise monitors the average amount of loan debt undertaken by both Virginians and non-Virginians as well as the percentage of graduates in each class with no debt. For 2021-22, in the fact pack, average borrowing per student was $2,836.71 per student and $2,202 per student FTE. Borrowing per student is down is down 36% from the 2012-13 average borrowing of $4,430.61. Average borrowing per student FTE is down 47% from $4,117 in 2012-13.

Data for the UVA Wise Class of 2023 is currently being collected. The survey will close December 2023. Please note that the knowledge rate of outcomes is generally on par with the national rate set by NACE; however, 2020 yielded a 64% knowledge rate which was a five-year low most likely due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Average knowledge rate for previous 5 years was 81% but they improved in 2021 to 76.4% and are showing positive improvement thus far in 2023. CPD is continually seeking to improve its collection methods and integrity of data and, as such, recently formed a cross-campus committee to further enhance graduate placement tracking.

**C5. What specific strategies/actions, including potential changes to your program portfolio or curriculum, are you planning to take to maximize the career readiness and job attainment of all students across programs of study, including increasing early career exposure for students (e.g., internships) during their time at your institution? How will you draw on successes/challenges from prior initiatives?**

UVA Wise’s most recent strategic plan, [Your College for a Lifetime](http://strategicplan.uvawise.edu/), has a pillar and several key initiatives devoted to enhancing our program portfolio to align programs with student demand, regional need, and our mission.

* As a key initiative of the UVA Wise Strategic Plan, Beyond Wise requires at least one high impact experiential learning activity for every UVA Wise student with the aim of eventually offering institutional funds to pay for at least one experience per student. This includes study abroad, internship, undergraduate research, clinical placements and service learning. This requirement has been approved and will be implemented for incoming freshmen in fall 2024.

This will include:

* + Consistent administration of experiential learning via the establishment of an Experiential Learning and High Impact Hub that connects, through a director and technological tools, the various programs—freshman seminar/first year experience, Office of Career Discovery and Planning, Wise Connects (community engagement), International Studies, Undergraduate Research, and the Office of National Awards and Fellowships—that provide opportunities for students to meet core academic requirements outside of the curriculum. This will be coordinated through the Office of Academic Affairs.
	+ Improved tracking of experiential learning across the entire institution via technology tools.
	+ Establishment of an evaluation toolbox for experiential learning programs.
* Funded through a grant from the UVA Strategic Investment Fund, UVA Wise launched the Wise Works internship program in 2015 in order to incentivize the creation of paid internships for UVA Wise students. Due to financial need, students were foregoing unpaid internships that may have propelled their academic and career goals. Wise Works provided up to 50% wage match for employers who were creating new paid internships and this model informed the current VTOP grant for Innovative Internships.
* UVA Wise is transitioning the Wise Works program funding to VTOP. The College has been designated by SCHEV as the regional coordinator for VTOP for Southwest Virginia and is in the process of promoting VTOP’s career readiness modules to students and employers throughout the region.
* In 2022, UVA Wise piloted the Grow Wise program which expands experiential learning options for UVA Wise students. Modeled after Iowa GROW®2, the effort works to transforming federal work-study positions to internships. In April 2023, UVA Wise won a planning grant after answering VTOP’s call for proposals, Transforming Federal Work Study to Internships. Therefore, in FY 24-25, through intentional planning among key stakeholders, UVA Wise will design an effective path for upgrading the work-study experience to reflect NACE Standards for internships.
* UVA Wise has strong relationships with employers throughout the region and the Commonwealth to include clinical placements with Ballad Health and other healthcare providers in the broader region, practicum placements with the region’s K-12 school systems and strong internship programs with public and private employers. As an example, UVA Wise has maintained a high-impact internship program with Virginia Energy for nearly twenty-five years in which UVA Wise students have contributed to award winning software development projects. With the creation of the Hospitality and Tourism Management degree, the College is contributing to the workforce as Hardrock Casino grows in Bristol, as well as the growing tourism industry in Southwest Virginia.
* As outlined in the strategic plan, the College is restructuring its Liberal Arts Core curriculum so that it is competency-based rather than course-based; integrates experiential learning and professional development into the curricular and co-curricular experience; provides individual students a comprehensive plan that maps out core and major requirements, incorporates experiential learning goals, and professional development opportunities; and stays informed of opportunities for new partnerships in support of post-graduate job opportunities.
* Guided pathways connect orientation advising, first year seminar, liberal arts core and experiential learning. The idea is that we are equipping and engaging students so that they are prepared not only with the knowledge to be success post-graduation, but the skills and professional competencies. In the midst of these different experience, they are learning about teamwork, how self-reflection spurs ideas for cover letters, personal statements for job applications, etc. This approach is rooted in evidence-based research which support that students who have deeper self-awareness have better emotional intelligence and abilities to navigate relations.
* Develop online degree completion programs in collaboration with UVA Continuing Education for students already working in the professional world as well as students who lack resources to come to campus in person.

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| **C6. How do you intend to use existing/provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template.** |

UVA Wise will use existing VTOP grant funds and Academic Success Center funding to support these strategies, and will not be requesting incremental state resources at this time. As we increase experiential learning opportunities for our students and engage more broadly with employers throughout the region and Commonwealth, we may request funding to sustain the VTOP coordinator in year two of the biennium.

**WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT**

***Key question: How are your institution’s programs of study and degree conferrals aligned with the evolving talent needs of the Commonwealth?***

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| **C7. For which specific workforce needs is your institution best positioned to supply talent, based on regional, industry, or occupation alignment?** |

* UVA Wise is the primary supplier of teachers in the region with Education programs that offer endorsements in Career and Technical Education (6-12), Elementary Education, English (6-12), Health and Physical Education (PreK-12), History and Social Science (6-12), Library Media (PreK-12), Mathematics (6-12), Music Education (PreK-12), Biology and Chemistry (6-12), Special Education (K-12), and Theater Arts (PreK-12). We have recently added an M.Ed. program in Curriculum and Instruction that will welcome its first students this fall.
* The UVA Wise Bachelor in Nursing and RN-BSN programs, with high passage rate on the NCLEX, prepare students to meet the supply demands in nursing. We are completing renovation of Wiley-Pippin Hall in November 2023 to support growth in Nursing programs. We will have the capacity to double the size of the BSN program and to add the Masters in Nursing.
* With a strong business curriculum that includes opportunities for coursework in Accounting, Finance, Marketing and Management, and, soon to be added, concentrations in Analytics and Hospitality and Tourism Management, UVA Wise is well positioned to meet the needs of business and industry in the region. Particularly with the growth of the hospitality and tourism sector and the opportunity for internships, UVA Wise students are well prepared to have productive careers that contribute to economic vitality in the region. Recently, the business faculty developed a 2+2 program that allows students transferring with associates degrees to complete the final two years of the bachelor’s degree in business administration online, another program that provides a clear pathway to work readiness.
* Computer Science and Software Engineering are well-established programs that provide a steady supply of well-trained individuals in the technology field, another emerging area in the region. These programs are equipped with an advisory board of professionals from businesses around the region and across the Commonwealth who seek out individuals with training in Computer Science and Software Engineering and have opened the doors to internships for UVA Wise students that have enhanced their preparation for workforce needs.
* Natural Science programs that include degrees in Biology, Chemistry, Biochemistry, and Environmental Science produce majors who seek careers in medicine, chemical science and engineering, and environmental science and policy. The BS Chemistry is accredited by the American Chemical Society providing a direct path for student to be hired in laboratories at Eastman Chemical.
* Psychology and Sociology majors with focus on careers in behavioral health address the range of mental and behavioral health needs in the region.

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| **C8. What specific strategies/actions is your institution planning to take to better align your program offerings or degree conferrals to current and projected workforce needs? Please provide a list of specific programs you intend to sunset or grow in the next 6 years to increase alignment, partnerships/initiatives you intend to launch or deepen, etc. If you intend to launch any new programs, please explain why your institution is particularly well-suited to succeed in that area.** |

* UVA Wise works to align new degree programs, certificates or endorsements with the workforce needs in Southwest Virginia, the Central Appalachian Region as well the Commonwealth of Virginia. These include but are not limited to the following:
	+ New education endorsement for Early Childhood Development
	+ Bachelor’s Degree in Data Analytics (also includes a minor in the discipline)
	+ Bachelor’s Degree in Hospitality and Tourism Management
	+ Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration (2+2 program offered fully online)
	+ Master’s Degree in Education
	+ Master’s of Science Degree in Nursing
* Future programs under exploration:
	+ Library Media Graduate Degree
	+ Special Education Graduate Degree
	+ Data Analytics Graduate Degree
* UVA Wise has engaged EAB Consulting to help with the quantitative analysis and projection of future program needs both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. The College is working to analyze the trends, anticipate workforce needs and plan 5 to 7 years in advance for new programs.
* UVA Wise is also working to build new programs aligned with community college transfer populations, and we are in specific conversations with Virginia Highlands Community College exploring the opportunity for a 2+2 program for their nursing students. This program would be a hybrid program with in-person courses being held at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center located in Abingdon, Va.

**SECTION D: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY**

**AFFORDABILITY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES**

***Key question: How is your institution accounting for and improving affordability for students and families?***

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| **D1. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to improve affordability moving forward across your overall student body and priority subpopulations, and what is the expected impact? Please account for a broad range of factors including the full cost of attendance, net price, time to degree, debt load, etc.** |

UVA Wise has developed several impactful affordability initiatives over the past decade that the College still carries out today including:

* The Within Reach program, which provides Virginia full-time, first-time students from families with an annual income of less than $40,000 and assets of less than $75,000, eight semesters of no tuition and student fees taken within nine consecutive semesters. This program is being managed through the use of Pell, Virginia financial aid, and endowed institutional scholarship funding to cover the costs.
* Donor-contributed scholarships from our endowed funds
* Elimination of unnecessary fees and avoiding the creation of new fees
* Keeping all costs as low as possible (tuition, fees, room, and board)
* Guaranteed Admissions Agreements
* Guaranteed Program Admissions Agreements

Some more recent programs we are piloting include:

* Decreasing time to degree by removing course transfer barriers, developing pathways and plans with feeder schools to move students from high school to bachelor’s degree completion; and
* Providing on-the-spot admission to high school students in our Upward Bound program to increase opportunity to earn a degree and remove barriers related to low-income, first generation and disability.
* Soon, we will propose the impactful strategy of decreasing out-of-state tuition, which will assist not only in enrolling students at UVA Wise, but will also help grow the Commonwealth with skilled workers.

**REVENUE**

***Key question: How is your institution approaching pricing and revenue management? What are the implications on long-term top-line financial health?***

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| **D2. Please explain the rationale behind your full pricing (i.e. published tuition & fees, including mandatory non-E&G fees) and financial aid award strategy (i.e. net tuition revenue projections). What data informed your assessment of T&F increase feasibility (e.g., market comparisons, student capacity to pay) and estimates of discounts/ waivers/unfunded scholarships? What informed your strategy around financial aid awards, merit and need-based, particularly for various student segments by income level and academic preparation?** |

Tuition and fee increases have been held low in an effort to increase access and affordability for students as well as to ensure the College remains competitive with local and regional institutions including those in neighboring states.

