

Hope in the Midst of American Carnage

Assessing the Economic Impact of UVA-
Wise on Wise, Virginia

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ABSTRACT

A central debate in American politics revolves around America's forgotten towns. Authors, politicians, and social activists have all added to the discussion of whether small-town America, as it functions now, can sustain in our changing economy and, if it can, how they can be helped to prosper. Some towns are actively trying to revitalize themselves by building institutions of higher education. Wise, a Southwest Virginian town situated in Wise County, is home to the state's most southwestern university, the University of Virginia's College at Wise (UVA-Wise). UVA-Wise is a division of the University of Virginia and, while student success is one part of its mission, economic development in Southwest Virginia is the other core reason why it was founded and still exists. The purpose of the research is to assess the economic impact the College has on Wise County, Virginia. The research qualitatively analyzed impact by conducting key informant informational interviews as well as surveys and focus groups with UVA-Wise students and local community members. The research also utilized the College's past economic impact reports to complement qualitative research with quantitative background. This paper contributes to our understanding of ways in which a rural four-year high education economically impacts a rural economy, and what ways it can improve upon its impact. It also helps shed light on what community members and students feel the role of public institutions like Colleges should be and currently is.

The overall finding of this research paper is that the University of Virginia's College at Wise devotes its resources regarding economic development to four key areas, which include public health, professional development, community development, and entrepreneurship. These projects deal with ancillary activities that the Chancellor's Office and Office of Economic Development spearhead. The College's primary initiative, educating students, is commonly left out of discussions revolving economic development. However, I posit that much of the College's impact stems from educating students. Impact from this primary College activity can be categorized into two segments: (1) lifestyle improvements, which involve educating teachers to improve Wise County's K-12 education and nursing education which improves the region's access to health services; and (2) sense of hope which stems from the energy and new identity that UVA-Wise has contributed to the region. In order for Wise, Virginia to continue expanding its impact it must continue to pair its economic impact initiatives with its primary role of educating students. The research's final suggestion is to add resources to one program, environmental science, so that it can specialize and differentiate itself. Doing so would attract more student interest, bring in outside business, and give students a rigorous place-based skillset which can spur on entrepreneurial ventures.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Motivations for Research

If everyone were as rationally-bound as economists theorize, individuals struggling to find gainful employment in rural towns would simply move to areas of the country with more economic prosperity. If business is booming in Denver, Austin, or Salt Lake City, it makes rational sense for labor supply to meet demand. Although this model makes sense on paper, data paints quite a different story. According to United States Census Data, Americans are moving at half the rate that they did in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2017, 42% of movers reported relocating for housing-related reasons, 27.9% for family-related reasons, and 10.6% for other reasons. Only 18.5% noted employment-related reasons for their moves. Relocating to a different region can be expensive and risky which might explain in part why Americans are moving less; however, the explanation is likely more complex than that. It is rooted in history, identity, and pride.

Immobility in the United States seems particularly curious because our nation has become seemingly more, not less, interconnected. Improvements in transportation infrastructure and access to the Internet have made rural towns less isolated from the rest of the country. Even though these trends increase ease of movement, Americans have not followed suit. It is puzzling policy experts in today's national and regional political debates. Sociological and economic explanations to immobility are certainly linked although there is little clarity regarding specific correlations between the two forces. Lack of concrete answers has bubbled to the forefront of every academic, political, and personal conversation about nonmetropolitan United States.

Although Americans have remained in their communities, their towns and counties have been unable to economically capitalize on this lack of movement. Regions across the United States are seeing decreasing rates of business startups (Haltiwanger, Jarmin, and Miranda 2011; Reedy and Litan

2011). In fact, the share of US employment accounted for by young firms has declined by almost 30 percent over the last 30 years. If Americans are not moving to more economically opportune locations or attempting to start business to revitalize their own communities, what can be done to help these struggling communities? Certain areas have introduced institutions of higher education as a tool of economic development. Wise, Virginia is one such example. The town, along with the University of Virginia, founded the University of Virginia's College at Wise as a means of economically and socially reshaping Southwest Virginia. Today, the College still functions as a direct economic engine for the community. Furthermore, the College, as I argue, increases community members' and student's sense of hope and aspiration within the region, which has harder-to-measure, yet powerful positive benefits on an economy. Throughout my thesis research, I hope to better understand the impact of one development solution to small-town America's struggles — the founding of a four-year university. I hope to understand both the direct economic impact of rural universities on the economy, in addition to indirect effects related to changing levels hope stemming from the introduction of a college. I will then consider what universities can do to help their local economies in a more improved fashion.

