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The Development of a Higher Education Consortium: A Case Study of The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center

A dissertation presented to the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Doctor in Education

by Susan Carey Fulmer May 2002

Dr. Russell West, Chair Dr. Nancy Dishner Dr. Terrence Tollefson Dr. Ronald Green

Keywords: Consortium, Higher Education, Case Study, Extended Campuses, Off-Campus Instruction, Distance Education, Adult Learners
ABSTRACT

The Development of a Higher Education Consortium:  
A Case Study of The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center

by

Susan Carey Fulmer

The purpose of this study was to describe the creation and development of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) in Abingdon, Virginia as an example of a higher education consortium. Case study methodology was used to determine why and how the SVHEC was established, who was involved, and how well it served adult students and the community.

Data were collected through interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis. The methodology included identifying key players, designing an interview protocol, and conducting interviews with academic and political figures who had played key roles in the SVHEC’s development. Abingdon community representatives were interviewed, as were present and former college and university presidents representing partner institutions in the consortium. Data were also obtained through observations gained from multiple visits to the Center, formal and informal interviews of employees of the Center and its partners, and participation in meetings. Internal and external documents were also analyzed. The cumulative data record enabled me to reconstruct the process through which the center was created and developed.

I found the SVHEC to be a grassroots effort, born of community need, and championed by a local educational administrator and a legislator from a neighboring community. Besides providing educational opportunity to an underserved population, the Center has promoted economic development, and enhanced outsiders’ perceptions while heightening local appreciation of the community. Recognized as successful by all types of stakeholders, the consortium reportedly serves its students well; is sensitive to the needs of adult learners and businesses; boasts strong leadership and legislative support; is customer-oriented, professionally operated, and community enhancing.

Uniquely designated as a state agency, the Center illustrates an effective partnership among universities, legislators, and communities and demonstrates the productive use of state funding in promoting goals of education and economic development. This study may provide a model for communities and higher educational institutions seeking solutions to their needs. In this time of a precarious national economy, mirrored by continuously dwindling state funding for higher education, examples of creative, cost-effective educational structures are needed. The SVHEC is one such model.
I wish to dedicate this dissertation

to my husband Dr. R. Stephen Fulmer,
   the wind beneath my wings, for his constant love,
   support, and understanding;

to my children, Cameron Scott Bell and Hillary Lauren Bell Hawkins,
   for their encouragement and belief in their mother;

to my grandson, Jackson Scott Bell, who was born while this was a work in progress;

to my sisters, Barbara Carey Hayes and Eleanor Carey Kroeger,
   for a lifetime of nurturing and caring;

and in fond memory of my late parents, Frank and Anna Carey, for
   fostering in me a love of lifelong learning, perseverance towards a
   goal, and belief in myself

All of you share with me in this accomplishment.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

America’s universities are at a critical juncture. At this nexus are difficult changes, including punishing competition for student enrollments, diminished political and tax dollar support, more mature and discriminating educational consumers who expect tangible returns in response to rising educational costs, and new and costly investments in technology that could expand access to learning and knowledge. All of these add up to a pressing need to remodel higher education infrastructure. This requires visionary planning, policy development, and action. If institutions of higher learning are to remain valued by those they are meant to serve into the long-term future, those in the academy must chart a new and necessary structural evolution. Failing such a timely evolution, the university, as we know it, will become largely irrelevant to our society. (Hall & Shiffman, 1996, p. 4)

As universities compete for the financial support needed for their existence, they must constantly access new ways of recruiting, marketing, and retaining students. Because funding is often based on full-time equivalency (FTE), university administrators spend a great deal of time and money ascertaining new ways to locate students, persuading them to attend, encouraging them to take as many credits as possible, and supporting them with services that would induce them to remain at the university as long as possible, preferably until graduation. As the number of adult learners continues to increase, this audience is being targeted most often, and the particular needs of this age group of students are being addressed.

With changing lifestyles and businesses restructuring, students are returning to college throughout their lives to retrain, gain advanced degrees, or simply enrich their lives. Adult students 25 and older are gaining in numbers over traditional 18-24-year-old students, and the population of part-time working students is growing. Because these contemporary students’ educational needs no longer relate to those established decades ago for traditional students in residential campus settings, college and university administrators look to different facilities, different delivery methods, and different organizational structures to attract and retain students.
Distance learning has been one important strategy used by universities to address this need for lifelong learning among the growing number of adult students. Through the development of expanded campus sites, institutions are providing classes and services beyond traditional university walls, thus providing many people with the ability to acquire degrees who would otherwise be denied access. Because many potential adult students live too far from a main college campus to make attending college feasible, some method of distance education should be provided. Whether through videotapes viewed at home, classes broadcast over television, Internet classes accessed from home, offices, or branch campuses, or on-site classes provided at extended-campus centers, new instructional delivery options are helping colleges to better serve their changing student populations.

Distance education programs have allowed people to acquire degrees from colleges and universities located great distances away. This concept, deriving its origin from the correspondence schools, has expanded to provide students opportunities to earn degrees from prestigious colleges throughout the world. Local, state, and even international boundaries are being dissolved with the development of on-line instruction via the Internet.

The increased opportunities that distance education offers will likely result in greater collaboration (Moore & Kearsley, 1996). In order to be competitive, colleges will be forced to form consortia and cooperate, according to Moore and Kearley. “The pooled resources and economies of scale produced by collaboration will give each member of a consortium a competitive edge over institutions that act alone” (p.240).

Because there are many methods available to increase outreach to students beyond the immediate campus, the organizational structure of a college or university outreach program may be based on its mission and goals. As Brooks, Conrad, and Griffith (1980) noted, “Ideally, educational facilities should be exciting, creative, inviting places” (p. 222). Because “human beings are both consciously and subconsciously affected by their environments” (Gwyne, 1976, pp. 1-2), the structure “should be planned, designed, operationalized and continuously modified
to effectively serve the defined human and educational needs of our rapidly changing world” (Leu, 1974, p. 1).

In order to provide students in remote geographic areas with adequate choices of educational opportunities, many universities band together to share resources and provide economies of scale, simultaneously meeting the community demand while increasing their own enrollments. “Partnerships often begin in self-interest, grow as a result of shared values, and flourish in service to all participants through cost-savings, expanded services, and a mutual concern for the improvement of learning in America” (Gross, 1988, p. 2-3).

Depending upon the missions and goals of participating universities, the consortium may provide the best choice to meet the educational needs of distant students. Although a variety of types of consortia exists, from partnerships among businesses and educational facilities to distance-education providers shared by several organizations, this dissertation will confine itself to higher education consortia. It will briefly examine a few existing ones, then focus on a specific consortium in Southwest Virginia (the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center [SVHEC]) for in-depth examination and case study.

In this dissertation I will explore the reasons why this consortium was formed and why it was located in Abingdon, VA, a small, historic town in Southwest Virginia’s Appalachian Mountain region. The possible connection between higher education facilities and economic development will also be explored.

Because the stated dual mission of the SVHEC is to provide higher educational opportunities to the citizens of Southwest Virginia and to improve economic development in the region, it demonstrates a theory presented by Radford College of Business and Economics Dean Blaylock. A member of the Virginia Economic Bridge Initiative Board of Directors, Blaylock stated in an article on the VEBI: “One key factor in economic development that has shown up over and over again in the research is the availability of universities. As the Economic Bridge
tries to bring economic development to Southwest Virginia, it’s important to have access to the resources in higher education”  (as cited in Doss, 1996, p. 2).

Statement of the Problem and Significance of the Study

As colleges and universities wrestle with increasing demands to increase enrollment while revenue decreases, officials must determine the most effective way to serve students outside the traditional main-campus setting. Consideration must be given for the mission and goals of the institution, specifically with respect to its outreach component, in order to determine the best choice for a particular higher education institution.

The organizational structure of a consortium is a possible solution for some colleges. Varied in definition, description, mission, and function, consortia generally mean partnerships among entities that come together to pursue some mutual goals, share resources, and provide services or products to their customers.

The purposes for forming a consortium, and the evolution of it, are perhaps as varied as the institutions they represent; indeed there may be as many different perceived purposes as there are stakeholders in the consortium. The purpose of this research is to examine the origin and evolution of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC). A case study of a particular consortium, the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) in Abingdon, Virginia, may yield insight into the variety of perceived purposes for which it was established.

This study of the interrelationships between the mission of the consortium and that of the partner institutions that comprise it may generate theory about structural organization, mission and goal setting, strategic planning, and vision for future university outreach endeavors. The lessons learned from one organization may provide the foundation for others to come.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The Changing Student Profile in Higher Education

The typical college student of today does not fit old traditional criteria, thus colleges need to change to accommodate current student needs. Twenty years ago adult learners constituted the most rapidly growing segment of American education (Cross, 1980). From 1980 to 1985, enrollments of students under 25 decreased by 5%, while those 25 and older increased by 12% (Digest of Educational Statistics [DES], 1987). Adult learners (defined as being age 25 or older) now at least equal or possibly outnumber the traditional college students. Aslanian (1990) said that for every college student under 25 there is now one over 25, and the percentage increases greatly for students attending classes in facilities away from the main campus. Between 1990 and 1997 students 25 and older increased by 6%, while those under 25 increased by only 2% (DES, 1999). Thus, education facility planners must meet the challenge of the ever growing adult student population by understanding the adult learner, applying what we currently know, exploring what we need to learn about adult learners, and being flexible to meet the diverse needs and interests found in a highly dynamic and changing society (Aslanian, 2001; Bock, 1980; Newton, 1980).

Traditionally, the obstacles that have prevented adult learners from participating in learning have been classified under three headings: “situational, dispositional, and institutional” (Cross, 1981, p. 106). Cross grouped the institutional barriers into five categories: (1) scheduling problems, (2) transportation or location problems, (3) lack of relevant courses, (4) procedural problems, and (5) lack of adequate information (p. 111).

In the 20 years since identification of these categories, many institutions have made significant headway in addressing these barriers; but continued creative methods need to be applied to make education and lifelong learning more accessible to all students, especially to
adults in non-traditional settings. In a 1999 study published by the Adult Higher Education Alliance, several barriers previously identified by Cross, were still found to keep some adults from attending college (Malhotra, Sizoo, & Chorvat, 1999). With more than six million adult students annually enrolling in one or more college courses (Aslanian, 2001; Aslanian & Brickell, 1988), this segment of the population needs to be considered greatly in the structuring of facilities and in the approaches to student outreach in the 21st century.

Even younger students have become less traditional in description, often holding full-time jobs and raising families while attending college. Nearly one half of all college students do not attend school full time, making part-time students the fastest growing group in higher education today (Aslanian, 2001; Halnon, 1990). For years, colleges have recruited students throughout the United States and from foreign countries, often, especially if they were state-supported schools, accepting a large quantity of in-state students. Most of the recruiting resulted in traditional students moving from their homes to the university campus to earn their degrees, or commuting to the main campus if distance permitted. But, as Sir John Daniel, then vice-chancellor of the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU), pointed out, “In the U.S., the group of full-time, living-on-campus students is only a sixth of those registered in higher education” (as cited in McClure, 1998, p. 8).

As it has become more difficult for people to attend universities in a traditional way, the need to facilitate learning to the regional, non-traditional student population has grown more urgent. Determining how to provide a convenient setting with flexible scheduling, diverse programs, and adequate support services, while maintaining high standards of quality, and remaining competitive in a shrinking economic environment, has become the challenge of universities wishing to grow and provide leadership into the next century.
Lifelong Learning Needs

The old model of “lockstep education,” a linear image whereby young people receive education and then go to work, was compared to the “lifelong model” by Birren (1989). Using a medical analogy, he likened the lockstep method to a childhood inoculation that sustains one for a lifetime. He compared the lifelong model to a series of booster shots, administered throughout life to maintain a “safety zone” of knowledge necessary to thrive in an increasingly demanding world (Feldman, 1990, p. 18).

Businesses’ need for employees to periodically reinvent themselves to meet changing knowledge and skill requirements illustrates the necessity for lifelong learning. As the president and CEO of Motorola stated, “Motorola no longer wants to hire engineers with a four year degree. Instead we want our employees to have a 40 year degree” (Meister, 1998, p. 181). The need was echoed by Richard Soderberg of the National Technological University when he stated, “People mistakenly think that once they’ve graduated from college they are good for the next decade--when in fact they are really good for the next ten seconds” (Meister, p. 212).

Higher Education’s Response to Lifelong Learning Needs

Extended Campus Centers

How can the academic community address the needs of lifelong learners, particularly in geographic areas that lack institutions of higher education? Opening new extended-campus university sites can be risky and difficult to manage. While extended-campus sites have common goals of serving additional students, and thus adding funding to universities, their individual missions, scopes, and structures are extremely varied. Lack of sufficient funding, lack of faculty who are willing to teach off campus, competition from other colleges, lack of community acceptance, vague or undefined missions, and criticism from within the university itself, are common difficulties faced by centers removed from the main campuses.
According to Meister (1998), “Just as the American healthcare system has moved from an inefficiently managed cottage industry dominated by the public sector to a market-driven system, the American education system must now transform itself to meet consumer demands for convenient and high quality on-demand education” (p. 208).

A 1995 report produced by Johns Hopkins University for the National University Continuing Education Association (NUCEA) provided the first in-depth study of extended-campus centers. Some positive growth factors were cited:

Whether for career advancement or personal enrichment, programs are moving off-campus to facilities and sites that have become extensions…of universities. This trend is not only growing, but is becoming central to the mission of outreach through the universities’ continuing education divisions. (Gabor & Heggan, 1995, p. 1)

The study stated that centers were expanding their original mission of taking “traditional courses to convenient locations” and were “designing and providing special programs to meet an area’s specific needs.” Thus, universities, through their extended-campus centers, have become “more responsive to local, county, and regional economic development and cultural interests” (Gabor & Heggan, 1995, p. 1).

As predicted three decades ago, the demonstrated need for lifelong learning has resulted in the expansion of course offerings “to accommodate an increasing demand for external degrees, individual off-campus study, correspondence study programs, and other modes of reaching the varied interests” (Hesburgh, Miller, & Wharton, 1973, p. 8). Methods of course delivery today seem as varied as the institutions that offer classes. A broad umbrella term that encompasses these multiple-delivery modes is “distance education.”

**Distance Education**

Distance education, a term coined by British adult educator Brian Jackson, according to Otto Peters, who used it at the 1969 conference of the International Council for Correspondence
Education, generally means educating students from a distance rather than face to face in a traditional manner on a university campus. The term is a translation of the German “fernunterricht,” the French “tele-enseignement,” and the Spanish “educacion a distancia” (as cited in Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 24).

Distance education actually began in the 1880s in Europe, with correspondence courses, and was introduced to the U.S. by educators such as Richard Moulton, who left Cambridge to join William Rainey Harper at the University of Chicago. In 1892, Harper, then president of the University of Chicago, established the first university distance education program through correspondence (p. 22).

Since then, the applications of distance education have expanded to include a variety of delivery methods such as synchronous television courses, asynchronous (not live) video checkout courses, audio-conferencing, teleconferencing, and Internet courses via computer.

With the passage of the 1998 Amendments to the Higher Education Act, a new definition has been coined, calling distance education a “process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student” (U.S. Dept of Ed. NCES). Experimentation and new theory development in the 1960s and early 1970s led to the University of Wisconsin’s AIM Project and the British Open University. Funded by the Carnegie Corporation from 1964 to 1968, the Articulated Instructional Media Project (AIM), directed by Charles Wedemeyer of the University of Wisconsin, tried to find ways of articulating (joining) various communications media for teaching off-campus students. Lessons learned from this led to the 1969 establishment of the British Open University, a “fully autonomous degree-granting institution” which was, at the time, the “best example of a total systems approach to distance education” (Moore & Kearsley, 1996, p. 27).
Virtual Universities

The development of Internet on-line courses has created another way of reaching learners. It is a new variety of distance education--the virtual college, or college without walls. No longer simply a means of delivery, “virtual” colleges and universities are “structures” (in cyberspace) of their own.

Over 30 years old, the British Open University, a pioneer in distance education, now called the United Kingdom Open University (UKOU), applied for American accreditation and by 1998 had entered into partnerships with universities such as Florida State (Arenson, 1998). In January of 2000, Sir John Daniel, chancellor of UKOU, signed an agreement with Athabasca University to offer joint course delivery in the United States. A branch of UKOU, established in the U.S. in 1999, is USOU (Athabasca University site, www.athabascau.ca/reports/usou.htm). An expansion of delivery methods is increasing the ways that universities can provide students with an education by allowing more and more people the opportunity to earn college degrees.

Western Governors University (WGS), a virtual university, was founded in 1998 “to improve access to college education for adults” and to accommodate an increasing number of students “without building [more] classrooms” (Arenson, 1998, p. A1). It was originally sponsored by 17 states and Guam with the intention of offering liberal arts and applied science competency-based, skill-related degrees to a largely rural constituency in the Western United States. Today, 19 states sponsor the endeavor offering courses from over 40 colleges, universities, and corporations. Accredited in 2001 by the Accrediting Commission of the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC), WGU claims to be “a virtual university for real-world results.” Actually a collaboration among states, higher education institutions, and corporations, WGS serves as a broker, gathering distance education offerings from a variety of sources and packaging them for students. (www.wgu.edu/wgu).

The University of Phoenix, a private, for-profit institution founded in 1976 “to provide quality education to working adult students,” claims to be the nation’s largest private, accredited
university, with over 95,000 degree-seeking students enrolled on-line at over 105 campuses in the U.S., Puerto Rico, and Canada (www.phoenix.edu).

The California Virtual University (CVU), a consortium of over 100 universities and colleges in California, boasted more than 1,600 on-line courses in 1998 (Arenson, 1998). However, two years later, Green (2000) called both WGU and CVU “notable failures,” writing that one dean had remarked, “The dirty little secret about on-line education is that no one is making money” (p. 33). WGU enrolled only 200 degree-seeking students by January 2000 (Press & Washburn, 2001). Pennsylvania State University offers on-line courses through its “World Campuses” and expects to double its offerings within a year. Last year, (2000), such elite universities as Harvard, Duke, and the University of Pennsylvania formed partnerships with a courseware design company, Pensare, while Stanford, Columbia, and the University of Chicago have partnered with Unext.com. Using a business model, these universities have enabled themselves to “leverage their prestige on the Internet, without diluting the value of their degree” (Green, 2000, p. 33). A committee of the American Association of University Professors concluded in 1997 that on-line courses could be a “valuable pedagogical tool to increase access to higher education” (Arenson, 1998, p. A1), at the same time warning against threatening the traditional academic quality of higher education, academic freedom, and instructor workloads.

In 2000, 75% of two- and four-year colleges offered some form of on-line education, which was estimated to grow to 90% by 2001. By 2004, 100 million Americans are expected to take on-line courses each year. The market is growing from approximately 700,000 students who took on-line courses in 1999 to a projected 2,100,000 by 2003 (Green, 2000, p. 32).

To address the needs of a changing student population, educators and policy makers must take into account adult students, part-time students of all ages, lifelong learning as a fact of life, and rapidly changing societal, technological, and economic conditions. As Governor Leavitt (Utah), one of the co-founders of WGU said, “The transition into the Information Age presents an unparalleled opportunity in the way that we can and ultimately will deliver education” (as
cited in McClure, 1998, p. 2). “The window is wide open,” he said, “for collaboration of private or public…to design and remake the educational delivery system that will reshape the world.” But, then Governor Roy Romer (Colorado), cautioned that he “did not advocate a shift to a completely distance-learning-based higher education environment” (as cited in McClure, p. 8).

While most educators support the use of technology to broaden educational opportunities, many fear its misuse. University of Washington professor of education Dr. Theodore Kaltsounis noted the importance of interaction between student and faculty in education, “Technology may facilitate that interaction, but it is not a substitute for it” (as cited in Press & Washburn, p. 37). Others, like Dr. Risa Lieberwitz, a law professor at Cornell University, concerned that pedagogical concerns are being supplanted by commercial ones, noted, “Universities should be asking: How can this new technology enhance the quality of learning? Instead, the question seems to be: How can this technology generate a profit?” (as cited in Press & Washburn, p. 36).

Quality Issues

Since the publication of A Nation at Risk (1983), Sewell (1994) said that there had been a renewed emphasis on institutional effectiveness and quality in higher education (Franklin, 1996). State and federal governments have become increasingly concerned with the improvement and assessment of higher education. Mingle (1995) suggested that state funding, reflecting accountability and quality assurance, could be based on learning outcomes in the future, so government interest in the “vertical university” as an “organized bureaucracy” may decline while interest in the “horizontal university--networks of scholars and programs--could increase” (p. 10). As trends move toward less traditional structures and varied delivery methods of college courses, concerns for quality increase.

In the first years of the millennium, higher education is being increasingly challenged to operate more efficiently, to keep pace with evolving technology, to show sensitivity to student and community needs, to be innovative, to maintain high standards of quality in programming,
and to be cost-effective. No small task, these challenges are increasingly being met through cooperation among institutions. In contrast to the competitive and isolationist stances of the past, more and more of the 3,500 higher education institutions in the United States (and many more worldwide) are collaborating, forming partnerships, becoming consortia.