Primary discounting strategy includes mostly these funding sources:

* Academic Merit Awards for students with GPAs of 3.2 and above (donor funded)
* Virginia Access Grant Program
* Federal Pell Grant

The College’s financial aid strategy is as follows: We leverage our aid based on both merit (high school academic success) and need using the FASFA. We divide students into three categories:

* High Need (0 EFC)
* Middle Need (Pell Eligible)
* Low Need (Non-Pell Eligible)

Because of UVA Wise’s current out-of-state tuition, the College is priced out of the market outside of the Commonwealth, where the price is too high and requires substantial discounting that we are unable to provide and sustain. Reducing out-of-state tuition is a critical strategy we will be proposing that will not only positively impact the College’s enrollment but also the Commonwealth’s growth.

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| **D3. What do you expect to be the impact of your pricing/discounting approach on enrollment numbers/mix (if any) and net tuition revenue moving forward and why?** |

As a regional public college located in rural Southwest Virginia, also known as the part of the Appalachian region, the College will need to be intentional when considering the overall student experience and the cost to attend. UVA Wise will need to remain affordable. For our students to succeed long term it is most beneficial that we leverage as much of their financial aid as possible while minimizing the amount of student loans they will need to borrow.

Our tuition revenue model has its greatest impact for all students when we maximize both federal and commonwealth grants. This allows greater discounting for students with less borrowing and less burden on our overall institutional budget. We also have a substantial donor-funded scholarship program we use in collaboration with those grant funds, thus providing a discounting methodology that benefits both the student and our net tuition revenue model.

**COST EFFECTIVENESS**

***Key question: How has your institution maintained bottom-line financial health and focused investment on the levers that will drive improvements in student outcomes?***

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| **D4. Reflect on the categories/subcategories of cost that have recently experienced the most significant increases on an absolute or per-student basis. What have been the primary drivers of those increases? Please be specific and include supporting data.** |

Academic Support

* In 2019 received $892,880 in new GF dollars for the Master Equipment Lease Program (MELP)

Institutional/Administrative

* In 2021 the College implemented the Early Retirement Incentive Program leading to additional expenditures of $1.8M.
* In 2022 the College provided a merit bonus to employees.

Instructional

* In 2022 received $810,912 in GF dollars to support the MSN/FNP program.
* In 2022 Center for Teaching Excellence (CTE) expenditures grew $785,000 as a result of increased enrollment.

Personnel numbers have grown with the recent addition of new programs and support personnel. Salary increases in 2020 (3%) and 2022 (5%) led to incremental increases in all categories/subcategories.

Non-personnel growth is driven by both growth and inflation to support the mission of UVA Wise.

**D5. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to contain/reduce key costs and improve fiscal health going forward while improving student outcomes? What are your objectives and what have been your results to date of any already-launched initiatives? What is the expected impact and timeframe of these strategies? Include any short-term costs that would need to be incurred to implement the strategies.**

Cost Containment Measures

* Implemented an Early Retirement Incentive Program with an initial savings of $270,000. New positions were hired in a strategic way to ensure savings for future years as well.
* Restructured auxiliary debt to keep student rates as low as possible
* Zero-based budget exercise in 2020 to identify and allocate/reallocate funding to strategic priorities. The College continues to use the foundation set from this exercise to review its funding and reallocate appropriately.
* Shared services, systems and software with the University of Virginia leveraging the needed expertise in areas such as General Counsel, Risk Management, Finance, and more. The College utilizes the Human Resource and Finance systems of the University, along with specialized software, to save money and keep our costs as low as possible to our students.
* Annual management of discretionary spending utilizing any savings to pay one-time costs.
* Completed an Energy Performance Contract through the Department of Energy allowing the college to make needed upgrades to its energy infrastructure and realize more than $245,000 each year in energy savings, which paid the debt service on those needed upgrades.
* Conduct annual contract reviews to ensure fiscal responsibility. Recent reviews realized savings in Broadband, Cable TV, and Garbage removal services resulting in more than $200,000 annual savings.

**D6. Provide information about your institution’s highest-priority E&G capital projects and requests (including new construction as well as renovations) over the six-year plan period and how they align to your enrollment trajectory, student outcomes improvement plans, or other strategic priorities. Please also reflect on your current E&G facilities utilization (especially classrooms, labs and student service areas), particularly in light of any recent trends that might impact space needs (e.g., enrollment trends, shifting learning modalities). How has square footage per student changed over time and why? What efforts have you made to reassess and further optimize the use of your existing facilities, and what has been the impact of those efforts to date? What do you intend to do in the next six years to increase utilization?**

**Furniture, Fixtures, and Equipment (FF&E) funding for previously authorized projects**

The College requests appropriation of the General Fund portion of FF&E for the Wyllie Hall Renovation. Project will be completed in fall 2023. DGS’ funding report dated January 29, 2021 authorized $1.589M for FF&E for this project.

**Technology Classroom Building**

The building will offer classrooms and technology-focused lab spaces to become the integrated location for both new growth programs offering bachelor’s degrees in Applied Data Analytics, Integrated Science and Technology and Data Science; as well as space for established bachelor’s degree programs in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Software Engineering. This facility will also provide initial space for new graduate programs.

The newly planned academic programs, necessary for growth at UVA Wise and to facilitate economic development in Southwest Virginia, require both adequate and appropriate educational spaces to foster success. At present, the closely affiliated and established programs in Mathematics, Computer Science, and Software Engineering are located in different facilities across campus and this new building will address the often-stated concern that such closely linked programs should be in proximate academic space for full collaboration. In addition, such technology-dependent programming requires complex and focused infrastructure which is not currently available.

The multi-level parking deck’s elevator would also provide a direct ADA-accessible route to the academic quadrant on the upper campus from the lower eastern portion of campus, which is presently not available. The current estimated project budget is approximately $67M.