1.2 Research Outline

This paper studies the assessed and unassessed economic effects of the presence of the University of Virginia's College at Wise on Wise's economy. We begin by outlining general economic trends affecting the United States. This includes looking at national-level economic change and rural-specific economic change which both impact the role of small towns in the country. We will then examine past literature relevant to the effects of a university on economic development as well as literature relevant to the effects of hope on economic development. That literature will build a framework which we can take with us to better understand and place our case study of Wise, Virginia. After analyzing Wise's history and current economic conditions in addition to the founding story of UVA-Wise, we

will dive into the current assessed economic impact the College creates for the Wise region. We will then focus our attention on the College's unassessed impact, specifically as it relates to its teacher and nursing program and its effect on individual sense of hope within the community. We will describe our survey and focus group research method which we used to assess the effect of a college on individual sense of hope, before sharing research findings. By the end of this research, I hope to identify the economic impacts of Wise, and propose suggestions for how the College can generate greater economic impact for the local community.

2 Current Landscape of Economic Change

2.1 National-Level Economic Change

Before analyzing what factors are holding back rural economies, it is important to more comprehensively understand economic dynamism in the United States as a whole. To accomplish this, I will use as the work of Ryan Decker, John Haltiwanger, Ron Jarmin, and Javier Miranda (2014) as my base. As the researchers note, the effect of startups and young businesses on job creation is very dynamic. Most young businesses do not survive past five years, therefore creating no direct job growth in the long-run. A fraction of firms, however, exhibit high growth and disproportionately contribute to job growth in a given region. These high-growth firms, defined as firms expanding their employment by more than 25 percent per year, make up for nearly all job losses created by shrinking and exiting firms within their cohort. Whether a firm is high-growth or not depends on vision, timing, resources, and luck among other things. Success also depends on the entrepreneurs' desire to innovate, grow, and create employment for other workers. Schoar (2010) calls such entrepreneurs "transformational entrepreneurs". Even though her area of research focuses on entrepreneurs in developing countries, her characterization can be applied to the United States as well. Entrepreneurs who start businesses for more personal reasons such as time flexibility or personal goals are dubbed subsistence entrepreneurs. While these entrepreneurs add value to an economy as well, they usually

only employ themselves and family members. Their contribution to national job growth is close to zero. Schoar finds that struggling economies might be rich with subsistence entrepreneurs but have too few transformational entrepreneurs. We can draw a parallel to this when thinking about the United States economy, and ask whether too few high-growth entrepreneurs might be the cause or result of the decline in startups.

Declining business dynamism is seen in all sectors within the United States economy. Some stories — such as the decline in the retail sector — are well-observed and documented. Within retail, big-box or national firms are expanding dramatically, using economies of scale and technological advancements to push out “mom-and-pop” businesses. As Jarmin, Klimek, and Miranda (2005) discover, these types of single-establishment firms fell from 70 percent in 1948 to 60 percent in 1967, and further still to 39 percent in 1997. The retail sector is particularly sensitive to the up-or-out dynamic driven of high-productivity firms growing and low-productivity firms contracting or exiting. Large retail firms can invest more heavily in technology, which as Doms, Jarmin and Klimek (2004) find is positively correlated with increases in productivity. While this might in part explain decreases in the share of employment from young firms within the retail sector, data also suggests that, among innovative firms, young and small firms have a higher innovation intensity than mature firms. Acemoglu, Akcigit, Bloom, and Kerr (2013) measure this by analyzing the ratio of research and development spending to sales. Even though small firms might yield less productivity, they also experience more innovation which, in the long term, may make them disproportionately important to growth and productivity increases. The retail industry is just one of many other sectors experiencing such complex dynamics, complicating our prior assumptions on the reasons for decreased business dynamism in the United States.

Just as startup and young firm creation has been on a downward trend over the past decades, so has job reallocation. As the aforementioned statistics show, Americans are moving at half the rate than they were. Using the Job Openings and Labor Turnover (JOLTS) data, researchers Faberman, Haltiwanger, Jarmin, and Miranda (2010) have found that there is a decline in the pace of job flow. This is matched by decreased worker flow, which together, point to a general decline in excess worker reallocation, defined as the change in the allocation of workers over a given set of jobs. Multiple theories exist for why the United States, across all sectors and states, is seeing reduced labor market reallocation. Hopenhayn and Rogerson (1993) argue that, increases in the adjustment costs for job destruction can lead to a decline in job destruction but also a decline in job creation. For example, if regulations on layoffs increase, making it more arduous for companies to fire and hire, firms will work to minimize worker churn, or the number of workers who are displaced and left without a job. This, in turn, reduces the overall pace at which resources shift from less-productive to more-productive business which, in economic theory, decreases both productivity and welfare. Whether this is actually the case is muddled with the social implications of worker churn. Another theory points to job training requirements as the culprit. As businesses have become more technology-enabled, the hiring and training of employees has become more time-consuming and expensive. Instead of hiring an individual to do simple tasks requiring no technical background, today's economy depends on technological adeptness to perform even the most basic jobs. In addition to increases in training requirements within jobs, our economy consists more heavily of an occupational mix of jobs. Cairo (2013) offers evidence that these forces have increased worker training requirements, thereby making it costlier for companies to hire new employees. Many more possible alternate causes can explain decreased labor market reallocation and each theory yields different consequences for trends in business dynamism.