Higher Education Consortia

A consortium is defined as “a semi-permanent organization, typically supported largely by financial contributions from its members, that employs a professional staff whose sole responsibility is to encourage and facilitate cooperative activities between and among its members, and between them collectively and others” (Neal, 1988, pp. 1-2).

While the concept began in 1925 with the Claremont Colleges, followed by the Atlanta University Center in 1929, the growth of such organizations has been slow until recently. Between 1925 and 1958, only nine consortia were formed, while 10 new ones formed between 1958 and 1965. According to Armstrong (1997), the number of states with boards or agencies dealing with the coordination of higher education grew from 15 in 1939 to at least one in each state by 1969. Today, more than 125 formal higher education consortia exist and over 10,000 interinstitutional agreements (Williams, 2001).

Moore (1968) noted that the federal government anticipated the rapid growth of higher education due to the 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act (the G.I. Bill) and the passage of other legislation such as the 1963 Higher Education Facilities Act, the Higher Education Act of 1965, and the 1966 International Education Act. Through Title III, and other programs, large amounts of money became available to expand existing facilities and develop new ones. Unfortunately, the demand far exceeded the supply as over 450,000 graduate students and comparable numbers of undergraduates enrolled in colleges. Clearly, a need to operate more efficiently led higher education to consider collaboration. Citing the example of administrative policies long used in business and industry, Moore (1968) identified cooperation as “one of the
most promising approaches to solving many of higher education’s problems” (p. 21). Sharing resources became a necessity to meet increasing demands.

Early in the 1970s, Lewis Patterson formed a national network of academic consortia, initially named the Council for Inter-Institutional Leadership, and known today as the Association of Consortium Leadership (ACL) (Dotolo & Strandness, 1999). ACL has over 80 member consortia; those that had representatives serving as officers or on their board as of 1996 when their 30th anniversary edition of the Consortium Directory was published, included: New England Land Grant Universities; Texas Association of Developing Colleges; Alliance for Higher Education; Virginia Tidewater Consortium for Higher Education; Atlanta University Center; Southern Illinois University at Carbondale; Five Colleges, Inc.; Colleges of Worcester Consortium; Ohio College Association; and Valley of Virginia Partnership for Education (ACL, Consortium Directory, 1996).

In the late 1970s, as fiscal constraints began to drain money from higher education, consortia were affected, and some were forced to cease operations. As accountability and justification became prominent concerns for colleges, consortia were scrutinized by the same standards (Armstrong, 1997).

Both Baker (1993) and Tushnet (1993) have identified common factors in successful consortia to include: a shared vision; clearly defined goals; a focus on real problems; an institutional decision-making structure; local decision-making; continuity among partnership personnel; systematic communication with all partners and with the community; sufficient time for institutional change to occur; the provision of resources to those whose roles and relationships will change; the provisions of professional development; workforce training and education programming (as cited in Dotolo & Strandness, 1999, pp. 4-5).

Higher education consortia, partnerships among several colleges and universities, have become increasingly popular in recent years. Interest has escalated as educators appreciate the advantages of collaboration (Maydew, 1999). A consortium provides another possibility for
universities to expand throughout their regions by pooling resources, maintaining or even improving quality, and adding to student satisfaction, thus increasing institutional effectiveness. “Collaboration is certainly a buzz word these days and states are likely to look for new incentives to pull institutions together. The result could be a number of new consortia in the years ahead” (Mingle, 1995, p. 10).

Consortia are a varied genre. As Neal (1988) noted, “There is no typical consortium. Each is a unique response to a set of conditions” (p. 2). A glance at the ACL Directory illustrates the variety of mission, membership, and services provided. As Lawrence Dotolo stated in the Preface of this volume, “Consortia are engaged in exciting and innovative activities that are serving their constituencies, their communities, and higher education in general. Consortia often offer a fresh and useful strategy for addressing the problems facing higher education” (Dotolo, ACL Directory, 1996).

Examples of Higher Education Consortia

Western Governors University, mentioned earlier for its on-line courses, is a consortium promoting competency-based degrees through its “education without boundaries” using distance education. The Consortium for Distance Learning provides learning opportunities and equality of access to higher education for all Northern California students. The International University Consortium is a working partnership of over 50 colleges and universities worldwide, which develops and distributes distance education materials, used in adult degree programs.

Other examples of consortia include the following: Tri-College Consortium, composed of Randolph-Macon, Sweet Briar, and Lynchburg Colleges in Virginia and recently joined by a fourth, Hampton-Sydney; The Educational Coalition, a not-for-profit educational organization created in 1993 in California, composed of elementary, secondary, post-secondary institutions, and agencies and corporations to create new public educational systems, models, and partnerships; and Ardmore Higher Education Center, a 27-year-old Oklahoma consortium of
universities and colleges. The Association of Consortia Leadership (ACL) is a national association whose primary mission is advocating the cause of inter-institutional cooperation in American higher education. It is comprised of over 50 member consortia or colleges throughout the U.S. The East Tennessee Consortium for Higher Education (ETCHE) is an inter-institutional network consisting of 23 colleges and universities formed in 1998 to facilitate sharing of resources, expertise, practices, and to foster collaboration. The organization’s main interests focus on four areas: technology; program, faculty, and resource sharing; faculty development; and articulation. The mission of ETCHE is “to support efforts and opportunities for post-secondary institutions in the region to build collaborative relationships that will strengthen each individual institution and thereby enhance the vitality of Higher Education in East Tennessee” (*The Link*, vol. 1, no. 1, winter, 1999, http://www.UTK.EDU/~ETCHE).

Clearly, forming consortia seems to be the direction that higher education institutions are choosing to take in the new century. University centers are becoming increasingly popular. According to Schmidt’s article, “Concept of university center has appeal in several states,” among states that have opened centers, or are in the planning or construction stages, are Illinois, Washington, Mississippi, Maryland, Texas, Michigan, and Ohio (1999). With the decline of resources in many states, the academic community has found these organizations to be a creative, cost-effective way to serve its students and, more broadly, society in general. Incorporating the latest in technology and distance education delivery choices, higher education consortia bring the university to the student, offering choices of degree programs from a variety of institutions, flexibility of scheduling, and other attributes essential to the changing population of learners, whether traditionally-aged or adult.

Higher Education Consortia attempt to develop a culture of cooperation. Dr. Greg Prince, President of Hampshire College, warned that consortia should develop relationships at all levels. “A consortium should not just be a group of vertical institutions that join to form a horizontal one” (1999 ACL Conference, Washington, DC). Dr. Marie McDemmond, President
of Norfolk State University, said that consortia engage in “technology mediated education,” calling it the “connective tissue” which holds together the programs offered through the various colleges in the consortium. Norfolk State is a member of the Virginia Tidewater Consortium, which was established in 1972 by an act of the Virginia General Assembly, which created six consortia. The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center (SVHEC) in Abingdon, Virginia, did not exist at that time, and Abingdon fell in the jurisdiction of the Western Region Consortium established in 1973 as part of the same General Assembly mandate. It was chaired by Virginia Tech and included all colleges west of Roanoke. The Consortium ceased to exist in the 1980s (M. J. Reifsnider, personal communication, October 18, 2001).

The Virginia Tidewater Consortium continued operation from its formation in 1973. Located in Norfolk, Virginia, the Hampton Roads Center has 11 resident educational institutions; two non-resident educational institutions; two associate members, The Armed Forces Staff College and the local public broadcasting station; and an affiliate member, the higher education cable TV channel. According to its president, Dr. Lawrence Dotolo, higher education is a significant part of the Greater Hampton Roads region, enhancing it both economically and culturally. Catering to area workforce development needs, the member colleges can custom design programs to meet individual business and industry demand.

Another Virginia consortium facility is the Roanoke Graduate Center. Opened in August of 2000 and housed in a facility donated by the Norfolk and Southern Railroad with 13 partners, it is a larger operation than the SVHEC but was established by the General Assembly as an “authority” rather than a “state agency,” as the SVHEC is designated. According to Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director of the SVHEC, a state agency has more autonomy and a more secure funding source than an authority does (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000). The Roanoke Center was endorsed by the State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) in October of 1997 and is managed by the Roanoke Higher Education
Authority, created by the General Assembly in 1997 (T. McKeon, personal communication, December 6, 2000).

As Executive Director Thomas McKeon explained, it is housed in the renovated Norfolk and Western Railroad office building. The Roanoke Center’s mission encompasses education, economic development, workforce training, and revitalization of the historic Gainsboro neighborhood in Roanoke, Virginia. [Link to Roanoke Center]

The Institute for Advanced Learning and Research (IALR), now being planned for Danville and the surrounding Southside region, has sought much guidance and information from the SVHEC as planning proceeds, according to Dr. Timothy Franklin, who is spearheading the project for Virginia Tech and will be the Executive Director of the Institute when it opens. A regional strategic plan developed by the Piedmont Foundation in 2000, addressed solving the economic problems of the region, focusing on two key strategies: building a technology infrastructure and the required human infrastructure to support and use it effectively. Requesting that Virginia Tech assist as partner and change agent for the region’s transformation, the region’s leadership embarked upon one of the main initiatives: the development of The Institute. This consortium will deliver academic programming through Virginia Tech, Averett University, Danville Community College, and other educational providers.

Other states that have established higher education consortia, such as The University Center of Lake County in Illinois, have cited reasons, such as cost-effectiveness and convenience. An article in The Chronicle of Higher Education quoted Keith Sanders, executive director of the Illinois State Board of Education, predicting that the center would meet the region’s post-secondary needs “at less than half the costs that the state would bear if we were to build a full-fledged university” (as cited in Schmidt, 1999, Illinois, p. 1). A member of the county Board of Supervisors explained, “What they are doing here is to bring the education to the people, rather than having the people transport themselves to the education” (Schmidt, 1999, Illinois, p. 1).
Summary

A changing student profile with a need for lifelong learning has resulted in higher education changing its traditional approach. Faced with shrinking budgets, universities have responded to student needs and their own needs for growth with a variety of methods. Various forms of distance education have grown from innovations in technology. New types of colleges have surfaced, such as corporate learning centers and virtual universities that compete with traditional universities for students. Extended campus centers have increased outreach efforts for many. A cost-efficient way for several universities to share resources and band together has emerged as a viable solution in many areas. The higher education consortium is a model with a century-long history, which has lately become more popular. A study of one such organization, the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, will shed light on the rationale for constructing consortia as an effective means to address the issues facing educators and students in the new century. Focusing on this particular example of a consortium, the background and development, the impact on the community and region, the effectiveness in achievement of its mission and goals, may provide insight for the consideration of other consortia in the future. This model may serve as an example, not only within Virginia, but in other states as well.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Historical Research/Case Study

When asked how an historian engages in research, Carr (1967) explained that, contrary to some researchers who gather factual information from various sources, taking notes until they feel prepared, then putting aside the sources to write with only the notes as a guide, he chooses another method.

For myself, as soon as I have got going on a few of what I take to be capital sources, the itch becomes too strong and I begin to write—not necessarily at the beginning, but somewhere, anywhere. Thereafter, reading and writing go on simultaneously. The writing is added to, subtracted from, re-shaped, cancelled, as I go on reading. The reading is guided and directed and made fruitful by the writing: the more I write, the more I know what I am looking for, the better I understand the significance and relevance of what I find. (Carr, 1967, pp. 32-33)

Carr’s process is more accurate for me than the method of those who suggest that the data gathering, analysis, synthesis, and writing are separate defined steps. Although loosely, I followed the following format, the steps were more circular than linear, the process so entwined that it resists neat description. Roughly based on Gall, Borg, and Gall’s (1996) suggestion, the stages are: Identify the problem, search for sources, summarize and evaluate the data, and report it in an interpretive framework (p. 649).

In addition to historical research, this is also a case study, intended to “shed light on a phenomenon, which is the processes, events, persons, or things of interest to the researcher” (Gall et al, 1996, p. 545). A case is a particular instance of the phenomenon; the focus is the aspect of the case that the research will concentrate upon; and the unit of analysis is an aspect of the phenomenon that can be sampled, according to Gall et al. Here the phenomenon is higher education consortia; the case is the SVHEC; the focus is the development of the Center; and the unit of analysis is the key players, supplemented by other stakeholders of the Center. As case
studies provide the means to understand and explain a phenomenon through the participants who experienced it, I attempted to reconstruct the development of the SVHEC and present it as it functions today, by examining documents and interviewing people who were instrumental in that development, or who are currently experiencing the results of it.

According to Merriam (1998), case studies allow the reader vicarious experiences requiring detailed descriptions and presentation of information. To be successful, case studies should immerse the reader in the experience, not just tell him/her about it. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) list historical case studies as a form of research. Merriam (1998) noted that elements of historical research and case study often merge. Yin (1994) stated that case studies could utilize the elements of historical research while also having the added advantage of direct observation and interviewing. The variety of types evidence available in a case study allows the researcher greater leeway than is afforded in an historical study. This study is an example of the overlapping of the two methods, not uncommon in educational research.

Research Questions

Six major questions were addressed in this study:

1. What were the motivational factors behind the establishment of the SVHEC?
2. What role did economic development play in the establishment of an educational facility such as the SVHEC?
3. How can educators and political leaders work together to improve the quality of life for citizens in geographic areas previously underserved by higher education institutions and underdeveloped economically?
4. In what ways has the SVHEC made a difference educationally or economically to the citizens of Southwest Virginia?
5. In what ways are consortium structures like SVHEC viable alternatives to extended-campus centers of individual colleges for serving area residents and increasing the educational opportunities and improving the economic health of their region?

6. What are the most significant challenges faced by the SVHEC?

Initial Interviews

“If the organization is to be successful, the image (vision) must grow out of the needs of the entire organization and must be ‘claimed’ or ‘owned’ by all the important actors” (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 15).

The important actors or key players in this study are the stakeholders in the consortium. Therefore, the researcher conducted interviews with representative stakeholders including political figures, administrators of the partner institutions, community figures, employees of the consortium, and students attending classes through the consortium. An interview protocol was developed and, using the constant comparative method, revised as new ideas emerged. Interviews were taped with permission of the subjects. A pilot study, as suggested by Glesne and Peshkin (1992), was conducted in the summer of 1998, during an internship at the SVHEC, using a sample of staff members of the SVHEC. The results of this study were used to revise the interview protocol applied in the subsequent study. It also established, as Marshall and Rossman (1995) suggested, a baseline or background prior to the participant observation or interviewing in the study. The key players, interviewed initially, all had a major role in the conception, development, or promotion of the SVHEC. In subsequent interviews, other stakeholders were identified and interviewed. A complete list of all interviews is included in Appendix A.

The initial key players consisted of the following people:

The Honorable Judge Ford Quillen (former Scott Co. VA delegate)

Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, SVHEC, Abingdon, VA

William Wampler, VA state senator (Bristol, VA)
Rick Boucher, VA representative to US congress (9th district)

Joseph Johnson, VA state representative, (Abingdon, VA)

Jay Lemons, President of Susquehanna College in Pennsylvania (former chancellor of the UVA’s College at Wise, then Clinch Valley College)

During personal face-to-face interviews, these respondents were asked the following questions:

**Interview Questions**

1. How and why did the SVHEC come to exist?
2. Who were the key players involved from the beginning?
3. Whose idea was it initially?
4. What was your role?
5. What did you envision its goals and objectives to be?
6. Has it fulfilled those roles? Have other roles evolved that you did not envision?
7. What impact do you think the SVHEC has had on the community/region educationally, economically, and/or in other ways?
8. What challenges threaten the success of the SVHEC?
9. Whom else should I interview?
10. What else would you like to add about the SVHEC?

Besides interspersing the results of these personal interviews in various parts of chapters 5-7, a summary chart of their responses to these questions is included in Appendix B.

**Focus Group/Community Interviews**

As a result of the key interviews and comments from my committee, I decided to solicit information from community members to determine their role in the process of the creation of the SVHEC and to solicit information about its economic development impact on the community. I also asked a group from another community to act as an informal focus group and...
answer a hypothetical question concerning their community. The question was: “If you lived in a community without a college or university and it was proposed that a higher education center be built in your community that would provide classes and programs from many different colleges, what kinds of questions would you ask to determine if this would be a good thing for your community to do?” I compared the results of the group’s answers with responses I had gathered from interviews to draw some conclusions about strategic planning and community versus educational and legislative perceptions.

SVHEC Staff, Partners Staff, Student Interviews

Several staff members of the SVHEC, the partner institutions, and selected students were also interviewed, both formally, using questions listed below, and informally, to clarify information, ask opinions about the success of the Center, and ask for reactions to lists of consortium-related data as it applied to the SVHEC.

Besides being asked to identify themselves, their position, and their affiliation with the SVHEC or the partner institutions, the respondents were asked the following questions:

1. How well does the SVHEC fit the definition of a consortium, and how does it measure up to these various lists of criteria? (Here they were provided with Neal’s [1988] definition, listed in Chapter 2, p. 18, of this document. The criteria mentioned, were presented in the findings, Chapter 7, consortia-related lists established by various authors.)

2. What advantages/disadvantages do you think a consortium such as the SVHEC has as compared with an extended-campus center of a single university?

3. Besides increasing educational opportunities, what other effects do you think the SVHEC has had on the community?

4. In what ways do you think the staff of the Center and/or the partners consider the adult student/client? What role, if any, do you think the facility itself plays?
5. How do the Center staff and the staffs of the partner institutions interact cooperatively? How do the partners balance cooperation with completion?

Additional Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with presidents of some of the partner institutions; in some cases, responses were e-mailed or faxed due to scheduling and distance constraints. They were asked the following five questions about their college/university’s role in the SVHEC:

1. What was your college/university’s role in the formation of the SVHEC?
2. What motivated the college/university’s administration to become a partner in the SVHEC consortium?
3. What advantages/opportunities has your college/university gained through its association with the SVHEC?
4. What disadvantages/challenges has your college/university encountered through its association with the SVHEC consortium?
5. What differences has the SVHEC made to the community/region/state educationally or through economic development?

Staff Surveys

Through informal interviews and meetings involving the staff of the SVHEC and partner institutions, I presented several lists of characteristics concerning consortia that had been identified through the literature. Through observation and their comments, I drew conclusions stated in Chapter 7 about how well the SVHEC exhibited the criteria, exemplified the characteristics, or fit the description of various benchmarking samples established in the literature. A more formalized effort involved using a survey instrument created by Williams (2001). In this case, I presented 33 factors affecting interinstitutional agreements and consortia.
in higher education. The staff members were asked to do two things: (1) Check any factors that they felt the SVHEC exhibited, and (2) Choose the 10 factors they felt were most important to the success of the SVHEC. The results of this survey and generalized impressions of the Center’s benchmarking with various literature-based criteria are presented in Chapter 7. The purpose of this survey was to gain a broader base of opinions than was available through staff interviews. I also wanted to balance the perspectives of the educational leaders, legislative figures, and community representatives with those of the Center and the partner institution staffs who actually work in the environment and experience these factors daily.

Document Analysis

Because an historical study requires an extensive search of documents, using content analysis, as prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), all available materials were examined, including agreements among the colleges, minutes of administrative meetings, news releases, newspaper articles, legislative documents, and other documents relating to the development of the consortia. As Worthen, Sanders, and Fitzpatrick (1997) suggested, “Thematic analyses of board meetings or editorials in professional journals or word counts on federal policy statements, can help identify and clarify values in an objective way no other source can match” (p. 385). A photographic account, “visual anthropology,” of the construction of the SVHEC was also compiled for added dimension and authenticity of reader experience.

Validity and Reliability

As Gall et al. (1996) explained, strict interpretation of construct validity, internal and external validity, and reliability are often difficult to apply to qualitative studies. Although Yin (1994) uses these same terms, and defines them for case studies, interpretive researchers, such as Altheide and Johnson (1994) retain the notion of validity, but redefine it as “judgments about the credibility” of a researcher’s claims (in Gall et al., p. 572). Some interpretive validity criteria
include: (1) usefulness, (2) contextual completeness, (3) researcher positioning, (4) reporting style, and (5) chain of evidence (Gall et al.). Generalizability is possible in this case study, because its results can be applied to other educationally underserved communities and by higher education institutions considering cost-effective outreach solutions.

This study is (1) useful, in that it enlightens the reader about the phenomenon; (2) contextually complete, in that it is set in the context of physical surroundings, events, activities, and even multivocality (seeking many points of view, rather than letting one speak for all) as described by Altheide and Johnson (1994); (3) cognizant of researcher positioning addressed through member-checking/peer review; (4) representative of the reflective reporting style that was used to achieve “verisimilitude,” whereby the reader would be drawn into the process and feel the experience of the researcher, not just read recorded facts; and (5) verifiable through a chain of evidence examined through the use of an auditor.