**Darden Hall Renovation**

This project will architecturally analyze the interior of this 34,500 gsf building for redesign elements, as current and planned academic programs within the facility have evolved over time, resulting in spaces ill-prepared to meet the space and layout requirements of the technology-dependent programs that use the facility. There will be upgrades to the HVAC and electrical infrastructure to properly meet the academic requirements of the programs within the building. The plumbing system will be analyzed and improved as the current layout has not been user-friendly. The roof is a two-level flat roof, the smaller portion of which was replaced in 2017. The larger portion, however, is nearing the end of its expected life and will need replacement. The project will also replace the large bank of energy-inefficient and failing windows at the southern prow of the building and assess other portions of the building envelope that may need renovation. In addition, this project would correct a vehicular access issue that affects the entire upper academic campus by enlarging the existing vehicle turnaround behind the nearby Slemp Student Center. At present, large delivery vehicles are unable to utilize this access, requiring many deliveries to the upper campus, be processed from the lower campus via elevators in the Student Center.

Post-renovation, the facility is expected to have an additional life of 50 years. The anticipated programmatic breakdown of the building is as follows: 50.96% classroom space (38.94% Education / 12.02% Computer Science) and 49.04% educational laboratory space (36.06% Computer Science / 12.98% Education).

The Darden Hall renovation will renew one of the College’s most heavily used academic facilities, updating its outmoded and overtaxed systems as well as presenting an opportunity for the College to grow several key academic programs with the renewed learning spaces. Currently, the Education, Computer Science, and Software Engineering programs are the primary occupants of the facility, and the academic spaces as configured and equipped today are not able to provide the robust technological environment for these particular types of programs. In particular, recently approved graduate level programming in the Education department needs the dedicated space and programming to grow and develop. This renovation will allow the College to pursue the leading edge of these key academic offerings, which prepare graduates to fill professional voids both in the region and throughout the Commonwealth. The planned vehicular access improvements will assist in maintaining and operating Darden Hall, as well as Zehmer Hall, Pippin-Wyllie Hall, and the Slemp Student Center. The current estimated project budget is approximately $47M.

**SECTION E: BUDGET**

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| **E1. Provide additional information for any budget requests in Part I of your planning template that are not described elsewhere in your narrative.** |

**Enrollment and Retention ($2M in FY2025; $2M in FY026)**

UVA Wise requests recurring state support to increase enrollment and enhance retention strategies. This funding will be used to support enrollment management marketing and increase use of technology in the recruitment and admissions of students, expanding student support services through living-learning communities and wellness activities, student retention though academic support technology and increased programming, as well as funding to recruit and retain exceptional employees.

**Workforce Program Strategies ($700,000 in FY2025; $700,000 in FY2026)**

UVA Wise requests recurring funding to support the expansion of programming in existing and newly established academic programs to support the workforce needs in the Commonwealth and Southwest Virginia. These funds would continue the growth and expansion of the nursing program, continued implementation of the data analytics program to include artificial intelligence, and continue development of the hospitality and tourism program which will support the tourism and gaming (casino) initiatives in Southwest Virginia.

**Research ($337,000 in FY2025; $445.500 in FY2026)**

UVA Wise requests on-going support for research activities. Governor Youngkin included funding in his proposed budget for a study to expand research opportunities at the College. To further support this work, the College is seeking funding to hire a director and support staff that would assist in this planning, but also focus on applied research in collaboration with the University of Virginia to develop knowledge, expertise, and experiential opportunities for students in areas of study important to our region. Additionally, this funding would provide additional support to the Healthy Appalachia Initiative which will implement population health programs in collaboration with regional community, business, health, and education partners; and teach public health courses at the College.

**Expanding Graduate Programs ($242,000 in FY2025; $242,000 in FY2026)**

UVA Wise requests on-going funding for the expansion of graduate programs. With its recently approved level change, the College will begin its M.Ed. in Curriculum and Instruction program this fall. The College is requesting additional funding to expand the M.Ed. program to include Library Media and Special Education programs.

**Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP) ($180,000 in FY2025; $185,400 in FY2026)**

UVA Wise requests funding to support the VMSDEP waivers. This growing unfunded mandate continues to add financial pressure to institutions of higher education in Virginia. Funding for these waivers would allow institutions to keep tuition and fees more affordable.

**Utilities ($250,000 in FY2025; $257,500 in FY2026)**

UVA Wise requests on-going funding for increased utility costs due to the current economy and inflationary impacts. The College used a 3% inflation increase for FY2026.

**Maintenance Reserve ($2.2M in FY2025)**

UVA Wise requests one-time funding to increase Maintenance Reservice allocations to address facility improvements. With recent decisions to pause funding of capital projects, the following is needed to address critical infrastructure needs to existing buildings:

* Roof Replacements:
	+ - Darden Hall (Built in 1997 -over 25 years old) - $303,500. The roof is leaking and has been patched repeatedly. As a flat roof, it has far surpassed its life expectancy and needs replacement. This is a budget estimate we received early January and is a turn key estimate (design, construction, and post construction inspections and closeout.)
* Zehmer Hall (Replaced in 1998 - 24 years old) - $375,500. The replacement of a flat roof has an updated budget estimate from the same company as the Darden budget above. It is a turn key estimate (design, construction, and post construction inspection closeout.)
* Replacement of Windows - $500,000. Due to the settlement and age of Darden Hall, the seals between the panes of the windows have failed. Moisture and cloudiness have caused unsightliness and energy inefficiency. The replacement windows would seek to match the adjacent library’s glass. Windows throughout the building show the same problems. This is a rough estimate with the assumption that all of the windows in the building would be replaced (not just the high-profile prow windows at the northwest corner of the building). Photos have been included in the attached document to highlight the severity of the cloudiness issue. Unfortunately, part of our software engineering and computer science programs are housed in this building; it is a challenge to recruit technology students to programs in a building in such disrepair.
* Replacement of Chiller - $450,000. At over 25 years of age, this Darden unit has achieved its expected lifetime. In addition to its age, the federal mandated changes in refrigerant makes a full replacement the prudent course of long-term efficiency. This estimate is higher than most similar replacements because the logistics of accessing and replacing the chiller is complicated by the surrounding terrain and buildings. It is likely that substantial machinery will be required to make the change. Please note this is an estimate.
* Interior Repairs and Improvements - $565,000. This investment in Darden Hall would include new ceilings, flooring, lights, and paint in the corridors of both floors as well as complete renovations of the restrooms. This is an in-house estimate based on a 2021 request and has been increased to reflect current market conditions.