2.2 Rural-Specific Economic Change

While many causes and effects of changes in economic dynamism span across urban and rural America, rural America in all its forms is experiencing distinctive challenges not seen in metropolitan areas. Traditionally, rural economies have been dominated by resource-based industries such as agriculture, mining, and manufacturing. Increased mechanization has made these industries less labor-intensive, lowering the need for entire towns to dedicate their economies to any given industry. Additionally, increased global trade with low-wage countries has dramatically reduced former advantages associated with low wages and labor costs typically seen in export-based industries (Goetz, Partridge, Stephens 2018). To make matters worse, much of the workforce which has excelled in rural resource-based industries is highly segmented. Workers are experts in one niche of an industry and lack the ability of broader skills which could translate to other industries. Forced to adapt their skillsets and find their place in our changing economy, these workers are struggling to adapt (Kilkenny and Partridge 2009). Another challenge unique to rural areas is a large dependence on natural resources which regularly see boom and busts. Hydraulic fracking, changing restrictions for the coal industry, and increased societal demands for environmental protection make it nearly impossible for economies to run dependably.

Up until this point, I have spoken of rural America as one standardized entity. This is not the case. Rural regions can be sliced into three types of areas: (a) high-amenity regions; (b) metro-adjacent rural communities; and (c) remote or extractive-based rural communities. This is the categorization scheme the rest of the paper will utilize. The latter has generally struggled the most which is why it will be the research's main focus. However, it is important to know that, as rural counties have changed over time, so have their classification. What was considered rural in the 1950s might be a metropolitan city in today's framework. Late geographer Andy Isserman, who formerly served as the President of the American Regional Science Council, argued that "this metropolitan area reclassification is like taking the best team out of a sports league every year; eventually the league would become low-quality"

(Goetz, Partridge, Stephens 2018). As rural areas grow, they become reclassified as an urban area which greatly skews the validity of the notion that rural America is in decline. If we take a look at the most urbanized 1950s definitions, we find that 1969-2015 and 2000-2015 population growth in rural counties exceeded that of metropolitan counties by twofold. When analyzing data according to the 1973 nonmetropolitan definition, rural population growth appears to equal that of the national average up until 2007. Clearly, fluctuating definitions and classifications of ‘rural’ in addition to separate current categories of rural America challenge research within this space. During my research, I will focus on the third categorization of “remote or extractive-based rural communities” that are currently defined as nonmetropolitan. However, throughout my research it is necessary, when comparing areas to one another, to keep in mind past changes in classification.

3 Related Literature

3.1 Impact of Higher Education on Economic Development

State officials concerned with public education spending, communities surrounding universities, and university administration all wonder about the economic impact of an institution of higher learning. Although institutions of higher learning have conducted informal economic impact studies for longer, the first methodological benchmark was created in 1971 when the American Council on Education (ACE) published a manual for conducting such studies (Caffrey and Isaacs, 1971). The ACE framework consisted of the following regional components: the impact on local businesses, the impact on local governments, and the impact on local individuals. Since 1971, the framework for economic impact studies has expanded dramatically. In 1995, researchers (Caffrey and Isaacs, 1971) synthesized previous research and identified eight functions, or outputs of universities that may lead to economic development impact. Among them were creation of knowledge, human-capital creation, transfer of existing know-how, technical innovation, capital investment, regional leadership,

knowledge infrastructure production, and influence on regional milieu. Other additions include those of Brown and Heaney (1997), Drucker and Goldstein (2007), and Johansen and Arano (2016).

Researchers have taken these frameworks to apply to individual universities, states, and entire countries. In 2015, Boston University published a study which comprehensively assesses six impact categories: economic impacts, employment impacts, government revenue impacts, community impacts, research activity impacts, and alumni impacts. Public universities that have multiple campuses often study economic impact across all of their locations. This is what the University of Wisconsin underwent in 2018. In addition to individual universities conducting such research, state-wide initiatives to assess economic output of universities have begun.