By triangulation of the data, bringing more than one source of data to bear on a single point, data from different sources can be used to “corroborate, elaborate, or illuminate the research in question” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.143). Designing a study in which multiple cases, multiple informants, or more than one data-gathering method are used can greatly strengthen the study’s usefulness for other setting. Member-checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) was employed to verify the researcher's interpretation of the interview data. With a postmodern research perspective, I, as researcher, searched for ways that the historical and cultural context may have shaped my perceptions (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992); that is, the interplay of how I affected and how I was affected by the subjects being researched. I discussed this with my peer debriefer and tried to remain as unobtrusive as possible in observations and informal interviews. I also tried to remain as objective as possible in drawing conclusions and interpreting data; however, in qualitative studies using reflective reporting, the researcher’s viewpoint, expressed
as such, is not viewed negatively. While the data often speak for themselves, the use and arrangement of the data will obviously be somewhat subjective.

Interview respondents were chosen as representative of a category of stakeholders. This stratified, purposeful sampling (Gall et al., 1996) was chosen to secure multiple representative viewpoints. The interviews were conducted to the point of redundancy, or “theoretical saturation” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, in Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 132). A peer debriefer helped the researcher stay on target, serving as a protagonist as prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985), creating conformability or objectivity and freedom from undue biases. A reflective field log (Glaser & Strauss) kept reflections fresh and helped me as researcher develop my thoughts, as well as serving as a stress reducer, while a dependability auditor (Lincoln & Guba) evaluated all data and conclusions for accuracy and trustworthiness. Prolonged engagement, along with triangulation of data, should ensure validity or the “truth value” as Lincoln and Guba explain it. Recognizing that, as Plummer (1983) stated, “Although confidentiality may appear to be a prerequisite of life history research, it frequently becomes an impossibility” (p. 142). In this study, all respondents were asked permission to identify them and their comments, and participants signed informed consent forms. Permission was obtained to use photographs and websites as well.

Data Analysis

Using Patton’s (1990) approaches to collect data, I conducted both informal interviews, as part of participant observation, and formal interviews, employing the interview protocol. The open-ended questions with occasional probes, as prescribed by Rockhill (1982), resulted in “fat data” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 130) with “thick description” (Fettersman, 1989, p. 114), full of quotes and rich with personal feelings and unsolicited, volunteered responses. Geertz (1973) defined “thick description” as “that which goes beyond the mere or bare reporting of an act, but describes and probes the intentions, motives, contexts, situations, and circumstances of action”
(Denzin, 1989, p. 39). As Kahn and Cannell (1957) described it, interviewing can be a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 149), discussing issues while learning the subject’s real feelings, which he may not be consciously aware of until he is engaged in the study. When interviewing the key figures, I was often surprised by their candor and willingness to share information. I was gratified when they chose to tell personal stories to illustrate their points.

Data were analyzed and sorted into categories as patterns emerged and meaning evolved, and, hopefully, grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was generated through discovery as the study progressed. Although, because this is an historical study, it was not theory driven, I made use of certain “empirical generalizations” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 20) as jumping off points or areas of comparison to further theory evolution. The data gathering, analysis, and grounded theory generation is described by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as an interactive process, not sequential in nature, but recursive, inductive, and evolving. Therefore, as stated earlier, my document study, interviewing, and participant observation, along with analysis of these data, were interwoven, not conducted in isolation or separate steps. Although an original list of stakeholders was identified by the gatekeeper, Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and a member of the State of Virginia Board of Education, as key figures were interviewed, they were asked to identify others to add to the interview list.

Reflective Reporting

As interviews were conducted, I began to piece together the story of the creation of the Center, sometimes modifying my draft plan as a result of information gained in a particular interview. During certain interviews, respondents shared documents or referred to information that I later gathered and examined. All these became pieces of the puzzle as I strove toward creating a unified historical picture. The constant comparative method was applied, not only to classification and analysis of data, but also to the approach of data gathering.
Once the data have been accumulated and analyzed, according to Denny (1978), the researcher should use the literary form that he/she feels best conveys his/her story; therefore, the natural history approach was applied with reflective reporting method, using storytelling techniques and reflecting the researcher’s voice within the narrative. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) stated, “An historical analysis is a method of discovering, from records and accounts, what happened in the past” (p. 89). But, a good case study reveals the researcher’s perspective (Gall et al., 1996), enabling the reader to agree or disagree with the viewpoint expressed. By extensive use of quotations and example anecdotes, I hoped to give the reader a sense of the study, not just an objective look at facts and analysis. By organizing the chapters and subheadings thematically, with a certain chronology inherent, I meant to focus the reader’s attention on the events and developments, not the time frame. Using inventive subtitles was my way of introducing more storytelling elements, and relieving the typically dry nature of chronological, factual information. I wished the reader to be engaged, not simply informed.

The combination of narrative and analysis was intended to allow the reader to experience the phenomenon as it unfolded, to see the results of my field research recreated through Hammersley and Atkinson’s (1983) strategy of the natural history approach, sometimes in chronological order, sometimes thematic, while also hearing “impressionist tales” (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 118) that “make use of dramatic recall, artistry, and literary standards.” The study is the narrative story of the researcher’s investigative process.

Diener and Crandall (1978) quoted Margaret Mead, who stated that, in anthropological qualitative research, there are no subjects, but rather the researcher works with “informants in an atmosphere of mutual respect” (as cited in Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 112). This was my goal as researcher. Collaboration, partnership, collegiality, and an atmosphere of active assistance were sought, with the researcher gaining access and building trust and rapport. Using Bogdan and Biklen’s (1992) strategy of field observations, the researcher observed the workings of the SVHEC and its participants, attended meetings, engaged in informal interviews over lunch, and
focused, as Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested, on behavior rather than individuals. “Rather than studying people, ethnography means learning from people” (Spradley, 1979, p. 3). The researcher’s intention was to learn much from the people, the documents, and the experience of qualitative research. I was not disappointed.

As Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explained, “Qualitative inquiry is an odyssey into our discipline, our practice, and perhaps our souls. We cannot be sure of what we will find, but we will inevitably be caught up in the search” (p. 178).

**Summary**

The research began with the identification of key players and their subsequent personal interviews. As transcription progressed and identification of patterns began, I proceeded to some document analysis and identification of additional groups and individuals to interview. A focus group was conducted and community interviews were obtained to broaden the scope of the study to include the perspective of community representatives who were neither educators nor politicians. While continuing the constant comparative method of analysis of the material gained thus far, I conducted interviews with staff members of the SVHEC and the partner institutions, as well as students attending classes at the Center. This added to the perspectives being examined, and gave a current view of how the Center was working as a balance for the information gained from interviews with those who participated in planning the consortium. I was able to surmise how well the Center had lived up to the expectations of those who started it, as well as to learn the conclusions of those who currently work or study in the Center. Using staff members, I also conducted a survey of attributes of a higher education consortium that had been identified in a previous study, to see how well the Center measured up. In addition, interviews of current and past presidents of the consortium partner institutions were conducted using phone, e-mail, or fax to obtain answers to questions. The compilation and analysis of these data led to conclusions about the process that was followed in conceiving, fundraising, and constructing the building and
the consortium partnership of the SVHEC. Lessons can be learned about what worked and what did not, what elements constitute an effective consortium, and how one community gained even more than they initially expected.
CHAPTER 4

CHRONOLOGY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER

Virginia’s Consortium Story

The consortium story actually began in Virginia in 1966 when the General Assembly assigned to the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) the responsibility for coordinating “off-campus extension and public service of all state-controlled institutions of higher education” (SCHEV, p. 1). Governor Mills Godwin stated his plans for the development of a statewide community college system and it was passed into legislation in 1966, along with a state sales tax to fund it (Graham, 1999). Findings from a study initiated by the General Assembly in 1970 resulted in the 1972 Senate Joint Resolution No. 44, “Urging the State-supported institutions of higher education to give fuller and more meaningful support to continuing education” (Senate Joint Resolution No. 44, p. 1). This resolution explained the need for continuing education programs; their tie to social and economic development; and, most importantly, noted that the offerings by State-supported colleges had been “piecemeal and often inadequate” (p. 1). The resolution further mandated that the State-supported institutions of higher education “devise meaningful programs,” of “quality and prestige,” responding to the communities’ needs, utilizing “facilities and resources fully and economically” (p. 2). The State Council of Higher Education was charged by the Senate to coordinate these activities “in a flexible manner…to prevent duplication…but preserve variety…” (p. 2). The promise of approval of appropriate budget considerations was also included in the resolution. (Resolution No. 44, February 14, 1972.)

In April 1972, Andre C. de Porry of UVA introduced the “Coordination of Continuing Higher Education in Virginia,” which proposed establishing a consortium of state institutions
authorized to offer off-campus programs and overseen by SCHEV. Dana B. Hamel, then Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, had introduced a plan in October of 1971 that proposed dividing the state into regions with community colleges directing activities within a region and coordinating with colleges and universities throughout the state (McKeon, 1976). Certain parts of both plans were incorporated into the State Plan.

A State Plan for Regional Consortia

A week later, another resolution followed “urging certain institutions of higher education to establish a cooperative center for continuing education in Northern Virginia” (Senate Joint Resolution No. 67, February 21, 1972, p. 1). This resolution recognized the growing number of higher education consortia across the country, the need for an organized effort to provide “opportunities for adults to earn undergraduate and graduate degrees, whether off-campus or resident in character,” and the cost-effective nature of cooperative ventures (p. 3). Through this resolution, the Senate established a Higher Education Consortium in Northern Virginia, encompassing George Mason University, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (VPI&SU), with main offices at George Mason University, to begin July 1, 1972, and “to serve as a model for further joint programs in other areas of the State” (p. 4).

Stemming from a combination of factors including a public outcry of need for expanded higher educational opportunities throughout the state, a legislative concern for cost-effectiveness in program offerings, and the State Council for Higher Education’s commitment to cease duplication of educational offerings, the Commission for Economy in Governmental Expenditures conducted a study and submitted its findings to the General Assembly in 1970. A follow-up study was undertaken by the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council, which resulted in the first resolution, followed by House Bill 1054, causing Section 23-9.10 of the Code of VA to
be rewritten, and paving the way for the second resolution initiating the first regional consortium in Virginia. (H.R. 1054, 1972).

Initially, the Northern Virginia Consortium constituted an important part of the state’s efforts to coordinate continuing education in Virginia. Following this model, the Coordination of Continuing Higher Education in Virginia: A State Plan for Regional Consortia for Continuing Higher Education, was compiled and approved in October, 1972, determined that six regional consortia would be established throughout the state following the planning district designations. Each regional consortium was to be served by designated colleges, universities, and community colleges within its region. Crossing regional boundaries would require permission from the consortium within the region and the State Council of Higher Education. The six areas were designated as follows: Western, Valley, Central, Capital, Tidewater, and Northern. The western region was to be served by VPI&SU and various community colleges within that region (SCHEV, 1972).

Although VPI&SU was designated the lead university for the western region, most of its efforts were concentrated on its main campus in Blacksburg or in areas toward the northern part of the state. VPI&SU had very extensive extension offices and programs throughout the state; they were focused primarily on agricultural and home economics issues. According to Delegate Ford Quillen, even in later years, VPI&SU was reluctant to become involved as an initial partner in the movement that ultimately resulted in the SVHEC (see Quillen remarks, this manuscript, “Institutional Buy-In” section, Chapter 5, p. 58). With the exception of engineering programs, VPI&SU never attempted to fully serve the southern extreme of the western region; and demand, primarily by area teachers, resulted in other colleges and universities offering more classes in Southwest Virginia (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

Abingdon, Virginia was part of the western region; and, over time, universities besides VPI&SU (e.g., Radford, Old Dominion, and George Mason) continued to offer classes and even
degree programs in various locations around the Abingdon area but still in an uncoordinated, piecemeal fashion as before.

The Timeline of the Virginia Consortium Story

Problem: Southwest Virginia’s citizens’ higher educational needs unmet.

1926 UVA began offering occasional classes in region; other colleges (e.g., VPI and Radford) offered occasional classes.

1956 The State Council of Higher Education of Virginia (SCHEV) was formed.

1966 General Assembly assigned SCHEV to coordinate continuing education throughout state.

1966-70 The General Assembly, at the urging of Governor Mills Godwin, passed a sales tax that increased Virginia’s revenue; he fostered the development of the statewide community college system and contributed greatly to higher education.

1970 Studies were commissioned by Virginia General Assembly.

1971 Dana B. Hamel developed a formal plan for the coordination of higher education.

1972 Senate Joint Resolution No. 44 and No. 67 and House Bill No. 54 passed, and State Plan was written, establishing higher education consortia throughout the state; Northern Virginia Consortium opened, based at George Mason University.

1973 The Western Region Consortium was established; it was dissolved in the 1980s.

1973-83 Piecemeal approach to solving educational needs continued in Southwest Virginia while Delegate Ford Quillen and Delegate Joe Johnson continued to search for ways to serve their constituents’ educational needs.

1984 UVA hired Dr. Rachel Fowlkes as Continuing Education Director in Southwest Virginia.

1986 UVA opened center on Route 58 in Abingdon; VPI&SU joined the center to offer additional classes; other colleges followed.
1989  Dr. Fowlkes and Delegate Ford Quillen determined to start initiating plans for expansion and funding, focusing on Abingdon as the intended site for a cooperative center.

1990  Delegate Quillen started his initiative to raise funding; Dr. Fowlkes met with Dr. Casteen of UVA and Dr. Culbertson of Clinch Valley College. SVHEC was approved by the General Assembly; a board of trustees was appointed by Governor Douglas Wilder.

Virginia voters approved bond issue by referendum; the newly formed SVHEC was dedicated at the Route 58 site (former location of the UVA Center) with Dr. Fowlkes as Interim Executive Director; the general obligation bond funds were approved through a referendum.

1994  SVHEC held a groundbreaking ceremony.

1995  ARC Grant was approved with Governor Allen’s sanction.

1997  SVHEC held ribbon cutting (banner raising).

1998  SVHEC held Grand Opening ceremony.
CHAPTER 5
THE SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION CENTER:
FROM VISION TO REALITY

The University of Virginia’s (UVA) Involvement

The University of Virginia, which had offered classes in various locations in the Abingdon area since 1926, established an extended campus site on U.S. Route 58, State Route 19, in Abingdon, in 1986 (Dellinger, 1997). Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Director of Continuing Education for UVA in Southwest Virginia since 1983, continued to operate the newly located UVA Center, which offered primarily education classes for local teachers to renew certifications and occasionally master’s classes toward advanced degrees. The initial consortium structure initiated by the General Assembly had long since collapsed and no organized coordinated effort existed. Even the UVA Center’s offerings were proving inadequate by the 1980s to serve the public’s needs.

Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, then Director of the UVA Center in Abingdon, Virginia stated, “I was frustrated because the UVA Center in Abingdon was restricted from offering programs not already available on the Charlottesville campus of UVA. Many of our area teachers needed classes in majors not offered by UVA, such as social work” (personal communication, December 1, 2000). Businesses were also asking for courses that UVA couldn’t deliver to Abingdon.

According to Williams (2001), one of the tasks currently faced by educators is “enhancing access to rural and traditionally underserved areas” (p. 26). In addition to her attempt to satisfy the needs of area teachers and businesses for advanced training, Fowlkes was faced with the general low level of education that often results in areas such as Southwest Virginia, where affordable access to higher education is limited. According to economic development
demographics, less than eight percent of adults 25 years of age or older had earned a bachelor’s degree (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

In 1986, Fowlkes received permission to forge a program with VPI&SU whereby Virginia Tech would lease a small portion of the UVA Center and offer courses, primarily in engineering. A few years later VPI&SU also offered their first graduate cohort in Vocational Special Education (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000). Other programs, like social work, were still being requested, so Radford University attempted to start a cohort in Abingdon. They also began to offer a master’s degree in school counseling in two locations in Southwest Virginia. “Radford had no off-campus support, so their programs were not successful,” Fowlkes commented. She continued her attempt to increase programming through various sources.

**Legislative Involvement**

From the 1970s when Ford Quillen was elected to the Virginia House of Delegates, he had searched for ways to help his constituency of Southwest Virginia, particularly in the area of education. He also noted that while UVA, Radford, VCU, George Mason, and James Madison had increased in size, Clinch Valley College in Wise, Virginia (the base of his district) continued with low enrollments. In the mid 1980s Quillen commissioned a study to offer graduate business courses at Clinch Valley College through the University of Virginia. UVA rejected the idea, so Quillen turned his attention to Abingdon as a better location to draw students from the region. Optimally positioned off Interstate 81, the town was much more accessible than Wise, the location of Clinch Valley College. As Quillen put it, “I wanted to spend it [educational money] where it would do well. I knew in Abingdon it would be a success. Somewhere else, it might not have been successful” (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000). In *Adult Students Today*, Aslanian (2001) noted “Universities need to
select sites carefully because geographical access is a primary reason students choose one provider over another” (p. 108).

In 1989, Dr. Fowlkes contacted Delegate Quillen of Gate City to discuss the issues of higher education in the region. Together they concluded that: (1) the public need exceeded the existing offerings from the UVA Center in Abingdon; (2) different programs were needed, including some not available from UVA; and (3) an organized effort toward coordination of course offerings from multiple institutions was required to satisfy the area residents’ needs (F. Quillen, R. Fowlkes, J. Johnson, personal communications, November 8, December 1, December 19, 2000). In addition, the 1990 census showed that in Southwest Virginia, only 5% of adults had earned bachelor’s degrees, while fewer than 3% held master’s degrees.

After much discussion, Dr. Fowlkes enlisted Delegate Quillen’s help in obtaining cooperation from other universities while she met with UVA’s President, Dr. Casteen, to elicit his support in initiating a formal partnership with other institutions (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000; F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000).

Quillen’s vision was echoed by Garza and Eller (1998), who stated that consortia would provide higher education to previously underserved populations, and encourage greater use of technology, lifelong learning, community-educational joint planning, and community-based strategies for growth.

If We Build It, They Will Come

Delegate Quillen had a dream of creating a hub that would be the center of educational opportunities in the region. He advised Fowlkes that the first priority should be to obtain funding from the state to construct a higher education center and then attract higher education institutions to bring offerings to the table. Quillen’s idea was twofold: first build an educational center that will form the centerpiece of a hub, then that will in turn function as a catalyst for
economic development in the region (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000; R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

Dr. Jay Lemons, President of Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania and former Chancellor of Clinch Valley College (UVA at Wise), said that Quillen was motivated by a number of factors: “He understood the importance of increasing educational attainment levels in our region; that raising those levels was going to be an important part of building a better, brighter future and diversifying the economic base of the region; that Abingdon would be a hub, a gateway for Southwest Virginia” (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000). Lemons attributed much of the success of the center to Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director of the SVHEC since its inception, “Rachael put legs on Ford’s dream,” he commented.

At a dedication ceremony in 1997, Lemons called the SVHEC a “family affair,” naming Virginia state Delegate Ford Quillen as father, Dr. Rachel Fowlkes as mother, Delegate Joe Johnson as grandfather, Senator William Wampler as rich uncle, and so on. He said, “I’ve known a lot of successful projects with excellent parents and a lot of failed attempts, which were usually lonely orphans. This project has a big, supportive family!” (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000).

Of major consideration was the location of the center. Thinking of a two-plus-two partnership arrangement with Virginia Highlands Community College, Quillen, Fowlkes, and Dr. N. DeWitt Moore, president of Virginia Highlands Community College, concluded that the grounds of the community college would offer a perfect location and foster the opportunity for area residents to earn undergraduate degrees from the community college and Clinch Valley College, without leaving Abingdon. Graduate offerings were an important issue, so UVA and other universities would be needed to expand the graduate classes then available.
A Catalyst for Growth

Quillen’s hub idea, he attributed in part to Dr. Wade Gilley, the recent President of the University of Tennessee. Serving on an economic council together, Quillen remembered Gilley’s theory to wed education and economic development as, “First you define the center, then you build on it” (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000). Incorporating a large 1,500-seat auditorium into the plan of the education center in order to host legislative meetings, state functions, and attract businesses from other parts of the state, Quillen found a way to mesh development with an education base. He calls the current center, “a catalyst for growth” (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000). Others also mentioned Quillen’s hub city idea as a key center for growth for the whole region with higher education being a key component (R. Boucher, personal communication, January 17, 2001; J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000; Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2001).

The reality of the vital role that higher education plays in the life of communities is true on a global level. In the United Kingdom, Thanki (1999) observed, “An integrated higher education policy becomes effective when it recognizes the contributions of higher education institutions to economic growth, regional development and social welfare” (p.1).

“Synergy Always Creates Opportunity” (Fowlkes, interview)

Quillen was certain that by obtaining building funds first, programming funds would follow. Because Virginia was suffering from a recession in the early 1990s, funding was tight. In order to stimulate the economy through new construction and to meet campus needs across the state where funding had been drastically cut, the state enacted the General Obligation Bond Program, which would allow more than $50 million in new construction for colleges (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000). Fowlkes gives Quillen high praise for persuading the legislature to construct the Higher Education Center in Abingdon and for raising $9.9 million
to do it. “It was just an unbelievable task, and he pulled it off” (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000). Because he had announced his retirement from the legislature, colleagues joked that the appropriation was his going-away present (Fowlkes & Quillen, personal communication, 2000). Senator Wampler commented that Quillen “certainly had the vision beyond the horizon of how to pull it together” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2001). Wampler called the bond package “a key player in the abstract.” Securing the bond issue was complicated further by the fact that two other major projects were on the legislature’s plates in Virginia--the Southwest Virginia Public Education Consortium and the Coalfield Economic Development Authority (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000).