**SECTION F: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT**

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| **F1. Provide a link to any report your institution has produced about its economic development contributions. You may also share it in the appendix or as an attachment.** |

* Information about UVA Wise’s economic development efforts are highlighted in Appendix A.

**SECTION G: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INQUIRY, FREE SPEECH, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT**

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| **G1. Provide a copy of any policy or reports your institution has produced and provide information about annual training or orientation related to this topic.** |

<https://www.uvawise.edu/about/our-history-mission/free-speech-policy>

<https://www.uvawise.edu/human-resources/harassment-and-discrimination>

Examples of campus leaders modeling free expression, viewpoint diversity and inclusion.

* Student Expedition, which is the College’s extended orientation, held on August 14, 2022. All incoming students partook in a session titled “Being Wise” where a community of respect, civility, free expression, personal safety, diversity and other topics were processed.
* Fall Employee Forum on August 11, 2022, included over 250 faculty and staff. Employees were all reminded of the centrality around the College’s academic mission where we must cultivate an environment that protects the open exchange of ideas and the freedom of individual expression.
* Campus-wide email to all employees on September 7, 2022. E-mail contained training information, proper use of Commonwealth technology, and the College’s non-discrimination statement, which encouraged all to be mindful of respect and civility within our community.
* The Chancellor and Senior Leadership all actively attend student and/or employee meetings and/or events that represent a variety of diverse viewpoints to support the value in active thinking.

Also, Senior Leadership Team adopted a policy in fall 2020 to ensure freedom of speech within college facilities or property.

**SECTION H: NEW SCHOOLS, SITES, AND MERGERS**

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| **H1. Provide information on any new instructional sites, schools, or mergers supported by all types of funding that your institution is considering or planning to undertake during the six-year period.** |

**The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center.** UVA Wise is currently planning to enhance our work at the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (SWHEC) located in Abingdon, Virginia, where we have been an anchor institution since establishment in 1991. UVA Wise maintains a presence at the facility and offers professional development programs, non-credit workshops that utilize the space in the facility. Some upcoming evolutions at this facility include:

* UVA Wise is in the process of evaluating program expansions that leverage the strategic location of the SWHEC and seek approval from accrediting organizations to reintroduce degree programs back into that facility.
* We are also exploring how we might offer the last two years of select bachelor’s degree programs at the Center. In particular, we believe that the second two years of our business degree, particularly as we develop a track that focuses on hospitality and tourism management, would be well received in Abingdon given its proximity to internship sites.
* Further collaboration with community colleges has previously been stated in this planning document to assist students and professionals in completing their bachelor’s degrees. One program that has sparked some interest from Virginia Highlands Community College is our RN-BSN program, which we currently offer fully online. Students at Virginia Highlands would like to have the opportunity to complete the program in person at the Higher Education Center.

**Budgetary Considerations for The Center.** For any of these programs to be viable, funding would be required to hire faculty who are based in Abingdon. For the nursing program, we would partner with the Higher Education Center to ensure that we have sufficient simulation labs and other equipment necessary to meet educational goals of the program. Currently, we believe that David Matlock at the Higher Education Center has this funding available, but we would need to solidify the plans before we offered the program. Another expense of offering programs at the Higher Education Center is a program coordinator and administrator who would be based at the Higher Education Center.

**Partnerships with K-12 Schools.** Besides the Higher Education Center, the College is developing partnerships with school districts to offer education degree completion programs both onsite within districts and online. Buchanan County is the first district for which such a program is being developed. The costs are nominal for these programs, mostly support for adjuncts and some programming.

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION I: RESEARCH**

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| **I1. [OPTIONAL] Highlight any strategic research priorities, programs, or key areas of investment (e.g., hiring plans, critical research agendas, interdisciplinary centers, business partnerships, commercialization efforts) and IP dissemination and commercialization priorities you intend to pursue over the next 6 years that have not already been mentioned in this narrative. What are the anticipated benefits to your faculty attraction/retention strategy, student value proposition, and the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth?** |

After years of serving as an economic engine in Southwest Virginia, UVA Wise is now poised to be an intellectual leader that further contributes to the community through research. A focus on resiliency as well as public and population health initiatives is essential to addressing widespread health issues (e.g., addiction, cancer, diabetes, and lung disease) associated with an aging population resulting from a declining economy spurred by a downturn in the coal industry. UVA Wise is uniquely positioned to implement innovative ideas to bring growth and prosperity to the region through increasing research capacity, which will bring new technologies, medical interventions, and financial investments to Southwest Virginia. In collaboration with the University of Virginia through the Grand Challenges initiative, UVA Wise will focus on research in the following areas:

**Applied Neuroscience** — Brain disorders are now the leading cause of disability and death in the United States, and the community in Southwest Virginia bears a disproportionate burden of addiction and dementia diagnoses. This research focus will collaborate with the Brain Institute and the Program in Fundamental Neuroscience at the University of Virginia to bring together undergraduate students and faculty from UVA Wise; social, clinical scientists, and biostatisticians; faculty, post-doctoral fellows, and graduate students associated with UVA graduate programs; and clinical partners across the region.