The Virginia Commonwealth (2017) published an economic impact report on all public institutions using the REMI model which is a structural input-output economic forecasting and policy analysis model. Applied to the 2017 study, the REMI model's inputs included higher education institution expenditures, foundation expenditures, and student expenditures. Outputs were bucketed into human capital, research and development, firm growth, and tourism and amenities. The report found that public higher education activities have substantial positive short-term and long-term economic effects at regional and statewide levels. According to its findings, economic activity stems from expenditures made by the institutions, foundations, students, and visitors as well as human capital improvements measured by increased productivity and earnings of graduates who enter and are retained in the state workforce. When including all these variables, public higher education-related expenditures and graduate workforce entry, jobs increases by 167,277 due to expenditures and states see a \$3.257 billion spike in revenues. These are all calculated using FY 2015 data. The study found that each dollar spent on public higher education correlates to an additional \$1.92 in state revenue and an addition \$21.32 to Virginia GDP. Measured in terms of net present value, the total economic footprint of one year of higher education operations total

\$36.122 billion in Virginia gross domestic product expressed in 2015 dollars. As might be expected, the medical centers at Virginia Commonwealth University and the University of Virginia make up one of the largest contributions to the Commonwealth's economy, accounting for 36,752 jobs, \$2.911 billion in GDP, and \$256 million in state revenues (Exhibit 1). Higher education research is another major source of economic impact, accounting for \$557 million in GDP.

3.2 Hope Theory

Since the 1990s, psychologists have tried to understand the impact of higher hope as it relates to performance, physical and psychological well-being, and interpersonal relationships. Particularly C.R. Snyder's (Snyder 1994c) gave researchers a proper definition for hope and created a framework for understanding the psychological phenomenon. According to Snyder's *Hope Theory*, hope is defined as "the perceived capability to derive pathways to desired goals, and motivate oneself via agency thinking to use those pathways". Hope depends on two key factors influencing the movement towards goals, namely pathways and agency thinking. Pathways thinking is the ability to envision ways to get from the present to a desired state. Agency thinking is possessing the confidence and ability to execute on those pathways. Hope theory suggests that rather than being an emotion, hope is a dynamic motivational system (Snyder et al., 1991; Snyder, Shorey, et al., 2002). Pathways and agency function in a reciprocal capacity to achieve desired goals. The project will use Snyder's definition of hope when characterizing levels of hope and aspiration among the research study's participants.

3.3 Impact of Sense of Hope on Economic Development

Despite the United States economy being on its road to recovery from the Great Recession, many communities around the country keep falling behind. According to data from the University of Michigan, Haver Analytics and Deutsche Bank Global Research, Americans younger than 35 years of age have less consumer confidence than those aged 55 and over. Sense of despair and loss of hope is especially felt among poor white Americans. A 2018 Brookings study found that optimism levels

among poor black individuals is higher than they those of poor white individuals. On a 10-point scale, 10 being “very optimistic”, poor black people on average scored above 8 while poor white people scored 7 (Graham, 2018). The gap between poor black people and poor white people is 1.4 points. Given that rich and poor people only differ in scores by 0.6, the disparity between black and white poor people is worth taking seriously (Graham 2018).

Until recently, developmental economists have focused on understanding persistent poverty through external constraints such as credit, education, health, infrastructure, and so forth. Increasingly, however, academics have turned their attention to the role internal constraints play in contributing to persistent poverty. Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen is arguably the most well-renowned researcher who identified internal constraints as a roadblock to economic development. In Sen’s capability framework, she argues that that effective development policy can expand individual agency, which she defines as the freedom to pursue goals that are most meaningful to an individual as both an end and a means to an end (A. Sen 1992, 1999). Although Sen does not explicitly point to hope as a factor in economic progress, her framework opened up the floodgates of emerging thought on the effects of internal constraints on the development of an economy. In fact, MIT economics researcher Esther Duflo cites Sen’s framework while arguing in a 2012 lecture that hope should be classified as a capability similar to health, good nutrition, and education (Duflo 2012) because of its pivotal role in understanding the lives and behavior of the poor. She argues, “Hopelessness among the poor is accompanied by low aspirations, which foster low levels of investment—an example she sites from her own research is in the under-application of top dressing fertilizer to maize crops—and hence poor outcomes” (Lybbert and Wydick 2016). Much of the more recent work in development economics related to hope focuses on aspirations and can be traced to the work of Arjun Appadurai (Appadurai 2004), who argues that an individual’s capacity to aspire has the potential to alter conditions of poverty. Because the poor