Show Me the Money

Quillen was able to call back a favor from Al Smith and Bob Ball. The previous year (1990), Quillen had rallied the Southwest Virginia legislators to back Ball and Smith’s request on an issue of importance to the latter. Quillen brought the support in exchange for Smith’s promise to “put my higher education center on the front page of the bond issue” (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000).

In 1991, all the colleges and universities throughout the state were competing for the $477 million bond issue. Quillen emphasized that he had insisted the amount requested for the higher education center be included in the bill. There was a time when Dick Cranwell of Roanoke wanted to cut the funding by $150 million and apply it to public education disparities. Even though this would have benefited public education in southwest Virginia, Quillen knew that splintering the funding for the Higher Ed Center would harm it and possibly thwart his efforts to build it. Quillen persuaded Cranwell to appoint him head of the capital outlay bill committee. In order to retain the Higher Education Center’s funds and get renovations for Clinch Valley College in his own constituency, Quillen had to give up Mountain Empire
Community College’s request for expansion. Because the community colleges had a big lobby, Quillen decided they would eventually get what they wanted; but, again, if the Higher Education Center’s funds were lowered, it would never get off the ground. His fellow delegates in the House recalled his past support and backed Quillen in his quest. He was able to accomplish all this without making enemies and still reward his Wise County constituency (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000).

The Virginia General Assembly’s Role

In 1991 the Commonwealth’s General Assembly appropriated funds to be raised through a bond issue with the SVHEC’s funding included, and the first Board of Trustees of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was appointed by Governor Wilder. Later, in 1992, Virginia taxpayers voted by referendum to approve the bond issue. Funding in the amount of $9,900,000 was designated to Southwest Virginia for the Construction of an Economic Development/Educational Center (H.R.1196, 1992). Chapter 16.1 of the Code of Virginia created the SVHEC and listed its duties, identified the membership of the governing board and officers, explained the Board’s powers and duties, and ensured the cooperation of other agencies of the Commonwealth in assisting the SVHEC (Code of Virginia,VGA,1992).

The Governing Board

The first meeting of the Board of Trustees was held on October 14, 1991, at which time Delegate Ford Quillen was named Chairman. Other officers elected were: Co-Vice Chairmen, Dr. N. Dewitt Moore, Jr. (VHCC) and Dr. Jim Knight (Clinch Valley College of UVA); Secretary, Dr. James McComas (VPI&SU); and Treasurer, Dr. John Casteen (UVA). During the first meeting, Delegate Quillen announced his plans to have the SVHEC placed on a list of projects designated for a possible state bond issue. The Board approved the proposal to submit the project to the Governor’s office to be included in the 1992-1994 biennium budget (Minutes,
SVHEC Board of Trustees, October 14, 1991). The Code of Virginia spelled out the membership and responsibilities of the Board. In accordance with the Code of Virginia, Chapter 16.1, Section 23-231.3:

The Center shall be governed by a Board of Trustees consisting of the Director of the State Council of Education for Virginia or his designee, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System or his designee, the presidents or Chancellors, as appropriate, or their designees of Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, the University of Virginia, the University of Virginia’s College at Wise, and Virginia Highlands Community College, and five citizen members to be appointed by the Governor, representing Southwest public education and area business and industry, including one school division superintendent and one public school teacher. Five members of the General Assembly, including three members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker and two members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections, shall serve as ex officio members of the Board with full voting privileges. Citizen members of the Board shall be chosen from among residents of the Southwest region of the Commonwealth.

When Delegate Ford Quillen left the Virginia legislature, State Senator William Wampler became Chairman of the SVHEC Board, and Delegate Joe Johnson of Abingdon became Vice Chair (Minutes, SVHEC Board, October 25, 1994). This gave Johnson the responsibility of chairing the building committee. Even though Quillen is a Democrat and Wampler a Republican, Wampler continued to provide “tremendous leadership” at the Higher Education Center, according to Fowlkes (personal communication, December 1, 2000).

**Senator William Wampler** recalled a story from his childhood, when asked about his involvement in the SVHEC’s development. “When I was growing up, my next-door neighbor, Janet Baxley, was like a second mom to me,” he noted. Wampler remembered admiring her dedication as she traveled to Radford University two nights a week for several years, to complete a master’s degree, carpooling with other teachers. “Little did I know,” he continued, “that 20 years later I’d be helping acquire funding for the SVHEC, which has as one of its primary goals...
to help teachers renew certification requirements and to pursue graduate studies” (personal communication, January 5, 2001).

**Forming the Team**

During the following meeting, in November of 1991, the Board formed a building committee, chaired by Delegate Joe Johnson, to consider facility usage and planning, and they viewed architectural drawings submitted by Dewberry and Davis of Marion, Virginia and Raleigh, North Carolina. Budget and program committees were also formed and a committee to appoint a half-time director for the Center (Minutes, SVHEC Board, November 6, 1991).

Fowlkes, Wampler, and Dr. Jay Lemons, former Chancellor of Clinch Valley College (UVA at Wise), all gave Johnson high praise for his diligence in supervising the project. Visiting the site weekly, taking numerous pictures (see Appendix C), and meeting with the architects resulted in a tremendously successful project, they agreed. “I wanted to name it the Johnson Center!” Wampler joked (personal communication, January 5, 2001).

Ken Smith, Director of Facilities Planning and Construction at UVA, was the project manager from the early days on the design of the building through to its completion. “He took us through every single step,” remarked Fowlkes (personal communication, December 1, 2000). She attributes the outstanding nature of the building to Ken Smith. Because Smith was based in Charlottesville, he designated a person from his staff, Gary Dillon, to be hired by the Higher Education Center as the on-site overseer of the project. “His vast experience with UVA building projects helped tremendously, and he actually moved from Charlottesville and lived at the construction site in a trailer from beginning to end” (Fowlkes).

Fowlkes also gave credit to Leonard Sandidge, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer for the University of Virginia, who agreed to have UVA serve as the fiscal agent for the Higher Ed Center in response to a motion made by Dr. James Knight, president of Clinch Valley College of UVA (Minutes, May 20, 1992). This meant that all state funds would flow through
UVA to the Center. The Governor established the Center as a separate state agency; but, because Dr. Fowlkes was an employee of UVA at the time, Sandidge agreed to provide the support services needed for a brand new agency, because the center lacked the personnel to do this itself. Jay Scott served as the Center’s CFO from 1996 to 1998, taking it through the difficult start-up times. UVA still provides budget support, accounting, financial procurement, and payments; in short, the whole financial picture. Chris Fields, director of budgets for the Higher Education Center, liaisons with UVA on all fiscal matters (C. Fields, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

UVA provided Leonard Sandidge’s services as in-kind contributions. Their facilities management charged a percentage of the construction cost for Ken Smith’s oversight and Gary Dillon’s salary was paid out of the Center’s budget.

**A Corporate Learning Center**

In choosing a design for the Center, the Board did not want to simply construct a traditional building to accommodate programs. They understood the importance of the building facility as an intricate part of the success of the endeavor from both educational and economic development standpoints.

“What seems absolutely critical is for the leadership of our modern universities to recognize, as did Thomas Jefferson nearly two centuries ago, that the physical design of the campus makes a fundamental contribution to the pursuit of academic excellence” (Burns, 2001, p. 9).

In 1990 Judith Eaton, then Vice President of the American Council on Education, described the need for educators to take a fresh look, not only at the programming, hours, and degree structures being offered to college students, particularly adult learners, but she also urged these educators to examine the actual design and physical structure of the educational facilities. “College education is being reshaped by the forces of limited financing, economic change, shifts in life-style and life expectations, and the demographics of our population. A call is emerging
for new leaders with new ideas to adapt our institutions to changing external forces” (Eaton in Parnell, 1990, p. 193).

In a work on corporate universities, Meister (1998) had cautioned educators that business would respond to the adult learners’ needs if the academy didn’t. Adult learners today express needs for efficient consumer services, flexibility of scheduling, convenience, and availability of relevant courses. Higher education must respond to those needs or lose this audience, now the largest and segment of the higher education population. The building blocks in designing a corporate university are similar to those used to design an effective higher education consortium.
While a corporate university starts with a single corporation and seeks to determine the needs of its employees, the new higher education consortium seeks to determine the needs of area citizens who are potential students and surveys the needs of all area businesses. The steps in developing a corporate university are the following:

1. Form a Governance System
2. Create a Vision
3. Recommend the Scope and Funding Strategy
4. Create an Organization
5. Identify Stakeholders
   (Meister, 1998, pp. 65-69)

(Key roles of the governance system)

1. Identifying and prioritizing current and future learning needs
2. Linking training to these key business strategies
3. Ensuring consistent design, development, delivery, and measurement
4. Providing direction for the development of a philosophy for learning
   (Meister, 1998, p. 66)
Although not followed in order, all of the steps for developing a corporate university are consistent with steps taken in strategic planning of the SVHEC during its formative stages. The key roles of the governance system are consistent with some of the responsibilities that are shared by the Board of Trustees and the Center Executive Director. Whether intentionally or not, the Center and its programs and usage were developed along some of the same guidelines used in the corporate world. As a result, the SVHEC is appealing to the adult working student and to business, as evidenced by positive student feedback. Customer surveys for business-related building usage showed a 99% satisfaction level (D. Bourne, personal communication, April 18, 2001). Another measure is enrollment and facility usage by business and government.

Taking into account facility needs of adult learners, visiting both campuses and commercial facilities throughout the country, and working with Gary Dillon and the architects Dewberry & Davis from Raleigh, North Carolina, the concept for the center evolved from 1992 to 1995 when construction began. Fowlkes’ concept was that of a corporate learning center, an education mall with vendors (colleges) offering products (degrees) and the center providing support services all under one roof--one-stop shopping. Lemons recalled the concept and noted that UVA was the “anchor store in Rachael’s educational shopping mall” (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000). She recognized that the facility, the staff, and the hours needed to be flexible to accommodate the adult learner, their primary audience. “Customization is central to the operation at the center,” Fowlkes commented (personal communication, December 1, 2000).

As Thomas Jefferson planned the University of Virginia as an “Academical Village” and a community, he made “the critical link between the educational enterprise and the physical environment of the campus the key to his design” (Burns, 2001, p. 8).

Dr. Jay Lemons noted the importance of the design of the physical structure and the pleasant atmosphere of the campus of the SVHEC. Calling the building “phenomenal,” Lemons
said its quality and visibility “symbolize the commitment the Commonwealth has made to lifelong learning and educational opportunity” (personal communication, November 15, 2000).

Because the SVHEC was intended not only to educate primarily adult learners, many of whom were used to corporate atmospheres, but also to serve the business and legislative meeting needs of the regional and even the state, creating a corporate environment was a crucial consideration. At the SVHEC dedication in December 1997, Virginia Governor George Allen referred to the new facility as “‘a business center’ as well as an educational center” (Fields, 1997, p. 1A).

Changing Perceptions

Lemons noted that the SVHEC functions as a community meeting place. He also pointed out the building’s impact in facilitating and bringing groups and organizations from throughout our region together in a state-of-the-art facility. Bringing people from across the Commonwealth of Virginia to Abingdon has “dramatically impacted the perceptions others have about our region, its people, and our capabilities” (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000). Fowlkes agreed that reshaping the misconception that many people in the state have of Southwest Virginia residents being “barefooted and illiterate,” has been very satisfying. Referring to a statewide Technology Commission meeting held at the Center, she said “People were so amazed at the technology available to them here, the elegant catered dinner served, the reasonable cost to stay in a beautiful, historic hotel (The Martha Washington Inn).” But they were especially amazed that “It didn’t take four days in a covered wagon to travel here,” she added. Some flew their corporate jets into the New River Valley Airport, only five minutes from the Center (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).
Institutional Buy-In

Initially, the key universities and colleges were supportive of the project. Quillen cites Virginia Tech (VPI&SU) as an exception. More interested in expanding toward the northern part of the state, Tech’s President, Dr. McComas, seemed reluctant to Quillen to sign on or commit to the higher education center at first. He was trying to break out of the Southwest Virginia mold and felt this would have been “another nail in the coffin” to bind Virginia Tech to this region in the state’s eye (F. Quillen, personal communication, November 8, 2000).

At the May 1992 Board of Trustees meeting, representatives of Clinch Valley College, Virginia Tech, and the University of Virginia discussed programs and majors on both undergraduate and graduate levels. At this point, Dr. Gordon Davis of SCHEV stated that higher education was expected to grow significantly within the decade. He suggested that private colleges be contacted to invite them to be involved in the center. A motion was carried that the Board contact Virginia Intermont, Emory and Henry College, and Bluefield College and request they appoint ex-officio members to the board (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1992). As a result of this motion, the presidents of Emory and Henry College and Virginia Intermont College, both private Virginia institutions, attended the September 1993 Board meeting, along with a representative of George Mason University and the other colleges and universities represented at previous meetings (Minutes, September 23, 1993).

Because the Higher Education Center was a grassroots effort that sprang from community need, Fowlkes and other leaders wanted to identify these needs and encourage the colleges to deliver the courses and programs requested rather than having the prospective institutions dictate what they would offer. She wanted to offer citizens the means to obtain what they wanted. This approach has spawned new ideas like the Virtual Governor’s School, which provides classes at the center via a fiber-optic regional network to high school students.

Dr. Jay Lemons, former chancellor of UVA at Wise, helped bring programs to the Center, both through UVA and VA Tech. He also brought Clinch Valley College (now UVA at Wise) in
as a partner in the Higher Education Center, noting that his faculty were committed to “offering a quality program or none at all” (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000).

Senator Wampler acclaimed Old Dominion University with their Teletechnet systems as a real asset. Distance learning in general greatly expanded the classes that could be offered, he added (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2001).

Beginning in 1993, the college partners began reporting on their programs being offered through the SVHEC at various temporary locations. Virginia Tech offered a televised engineering course in Abingdon and at Eastman (a corporation located in Tennessee) as well as a televised MBA. UVA reported an expanded list of course offerings; George Mason announced plans to offer a doctorate in Community College Education, while VHCC and Clinch Valley College both reported increased enrollments (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 23, 1993).

Radford University became a partner and began offering programming in 1996, UVA reported high enrollments in teacher certification classes and was considering starting a master’s degree program in reading. Virginia Tech reported the completion of a cohort program in a neighboring county and the consideration of an educational leadership degree with a vocational education collaboration. Old Dominion University reported that they would offer nine undergraduate degrees at the community college through their Teletechnet connection (Minutes, May 20, 1996).

At this point, the programming was growing at such a speed that competition and duplication were a concern. The Program Committee was charged with the responsibility for dealing with these issues, but they would continue to be a concern from then on.

The first joint schedule was printed for the spring semester of 1997, listing all the partners’ programs and classes. In spring of 1998, the first semester that the partners occupied the building, 42 different degree programs were identified.

On July 1, 1998, Emory and Henry College joined the Higher Education Center as a partner, offering a master of arts in English and language arts; Delegate Joe Johnson sponsored
the legislation. The college’s dean of faculty, Dr. James Dawsey, said they were “excited to be a part of the cooperative arrangement” which he saw as “an asset” for both partners (“E & H, higher ed center,” 1998). Virginia Commonwealth University began offering programs in 1999 as a non-resident partner. ODU was made an official member in 2000.

The groundbreaking ceremony was said to symbolize “a new era of educational service for the citizens of Southwest Virginia” (Ceremony Program of SVHEC Ground-Breaking, Oct. 26, 1994). The growth of the Center and of its partnerships is evidence of the truth of that prediction.

An interesting note that illustrates how the consortium issue in Virginia has come full circle is that the membership of the steering committee appointed to address issues confronting continuing education in Virginia in 1972 as part of a plan introduced by Dr. Daniel E. Marvin, Jr. was composed almost exactly of the original member partners of the SVHEC in 1998 (UVA, VPI&SU, Radford, VCU, ODU, and William & Mary, as well as the community college system representative). Because VCU is now offering some programs and UVA-Wise did not exist yet, the only member that is different is William & Mary. Jointly, the partner institutions at the SVHEC now offer 67 degrees (C. Fields, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

**For a Few Dollars More**

Senator Wampler noted that the bond issue funds acquired through Ford Quillen’s actions fell short of the cost of the project. “As with any state project I’ve ever seen,” he noted, “projections were too low, and the building came in way above estimates; about $1.5 million over budget” (personal communication, January 5, 2001).

Almost from the beginning, it was clear that something would have to be eliminated from the building design. At the May 1992 Board meeting, Delegate Johnson expressed distress at the reconfiguration of the building drawings presented by the
Delegate Ford Quillen explained that, during the legislative session, the $9.9 million figure for the General Obligation Bond package was finalized. Due to additional projects needed throughout the state, Dr. Fowlkes pointed out that time had not permitted a redesign of the facility nor voting on the changes needed.

Delegate Johnson noted that the convocation center was “a very high priority for the local Board” (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1992). Delegates Quillen and Johnson called for a meeting of the building committee to determine how to best use the money from the bond package. Delegate Quillen told Johnson and others that additions could always be made later, but the important thing was to get the initial funding secured and the building underway (Minutes, May 20, 1992).

Delegate Quillen explained the procedure to the committee, whereby the building committee would make recommendations to the Center Board, which then would be presented to the VHCC Board and finally to the Virginia Community College System Board (Minutes, May 20, 1992). A resolution supporting the bond issue was approved and adopted at this meeting.

From the formation of the SVHEC in 1991, to the dedication ceremony in 1992, to the groundbreaking ceremony in 1994, to the grand opening in 1998, hundreds of people, millions of dollars, and myriad decisions were made. The dedication ceremony was held on May 20, 1992, following the board meeting where discussion had just taken place about the modifications necessary for the architectural plans for the proposed building, due to budget considerations. Still housed on Route 58 in Abingdon, the real Center was still architectural renderings on paper, and even these were undergoing redesign. Despite uncertainty and some controversy, Board members expressed optimism for the future, and Secretary of Education James Dyke noted the Commonwealth’s commitment to Southwest Virginia (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1992).

Jody Gibson, of Dewberry and Davis, reported in a September 1993 Board meeting that revised drawings were being submitted to the Department of Engineering and Buildings. The
next step would be working drawings (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 23, 1993). Plans were fine-tuned by a telecommunications expert and finally submitted in June 1994.

A land-use agreement and deed were drawn up between the State Board of Community Colleges and the Board of the SVHEC, because the Center would be constructed on land owned by the community college system. Board members also discussed a virtual library and other facility uses (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 31, 1994). Connie Bundy, a member of the State Board of Community Colleges, remembered her role in assisting in the approval of the land-use agreement and in obtaining approval for the design of the facility. Not all members were convinced that Abingdon should be the location of the Center or that it should be placed on the land with the community college. Apparently, T.A. Carter, who owned the Marriott Hotels in Roanoke and Blacksburg, was one who wasn’t convinced. “Some of us on the Board held our ground, and he came around,” she noted. “The center has made such a difference to our community. It’s something for which we can all be truly proud” (C. Bundy, personal communication, October 22, 2001).

**Creative Financing**

Commenting that Quillen’s retirement left him and Delegate Johnson “holding the bag,” Wampler said they had to come up with “creative financing” to acquire funds to add the needed technology and equipment to the “bricks and mortar” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2000).

In 1995, the Center applied for the Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant, which is usually used for building water systems or developing hard infrastructures, and pushed for it to be used for what was needed, he explained. He and Johnson “made a pretty compelling case” to Governor Allen that the SVHEC would bring economic development to the region, not only training workers in existing businesses, but also attracting new business to the area. Calling
the center a “showplace for the region,” Wampler emphasized the importance of “doing it right” from the beginning. “If you cut corners, and don’t design it with appropriate technologies, you are missing a tremendous opportunity” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2000).

Governor Allen was instrumental in obtaining a $500,000 Appalachian Regional Commission (ARC) grant to finish construction of a 100-seat, tiered executive auditorium at the center (Fields, 1997). Virginia Delegate Joe Johnson claimed that he and State Senator William Wampler used “‘wit and wile’” and traveled a “long and rough” road marked by legislative maneuvering to secure the added funding needed for the center’s completion (Fields, 1997). Abingdon town and Washington County, VA and the city of Abingdon provided a local match of $68,943 for the funds (Evans, 1997; Fields, 1997). Johnson thanked the taxpayers for “having enough faith in education” to make the center possible (Fields, 1997).

Governor Allen had started his career as a law clerk for United States District Judge Glen Williams in Abingdon in 1977, Wampler recalled. “He loved Southwest Virginia, and would have done anything to help us reach our goal. He understood what needed to be done” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2000).