**Resiliency and Sustainable Solutions** ­— This research focus will find its footing in the unique biodiversity of Southwest Virginia with a focus on bringing scientists, policymakers, and practitioners to the region to deepen knowledge of how a coal-based economy can move toward clean energy solutions (i.e., nuclear, solar, etc.) and best practices for responding to climate-driven challenges. The Environmental Resilience Institute at UVA, research scientists recruited to the Center, post-doctoral fellows and graduate students associated with UVA graduate programs, undergraduate students and faculty from UVA Wise, and community partners across the region will collaborate in the research endeavors, bringing scientists and stakeholders together to develop solutions to regional environmental challenges and increased energy demands.

Presently, UVA Wise attracts $10 million in research funding annually. This is without a research director and staff to help facilitate research activities and attract new federal dollars to support the increase in research at the College. To further support this work, the College is seeking funding to hire a director and support staff that would assist in this planning. The College’s Healthy Appalachia Institute (HAI), the only public health institution in Southwest Virginia will lead the population health work. Currently, HAI is providing support to the Health Authority in developing the region’s healthcare blueprint. This strategic plan will identify new programs and activities needed to improve the region’s health metrics. Poor health metrics have a negative impact on economic development efforts since employers need an educated and healthy workforce. Prospective employers often eliminate SWVA from potential sites due to poor health metrics and demographic profile (i.e. population trends, median age, workforce participation rates, etc.). Addressing population health issues is inextricably linked to economic diversification and revitalization, and UVA Wise is positioned to help lead the region in addressing these issues.

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION J: COLLABORATION**

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| **J1. [OPTIONAL] Outline any existing or potential initiatives you have not already highlighted in this narrative that feature collaboration across public higher education institutions (and other state agencies as appropriate) in furthering the goals outlined in sections B-D. What is the expected impact and in what timeframe? What is the timeline for the initiative and how far along is it? What (if anything) would be required from a budget or policy perspective to facilitate the success of the initiative?** |

UVA Wise has a long-standing tradition of building strong relationships. Below are the College’s established partnerships, which we continue to utilize to achieve results that no one organization can achieve on its own.

University of Virginia

* Shared Services – Office of Sponsored Programs, Architects, Legal Counsel, Risk Management, Audit, Construction Management
* Shared Systems – Financial Management, Budget, Human Resources Management, Advancement
* UVA Support – helped establish the Office of Marketing and Communications, leveraged Bicentennial Scholars Program for student scholarships; endowment co-invested with UVIMCO
* Leveraging of procurements and buying power of the University as well as the Virginia Association of State College and University Purchasing Professionals (VASCUPP) to realize cost savings.
* Leveraging of expertise of faculty and research capacity
* Shared programs and courses
* UVA Physician’s Group management of UVA Wise Student & Employee Health Clinic

Virginia Higher Education Procurement Consortium (VHEPC)

* Leverage collective buying power of consortium
* Negotiated rebates from suppliers

Mountain Empire Community College

* Academic Articulation Agreement for Software Engineering

SCHEV

* UVA Wise has been awarded numerous grants from SCHEV over the past three years that have focused on increasing our capacity to expand internships. These include the Wise and Ready initiative which provided professional development to individuals in all academic departments, equipping them to facilitate meaningful internships for their students. The Grow Wise effort works to transition federal work-study positions into internships. This particular initiative impacts nearly all areas across campus. Most recently, UVA Wise has been designated as the regional coordinator for VTOP and also awarded funding from SCHEV to engage middle school students in order to introduce them to UVA Wise and higher education in general, increasing their awareness of educational opportunities in the region.

Southwest Virginia Community College

* Academic Articulation Agreement for Exercise Science

Virginia Highlands Community College

* Academic Articulation Agreements in Computer Science, Education, and Exercise Science

Radford University

* Affiliation Agreement for Medical Laboratory Science Program

Additional Commonwealth Offices and Agencies

*It is common for the College to collaborate regularly with other Commonwealth offices and agencies outside of higher education. Some of those partnerships include:*

* Virginia Department of Energy: includes a 25-year internship agreement for students in computer science, software engineering and business-related fields.
* Virginia Tourism Corporation: Co-created Opportunity SWVA, a network of entrepreneurial support organizations in 2012 to implement the regional entrepreneurship blueprint. The network continues today and has been designated by GO VA as the ecosystem coordinating entity which UVA Wise leads.
* Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development: Co-created Opportunity SWVA, a network of entrepreneurial support organizations in 2012 to implement the regional entrepreneurship blueprint. Designed and launched Rally SWVA, a leadership capacity program which has impacted 28 communities across the four westernmost planning districts in the Commonwealth. Also, we work with DHCD in serving as the support organization for GO Virginia Region One Council. Other state agency members of Opportunity SWVA include Friends of SWVA (a division of DHCD), and three Small Business Development Centers.

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION K: STATE POLICY**

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| **K1. [OPTIONAL] Use this section to outline any state policy changes you have not already mentioned in this narrative that would enhance your ability to achieve greater success on the topics, strategies, and initiatives referenced in this narrative. What existing policies, if any, are hindering your ability to maximize outcomes and value for students? What new policies might create conditions that are more conducive to achieving those goals? What strategies or initiatives would these policy changes enable your institution to do or try that you are not yet able to do today? Please be as specific as possible.** |

UVA Wise is requesting a permanent reprieve from the recovery of indirect costs from auxiliary operations to educational and general programs. This action would allow the College to steady auxiliary operations at a time when revenues are down and expenditures are increasing, and secure vital student services and rebuild the financial foundation of the College’s auxiliaries through the growth forecast of the College.