lack opportunities to achieve their aspirations, sense of hope for the future decreases to a point at which a culture of aspiration is only practiced by the more well-to-do segment of society. Appadurai outlines three main conditions that prevent the poor from building a culture of aspiration. The first condition pertains to societal structures that force the poor to engage in work that diminishes their dignity and exacerbates economic inequality through, for instance, a low-paying or demeaning job. The second condition is the lack of political representation which could have the power to change policies around poverty. The third condition is constrained opportunities to follow personal aspirations, due to financial restrictions or lack of access to enter certain societal spaces due to an exclusionary conduct towards poor people. Yet another explanation for why the poor have lower aspiration and hope levels stems from the work of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu (1979) argues that a person's local environment determines their interests, life philosophy, and aspiration levels. Dercon and Singh (2013) demonstrate this theory through a case study on Ethiopia and India. The researchers found that parents tend to have higher aspirations for boys than they do for girls because of the social norms of their environment. Over time, the boys and girls within the study assimilated to the aspiration levels which their parents had for them which is reflected in attainment of higher education.

Lack of hope has been found as a significant contributor to development traps found in economic development research and policy initiatives. Low morale and low aspirations for a person's future well-being (or that of their children) decreases incentives to invest which makes economic development initiatives a challenge (Genicot and Ray 2010). However, aspiration levels are not just shaped by the individual; rather, the experiences and lifestyles of others impact the way people shape their aspirations. Empirical work has been done to explore whether "fatalistic beliefs have implications for the attitudes and behaviors of poor rural households toward investment in the future" (Bernard,

Dercon, Taffesse 2011). Using survey data from rural Ethiopia, the researchers found that fatalistic beliefs among groups of people correlate with lower demand for credit, in terms of loan size, repayment horizon, and productive purposes, in statistically significant ways. While most studies assessing the effect of hopefulness have narrowed economic development metrics to future financial investment, little work has been done to look at the effects in more complete ways.

An individual's hopefulness does not only affect economic development but is, in fact, also affected by economic development. Research by Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge (2013) is an important piece of work assessing this reverse relationship. In a study of 10,144 individuals from six countries, the researchers present the impact of international child sponsorships, one of the leading forms of direct aid for which a donor sponsor gets paired with a particular child beneficiary, on adult life outcomes. Statistically significant effects were found on dependent variables such as completed schooling, primary, secondary, and tertiary school completion, and on the probability and quality of adult employment. The research concluded that these effects might in large part be due to the effect such child sponsorships have in raising aspirations and self-expectations of impoverished children. Research from the University of Warwick yields similar findings. Researchers Dalton Ghosal and Mani developed a model to show that a greater degree of initial disadvantage results in higher likelihood of low aspirations and low achievement which perpetuates economic disadvantages into adulthood. Internal constraints such as low aspiration act as a poverty trap since they perpetuate economic disadvantages into adulthood. Mookherjee adds that "long-run poverty is fundamentally self-perpetuating [and] the entrapment goes hand in hand with [...] lack of hope" (Mookherjee, 2003, p.5). The link between social exclusion and lack of hope is more comprehensively analyzed by Atkinson (1998) who presents a three-tiered model for understanding the concept. First, social exclusion is

relative, depending on place and time. Second, social exclusion is an agency problem¹ since people are either excluded or exclude themselves from a particular society. Third, individuals are excluded not simply because they do not have a stable income. Rather, social exclusion arises from having sparse prospects for the future. Appadurai notes that poor people may lack the capacity to aspire to "contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty" (2004, p.59).

The relationship between (1) the condition of poverty, (2) degree to which poor people are satisfied with their life, (3) their aspirations to escape poverty, (4) the efforts that they make to do so and (5) the success or failure of their efforts are all dynamically linked (Ghosal 2013). This is what has become known as "Aspiration failure". Stern et al. (2005) have done significant work homing in on this theory. They argue that individuals 'can be constrained by their aspirations and perceptions of their role, so that development depends on relaxing these constraints. [...] To understand [...] the path out of poverty, we have to focus not only on the growth of opportunity but also on [...] internal constraints on aspirations and behavior [...] that limit poor people's ability to participate (Stern et al. 2005). When economists ignore such considerations, the result is a theoretical gap in the economic literature and a practical obstacle to designing effective policies attempting to tackle poverty.

