Public Service Programs at Virginia Tech

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article continues the series about the public service/outreach services provided to various constituencies in the commonwealth by Virginia’s universities.

In 1896, Virginia Tech adopted the motto Ut Prosim (“That I may serve”). One way the university fulfills its commitment to service is by offering programs and services through Public Service Programs (PSP), a unit of University Outreach.

PSP’s program initiatives include tourism and technology, international trade development, technology assistance, domestic economic development, community preparedness, and the Economic Development Assistance Center. The primary goal of PSP is to link communities, government agencies, and businesses throughout the commonwealth and the world with each other and with Tech’s expertise in order to support and stimulate Virginia’s economy.

PSP provides lifelong learning opportunities for economic development professionals; uses university expertise to solve commercial and technical challenges; and facilitates partnerships among community, business, and government groups.

Since 1993, the Tourism and Technology program has provided support to the tourism industry for initiatives such as product development, marketing, organization, planning, and the integration of new technology applications. The Virginia Travel and Tourism Institute, jointly developed and managed by the Virginia Tourism Corporation and PSP, offers a core curriculum and one-day seminars on industry best practices. A primary goal is to maintain knowledge of the tourism industry and a relationship with state, regional, and community tourism programs and tourism-relevant businesses. Community assistance is provided with an emphasis on support to existing and developing programs. For information: 540/231-4375.

Educational and research programs under the International Trade Development initiative enhance Virginia’s productivity and global competitiveness. Programs include ISO 9000 quality assurance seminars; export assistance offered in conjunction with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership and the U.S. Department of Commerce, and the annual World Trade Institute, which equips community leaders with an understanding of international trade in terms of its impact on communities and its potential for stimulating domestic growth. For information: 540/231-8324.

The Technology Assistance program provides technical assistance to the commonwealth’s state and local agencies and businesses, serves as an information resource on topics at the crossroads of technology and economic development, and provides education for emerging business communities on topics such as website development, administration, and marketing. The program also ensures that all other PSP programs remain current on leading-edge tools and trends that can be passed on to businesses and communities. For information: 540/231-5633.

The Domestic Economic Development program is responsible for the annual Virginia Institute for Economic Development, now in its 17th year, and the development and delivery of seminars on marketing, finance, and site location. The institute and the seminars provide education and networking opportunities for those involved in economic development statewide and are cosponsored by the Virginia Department of Business Assistance and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership in addition to private businesses supportive of economic development. Under this program, PSP also publishes the annual Economic and Governmental Assistance Catalog and promotes awareness of certification and continuing education opportunities for economic developers in conjunction with the American Economic Development Association. For information: 540/231-6638.

As localities accelerate their marketing efforts to attract businesses seeking relocation sites, community leaders can gain the tools they need to remain competitive from the Community Preparedness Program. This program educates leaders across the commonwealth in developing, implementing, and managing economic development activities. Emphasis is placed on communities’ self-readying activities prior to marketing their locales. An economic development specialist teaches community representatives how to collect and analyze the appropriate data, determine economic development goals, implement planning, and market shell buildings and sites in the most effective manner. For information: 540/231-6721.

The Economic Development Assistance Center (EDAC) gives community leaders the tools they need to prudently manage economic change and enhance constituents’ quality of life by improving local, regional, state, and national economic development initiatives. Services include technical assistance and access to information, education, and applied research on topics such as economic development incentives, retail business development, business incubator feasibility, industrial targeting, and business retention and expansion. With the United States Economic Development Administration, EDAC also cosponsors the Virginia Industrial Development Authority Institute, which trains developers and administrators in targeting, recruiting, and retaining industrial residents. For information: 540/231-3391.

For general information, please call Public Service Programs at 540/231-6913 or visit its website at http://www.public.service.vt.edu.

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