Lemons also cited State Senator William Wampler’s work to secure the additional $500,000 needed to complete the promised executive auditorium feature for the center (J. Lemons, personal communication, November 15, 2000).

The 1997-1998 operating budget included an increase for operation and maintenance of the new facility, and a “Master Lease Finance Program” included $350,000 in state-allocated money for furniture and equipment for the building, according to Jay Scott, UVA’s Director of Budget (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 2, 1997).

In 2000, a bill was presented to the General Assembly to amend the Code of Virginia to declare the SVHEC an educational institution (Minutes, December 9, 1999). This statute
alleviated past problems in allocating Higher Education Equipment Trust Funds and other appropriations restricted to colleges and universities.

**And So It Began**

“I opted for Abingdon because I felt it is the hub of Southwest Virginia,” Delegate Ford Quillen, the keynote speaker during the groundbreaking ceremony on October 25, 1994, commented. “We can be a success if UVA and Virginia Tech, with their enormous resources, make the commitment that they should for this facility” (Evans, 1994, p.1A, 8A).

Bids were received for the construction process, starting in May 1995, and J.A. Street and Associates was awarded the contract (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 30, 1995). In September, Ken Smith, project manager, reported to the Board that, due to budgetary constraints, he had been required to trim $1.6 million from the building costs, $1.1 million of which he and the design team had been able to accomplish. This would result in downsizing the building. In addition, the remaining $500,000, formerly earmarked for furniture, fixtures, and equipment, was transferred to the construction line. A construction budget of $8,444,004 was approved (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 28, 1995).

The General Assembly voted $300,000 for operating and maintenance expenses and covered the $500,000 shortfall in construction money that had been allocated from the furnishings and equipment category (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1996).

Over 155 construction days were lost because of bad weather, according to Gary Dillon, who noted that Carl Gutschow of Dewberry and Davis helped him make those days constructive by reviewing drawings, discussing problems, and making suggestions for building materials (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1996).

November of 1997 saw last-minute details delaying the Center’s opening. A target date of January 1998 was set for occupancy. Ken Smith reported a total project cost of $120 per gross square foot [GSF] (Minutes, SVHEC Board, November 12, 1997).
In December, at the ribbon cutting, Governor Allen called the SVHEC “a solid investment,” adding that he didn’t like to support things unless they made good sense and that he always looked at things on a “bottom-line basis” (Dellinger, 1997, p. 1C). According to Ken Smith, that bottom line was $9.45 million, or $104.86 per square foot. Based on 90,000 square feet in the facility, Smith reported the total cost included 16 change orders (Minutes, June 9, 1998). (For the SVHEC floor plan/visual tour, go to its website at www.swcenter.edu).

**Technology Infrastructure**

In 1995, Delegate Bud Phillips introduced legislation to secure additional money to build fiber optics and V-Tel electronic classrooms into the SVHEC. Delegate Johnson and Senator Reasor supported the legislation (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 30, 1995).

In September, after conferring with Secretary of Education Beverly Segro, Dr. Fowlkes explained to the Board that one of the Center’s main goals was to get a technological infrastructure in place capable of transmitting classes across the Commonwealth (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 28, 1995).

By the time the facility opened in 1998, it operated four types of technology: satellite, ISDN telecommunications, ATM, and audio conferencing (Minutes, June 8, 1998). Further updating was continued to keep the technology aspect of the Center at the state-of-the-art level. “The entire facility is wired for satellite conferencing,” explained Mark Bordwine, systems engineer. “You can patch and switch video from room to room or pipe it in from a satellite” (Evans, 1998, p. 1B). Noting the difficulty in developing this type of technical environment, Bordwine noted that two years before, when they started to design it, there was a whole different industry standard.

With Abingdon an important part of the "technology corridor" identified by **U. S. Representative**
Rick Boucher, it was vital to have advanced technology to demonstrate to the technology-oriented customers the Congressman brought to the area. His “Showcase Southwest Virginia” program involves convincing employers that Southwest Virginia is an excellent place to relocate, train employees, employ an existing locally-trained workforce, and remain connected not only to other parts of the state but also to the world (R. Boucher, personal communication, January 17, 2001).

Explaining that, when the Center was being designed, those involved didn’t know the full extent to which technology would be an influential factor in the Center. “Technology is our modern highway,” she noted, “as the rivers were highways in the past.” The Center’s location on a highway (Interstate 81) was “critical to accessibility, and our broadband fiber optic connection is the backbone structure that enables us to interact, to network with the state, the country, the world” (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

A Winning Team

“Teamwork is the most essential element of any collaborative effort, especially those involving innovative projects. We have built diverse talents and backgrounds to implement the vision of former Delegate Ford Quillen” (Fowlkes, 1999, Bristol Herald Courier). Dr. Rachel Fowlkes was confirmed unanimously as permanent Executive Director at the September 1993 Board meeting, after a statewide search (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 23, 1993).

While Fowlkes emphasizes teamwork, everyone associated with the SVHEC acknowledged her leadership as primary to the success of the Center. Horgan (1999) stated that the director of a consortium must play a double role, “serving both as an arbiter of the status quo and as a visionary of collaborative potentiality” (p.19). And Johnson (1988), noted that the leaders must be visionary and “eternal optimists” (p. 193). Finally, Williams (2001) pointed out the necessity for the director’s sensitivity to the partner institutions and flexibility in helping all concerned for the sake of the consortium as a whole.
The staff of the SVHEC grew gradually, as needs were defined, qualified personnel identified, and funds approved. The names of staff members, along with their titles and starting dates, are provided below:

- Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, former UVA Southwest Virginia Center Director with a background in special education (1993)
- Ms. Christine Fields, Director of Budgets, former business administrative assistant with a background in public administration, purchasing (1996)
- Ms. Marcia Quesenberry, Director of Development (1999-2001)
- Mr. Jeff Webb, Chief Information Officer (1997)
- Mr. Mark Bordwine, Systems Engineer, (until 1997)

The resident partner institutions’ coordinators and directors include:

- UVA, Mr. Carl Clarke (moved from the old UVA site to new Center, 1997)
- UVA-Wise (former Clinch Valley College of UVA), Ms. Elizabeth Lowe (moved from the Clinch Valley site at VHCC to new Center, 1997)
- VPI&SU (Virginia Tech), Dr. Patricia Foutz (1997)
- RU, Ms. Jill Smeltzer (1998)
- ODU, Ms. Penny McCallum (1999, following Hope Hancock)

Additional staff working in the Center for various concerns includes:

- Mr. Bruce Mathews, Director of the Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network
- Mr. Mike Karmis, Director of the Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research
- Dr. John Collier, Director of the Linwood Holton Governor’s School

As budget allowed, new positions were added to the SVHEC staff to address technical, administrative, and economic development needs.

What’s In It for Me?

According to Neal (1988):
By cooperating with other similar or dissimilar colleges and universities, an institution can achieve more, do something better, or reduce the cost of an activity. These are three principal objectives that the consortium can help its members achieve. Every member institution sees the consortium in somewhat different terms, since each college or university has somewhat different needs. Each, however, expects to get something of value out of the time, energy, and financial resources that it invests in consortia membership and participation. (p. 3)

In the consortium of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, for a fee of $45,000 each, five resident institution partners receive a variety of benefits. Non-resident partners contribute differently, paying for classroom usage according to times that classes are offered, and usage-service fees such as long-distance phone calls, photocopying, postage. Some also offer in-kind contributions, such as library facilities. Other occupants besides the main partner institutions pay varying fees, such as the Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension ($31,560 for leased office space). Other entities are provided in-kind services, such as the Governor’s School and the Southwest Virginia Education and Training Network (D. Bourne, personal communication, April 18, 2001; Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 26, 1999). Although Fields and Fowlkes agreed that establishing partner fees was initially difficult, once a figure was accepted the member institutions signed on and were committed. All fees and services are detailed in a “Memo of Understanding,” signed by both parties.

Some services provided for these fees include:

1. Facilities and scheduling (utility services; cleaning and maintenance; shared access to classrooms, labs, grand hall and auditorium; shared faculty office space; audiovisual equipment; one administrative office and one workspace for support staff).

2. Furnishings, fixtures, and equipment (specific furniture and equipment in offices, labs, and classrooms).

3. Administrative, instructional, and student support services (public relations; budgeting and financial management; scheduling of the facility and special events; strategic planning with Board of Trustees, institutions and State government; mail pick-up,
distribution and delivery; rental of post office box and bulk mail permits; program
development and coordination; grant writer; science lab manager; video-tape for
televised courses; and general office supplies). Additional staffing includes staff of the
information desk and reception area in the administrative suite; 1.5 FTE librarians at the
VHCC library to serve the resident students and faculty.

4. Operation and maintenance services (normal utilities, general hazard insurance, custodial
services, maintenance services, parking, security grounds maintenance, snow removal,
and interior landscaping).

5. Others services provided include joint marketing, such as the Center’s brochure and
schedule, developed through a consultant and the Program Committee, mailed to all
alumni of all the partner institutions in the region. Surveys and other information-
gathering materials have also been generated and distributed for the partners. Web-page
design is another marketing service.

Fowlkes remarked that the design of the building and the location of the partners’ office
space were critical to the operation. Sharing a common administrative area, kitchen, copy
machine, even receptionist, “fosters a team spirit,” she noted. “Everything is shared, and no
one owns anything; there is no territory to stake out” (R. Fowlkes, personal communication,
December 1, 2000).

Having a hand in decision-making and an impact in problem solving is also an important
part of the strategy for peaceful coexistence and cooperation among partners, according to
Fowlkes. The Program Committee, composed of the site directors of the participating
institutions and Dr. Fowlkes, deals mostly with which programs of study each college will offer.
Sometimes they also discuss issues of concern for the partners and the Center, such as ways to
restructure inefficient processes (staff interviews, 2001).

Telephone system, maintenance and janitorial services, bookstore, rental fees, and
security were issues that had to be determined before the building was ready for occupancy (R.
Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000). She identified four areas of major concern prior to the facility’s opening: furnishing and equipping the building, staffing and operating the new facility, program development, and marketing and student recruitment.

A non-general fund was set up for revenue-generating activities such as partner fees, other building occupant fees, and facility-usage fees. Local telephone charges are paid by the center, while partners are billed for long-distance calls.

Initial start-up program money was allotted to assist partners beginning new programs. Later, program development money had to be applied for through a proposal to the Program Committee (D. Bourne, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

Some services were outsourced for cost-effectiveness; for example, library services were contracted out to VHCC library. A private company was contracted for outdoor landscaping and another for plant maintenance within the building. A facility management company provides maintenance and custodial services.

**Finances: How the Budget Works**

Chris Fields, director of budgets for the SVHEC, serves as the liaison to the state department of the budget. She works in conjunction with the University of Virginia, which is the fiscal agent. Fields oversees debts, and deals with accounts payable and receivable, purchasing, and inventory. She handles day-to-day operating budgets, handles the state appropriation, and files all documents with the state. She accompanies the Executive Director of the Center twice a year to assessment meetings with the Virginia Department of Budget and Planning. In these meetings, goals, initiatives, and issues are discussed and the state budget office provides guidance on spending issues. She has seen the budget grow from $475,000 to $2.2 million (C. Fields, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

The state appropriation funds are called the General Fund, and the current appropriation is $1,695,375. The Non-General Fund appropriation is $402,000. This includes resident
institution annual fees, College for Older Adults fees, conference revenue, leased office space, revenue from E-Commerce Project, and miscellaneous revenue, according to Fields (April 18, 2001). Grant funds add another $92,711, for total revenue of $2,190,086. Part of the Non-General Fund is set up to provide services for businesses, which, in turn, are billed for; thus, it is essentially a cost-recovery account.

The distribution of the funds within the total budget is as follows:

- General Funds = 77%
- Institutional Fees = 10%
- Grants = 4%
- Other Revenue = 9%

(C. Fields, personal communication, April 18, 2001)

Student tuition varies according to the individual educational institution, but in 1999, Governor Allen proposed a 20% rollback in tuition for all Virginia public colleges and universities, and the General Assembly appropriated state funds to accommodate the lowered costs (Graham, 1999). This speaks to the commitment of the state to provide access to public higher education.
CHAPTER 6
CONSIDERATIONS FOR COMMUNITIES

Economic Development: Bonus or Driving Force

A 1986 report from the American Association of State Colleges and Universities entitled, *Issues in Higher Education and Economic Development*, concluded that higher education institutions today constitute “the single most significant resource that can influence economic development” (Parnell, 1990, p. 53). Demonstrating this “key emerging role for colleges and universities to play in the decade ahead (1990s),” Parnell posed a new economic development paradigm (p. 59).

Employers

(Adapted from Parnell, 1990, p. 59).

Figure 2. New Economic Development Triangle
The SVHEC is an example of how this paradigm can work, with the cooperation of colleges, employers, local and state agencies. The collaborative efforts paid off in building the Center and in creating economic opportunity through the Center once it was completed.

The SVHEC was born of a community’s need for education and for increased development. An article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* explained that university centers have often developed as a result of a community need, then identifying a model and getting institutions to come on board (Schmidt, 1999, Concept).

As an example of the influential power and accompanying responsibility of education to produce results, Noftsinger (1996) stated, “Higher education can and should play an integral role in the shaping of society for the future, in order to achieve the synergistic economies of scale of society’s educational investment” (p.54).

At the September 1993 SVHEC Board meeting, Dr. George Johnson of George Mason University delivered an address on the importance of higher education to economic development. “In the global competition of our time, we are going to have to create partnerships wherever we can. And in an era of knowledge-driven economies, partnerships in which higher education becomes a major player are crucial” (Johnson, 1993). And, according to Aslanian (2001), “Education has become the key to the future of the economy” (p. 5).

But this is not a new concept. Indeed, Virginia can go back to 1963 to a study by Edwin E. Holm, “The Importance of Education in the Economic Development of Virginia” to see a connection made between education and economic development in the state (McKeon, 1976). Also, the Association of Governing Boards has identified economic development as one of its ten public policy issues for higher education.

While sponsoring the 9th Congressional District Local Government Summit at the SVHEC, U.S. Representative Rick Boucher said, “Here we have reaped the benefits of regional
cooperation; we must continue to work together to advance economic development throughout the region, and to boost local economies” (O’Nan, 2000).

The association between education and economic development and the need for strong partnerships are apparent.

The mere existence of higher education in a community, state or region is no longer an acceptable response to queries about contributions to workforce and economic development. Effective leadership and equal partnerships hold the key to success for the academy. The opportunity for Virginia higher education to lead in the new economy should be happily and strategically embraced. (Noftsinger, 1996, p. 54)

Community Focus Group

The researcher wished to understand what factors would be important considerations for communities that were faced with the challenge of supporting the establishment of such a Center in their locality. Therefore, on October 3, 2000, in a focus group consisting of 10 community leaders, the researcher asked the following question: “If your community were considering constructing a higher education consortium facility which would house several colleges and university partners, what would be some questions that you would want to ask?” The resulting questions and concerns were:

1. Who would fund it (public or private)?
2. What would be its mission/focus?
3. What benefits would the facility offer the community?
4. What colleges/universities would offer classes?
5. What would be the service area for recruitment?
6. Would the facility formulate varied courses to meet the needs of business and industry?
7. What types/levels of classes would be offered? Graduate or undergraduate or both?
8. How would it be marketed?
9. Did the decision to consider building such a facility come from a demonstrated need in the community?
10. Could existing facilities be used instead of building a new one, in order to save money?
11. Who would be the controlling/governing entity?
12. How would the center benefit the community?
13. What would the economic impact be?

The concerns of the focus group were also concerns of those involved in the early stages of the SVHEC. Establishing the method of financing was a major concern. The dual role of education and economic development surfaced in these questions, as did the importance of the center developing out of a demonstrated community need. A fourth theme was the reciprocal role of the center and the community’s contribution to each other.

SVHEC Staff, Partners, Students Interview Insights

Individual interviews with the SVHEC’s key staff personnel, partner institution directors, instructors, and students yielded the following information and opinions:

1. Consortia were a better choice than extended campus centers to meet needs.

In general, the principal investigator found that Higher Education Consortia are certainly one option for the future of continuing education. Most subjects agreed that cost-effectiveness and sharing of facility space, staffing, equipment, services and expertise were a major advantage of a consortium over an extended-campus center for a single university.

2. Consortia were most effective when they grew from a community need.

Most agreed that the success of the institution was related to the identification of a need by the community itself rather than something imposed upon them.

3. Consortia enhanced economic development in the regions where they existed.
Community leaders, educators, and legislators all mentioned the cross connections between education and economic development. Most stated that given a demonstrated educational need for higher education in a community, the establishment of a consortium center would be beneficial. By offering a variety of degrees and courses from a collection of institutions, it would not only benefit the citizens of that community, but also induce new business and industry to locate there while providing existing business and industry with access to trained, degreed professionals. As several subjects pointed out, the domino effect of economic development grew from the catalyst of the SVHEC in Abingdon. Not only has it showcased Southwest Virginia to other parts of the state and the country (R. Boucher, personal communication, January 12, 2001), but it has also spawned other new facilities like the Stonemill Research and Technology Park (F. Moore, personal communication, September 11, 2000). The center has elevated the stature of this part of the state and helped gain respect for its citizens.

4. Consortia needed solid funding.

Funding was a crucial factor in the success of the SVHEC and for any consortium. Establishing the method for funding must precede the programming or the center will never get off the ground, according to many. Ongoing legislative support, not only for funding, but also for other support issues was named as a priority by many.

5. Consortia need well-designed facilities geared to their audience.

If a structure is to be constructed or remodeled, as opposed to a consortium coming together in an existing facility, a definite need is an excellent design and construction team. An analysis of needs of the expected audience should influence facility design. Because the centers are often designed for use primarily by adult students, many emphasized the importance of considering the needs of adult learners in the design of facilities as well as programs.

6. Consortia need strong leadership.
All agreed that *strong effective leadership and a highly motivated staff* committed to partnership and collaboration rather than territorialism and competition was necessary to avoid conflicts and create a positive atmosphere.

7. Consortia need public support.

Public support, not only initially but through every step of the process and continuing after the center opened, was cited as another essential ingredient. *A sense of ownership exhibited by the community’s use of the facility both for educational and community enhancement purposes* was another important point mentioned by several subjects.

8. Consortia should offer programs that respond to a demonstrated need.

With regard to programming, many pointed out the need for *commitment by all partner institutions to offer the types of degrees and courses for which the community had demonstrated a need*. In addition, the individual institutions must *avoid duplication of programs and strive to complement each other’s offerings*, thus providing students with options. *Transfer of credits must be made as easy as possible*, with institutions assisting students in acquiring classes from partner colleges whenever necessary to complete degree needs. The Program Committee meets twice a month at the SVHEC, once for operational issues and once for program issues. All agreed that the meetings are crucial to ward off duplication and keep members cooperating.

9. Consortia need support services.

Support services were noted by many as vital to the success of the students and, thus, the Center. *Caring, helpful staff members, consumer-oriented and dedicated to responding to and even anticipating student needs* were also identified by the educators and students as elements of success.
Some Cautionary Thoughts: The Mayor’s Perspective

In a telephone interview with Dr. French Moore, current vice mayor and former mayor of Abingdon, Virginia (September 11, 2000), a similar question was asked. He not only had some similar questions as those voiced by the focus group a month later, but he also had specific concerns identified through his association with the development of the SVHEC. Asked what questions he would want addressed before a community should begin constructing a center like the SVHEC, he responded that he would not only ask about financing, but would also ask who would make up the difference. He noted that the town of Abingdon and Washington County contributed $68,943 as matching funds for the ARC grant. The town and a local hotel had originally applied for the grant but were unable to raise matching funds. The Center then applied for the grant and the town and county funds provided a match. Some local officials complained that they were giving the money to the Center just to get the convention center, which they were originally promised by the planning team. The town and county voted to give the matching funds to the SVHEC to enable the auditorium to be built. Deeming the SVHEC “tremendously successful,” he noted that the “Richmond mentality” was often to “forge ahead and worry about gaining the means to pay for it [a project] later” (F. Moore, personal communication, September 11, 2000).

He iterated the importance of a real identifiable need in the community as the basis for such a project. He also pointed out the importance of identifying the community’s expectations from such a center.

Discussing enrollment projections, he pointed out the value of having the VHCC students readily available on site as an immediate source of undergraduate transfer. In turn, the community college needed a large auditorium for graduations and other large gatherings, such as the Arts Array series programs; without the ARC grant and the additional community support, this expectation would not have been met.
Hailing *economic development as a high priority* of the Center’s mission, Moore cited the research park and the small business incubator as prime examples of the success of this aspect of the Center on the community (F. Moore, personal communication, September 11, 2000).

The town of Abingdon purchased 74 acres for $1.3 million to construct the “Stonemill Research and Technology Park” for service-oriented firms, rather than industrial or manufacturing ones. Located next to the SVHEC, the park will have a direct relationship with the center, providing opportunities for hands-on learning and internships, and the county’s 40,000-square-foot small business incubator being developed by the Washington County, Virginia Chamber of Commerce which will be built adjacent to the SVHEC on a six-acre site within the park (Tobelmann, 2000). In October of 2001, the Abingdon Town Council voted to approve a $2 million loan from Suntrust Bank for the future technology park (Cooper, 2001).