3.4 Impact of Higher Education on Sense of Hope

Ample research exists suggesting the positive impact sense of hope has on academic achievement. Hope in the future significantly predicts dropout rates versus graduate status (Worrell, Hale, Robert 2006). It also is positively correlated with future earnings (Wydick, Glewwe, and Rutledge 2013). Research on the impact higher education has on sense of hope is less conclusive. No research was found looking at the effects university attendance or completion has on an individual's sense of hope or aspiration for the future. There is, however, research on the predominance of mental health

¹ Agency, as defined by Atkinson (1998) is the capacity for human beings to make choices independently and freely of one another.

challenges among university students. Ahmed, Shona, Clive, and Cris (2013) found that, for instance, rates of depression among university students were substantially higher than those found in the general population. Still, the opposite may be true as well. On at least a theoretical level, it would make sense that attendance at a four-year institution opens up new possibilities for careers and lets students explore new areas of study, which might increase hope for their economic and social future. It is not conclusive as to why there is a lack of research attempting to assess the effect of universities on the hope of individuals *directly* affected by the university itself (via receipt of a diploma). Even less research exists on the effect of universities on residents of college towns, who are *indirectly* affected by proximity to a university. For this research question, hypothetical answers are less easily identified. The paper seeks to contribute to this gap in the research.

4 Research Question

Over the course of my thesis, I aim to put the aforementioned economic forces, both those specific to nonmetropolitan and those general to America as a whole, within the framework of Wise, Virginia, a town in which I am conducting my case-study. I seek to better understand what effect UVA-Wise has on Wise's economy, both directly (i.e. employment, new business creation, expenditures by College) and indirectly (i.e. community's sense of hope and aspiration). I hypothesize that UVA-Wise contributes to Wise's economy directly, and indirectly through its educational focuses and the community's heightened sense of hopefulness. However, while the College engages in ancillary activities that contribute to economic development in the area, the College fails to see the regional economic impact of its primary work, namely educating students. As a result, it does not alter its educational offerings in ways that can a) drive more business to Wise and b) drive more student applications from around the region.

Throughout my examination, I will keep going back to a question which has haunted public policy experts over the past decades—should rural America abandon their towns in favor of more economically prosperous urban centers? Has small-town America become an unfeasible model for prosperous living and, if that is not the case, what must towns do to become sustainable? In popular media, journalists and politicians from both the left and right have questioned rural America as a viable alternative to cities. Kevin Williamson, a reporter for the *National Review*, wrote in a 2016 article, “The truth about these dysfunctional, downscale communities is that they deserve to die. Economically, they are negative assets. Morally, they are indefensible”. Economist Paul Krugman noted in a 2017 *New York Times* opinion article, “Smaller cities have nothing going for them except for historical luck, which eventually tends to run out”. Even President Donald Trump, despite his political success with white working-class America, has made such proclamations. In a July interview with the *Wall Street Journal*, the president stated, “I’m going to start explaining to people: When you have an area that just isn’t working like upper New York state, where people are getting very badly hurt, and then you’ll have another area 500 miles away where you can’t get people, I’m going to explain, ‘You can leave’”. Not everyone is abandoning the idea of small towns. A growing number of authors, economists, and politicians appreciate the social value created through regions that are small enough to prioritize community and trust among citizens. Thinkers with these views are pushing for the revival of small towns. “Vibrant small cities not only offer a hedge against the health of our big ones—certain as that health seems now—but a number of distinct perks of their own,” argues journalist Henry Grabar in a 2018 *Slate* piece. “They’re small enough for regular people to participate in politics and make a mark on civic life; small enough for responsive, local ownership over institutions and infrastructure like banks, broadband, retail, and food production; small enough for short commutes and easy access to nature.” Throughout my research, I will craft an argument about the efficacy of

small-town America and assess what a four-year university, as exemplified by UVA-Wise, can do to sustain small-town America in economically and socially feasible ways.

5 Research Method

5.1 Case Study Location Selection

I chose Wise, Virginia as case study for two reasons. First, Wise is located in Southwest Virginia, the poorest region in the state. Wise County ranks as the 121st location with the lowest per capita income of \$17,944, out of 134 locations measured, in Virginia. Furthermore, Wise County is only one of three states defined by the Virginia Department of Mines, Minerals and Energy as a bituminous coal county. Its heavy concentration of coal has made it an area currently experiencing significant growing pains to do fast-paced economic change. Placing my study within an area experiencing a challenging economy and, I assume, resulting fluctuations regarding individual sense of hope, will make the impact UVA-Wise is having more pronounced for me to detect. Second, the University of Virginia's College at Wise is an appropriate College to study because of its history. UVA-Wise was founded explicitly with economic development in mind. The College's founders aimed to revitalize SW Virginia through the introduction of a 4-year institution and the University of Virginia partnered with the College because of a desire to economically impact an often forgotten region of Virginia. The College is only 67 years old which means that I can get first-account data from individuals who knew what Wise was like before the introduction of UVA-Wise. Third, in UVA administration's and students' lackluster attempt to support UVA-Wise, I find it necessary to uncover the history and current economic landscape of Wise with the hopes of urging UVA to take greater initiative around UVA-Wise.