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION L: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

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| **L1. [OPTIONAL] Use this final section to provide any additional context and/or supporting materials you feel should be incorporated into the six-year planning process.** |

**Appendix A: Economic Development Annual Report *[as referenced in F1]***

**Six-Year Plan Economic Development Report July 2023**

UVA Wise is the only public four-year higher education institution in the coalfield region of Virginia. As a primary economic engine for the region, the College works diligently toward the mission of ‘Creating Opportunity Through Community’ by building upon the strength of bringing people together to identify challenges and unique opportunities. According to the most recent economic impact study, UVA Wise contributed $64.5 million in direct, indirect, and induced economic impact to the southwest region of Virginia and $85 million to the state. An update to this study is underway.

The College’s student population is largely first-generation, rural students, for whom we offer access and affordability. The 2022 *U.S. News & World Report* rankings listed UVA Wise as eighth in the nation for promoting social mobility—47 percent of students are Pell eligible, while 54 percent of the Pell eligible students have zero expected family contribution toward college. Through a 2019 legislative measure, the College offers students in any of the 420 counties in 13 states that fall in the Appalachian Regional Commission region near in-state tuition. The College also works collaboratively with community colleges to strengthen the pathways to bachelor’s degree attainment. The opportunity for social mobility is one of the College’s greatest long-term impacts on the students that UVA Wise serves.

At the core of our efforts is creating economic prosperity through community engagement and mutually beneficial partnerships and leveraging the College’s assets to strengthen the region. Our 2030 strategic plan, [Your College for a Lifetime,](https://strategicplan.uvawise.edu/StrategicPlan-20211201.pdf) outlines ways to enhance our public service and community involvement by developing an atmosphere of mutual respect and making the community’s agenda the institution’s agenda.

UVA Wise builds community and improves the quality of life for all of Southwest Virginia by:

* Producing the talent needed to fuel the economy, ensuring that employers have the skilled workforce they need to grow.
* Connecting the wealth of resources available at UVA Wise and UVA Charlottesville to opportunities in Southwest Virginia.
* Serving as a neutral facilitator and unbiased convener to develop strategic blueprints and catalyze regional efforts.
* Linking the community to faculty, staff, and students through strategic partnerships.
* Strengthening the quality of K-12 education in Southwest Virginia in partnership with local schools.
* Serving as a source of professional and leadership development.
* Supporting the economic development community (local governments, chambers of commerce, IDAs/EDAs, etc.).
* Playing an integral role in improving regional healthcare access and quality.
* Leading the way in environmental stewardship.

Across the campus and among our stakeholders, there is an understanding of the need for collaboration and collective action in reaching these shared objectives. Across the region and around the Commonwealth, UVA Wise is seen as an anchor institution playing a key role in coordinating regional efforts. UVA Wise serves as the support organization for the GO Virginia Region One Council, the entrepreneurship coordinator for the region and most recently, the coordinator for the VTOP program. By way of our strategic initiatives and partnerships to address the region’s needs, the College’s economic engagement efforts fall into the following categories: Community Development and Entrepreneurship; Professional and Career Development; and Health and Prosperity.

**Community Development and Entrepreneurship**

Since 2017, UVA Wise has served as the coordinating entity for the GO Virginia Region One program. GO Virginia is an initiative that fosters private-sector growth and job creation through state incentives for regional collaboration by business, education, and government. Much of Region One has been dependent upon natural resources, such as coal, timber, and natural gas, as its economic base for many generations, enjoying economic growth during boom times but enduring extreme economic difficulties during primary industry contractions. Echoing one of the forces behind the formation of GO Virginia, the economic leaders of the region have identified the volatility of relying upon a single source economy, regardless of industry, and are embracing the creation of a varied and robust economic base. Since the program’s start, the College has established three Growth & Development Plans for the 13-county, three-city region and facilitated 34 grant projects with over $8.5M in GO Virginia investment.

Together with GO Virginia Region One, UVA Wise annually presents the SWVA Economic Forum, one of the College’s most extensive engagement initiatives. Since the inaugural event in 2016, the Forum has become a central gathering place for the region to discuss new ideas and synergies related to various economic themes. Speakers from within and outside our local communities gather to present on how to move the region forward. Various community partners have sponsored the event throughout the years, including Ballad Health, the *Business Journal of Tri-Cities Tennessee/Virginia*, *Virginia Business* Magazine, Virginia Tourism Corporation, Appalachian Power, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development, among others. In collaboration with these partners, the regional planning committee selects various speakers and themes that focus on critical topics in economic development, including innovation and entrepreneurship, housing, childcare, energy, transportation, talent, and workforce development. Held each May, the event attracts an average of 350 participants annually.

The College also partners with regional sponsors to present CreatorCon, an educational conference for entrepreneurs and creators to network, share ideas, and take away actionable items to grow.

Additionally, UVA Wise coordinates Opportunity SWVA, a network of community development and small business support organizations working together to encourage business development in rural communities throughout the region and serves as a partner in the multistate Opportunity Appalachia program. In June 2022, Opportunity Appalachia, supported by the Appalachian Regional Commission, announced the funding of 34 projects to bring jobs, business support, and investment to Central Appalachia. The selected projects propose to create over 1,700 jobs and attract over $177 million in financing to develop manufacturing facilities; downtowns; community centers; health, wellness, and childcare centers; food and agricultural facilities; hotels; and retail enterprises in downtown and rural areas across Central Appalachia. A second round of funding solicitations is now underway, with 41 projects selected for funding, nine of which are in Virginia.