**County Administration Thoughts**

Because economic development was clearly an expectation of those involved in considering a center, the researcher asked Christianna Parker, assistant county administrator for Washington County, Virginia, her opinion on the economic impact of the SVHEC on this area.

Parker recalled that before the center was built the only large meeting space in Abingdon or the surrounding Washington County area was located at the Martha Washington Inn. “While it was beautiful, it was limited and lacked the high-tech impact that businesses needed” (C. Parker, personal communication, May 21, 2001). Because economic development relies highly on meeting space that can help showcase the area to potential business and industry prospects, the Center is “ideal” for this, according to Parker. Noting its regional appeal, she pointed out that now the Center hosts countless local, regional, and state events, like the “All America City” conference and the Global Information Systems (GIS) conference. According to Parker, “The Center has become a potential entity in itself.”
But the potential is greater than the region or state, because “teleconferencing has made boundaries no object,” she continued. “It doesn’t matter if they are in Bristol or Brussels, a pool of applicants can connect to a potential employer, or a business can meet with its affiliate offices,” she explained. It creates a “competitive advantage,” which allows this area to compete throughout the country (C. Parker, personal communication, May 21, 2001).

Workforce Development

A needs assessment was developed by the SVHEC Center staff in 1995 and sent to all businesses in Washington County, Virginia and the city of Bristol, as well as to the students of VHCC to determine additional course offerings that would cater to the wishes of businesses, as well as identifying economic opportunities. Dr. Fowlkes noted that the results of this survey would be used to determine new programming “to develop citizens with the correct training for the economic development of Southwest Virginia” (Minutes, May 30, 1996, p. 3). Later in 1996, Dr. Fowlkes developed a needs assessment to determine graduate courses and particularly scheduling that met needs of business (Minutes, SVHEC Board, May 20, 1996).

Educators and leaders in business often consult and collaborate for mutual benefit. In 1995, SVHEC Board of Trustees member, Dr. Jay Lemons, chancellor of Clinch Valley College, attended a meeting of the Virginia Business Higher Education Council, comprised of 30 business leaders who had joined with presidents of Virginia colleges to determine how higher education can be more efficient, more economical, more responsive to the needs of business, to assist economic growth in the Commonwealth (Minutes, SVHEC Board, September 28, 1995).

If the SVHEC is an example of what such collaboration can achieve, then, in the words of Wilbert Bryant, Virginia Secretary of Education in 1998, the residents of Southwest Virginia really are the “‘true winners’” as he called them in ceremonies marking the Grand Opening of the SVHEC.
Referring both to the increased educational opportunities which would “enrich lives” and also to the “boon in the region’s economic development,” Secretary Bryant explained that the center would help attract new businesses which tend to “locate in areas where workers are well-trained” and where their management and families can pursue additional learning (Drummond, 1998).

While speaking at the Center’s ribbon cutting, Governor George Allen remarked, “Education and good jobs go ‘hand in hand’” (Evans, December 2, 1997, p. 1B). He also declared that the Center was an indication that “Southwest Virginia is Open for Business,” while he unfurled a banner emblazed with that sentiment. Dr. Fowlkes and local legislators asked Governor Allen to take the banner and the sentiment back to Richmond as a message to the state. He complied and draped the state capitol building with the banner.

At a legislative breakfast in 1998, held at the SVHEC, Delegate Bud Phillips called economic development the “number one issue on the minds of citizens of Southwest Virginia” (“Legislative breakfast,” 1998). Iterating that “economic development is linked to education,” Phillips expressed the belief that Southwest Virginia was “up to the challenge” of recruiting businesses to the region and training workers to meet the increasing needs of business in other parts of the state as well (p. 5A). Senator Wampler, in quoting Booker T. Washington, echoed the importance of workforce development at the Center by saying, “Educate them so they are employable” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2001).

Meeting Place

Delegate Joe Johnson noted that the Center would provide an excellent meeting facility for convention planners; and, during his tenure on the Board, a usage policy and fee schedule was developed before the Center opened, which outlined policies for the Center to be used by businesses, government, and community, as well as educators. Congressman Boucher noted that his office used the Center often and added that he had hosted at least 10 conferences, with
approximately 200 people in attendance at each since the Center opened in 1998 (R. Boucher, personal communication, January 17, 2001).

Between January and June of 1998, the first semester of occupancy of the new facility, the SVHEC hosted 113 different events. During the next calendar year (1999), over 601 events took place in the facility, with 48,498 participants (D. Bourne, personal communication, April 18, 2001). By 1999, the SVHEC had developed partnerships with agencies for mutual marketing efforts and increased economic development of the region. Some of these agencies included: Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau, the Southwest Virginia Tourism Association, and several area Chambers of Commerce (Minutes, December 9, 1999). Plans were also formed to begin an E-Commerce incubator for local businesses.

**Assessing the Impact**

The increasing success of the Center’s goal to provide a premier meeting facility was evidenced during calendar year 2000, when 926 events served 65,288 participants at the Center. The impact as recorded by the Abingdon Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACVB) was that total gross receivables increased by nearly 11% from FY 1996-1997 to FY 1997-1998 and that inquiries about the Abingdon area increased by 64% from FY 1997-1998 to FY 1998-1999 (ACVB, 2000, SVHEC events calendar reports).

As an example, the impact of a single event at the SVHEC, the Graphic Information Systems (GIS) conference in 2000, was judged to be over $100,000:

- 425 people attended for 2 days
- 250 people were overnight stays
- 250 overnights @ $150 per night x 2 nights = $75,000
- 1,800 cups of coffee @ $0.75 = $1,350
- 2 conference meals = $18,000
- 4½% VA state tax = $3,375
4% town tax = $3,000

(ACVB, 2000)

According to Travis Perry, Project Administrator, Southwest Virginia Offices for UVA’s Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, no formal impact studies have been done to date, but the example above shows the obvious impact of a single event hosted at the Center (T. Perry, personal communication, January 17, 2000).

On a daily basis, local vendors like the following are economically rewarded for their association with the SVHEC: National Linen, Kwik-Kafe, Sysco, The Office Place, local utilities companies, and local caterers. Indirect impact can be seen in local hotels/motels/B&B’s, restaurants, gas stations, merchants (T. Perry, personal communication, January 17, 2000).

**Diversity of Events**

Organizations hosting events at the Center include educational institutions or groups; local, state, and government groups; corporate groups; and non-profit organizations. During calendar year 2000, the breakdown of events by category of sponsor was as follows:

- Higher education = 34.5%
- Corporate = 12.5%
- Non-Profit = 19.5%
- State Agency = 20.25%
- K-12 Education = 10.5%
- Federal/Local Government = 3%

For fiscal year 2000 (July 1, 1999-June 30, 2000) the Center hosted 693 events; for fiscal 2001 (July 1, 2000-June 30, 2001) there were 804 events.

Numerous events have taken place at the Higher Education Center since its opening in 1998 representing categories such as education, government, business, tourism, health, and the arts. A sampling of events hosted by the SVHEC shows the diversity, range, and scope of the
Center’s capabilities as well as its ability to attract programs from throughout the state.

Virginia’s Ninth Congressional District Internet Conference, 2000; Ninth Congressional District Local Government Summit, 2000; Tri-Cities TN/VA All-America City 5-Star Regional Showcase, 2000; Regional Health Services Committee of the Appalachian Consortium, 1999; Mistletoe Market, 1999, 2000, 2001; VA Supreme Court Justice lecture, 1999; State Forestry Conference, 1999; Governor’s Commission on Information Technology, 1999; multi-state Appalachian Studies conference, 1999; Regional Garden Faire, 1999; Commonwealth Transportation Board, 1999; VA Senate Finance Committee, 1999; Burley Tobacco Farmers conference, 1998; a video teleconference with the state Secretary of Technology and the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, 1998; the Appalachian Triad conference, 1999, the Governor’s Commission on Education and Technology, a state-wide event, 1999, and the Kingsport Symphony, 2000 and 2001 (SVHEC records of events calendars and various newspaper articles from archives).

Innovative Programs

Among the innovations that have spun off from the original goals of the SVHEC was the A. Linwood Holton Governor’s School for Southwest Virginia, the first virtual school ever formed in the state, which links over 120 high school students from 12 counties in Southwest Virginia electronically by computer, while their instructor teaches from the SVHEC. Students receive a “futuristic” curriculum of mathematics, science and technology (Fields, 1998).

Senator William Wampler commented about a recent visit to the VGS, “The high school kids were logged on to Harvard’s telescope in real time, measuring the moons around Mars. What my sister and I did in our day was fight for the Encyclopedia Britannica’s transparencies on skeletons, organs, and muscles. That was the latest in technology then” (W. Wampler, personal communication, January 5, 2001). The state-of-the-art technology in the Higher Education Center used by the Virtual Governor’s School is one factor that put Southwest Virginia on the
map for visiting business people attending a technology conference at the Center, according to Wampler.

The Southwest Virginia Education and Training Center connects over 40 high schools and colleges in Southwest Virginia through two-way interactive instruction. It houses the network for the Governor’s School (Dellinger, 1997).

The Youth Technology Program, initiated by the SVHEC, is open to high school students or graduates who plan to attend college. It allows them to work as interns with local businesses (Webb, personal communication, 2001).

The College for Older Adults (COA) has brought a wealth of non-credit programs to the community. Managed by the director, Dr. Linda Campany, designed for learners age 50 or older, the program offers short, non-credit courses in a relaxed, daytime format. For a membership fee of $30, members can take one or more classes.

The E-Commerce project will serve area business and industry and the business incubator, located in the planned business park, will provide for the needs of service-related businesses (C. Parker, 2001, personal communication, May 21, 2001; F. Moore, personal communication, September 11, 2000).

The Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research is another new initiative housed in the Center. The Virginia General Assembly created the VCCER in 1977, as an interdisciplinary study, research, information, and resource facility for the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is directed through Virginia Tech (VPI&SU) and has offices in Blacksburg, Alexandria, and Abingdon (in the SVHEC). Its goals are to research, coordinate, and disseminate energy and coal-related information and issues and examine socio-economic implications related to energy and associated environmental impacts. The local director is Mike Karmis.

One of the most successful achievements of the SVHEC has been, to employ the sentiments of Gaza & Eller (1998), adopting a community-based framework to increase
economic growth and educational access. “Thinking outside the box” (Watson & Jordan, 1999) has encouraged innovative solutions to local business challenges.

Summary

For community leaders seeking solutions to economic development issues, while recognizing the importance of educational opportunities, consortia may be viable options. This chapter demonstrates the added bonus of economic development that the SVHEC has added to the community of Abingdon, Virginia and surrounding area. Noting the list of questions that the focus group developed, communities might use them as a starting point for discussions. Reviewing the results of information gained from current staff members might help community representatives to gain insider views of a working consortium. Seeing the perspective of a community leader who was involved in the development of the SVHEC, as well as that of a county administrator who came after the fact, may give communities the perspective of those who have been in their situation and have found a successful solution. Because the SVHEC resulted in impacts beyond those originally envisioned by many, the results of this endeavor may offer ideas to other communities in their planning stages. While no two communities are alike, case studies such as this provide information and suggestions for consideration.
CHAPTER 7

CONSIDERATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

Benchmarking with Historical Data

While community leaders have one perspective, educators and administrators of universities wishing to serve a community or a region have another. Providing educational opportunities in a cost-effective manor is of primary concern for most leaders of the academic world. As researchers, administrators would likely start by searching the literature for criteria to serve as a starting point for their consideration of forming consortia. Noting how the SVHEC meets each set of measurements may provide projections of expectations for their own institutions.

Historically, over the last 30 years, several key figures in higher education consortia-related research have developed lists of factors concerning consortia. Through personal observation and evidence gathered during interviews with consortium personnel and member institutions’ administrative staff, the researcher concluded that with respect to the following examples, the SVHEC possesses the defining characteristics, meets the established quality criteria, and its member institutions exhibit the identified traits necessary for success.

Patterson (1970) identified five criteria to differentiate higher education consortia from other types of partnerships or arrangements among academic institutions. He concluded that a consortium was: a voluntary organization; comprised of three or more member institutions; offering multi-academic programs; employing at least one full-time professional to administer the programs of the consortium; and the member institutions must contribute an annual fee or other evidence of a long-term commitment. The SVHEC meets each condition. Although the Virginia legislature established it, the member institutions are voluntary partners.

At the same time, Grupe (1970) listed six areas of concern for young consortia in terms of cooperation: (1) cooperation as an abstraction and cooperation as a reality may be
significantly different; (2) institutional autonomy can often impede interinstitutional cooperation; (3) unrealistic and idealistic expectations of cooperation can lead to frustrations; (4) the search for identity can be problematic; (6) member institutions sometimes expect the consortium staff to develop their long-range plans and programs; (5) financial support can be a major stumbling block.

All of the SVHEC consortium staff and member institutions’ staff agreed that Grupe’s list constituted potential areas of concern for them either in dealing with their employing institutions or with other university or consortium personnel (SVHEC, staff interviews, April & September, 2001). For example, even with the best intentions, competing for the same students, or wishing to offer the same programs can impede cooperation among partners. Although the member institutions disagreed that they expected the SVHEC staff to develop programs or plans for them, some stated that they should receive more support services, while few were interested in contributing to the Center’s overall operational needs in addition to their own responsibilities to their institutions. All cited cooperation versus competition and funding issues as potential problems for consortia.

Patterson (1974) proposed a list of assumptions that institutions should agree upon before forming a consortium. He determined that the consortium should: (1) improve the quality and range of education available to students through each of its institutions; (2) encourage each institution to preserve its identity and maintain as much autonomy as the constraints of serious cooperation permit; (3) minimize duplication of education programs and redundancy of facilities and resources; (4) strive to control institutional operating costs by collective means wherever possible; (5) provide central financial assistance to members for collective needs; provide planning, development, and coordination for new collective educational programs responsive to changing needs and new clientele in the area; and (6) have authority equivalent to its responsibility for leadership through its executive administration and its governance (pp. 108-109).
While the constituents of the SVHEC did not consider these specific factors as a part of their structural planning criteria, many of these principles evolved as the consortium was formed and developed. When presented with this list, consortium and academic institutional staff agreed that most of Patterson’s assumptions were valid ones for consortia, and that, in general, all were practiced by the SVHEC (SVHEC, staff interviews, September, 2001).

Grupe (1975) later constructed a list of quality attributes that, in his opinion, distinguish the best consortia from the mediocre. He determined that they are: creative; programmatic; expert; academic in orientation, high risk; of importance to the institutions; open-ended; of tangible impact; permit broad access by faculty and students; and reinforce and strengthen existing programs.

Again, when presented with the list, personnel agreed that the SVHEC met each element of the criteria (SVHEC, staff interviews, September, 2001).

Baus (1988), in analyzing educational consortia, identified six characteristics: (1) consortia are derivative organizations, deriving their missions from those of the member institutions; (2) they have unique characters reflective of the mix of their member institutions; (3) consensus formation is the basis for consortium activity; (4) consensus is an expression of institutional will; (5) cooperation is based upon mutual and individual gain; (6) success is based on two principles: the acceptance of each member of its individual limitations, and the realization that through consensus formation each institution can exceed those individual limits.

While the consortium and university personnel agreed with most of these criteria, there was some discussion of whether the SVHEC’s missions drove the consortium and the members helped to fulfill them, or that, conversely, as Baus’ statement number one expressed, the consortium derives its missions from those of its member institutions (SVHEC, staff interviews, September, 2001). Sometimes performing a “check-and-balance” act, the Executive Director has to maintain an even keel between the needs of the region and those of the partners.
Finally, when the State Council of Continuing Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV) submitted its plan for regional consortia in 1972, it included certain responsibilities for the consortia. Twelve of the following 13 provisions are practiced by the SVHEC today. The exception is number 13; the executive director reports to the Secretary of Education for Virginia, rather than SCHEV, because the Center is a state agency.

Responsibilities for each consortium include the following:

1. To access the needs for continuing higher education programs in the consortium region.
2. To provide maximum higher education opportunities for continuing education students.
3. To encourage mutual acceptance and interchangeability of course credits among participating institutions.
4. To facilitate the earning of degrees at all levels by continuing education students.
5. To make efficient and appropriate use of the resources of all state-supported institutions offering courses within the consortium region.
6. To approve or disapprove specific course offerings by member institutions engaged in continuing higher education activities in the consortium region.
7. To publish periodically an announcement, listing offerings available in the consortium region for continuing education students.
8. To ensure counseling services by participating institutions for continuing education students.
9. To ensure the maintenance of academic records by participating institutions for continuing education students.
10. To facilitate inter-institutional cooperation in the development of community service programs for the consortium region.
11. To evaluate, where appropriate, the effectiveness of continuing education offerings and activities conducted through the consortium.
12. To report semi-annually to the State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) the ongoing activities of the consortium.
13. To report to the SCHEV on the desirability and need for educational services from state-supported institutions not engaged in continuing higher education within the consortium region when educational expertise is not available within the member institutions of the consortium.

(Taken from SCHEV Plan, 1972, pp. 3-4).
Staff Survey Instrument Results

In recent research, Williams (2001) identified factors affecting interinstitutional agreements and consortia in higher education. Using those factors, I developed and administered a survey instrument to SVHEC staff members and partner institution staff members, as noted in Chapter 3. To view the survey instrument, see (Appendix D).

The purpose was to solicit their impressions about the factors responsible for the success of the SVHEC, to supplement information that had surfaced in the interviews and to allow for a broader mix of opinions than the interviews allowed. A list of factors taken from Williams’ (2001) study, *Factors Affecting Interinstitutional Agreements and Consortia in Higher Education* was distributed to the participants, who were asked to do the following two things: (1) Check any factors which they felt the SVHEC exhibited, and (2) Choose the 10 factors that they thought were most important to the success of the SVHEC.

The 10 factors with the highest occurrence were:

1. #13, There is a strong consortium leader.
2. #7, There is a strong organizational structure.
3. #33, Regional needs are identified and addressed.
4. #17, Opportunities for students are enhanced.
5. #21, There are clear benefits to each participating institution.
6. #32, Systematic communication occurs.
7. #2, The objective is important to all participating institutions.
8. #10, Institutional leaders provide vision and support.
9. #5, Personnel provide stability and continuity.
10. #3, Adequate funding is available.

The factors participants checked most often as being ones that they felt the SVHEC exhibited were: #1,3,4,5,9,11,13,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,24,29,30,32, and 33. Those least checked
were: #6,8,12,14, and 31, indicating some concern for lack of communication, trust, unambiguous decision making, partner institutional commitment, and competition for the same students.

A Collective Positive Response

During formal and informal interviews and participant observation, overall positive impressions of the Center were conveyed by all staff members. In noting the best aspect of the Center, several staff members noted factors that were listed in the surveys. For example, several mentioned the strong leadership of the Executive Director, noting her helpfulness and concern for the individual partners. Others noted her ability to maintain a positive balance among the partners, even in the face of conflicting or competing goals. Many mentioned the pleasant atmosphere that was related to this balance, calling it “stimulating” and “exciting.” Others pointed out the partner staff and Center staff’s cooperative efforts as supportive of each other’s needs, resulting in everyone more easily reaching his or her individual goals, which, in turn, enhanced the consortium. Partner staff members noted their appreciation of the efforts of Center staff specialists who provided “vital support services” including “troubleshooting and handling arrangements,” thus freeing up the partner staff to focus on their duties. The partner staff members were referred to as “pioneers” exhibiting “progressive thinking.”

The progressive, stimulating environment was echoed by some through the “awesome technology” and the development of exciting programs such as E-commerce, which helps businesses. Many mentioned the economic development aspect of the Center, noting that the consortium helped train people and keep them in this area. This related to the students, especially adult learners whose needs were being well addressed, many stated, by the facility, the availability of classes at night and on weekends, and by a responsive staff.
Responses from College Presidents

On the surveys, several partner staff members ranked vision and support by institutional leaders as important to a consortium. Many also listed the importance of funding, of identifying regional needs, and of incentives or benefits for each institution. In telephone interviews, followed by e-mail or faxed responses, the presidents or their designees of SVHEC consortium partner institutions responded to a list of questions. Many of their responses repeated some of the same factors noted by the staff members.

When asked their college or university’s role in the formation of the SVHEC, VHCC noted the donation of land for the facility and the early involvement in discussions, needs assessments, and program planning. Radford and UVA, as well as UVA at Wise (then Clinch Valley College), also participated from the start in these discussions and planning sessions. Others, such as Virginia Tech came on board later, while Emory and Henry, a private local college became a non-residential partner after the Center was developed and operating. All mentioned earlier attempts to address the needs of area residents were less than satisfactory and that joint efforts through the consortium had benefited area citizens greatly.