5.2 Research Design

The dissertation research uses qualitative methods. The main reasoning behind this research decision is that qualitative methods offer rich description, thereby surpassing some of the major limitations

and criticisms of quantitative methods (Singleton and Straits, 2009). The research study's first component involves gaining a historical understanding of Wise and the impact of the University of Virginia's College at Wise on the community. The utilized method will consist of secondary research and informational interviews. Secondary sources I will pull from include history books on Wise, public university founding documents, local and university newspapers, and two economic impact reports published by UVA-Wise in 1993 and 2015. I will conduct informational interviews with key informants from the UVA-Wise administration and faculty as well as the town's government. Informational interviews and secondary research will clarify in what ways UVA-Wise is *actively* and intentionally economically revitalizing the Southwest region. The second component of the research study seeks to understand the present-day economic impact, both intentional and unintended impacts.

To answer this question, I will survey two stakeholders — local community members and UVA-Wise students. Questions within the survey range from direct benefits resulting of UVA-Wise to indirect emotions on people's thoughts, loyalty to, and on the future of Wise (Exhibit 2a, Exhibit 2b). Upon completion of the surveys, two separate focus groups with the stakeholder communities provide more depth and clarity regarding initial responses. The two focus groups consist of 5-10 individuals each. The previously agreed-upon guiding questions mirror those asked during stakeholder surveys (Exhibit 3). Consent forms for survey participation (Exhibit 4) and focus group participants (Exhibit 5a, Exhibit 5b) were distributed. Debriefing statements for surveys (Exhibit 6) and focus groups (Exhibit 7a, Exhibit 7b) were as well to clear unanswered questions and give participants follow-on information.

5.3 Data Collection Strategies

Two qualitative data collection strategies, in addition to one-on-one interviews for foundational research, will be employed during the proposed research — surveying and focus group interviewing (Berg and Lune 2012). The use of multiple qualitative methods, commonly considered to be part of a

process of triangulation, has been recommended by previous social scientists as a means of convergent validation. Convergent validation is an important consideration because a major criticism of qualitative methods includes poor reliability and validity related to the localized specificity of many qualitative studies. The use of multiple qualitative methods helps counter the imposed perspective a single method may place on the social reality of a particular social setting or sample population.

The use of focus group interviewing and surveying presents the best qualitative research option for the proposed study because of the highly complex nature of economic development in rural America. Each method lends specific strengths and limitations; therefore, a combination of these methods as part of a “multiple-lines-of-action” strategy will reinforce the depth of my research (Berg and Lune 2012). Giving voice to the participants through each of these research strategies will influence and strengthen data collection, analysis, and interpretation of the data as well as increase the authenticity and credibility of the findings.

Stakeholder surveying. Qualitative surveys are a qualitative research method used to identify trends across a large swath of individuals in a cost-efficient manner. The goal of qualitative surveys is to ask the same questions to a comprehensive number of people and, through that, understand general trends without concern of an inadequate sample size. While generally less concrete and dynamic as focus group or in-depth interviewing, this strategic method is adequate if it is paired with follow-on research methods such as focus groups.

Focus group interviewing. Focus group interviews are a qualitative research method typically used with small groups in an effort to understand the shared experience of group members (Berg and Lune 2012). A primary goal of focus group interviews is to moderate and facilitate a dynamic group discussion that stimulates the sharing of ideas, topics, problems, and solutions related to the social context of the group’s purpose. Focus group interviewing is a strategic method for identifying group concerns or group interests. When paired with individual stakeholder surveys, it can elucidate how

individual responses may differ from group responses and what that may say about the delicacy or comfort level of the topic. Focus groups may also present an opportunity to verify or validate participant observations. The goals of the focus group interviews are to delve deeper into general responses and sentiments from the stakeholder surveys, understand stakeholders' hopefulness when discussing economic development in groups, and identify what levels of responsibility individuals have regarding economic development when speaking within a group setting.

5.4 Gaining Entrée and Sampling

The research study will sample two distinct stakeholder groups — local community members, and UVA-Wise students.