A strategy of the Opportunity SWVA initiative, Rally SWVA is an action learning mini-grant program that engages community leaders in working together to make their community a better place for small businesses. RALLY stands for “Real Action Leadership LearningYay,” andis building community leadership capacity and reinforcing collaborative, entrepreneurial communities across the region. The program provides the community with a $3,000 grant for a project that advances the community vision and supports business development. The Rally SWVA process provides positive coaching, leadership development activities, and facilitated discussions that emphasize goal setting based on a shared vision, consensus building, outcome measurement, and moving from talk to action. Within a few months, community members achieve something together toward their shared revitalization goals and then celebrate it. Over $86k in 26 communities has been distributed through Rally.

The College recognizes that entrepreneurship is a critical component of a regional economic growth plan. UVA Wise has hired an ecosystem builder to lead a regional innovation program, cultivate strategic partnerships through community outreach, and raise awareness of entrepreneurial activities throughout Southwest Virginia. As part of Opportunity SWVA, the ecosystem builder will foster critical relationships to create and sustain a healthy, effective, and robust entrepreneurial ecosystem. Acting as a coordinating hub and catalyst for the region’s entrepreneurial resources, Opportunity SWVA, through the work of the ecosystem builder, will deliver value-added, stage-specific educational programs to entrepreneurs and scalable early-stage companies across Southwest Virginia.

As a result, an accelerator program is now underway out of the UVA Wise Oxbow Center in St. Paul. Partnering with GO Virginia and Opportunity SWVA, UVA Wise established Hatch Accelerator to remove barriers to growth for entrepreneurs in the region through the CO.STARTERS Core Program. Drawing from the experience of successful entrepreneurs and startup veterans from around the globe, CO.STARTERS Core walks creative small business owners through lean, effective business modeling methods in a simple and intuitive way and with the help of a supportive community. Rather than treating a startup like a large corporation and writing a detailed business plan, CO.STARTERS participants are encouraged to build and test small models first. In the process, participants learn from seasoned entrepreneurs and can receive real-time customer feedback, update their models to meet customer needs, and avoid creating businesses based on incorrect assumptions. The program convened its first cohort in August 2022, and another begins in September 2023.

UVA Wise and Opportunity SWVA also provided support to regional entrepreneurs to compete in The GAUNTLET Business Program and Competition powered by The Advancement Foundation. The competition provided an opportunity for entrepreneurs to compete for $300,000 in cash and prizes, as well as receive access to statewide resources, including business training, mentorship opportunities, scaling strategies, and entrepreneurial ecosystem building. After 10 weeks of classes, 45 businesses across the Commonwealth submitted business plans for the competition, with pitches and awards in May.

Lastly, to ensure that economic growth is both sustainable and environmentally conscious, UVA Wise and The Nature Conservancy have partnered to invest resources into community partners through the Cumberland Forest Community Fund—a grant open to nature-based economic and community development projects that make tangible contributions toward local economies, community capacity, and environmental quality. The first round of projects was awarded $100,000 in July 2021; the second round of projects is expected to receive $140,000 in July 2023.

In order to evaluate the College’s economic engagement and impact and reinforce our commitment to the revitalization of the region’s communities, UVA Wise submitted an application in May 2023 for the Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) and the University Economic Developers Association (UEDA) Innovation and Economic Prosperity Designation (IEP). There are less than 100 designated institutions across the nation and only two in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The IEP designation program helps higher education institutions better know, measure, tell, and enhance their economic and community development impact while recognizing institutions that have demonstrated a substantive, sustainable, and institution-wide commitment to and strategy for regional economic engagement, growth, and economic opportunity.

Institutions complete a rigorous self-assessment, engaging on-campus and off-campus stakeholders, to identify the strengths of the institution’s economic engagement enterprise and, importantly, areas for growth and improvement—all while sharing and learning from an international community of practice comprised of peers. A decision by APLU is expected in late July 2023.

Full application: <https://uvawise.box.com/s/xg4gx3wh87pccw895n5hsl17ci9l6bbs>

**Professional and Career Development**

The UVA Wise Office of Career Discovery and Planning provides students with a continuum of career-related activities and workplace learning experiences to support exploration and specialized education. Working with industry partners, UVA Wise offers internships and micro-internships, helping students make connections and gain valuable job skills while addressing the employment needs of regional businesses.

In spring 2023, Wise Works ushered the VTOP. The $250,000 grant funded by SCHEV aims to address Southwest Virginia’s estimated loss of 11,584 jobs, equivalent to 8.5% of the regional workforce, at the height of the pandemic in the first quarter of 2020. Grant funds will be used to target priority industry clusters, improve student and employer readiness, and facilitate and strengthen connections between students and employers. VTOP aims to bolster the economy, reduce population decline and workforce brain drain, and educate and prepare students to work and thrive in Southwest Virginia.

An additional $25,000 from SCHEV was awarded in May to plan the transformation of federal work-study jobs to internships. The grant was proposed as GROW Wise, which was inspired on the model, Iowa GROW®, and expands on work begun in 2021 with campus and community partners. With great consideration of the campus culture, GROW Wise will deliver the best path forward for professional development, supervisor training, and evaluation.

**Health and Prosperity**

The College’s goal to transform rural community health includes ongoing health partnerships and planning, designing, and implementing innovative models of health education, workforce development, and healthcare delivery through the Healthy Appalachia Institute (HAI).

In early 2023, HAI welcomed a new director who has spearheaded similar community public health and research initiatives across the U.S. and will begin working with a host of community partners to develop a new strategic plan and the third iteration of the SWVA Health Authority’s regional Blueprint for Health aimed at improving health for all central Appalachians. Additionally, the director will lead HAI’s research portfolio; identify, develop, and implement population health programs in collaboration with regional community, business, health, and education partners; and teach public health courses at the College.