Their motivations stemmed from the dual goals of serving the region and increasing their institutional presence and enrollments. VHCC and Clinch Valley College wished to partner to enable the community college students to obtain a bachelor’s degree on-site. The consortium fit their needs while providing additional choices from other partner institutions as well as graduate options for those students who intended to continue their degree pursuit. The Center would provide VHCC access to a large auditorium needed for events and graduation ceremonies.

Several presidents noted increased visibility and enhanced enrollments in the area through participation in the consortium. Sharing resources was another benefit to all partners,
allowing the improvement of services in a cost-effective manner, and the increase of program offerings, seminars, and professional development opportunities. VHCC noted many examples of resource sharing providing enhanced assets such as science lab, bookstore, and library expanded facilities and well as increases in personnel to staff them.

While none of the presidents listed disadvantages of partnering, several mentioned challenges such as the constant effort needed to communicate, coordinate, and resolve issues. Other challenges noted included the rule prohibiting duplication of programs being restrictive, the difficulty of providing financial and human resources to fledging programs while they developed, and the divided loyalties facing partner staffs. All claimed funding as a challenging issue. Many were quick to point out, however, that these issues would be present for individual institutions not participating in a consortium. Most expressed the belief that the advantages far outweighed the challenges and allowed the partners to accomplish more collectively than they could individually.

These benefits extended to the community and the region, as many noted through expanded programs, such as meetings, trade shows, home and garden shows, even beauty pageants. VHCC noted that these events brought travel and tourism dollars to the area, while reducing the need for residents to travel to other areas. Continuing education for professionals, increased meeting facilities for businesses, and enhanced opportunities for cultural events were also mentioned. Radford noted that more educational opportunities had increased the level of educational attainment of area residents, while increasing the perceived a value of education for their citizens. UVA mentioned that area teachers found professional development more accessible through the Center, while VPI &SU noted a greater support for the K-12 infrastructure. Emory and Henry stated that economic development “was and remains the
primary contribution to the region.” In the key interviews discussed earlier, UVA at Wise Chancellor Lemons noted the area residents’ increased perception of self-worth and realization of the value of their community that the Center has fostered.

Higher Education Consortia, the SVHEC, and the Adult Learner

The adult learner (25 and older) comprises 35% of the total undergraduate enrollment and 43% of all enrollments in higher education today (Watson, 2001). Starting back in the 1970s, when the Virginia General Assembly assigned SCHEV to oversee continuing education in the state, college populations were growing, and adult student populations were bursting. According to the 1987 Digest of Educational Statistics, enrollment of students under 25 increased 25% between 1970 and 1985, while college enrollment of adults during the same time increased by 114% (Digest, 1987). In the first part of this last decade, students under 25 increased enrollments by only 2%, while those over 25 increased enrollments by 6%. From a reported 2.4 million adult students in 1970, the population has grown to an estimated 6.5 million in 2000 (Digest, 1997).

Whether Higher Education Consortia are a good solution for the adult learner of the 21st century seems to depend on a few specific areas: Why they were started, how responsive each partner institution is to the programming and support service needs of the adult learner, how convenient they are to the community, how flexible in scheduling and how sensitive to adult learners’ needs. All these, plus dependable funding, solid leadership, and committed institutions, can spell success for one consortium and doom for another. As William Craft pointed out, there’s a big difference between introducing adult learners to higher education and truly serving their needs (as cited in Miller, 1981).

The adult learner’s needs and desires are the same whether they are attending the main campus of an individual college or an extended campus or consortium center, such as the
SVHEC. While many institutions have made attempts to accommodate these needs, a study conducted in 2001, which measured students’ perceptions of higher education’s efforts in this regard, found that effective communication of information and policies is often lacking. Other areas of concern noted were institutions’ failure to make key offices available during evening hours and lack of effective orientation programs for adult students (Watson, 2001). Because the SVHEC was originally constructed with the adult learner in mind, it may meet its adult students’ expectations better than most institutions. According to a student survey conducted at the SVHEC in 2001, most of students used the services available and indicated a high level of satisfaction to questions concerning the SVHEC. The Center also keeps a suggestion box for student feedback, as well as gathering feedback from students pertaining to individual programs through surveys conducted by partner institutions in their classes. Some of these issues become discussion topics for program/operation meetings.

Both SVHEC adult students interviewed expressed the belief that the Higher Education Center staff was sensitive to the adult learner. They both stated that some professors were aware of the special needs of adults, whereas others still treated all students as they would 18-year-old traditional students living on a main campus. Even with the flexibility the Center provides, Connie Estep explained, “It’s hard to complete a degree when you have a job, kids, ballgames, and such. I’ve had to make sacrifices. We all have” (C. Estep, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

Nationally, because 66% of adult undergraduate students and 72% of adult graduate students attend part time, scheduling is very important for them (Aslanian, 2001). Estep, both a student and a member of the staff of one of the partner institutions of the SVHEC, stated that her schedule allowed her to work around her class hours as she studied for a master’s degree in counseling. She reported liking being a member of a cohort, stating it was “just like a family” (C. Estep, personal communication, April 18, 2001).
Another SVHEC graduate student, Dwayne Copenhaver defines his college and family situation a little differently. Enrolled through the Virginia Tech MBA program in Abingdon, Virginia, his then fiancée and now wife was enrolled in the same program at the Roanoke, Virginia facility for Virginia Tech. The couple was married in June of 2000, while studying for their degrees. “We purchased small video cameras for our PCs and we had our own study group over the net,” he commented. “You learn very quickly whether or not you get along and can work together” (D. Copenhaver, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

A Market-Driven Educational System

With the rise in working adult students, their need for lifelong learning and job skills retraining, and a heavy emphasis on distance learning, a market-driven educational model is emerging with its focus on convenience, self-service, and flexibility. Competition from private business has increased the need for those associated with educational institutions to be responsive to the market’s needs. Higher education consortia, like the SVHEC, if sensitive and responsive to the needs of the community and business, can provide an answer to the dilemma facing higher education today. The challenge is to construct a “market-driven educational system” and a movement from a “teacher-centered to a learner-centered environment” (Meister, 1998, p. 231).

In a national survey, the top six features that adult students ranked as important considerations for choosing a specific facility were: desired course or degree offered, quality of faculty, quality of programs, location, schedule, and general reputation (Aslanian, 2001, pp. 57, 101). Those responsible for the SVHEC took great care in determining the location of the Center and the quality and reputation of the participating member institutions. These partners, under the leadership of the center director, chose faculty and programs carefully and tried to make scheduling convenient to the adult learner.
The Center staff has striven to develop “a culture of hospitality” noted Bourne (personal communication, April 18, 2001), SVHEC Facilities Director. Whether it’s a student or a customer who has rented the Grand Hall, “Each person is our guest, and we all try to make him or her feel special. They are our customers, and we want them to come back,” she added.

Two main differences between single universities and consortia are convenience (both in location and access) and variety of programs and classes, due to the variety of partner institutions represented in a consortium. Whether a student is attending a consortium or an extended campus of a university, pointed out one graduate student, taking an MBA via televised classes linking several locations, there is a difference between the typical student on the main college campus and those at the extended sites. Those on the main campus are usually younger and more “academically oriented,” he noted, while those attending from a remote site “may have lost some of their academic edge, but they have more pure business knowledge and business sense” (D. Copenhaver, personal communication, April 18, 2001).

According to Dr. Carol Aslanian, senior advisor for adult learners for the College Board and President of The Aslanian Group, Inc., “Conceptually, consortia are a great idea--if you can deliver what people want” (Aslanian, personal communication, February 6, 2001). Citing examples like Tulsa, Oklahoma and others in Mississippi, she stated that sometimes consortia don’t work well. She noted that they must be in an ideal location and have programs that students want and follow through by each institution. Often “they don’t get the right professors and the right topics at the right time.” She noted that private institutions and non-traditional ones are often better at responding to the needs of the adult learner than public universities are. “Privates are market oriented,” she commented. Aggressive privates like the University of Phoenix “identify their market, determine what’s needed, and provide it.” They have made great strides through distance education. She concurred with other subjects in stating that successful consortia must be demand-oriented operations. Ideally, they should take “the best of the best” of each college and offer it to the student. Regis University, in Denver, Colorado, does this, she
stated. Some consortia, like one in South Boston, Virginia, combine public and private offerings in one setting, according to Aslanian.

State Secretary of Education Beverly Sgro, who helped promote the ARC grant application endorsed by Governor Allen to acquire additional funding for the SVHEC, called the Center “the only state institution ‘with the exclusive mission’ of providing college courses for adult students” (Evans, 1997). Citing its “unlimited potential,” Sgro noted that the facility will “decrease the barriers of time and geography that have plagued this area for too long” (as cited in Dellinger, 1997, p. 5C).

**Summary**

If educators wish to fashion a solution for their dwindling enrollments while serving students at a distance from the main campus, they may consider forming a consortium with other institutions. The data presented in this chapter provide benchmarking criteria for consideration, demonstrating how the SVHEC measures up as a means of comparison. Information from staff surveys as well as responses from consortium partner institutions presented in this chapter might also be interesting to administrators and educators in their discussions about consortia.

Because adult learners have been identified as a primary audience for many consortia, the SVHEC among them, consideration for areas of measurement to satisfy the needs of this constituency are advisable. Again, the SVHEC is held as an example of a consortium that effectively meets criteria identified by respected educators, both past and current. Finally, a natural result of the adult learner needs criteria is the recognition that in a market-driven economy, pleasing the customer/client/student is paramount for success. Showing the ways that the SVHEC has tried to address these issues may be helpful to other educators and administrators considering consortia.
CHAPTER 8
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Research Questions Addressed

In reconstructing the history of the SVHEC, the researcher compiled historical information on higher education consortia in general and specifically in Virginia. Through interviews of key figures instrumental in the creation of the Center, documents such as minutes of Board of Trustees meetings, newspaper articles, and legislative documents, the researcher attempted to answer the following research questions. Below are the findings.

1. *What were the motivational factors behind the establishment of the SVHEC?*

   The factor most often cited was community need; specifically, teachers needing recertification classes and master’s degrees; businesses needing training for employees and higher degrees for management; community college students needing to complete a bachelor’s degree without a long commute; and adults wishing to upgrade skills, or pursue personal interests. All the legislators saw this need expressed through their constituents; Dr. Fowlkes saw it expressed by area teachers, community college administrators, local businesses, and community members while she was director for the UVA Center in Abingdon, Virginia.

2. *What role did economic development play in the establishment of an educational facility such as the SVHEC?*

   The economic development-related need was twofold: area businesses and government officials needing a state-of-the-art, large facility to hold meetings customized to their technology specifications, and the community’s need to attract business and industry to the area by means of such a facility and by the ability to educate their workforce and provide them with already well-trained employees.
The Center fit right into U.S. Representative Rick Boucher’s “Showcase Southwest Virginia” program and Governor George Allen’s slogan, “Southwest Virginia is Open for Business.” It also helped the town and county acquire the meeting facility it wanted (although, as noted, through their added funding contribution) and provided a large indoor graduation site for the local community college. In addition, numerous spin-off projects have arisen as a result of the establishment of the Center, all positive steps in assuring continued expansion of economic development.

3. How can educators and political leaders work together to improve the quality of life for citizens?

The creation of this Center is a model of collaboration by educators, business representatives, community leaders, and legislators. All concerned had a high regard for the vision, dedication, and cooperation of the stakeholders. Because the common good was truly the intention, all those involved had something of real value to gain by the success of the project. Everyone involved stated the belief that his or her time was well spent. All stated that quality of life had been enhanced for area citizens through the development of the SVHEC.

4. In what ways has the SVHEC made a difference educationally or economically to the citizens of Southwest Virginia?

Educationally, area citizens can now choose from 65 degree programs offered through eight different institutions without leaving their community. Economically, businesses can now obtain training for their employees and choose new employees from citizens educated through the Center; new businesses have come to the area, and existing ones have used the facility to promote their business; legislators have used the facility to change the perception of outsiders concerning the resources of Southwest Virginia; and the area has profited financially through all these examples.
Perhaps the best benefit to the citizens is that, because they feel it is truly their Center, and they use it often, a new sense of regionalism has grown through the cooperative efforts that created it and an immense sense of pride in the Center, their community, and each other. The perception of Southwest Virginia by those in other parts of Virginia and in other states as well has changed due to the Center. By hosting regional, state, and national meetings, the SVHEC has dispelled a long-held myth of the region’s lack of resources, sophistication, and technology.

5. *In what ways are consortium structures like the SVHEC viable alternatives to extended-campus centers of individual colleges for serving the residents, and increasing the educational opportunities and improving the economic health of their region?*

Cost-effectiveness is a major factor for choosing a consortium over an extended-campus center for a single university. Shared resources allow a multiplicity of offerings without unnecessary duplication. A reliable financial base is a major requirement for the success of such a consortium. State-allocated funding for the Center itself, augmented by partner, rental, and usage fees are essential. A visionary Board, supportive legislators, a dedicated staff, and a talented director are also important for a successful consortium, stakeholders agreed.

An extended campus for a single university is constantly threatened by budget cuts, limited in its course and degree offerings, and lacking in shared resources. Because it has the limited base of one sponsoring institution, it has little room for changes in resources or structure.
6. **What are the most significant challenges faced by the SVHEC?**

The most difficult challenge mentioned was the ability to maintain the cooperative atmosphere and foster cooperation rather than competitiveness among the partner institutions. All parties interviewed credited Dr. Fowlkes with extraordinary powers in this regard. Many said the construction of the Center never would have happened without her; all stated that its success and continuing cooperative, professional spirit was largely due to her leadership. All mentioned strong leadership as an important factor of success, and the loss of it as a threat. Loss of financial support as state funding becomes tighter, was also considered a challenge to the Center.

**Benefits and Projections:**

**The Bottom Line: Lessons Learned**

A specific benefit of this study is the establishment of a permanent historical record that the SVHEC and the community can use to document the conception of the idea to open a higher education center; the formation of a consortium; and the planning and building of the Center. One of the primary values of any case study is the application of lessons learned to other similar situations. This researcher hopes that insights gained through studying this individual case would have transferability to other cases. Whether the impetus comes from the unmet educational needs of a community itself, from higher educational institutions that currently serve the area, but are limited in their resources, or from a community desire to improve the economic development of their locality, the decision to create a higher education consortium could benefit from some lessons learned by those engaged in the development of the SVHEC. While each community is unique, certain similarities and connections can often be found. Some ideas that serviced during the conduction of this study include the following:
An initial visioning process should take place. Several different constituencies should be involved in the process. Among the groups that should be represented are community leaders and representatives of the general population; local educators and those representing higher educational institutions interested in participating in service to the region; local, state, and federal government representatives; and representatives of local and state economic development, including the chamber of commerce and business leaders.

A SWOT analysis should be conducted to determine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats inherent in the community and to examine the role that higher education could play in their community.

A decision should be made among the options of creating a new college, an extension of an existing college or university, or a consortium among several colleges. While all these options may not be possible, all should be considered and weighed, based on the specific needs and the resources available.

Existing facilities should be explored to determine if any would adequately serve the purposes of the community. Location should be a prime concern. If a new facility is required or if extensive renovations are required in an existing facility, sources of funding should be identified and sought, through the assistance of legislators, the identification of grants, and the interest of local businesses and the community to contribute financially to such a venture.

A strategic plan should be developed and implemented, with continuous improvement components included that use feedback to alter and adjust plan components according to changing needs.

If a higher education consortium is to be created, consideration should be shown to the following areas:
With regard to facility planning, the location, cost, method of funding, and the choice of architect and builder are all-important. In planning the facility, thought should be given to the audience to be served, including their various special needs; uses of the facility, including types of activities to be offered; and aesthetic appearance of the building. Integral to all of these considerations is the use and types of technology and the methods of providing it.

Program planning is another vital component of creating a successful consortium. Higher education institution representatives and members of local boards should make initial determinations about programs of study based on feedback from needs assessments of area citizens, students and alumni of local colleges and community colleges, and businesses. A committee should be appointed with established procedures to continue this process and to arbitrate among the various providers, as competition arises.

In planning the consortium itself, a mission and goals should be developed, articulated, and embraced with consideration for the member institution’s goals. A culture should be developed, based upon these goals and reflected by all participants and stakeholders. Strong leadership should be established and maintained. Method of governance and financial systems should be determined. The Center should have a separate funding source, if possible, and a separate staff independent of the partner institutions. Facility usage guidelines, including fee structures should be developed both for partners and for others using the building. Opportunities for shared resources should be identified. A dispute-solving mechanism should be developed with the consortium director as arbitrator. Student/client needs should be served above all, with a customer-friendly, professional atmosphere prevailing. Creativity, flexibility, and response to community needs should be practiced in planning and operating the Center.
Economic development of the area, including workforce training, management education and leadership, recruitment of new business, and maintenance of current business and industry, as well as promotion of the general well-being of the community’s economic health should be primary concerns.

Implications and Projected Uses of the Study

Historical research, according to Gall et al. (1996), “helps educators understand the present by shedding light on the past. It also helps them imagine alternative future scenarios in education and judge their likelihood” (p. 643). The SVHEC’s success story could be an incentive for other communities. Because it started as a grassroots effort in a rural area, the state seemed to have sometimes forgotten and grew into a model the state now applauds. Fowlkes claimed it could help people to stop feeling victimized and take to responsibility for the future of their communities and their citizens. “Life is not a spectator sport; [people should] get in and do something about it,” she admonished (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

The Center’s reputation has spread and, as a result, an enormous number of people visit the SVHEC to learn how it started. (D. Bourne, personal communication, April 18, 2001). Dr. Timothy V. Franklin, Director of University Outreach Programs for Southside, Virginia and future Executive Director of the Institute for Advanced Learning and Research in Danville, Virginia, named Dr. Rachel Fowlkes as having both directly and indirectly influenced the development of the IALR project. “The Abingdon model was a core piece of what evolved here, Franklin stated (T. Franklin, personal communication, October 18, 2001). Other colleges and universities that have visited the SVHEC to gain assistance and information concerning their own consortia or extended campuses include Appalachian State University in North Carolina and Bluefield State Community College in West Virginia.
Douglas C. Day said in reference to university center consortia, “They are all different; they all have stories; they all respond to local needs” (Schmidt, 1999, Concept). Distaining the “cookie-cutter approach” to designing consortia, Dr. Fowlkes cautioned against communities or universities wishing to simply duplicate their process in Abingdon. She suggested instead that each community draw on its strengths and develop its consortium to fill in the gaps and address the unfulfilled needs (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000).

Parnell (1990) reflected that successful cooperative ventures often began through the efforts of just one or two interested individuals. When people heard that statement in reference to the SVHEC, it surprised them. They were shocked when they learned it grew from a conversation between two people and not from some idea that someone in another location decided was good for this community. “The ripple effect,” Fowlkes pointed out, “has been fantastic.” She continued, “Once you provide the means for people to reach their educational goals, then they have no more excuses not to do so. The opportunity exists right in their back yard” (R. Fowlkes, personal communication, December 1, 2000). “One positive thing that could come from this study,” Fowlkes noted, “is some community leaders saying, ‘If it can happen there, it can happen in our community.’”

Suggestions for Further Study

Depending on their goals, researchers could conduct studies in any of the following areas:

1. Replicate this study based on the development of another higher education consortium.
2. Conduct a quantitative study comparing student satisfaction at the SVHEC to that of another institution.
3. Conduct a study of the effectiveness of the SVHEC in serving the educational needs of area citizens.

4. Conduct a study of the effectiveness of the SVHEC in serving the training needs of area business and industry.

5. Conduct a study of the funding higher education consortia.

6. Conduct a study of the legislative involvement in higher education consortia.

7. Compare higher education consortia to extended-campus centers for single universities.

8. Specifically for the researcher’s home institution, East Tennessee State University:

   Conduct a feasibility study considering joining the SVHEC as a non-residential partner, while continuing to operate its Bristol, Tennessee extended campus center. Despite the short distance between the two facilities (18 miles), the researcher recommends that ETSU join the consortium in order to have the distinction of being the first out of state partner; to promote specific, unique programs to students in Southwest Virginia that are not available through any of the existing partner institutions; and to broaden the regional outreach of the university. I temper the suggestion with the caution that the ETSU at Bristol Center remain in place, because its presence in the Bristol community has had a major positive impact for the entire university increasing visibility, community connection, and support of ETSU by the Bristol community. In the six years since the extended campus center has been in operation, the community’s awareness of ETSU, use of its resources, and positive feelings about its commitment to the Bristol community and its citizens has increased tremendously. Leaving Bristol would have negative consequences for the entire institution.
In a speech to the SVHEC Board of Trustees, Dr. George Johnson emphasized the practical necessity of careful planning in reaching a goal. “Strategy is not a matter of ‘vision’ in the sense of imaging the shining city on the hill; it is a matter of seeing how we get from here to the hill” (Johnson, 1993). The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center is the shining city on the hill, and this study maps the strategy that brought the stakeholders to that hill in Abingdon, Virginia.
REFERENCES


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Legislative breakfast proves informative. (1998, December 10). The Virginia Mountaineer, pp. 5A, 8A.


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

List of Interviewees

Stakeholders
Key Players
11/08/2000--Honorable Ford C. Quillen, former State Delegate, Virginia General Assembly
11/15/2000--Dr. Jay Lemons, former Chancellor, UVA-Wise (Clinch Valley College) currently President of Susquehanna College in Pennsylvania
12/01/2000--Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, SVHEC
12/19/2000--State Delegate Joseph P. Johnson, Jr. (Virginia)
1/05/2001--State Senator William C. Wampler, Jr. (Virginia)
1/17/2001--U.S. Representative, Congressman Rick Boucher

Staff, Faculty, & Students of SVHEC & Partner Institutions
4/18/01--Dwayne Copenhaver, student
4/18/01--Connie Estep, student and staff member of ODU
4/18/01--Chris Fields, staff member of SVHEC
4/18/01--Debbie Bourne, staff member of SVHEC
4/18/01--Penny McCallum, staff member of ODU

Informal interviews with above respondents and others at the center--periodically throughout 2000-2001

Telephone Interviews
9/11/2000--Dr. French Moore---Vice Mayor and former Mayor of Town of Abingdon
2/06/01--Carol B. Aslanian, President, Aslanian Group, Inc. and senior advisor for Adult Learners for the College Board
5/21/2001--Christianne Parker, Assistant County Administrator, Washington Co., VA

Community Focus Group
10/3/2000--Focus Group

Presidents Interviews (telephone/fax/e-mail)
10/2001
Presidents or their designees
UVA—Responses to fax/e-mail from President John Casteen’s office
VPI&SU—Responses from President Steger’s office via Ralph Byers
UVA-Wise—Formal interview with past Chancellor Dr. Jay Lemons
ODU—New president was not involved in this project
Emory & Henry—Responses from President Thomas Morris’ office via Greg McMillan
Radford—Responses from President Covington’s office via Dr. Gary Ellerman
VHCC—Responses from President David Wilkin and Dr. Edwin Hardison

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Additional interviews (via telephone or email)
10/20/00--Elizabeth McClanahan, Attorney, former member of Virginia State Commission on Higher Education
12/6/2000--Dr. Thomas McKeon, Director, Roanoke Higher Education Center
10/18/01--Dr. Martha Johnson Reifsnider, Assistant Dean of the Graduate School, Virginia Tech (VPI&SU), former Director of the Western Region Consortium
10/18/01--Dr. Thomas Franklin--Virginia Tech--heading up development of The Danville Institute
10/22/01--Mike Karmis, Director of the Southwest Virginia Office of the Virginia Center for Coal and Energy Research
10/22/01--Ms. Constance Bundy, former member of Virginia State Community College Board
11/01/01--Dr. Ralph Byers, Government Relations Director for Virginia Tech (VPI&SU)
## APPENDIX B

### Summary Chart of Key Players’ Responses

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How &amp; Why the SVHEC began</td>
<td>Constituent needs/ HUB for expansion &amp; development Raise educational level of region</td>
<td>Community/teachers needs/ enhance appeal of area for business/community/retain young people</td>
<td>Constituent needs/economic development/ education/ workforce training</td>
<td>Regional needs/economic development/raise level of opinion of SWVA Promote technology</td>
<td>Local needs for education &amp; economic/workforce development</td>
<td>Regional educational needs/ 2+2 arrangement/ growth for CVC-UVA-Wise</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Key Players | Gov’s Wilder/Allen; Legislators Al Smith/funding; Dick Cranwell/cap outlay/Wampler & Johnson--later on | Quillan, Fowlkes, Wampler, Johnson, Lemons, Sandidge Gov’s Wilder & Allen | Gov Allen, Quillen, Johnson, Fowlkes, The Bond package (funding) | Quillen, Fowlkes, Wampler, Johnson | Quillen, Fowlkes, Wampler | Quillen, Fowlkes, Wampler, Johnson |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who’s idea</th>
<th>Quillan, Fowlkes, Wade Gilley (hub)</th>
<th>Quillan,Fowlkes</th>
<th>Quillan,Fowlkes</th>
<th>Quillan,Fowlkes</th>
<th>Quillen,Fowlkes,</th>
<th>Quillen,Fowlkes,</th>
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</table>

| Your role | Vision/Bond issue/ finance/Governor, state & college presidents’ support | Organizing/creating synergy/management | ARC grant/Gov Allen’s support/ Chair of Board of Trustees | Support on Nat’l level/ promoting SWVA throughout state/ technology support | ARC grant/oversight of building construction/ Board of Trustees | Institutional buy-in/ passage of bond issue/ Dir--search committee chair |

<p>| Your view of goals and objectives | Educational HUB/ catalyst for economic growth | Educational mall/ corporate, convention &amp; community center | Teacher training &amp; graduate classes/workforce development | Extend educational opportunities/ create economic develop new business | Graduate programs/ Workforce training/ Linking resources, colleges | Expanding educational opportunities/ growing UVA-Wise in Abingdon |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fulfilled these goals? Others?</th>
<th>Educationally &amp; economically, it’s doing well---still room to grow</th>
<th>Exceeded goals/branching in more areas/new developments</th>
<th>Outstanding job/high profile for center/regional</th>
<th>A tribute to Southwest VA &amp; its citizens/ a class act/ great resource for the region &amp; state</th>
<th>Doing a fine job/great facility for community &amp; region</th>
<th>Very successful/ Symbol of state commitment/impacted perceptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact educationally, economically, other?</td>
<td>Educational access/more business for region/growth</td>
<td>Changed perception Of the region/gave citizens needed tools/economic growth</td>
<td>Created access for the region/partnerships/growth</td>
<td>Broadened outsider’s views of the area/showed potential/showcased our assets</td>
<td>Jobs/local prosperity Brought the state to Abingdon</td>
<td>Raised expectation/fostered education &amp; economic interdependence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenge s/ threats</td>
<td>Keep distance ed as a tool; don’t let technology replace personal contact</td>
<td>Funding/loss of leadership/losing cooperative atmosphere</td>
<td>Losing support of Gov &amp; state/keeping quality staffing</td>
<td>Keep seeking creative ways to use center—keep growing/remain on cutting edge</td>
<td>Losing support of state funds</td>
<td>Losing state financial support/Should be about public service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other candidates to interview</td>
<td>Wampler, Johnson, Sandidge, Fowlkes</td>
<td>Boucher, Quillen, Wampler, Johnson, Lemons</td>
<td>Gov Allen/Quillen, Johnson, Fowlkes, Lemons, Bourne, Fields,Ewing,Sheffey</td>
<td>Quillen, Fowlkes, Wampler</td>
<td>Quillen, Fowlkes, Wampler</td>
<td>George Colberson, UVA-Wise DeWhitt Moore, former pres-VHCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional info/benefits</td>
<td>Entire area will grow—Wise/Scott counties will benefit too</td>
<td>Spin off programs/grants/Community pride/technology</td>
<td>Using the resources to meet the mission</td>
<td>Local/community expansion of events/arts Chance for legislators to see southwest VA</td>
<td>Local pride/state recognition/community use</td>
<td>Non-credit aspects-COA/regional development/retirement Mecca expansion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Econ Development</td>
<td>HUB for growth/expansion</td>
<td>e-business/global conferences</td>
<td>Haven’t reached potential yet</td>
<td>Technology &amp; facility Creating opportunities/growth for region/business</td>
<td>Training for businesses,education Business incubator/research park</td>
<td>Great growth potential for region/Wise Co will benefit too</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary Chart of Key Players’ Responses (continued)
APPENDIX C

Construction Photos of SVHEC
## APPENDIX D

### SVHEC Staff Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Y or N</th>
<th>Top Ten</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>1. The mission is understood by participating institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>2. The objective is important to all participating institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>3. Adequate funding is available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>4. The purpose is apparent to all participating institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>5. Personnel provide stability and continuity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>6. A high level of trust exists among participating institutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>7. There is a strong organizational structure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>8. All participating institutions communicate effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>9. Staff provides program continuity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>10. Institutional leaders provide vision and support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>11. Institutional leaders are committed to the mission and objectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>12. Decision-making processes are unambiguous.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>13. There is a strong consortium leader.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>14. Institutional commitment is found at all levels of participating institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>15. Specific incentives for participation are available.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>16. The quality of instructional programs is enhanced through participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>17. Opportunities for students are enhanced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>18. Professional development for faculty and staff are enhanced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>19. Apparent institutional needs are addressed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>20. Faculty and staff willingly participate in activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>21. There are clear benefits to each participating institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>22. Faculty and staff do not fear job loss due to participation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>23. Institutions do not feel that participation will be a drain on resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>24. Participation is not seen as a &quot;zero sum game&quot;.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>25. Significant differences in resources do not exist between participating institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>26. Significant differences in expectations do not exist between participating institutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>27. Participating institutions have experience with collaboration.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>28. Minority student access to higher education is enhanced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>29. Institutional response to external demand improves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>30. External funding or assistance is received.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>31. Participating institutions do not compete for the same type of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>32. A systematic communication is in place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_____</td>
<td>33. Regional needs are identified and addressed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E

Consent Form for Photo Use

For the dissertation project of Susan C. Fulmer,
Doctoral Candidate at ETSU in Educational Leadership

Project Title: The Rationale for Higher Education Consortia: A Case Study of the
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, VA

I agree to be interviewed by Ms. Susan C. Fulmer concerning the above topic. I understand that
the interview will be tape-recorded and that I will be provided with a transcript of the tape. I
understand that information from my interview will be used in the study.

I agree to allow Ms. Fulmer use of any photos that she takes herself, with my permission, as
well as those I provide for her use in the dissertation project.

Interview Subject____________________________________

Date of Interview____________________________________
APPENDIX F
Informed Consent Form (IRB)

East Tennessee State University
Institutional Review Board
Informed Consent (Short Review) for a Research Project

Principal Investigator: Susan C. Fulmer__________________________
Title of Project: A Rationale for Higher Education Consortia: A Case Study of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Abingdon, VA

This Informed Consent will explain about being an interview subject in a research study. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to participate in an interview.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to explain the process by which the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center was conceived and built, and to identify the implications both educational and economic on the Abingdon community as a result of the center’s establishment. The study may serve as a guide for other communities, which are considering constructing similar centers. The study of this center may form the basis for determining whether higher education consortia or some other type of structure or facility would be the best choice for meeting the educational needs of communities in the future.

DURATION: You will be asked to participate in a taped interview of approximately one hour, then review a transcript of the interview for accuracy. The interview will take place at a site and time convenient for you.

PROCEDURES: The Principal Investigator will request an interview with you; arrange a time and place; explain that the interview will be taped; conduct the interview; and provide you with a typed transcript in a timely fashion for your review. The investigator will then use information from the interview in her dissertation study.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: I do not anticipate any risks or discomforts involved with the study or the interview.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS and/or COMPENSATION: This study may result in enabling information about the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center to be accessed by many people, raising its visibility and stature throughout the country. It may also help communities to make determinations about constructing similar centers. Your participation in the study will help make the information more complete and accurate.

MONTH 11/ DAY 29/ YEAR 2000    Subject’s Initials__________________
Principal Investigator: Susan C. Fulmer
Title of Study: The Rationale for Higher Education Consortia: A Case Study of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center, Abingdon, VA

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:
If you have any questions, you may call Susan C. Fulmer 423-844-6300 or Dr. Russell West at 423-439-7619. You may call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at 423-439-6134 for any questions you may have about your rights as an interview participant in a research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY:
Your name and information gained through your interview will be used in a published dissertation produced as a result of this qualitative study. Parts of the study may be presented at meetings as well. Every attempt will be made to keep the results of the study confidential (interview tapes and notes). These records will be stored in the ELPA office in Warf Pickle on the fifth floor for at least 10 years after the end of this research. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, East Tennessee State University’s Institutional Review Board and the ETSU Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis department have access to the study records.

COMPENSATION FOR REQUIRED MEDICAL TREATMENT:
East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury, which may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at 423-439-6134.

MONTH 11/ DAY 29/ YEAR 2000  Subject’s Initials_________
VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:

The nature of demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me.

Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

__________________________________________ DATE
SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER

__________________________________________ DATE
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR
APPENDIX G

Letter of Introduction/Support
(from Dr. Rachel Fowlkes)

October 9, 2000

Rachel
D. Fowlkes, Ed.D. Executive
Director

University of Virginia’s
College at Wise
Emory & Henry College
Radford University
University of Virginia
Virginia Commonwealth University
Old Dominion University
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University
Governor’s School
Virginia Cooperative Extension, SW District Office
Community College
Virginia Highlands Community College
Southwest Virginia Education & Training Network
College for Older Adults

To Whom It May Concern

Sue Fulmer is conducting a research study on the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center and its impact on the region. I encourage you to talk openly with Ms. Fulmer about the Center and your role as a student, faculty member, legislator, board member or community leader. The results of the study will benefit other groups as they seek to establish similar collaborative partnerships.

If you have any questions or suggestions concerning the study, please contact me at 1-800-SWCENTER or (540) 469-4005.

Sincerely,

Rachel Fowlkes
Executive Director

One Partnership Circle VHCC
Abingdon, VA 24212

(540) 469-4000
(800) SW-CENTER
FAX (540) 469-4009
www.swcenter.edu
APPENDIX H
Permission Letter (SVHEC)
(From Dr. Rachel Fowlkes)

Sue Fulmer, Director
ETSU at Bristol
1227 Volunteer Parkway
Executive Park Plaza
Bristol, TN 37620

Dear Ms. Fulmer:

For the purpose of completing your dissertation at ETSU, you have my permission to reference and use information from October 30, 2001

- the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center's website,
- pictures from the SVHEC's scrapbook, and
- PowerPoint slides of SVHEC presentations.

Best wishes with your research. If I can help you with additional information, please let me know.

Sincerely,

Rachel Fowlkes
Executive Director
APPENDIX I
Letter Requesting Interviews

Susan C. Fulmer
154 Trinity Cove
Bristol, TN  37620

Date

Ms. Mary Doe
1111 Main Street
Johnson City, TN 33333

Dear Ms. Doe:

I am a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University beginning a dissertation research project on Higher Education Consortia. I intend to conduct a case study of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia. I seek to learn the reasons that the facility was established and the connection between such a facility and economic development in a region. Accompanying this letter is a letter of introduction from Dr. Rachael Fowlkes, Executive Director of the SVHEC, who is familiar with my project and endorses my research.

Based on my discussions with Dr. Fowlkes and my preliminary research on the SVHEC, I have established an interview list for this qualitative study. I will contact you by telephone the week of _______ to request an interview date. When the time and location of the interview have been established, I will send you a list of questions I intend to ask, so you can consider answers in advance. I will restrict my interview to one hour, to keep imposing excessively on your busy schedule. I request that you allow the interview to be taped for accuracy, and I will provide you with a typed transcript of the session for your review as soon as possible after the interview has been completed.

I hope that this study will produce meaningful information that will be helpful to educators and legislators alike. I appreciate your willingness to participate in this project, and I look forward to meeting with you soon.

Sincerely,

Susan C. Fulmer
Director
ETSU at Bristol
January 18, 2001

Congressman Rick Boucher
188 East Main Street
Abingdon, VA 24210

Dear Congressman Boucher:

Thank you for taking time from your busy schedule to grant me an interview on Wednesday, January 17, 2001. I appreciate your allowing me to record the interview and to use your picture in the dissertation.

Sincerely,

Sue Fulmer
APPENDIX K
Peer Debriefers Letter

December 1, 2001

To Whom It May Concern:

I served as a peer reviewer for Sue Pulmer during her work on her dissertation
The Development of a Higher Education Consortium: A Case Study of the
Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon, Virginia. Throughout
her research, we discussed the work she was doing, from prospectus through
research and analysis.

During this process, she explained her work, and I provided feedback
and reactions to her methodology and conclusions. She shared the process of
her data collection with me, and we discussed various methods of analysis.
In addition, we talked over reliability and validity issues, member checking,
and classification of data. I looked over her record keeping, helped her
verify citations, and gave her other advice out of my field of expertise, as
well.

Now that she has completed most of the work for this dissertation, I am
confident that her treatment of the data is satisfactory. Her conclusions and
recommendations are based upon the data, and can be traced back to that data.
Sue looked at the research questions from various perspectives that provided
a balanced picture of the development of the higher education center.

I believe that the recommendations that came out of the research will be
extremely useful for educators and community leaders. Those who might
consider establishing a similar center in their own community will find Sue’s
blueprint of the development of the SVHEC helpful in their own development.
By outlining the successes and drawbacks in SVHEC’s history, Sue’s study will
provide others with options for their own work, taking into account community
and regional differences. Similarly, material in the study will be useful to
administrators in other higher education settings.

I am glad to have been able to participate in Sue’s research process. I hope
that my support, encouragement, and perspectives were helpful in making this
a worthwhile project.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Adria Jones
APPENDIX L
Auditor’s Letter

RICHARD A. MCINTURF
612 Edgemont Avenue Bristol, TN37620
(423) 652-9230

November 14, 2001

Sue Fulmer, Director
East Tennessee State University at Bristol
1227 Volunteer Parkway
Bristol, TN 37601

Dear Ms. Fulmer:

On November 13, 2001, I had the privilege to meet with you to begin the process of auditing your qualitative dissertation. I appreciate the time that you spent familiarizing me with your study related to the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center. It has been a pleasure becoming familiar with your study and confirming the accuracy of the enormous amount of information you have acquired through your research.

My review of your project consisted of several steps. The following is a summary of the steps taken:

A review of the design section of the paper was completed to become familiar with the general procedures used in the study.

The interviewee list was reviewed to determine specifically who provided information for the study.

The interview protocol was reviewed to determine what type of information was to be collected.

Interview files were reviewed to verify the existence of a recorded copy or a data disk of each interview.

The "Chart of Interviewees and Interview Protocol" was reviewed to verify that multiple interview sources were utilized to strengthen information included in the study.

The existence of transcribed versions of each interview was verified, and it was confirmed that appropriate procedures were used to guarantee accuracy of the transcripts.

Interview transcripts were checked against the text of the paper to verify that information had been transferred accurately and without bias to the text of the paper.
Audit Findings: The research design section clearly described the research questions to be addressed, the individuals and groups to be interviewed, the interview protocol for each group, the survey documents to be used, and how the various documents would be analyzed. It gave the study a clear focus and direction. A review of the design section of the paper was completed to become familiar with the general procedures used in the study.

The interviewee list indicated clearly the individuals and groups that had supplied information. The list grew as the project progressed, at the request of committee members, and as the need arose on the part of the researcher.

There was a clear indication of what information would be gathered from individuals. The interview protocol changed from group to group according to the specific relationship that the individuals or group had with the Center.

Interview files were reviewed. Each file contained either a tape or a data disk containing the content of the interview. Files also contained the transcribed version of the interview. Two of the primary sources of information for the study were Ford C. Quelled and Rachel Folks. Representative Quelled was instrumental in gaining legislative support for the Center and Dr. Folks is the Center's executive director and held a vision for the Center from the outset of the project. Information from these interviews was tracked from the transcript to the research project to verify accuracy of reporting and the absence of personal bias.

The auditor concludes that this study was conducted in a professional and thorough manner. All data was accounted for and all reasonable areas seemed to be explored. There was evidence of credible qualitative research techniques, such as triangulation, through the use of interviews, printed data sources, and on-site visits to the Center. The data was well organized and closely related to the topic being studied.

I commend you on conducting and completing such a challenging research project. It is my observation as a result of the audit trail that you have maintained a high degree of professionalism as a researcher throughout this project.

Sincerely,

Richard A. McIntyre, Ed.D.
Supervisor of Federal Projects
Bristol Tennessee City Schools
VITA

SUSAN C. FULMER

Personal Data:
Date of Birth: August 15, 1948
Place of Birth: Washington, DC
Marital Status: Married

Education:
Parochial School: St. Thomas More, Arlington, Virginia
Radford University, Radford, Virginia, B.S. English, 1970,
M.S. English, 1984
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, TN,

Professional Experience:
Professional Teaching License, 1970
Southwest Virginia Writing Project Fellow, 1982
Postgraduate Professional Teaching License, 1984
Washington County, Virginia Chamber of Commerce Leadership Development Program, 1994
Educational Leadership and Ethics Conference Fellow, Exeter College, Oxford University, 2000
Governor’s School for Arts and Humanities, Richmond, Virginia, summers 1992 & 1993.
Instructor/Lecturer- New River and Virginia Highlands Community Colleges 1976-1989; adjunct faculty for Emory and Henry College and Virginia Interment College.
Grant Coordinator for federal programs (VHCC) 1983-89.
Director, ETSU at Bristol (East Tennessee State University, extended campus center, Bristol, Tennessee), 1995-Present

Professional Associations:
Phi Delta Kappa, Phi Kappa Phi, Kappa Delta Pi, Gamma Delta Phi,
Bristol TN/VA Chamber of Commerce Board, Bristol United Way Campaign Cabinet and Board, Bristol TN/VA Rotary Club.