Individuals apart of the community participant group include residents of Wise County who have lived in Wise, VA a minimum of 10 years. They are made up of males and females, and are mostly Caucasian, since Wise County is 91.2% Caucasian. Participants who are part of the "Community Member Participant Group" will be surveyed through the Wise County Kiwanis Group, a 40-person community organization which brings together people of all professions and interests to work and talk about local community concerns. Cindi Smoot, the president of the organization, is the researcher's main point of contact, and can share information and the online survey via email to all Kiwanis Group members. Individuals apart of the UVA-Wise student participant group includes junior-year and senior-year undergraduate students at the University of Wise County who are over the age of 18 and have been students at UVA-Wise since their freshman year. Students who are in their first two years of undergraduate education and students who transferred into Wise are not eligible. They are made up of males and females, some of whom are Wise residents and some of whom are from outside the County. Access is gained to this participant group through the UVA-Wise Registrar's Office which has provided contact information of a

random sample of 118 undergraduates who meet participant group requirements. An email template of the request to fill out the survey (Exhibit 8) and sign up for a focus group was used (Exhibit 9).

To identify participants for the focus group, a purposive convenience sampling strategy will be applied, which is the deliberate and nonrandom technique of selecting individuals to sample within a population. The technique is commonly used within ethnographic work and is especially fitting when attempting to conduct research with fixed time, resources, and network. Purposive sampling is especially effective when a few individuals act as key contacts and can guide researchers to properly choose a nonrandom sample to study (Bernard 2002, Garcia 2006, Gustad et al. 2004, Jarvis et al. 2004, Lyon & Hardesty 2005). Professor Christa Moore, a sociology professor who is acting as an informal advisor for this research project, and Cindi Smoot are the key contacts in this context. While nonprobability sampling has a lot of limitations due to the subjective nature of population sampling, it is an especially fitting technique when randomness is otherwise impossible (i.e. the population is too large), when resources are limited, and the researcher does not seek to make generalizations about their findings, as is the case for this research. Since these key contacts can function as an effective guide, purposive convenience sampling is the most appropriate and effective technique for the study. Through key contacts' networks, individuals who would be available to engage as participants can be contacted.

5.5 Measures and Risks

Focus stakeholder surveying and focus group interviewing have been selected as the best methods for attaining rich, descriptive data about the collaborative experiences of key respondents to understand the economic impact UVA-Wise has had on the greater region. The use of qualitative methods often provides a theoretical depth and richness of clarification that is difficult to attain from quantitative methods; however, a few quantitative data points will be obtained through the

stakeholder surveys and secondary research. This will help triangulate findings further and provide a richer, more complex understanding of economic development in the area.

Survey data is helpful in obtaining data from a broad set of individuals in a short period of time; however, qualitative surveys tend to not go into enough depth to draw valuable and accurate conclusions. In order to gain insights from both stakeholder groups and maximize participation within groups, I decided to use surveys as a preamble to my research study. I used survey data to refine my hypothesis and decide on the most pertinent questions for the stakeholder focus groups. By using survey data in addition focus group data, I could apply a multi-method research method to allow for triangulation of data to create more precise pictures of situations. Focus groups are helpful in quickly and efficiently observing how residents talk with each other about their community. However, they are oftentimes also less effective than individual interviews for obtaining a range of ideas and viewpoints, since discussions might lead to bias due to impression management and group think mentality (Wooten & Reed, 2000). Furthermore, they are less effective than surveys for assessing the prevalence of beliefs or experiences (Berg, 2007; Morgan, 1996; Seal, Bogart, & Ehrhardt, 1998). As a result, we must not overstate the value of focus groups, as we should not do with any single research method. All trends and opinions must be approached with caution and further questioning.

To effectively apply the focus group method in research to the best of my ability, focus groups have to be tailored to individual environments. In a more applied sense, this research study must adapt focus groups to a rural context to obtain the best results. Sociology researchers Goodsell, Ward, and Stovall propose six aspects of the design of rural focus groups in which rurality should be taken into account: *conceptualizing the rural place, identifying research participants, inviting residents to participate in a focus group, selecting a site for the focus group and scheduling it, conducting the focus group, and expressing appreciation*. To *conceptualize the rural place*, I will apply a phenomenological approach (Patton, 2002) to my study. This involves adopting any definitions for important terms relevant to my research question such as what

the “valley” or “town” from local residents. Professor Christa Moore will be my preliminary resource for obtaining these definition clarifications. To *identify rural focus group participants*, the researchers remind us that “age, race and ethnicity, disability status, and class all can be factors that need to be taken into account when conducting focus groups with rural populations” (Goodsell, Ward, and Stovall, 69). While my research does not make an attempt to diversify participants based on race and ethnicity, since an overwhelming majority of Wise residents are Caucasian, I worked with my key contacts’ networks to create a focus group participant group that is inclusive and representative of Wise Virginia in terms of age, disability status, and class. In *Inviting to Participate in a Rural Focus Group*, I used my key contacts to distribute the research opportunity to a large swath of individuals. In *Conducting Rural Focus Groups*, I ensured that everyone who selects into the focus group study has a way to get to the focus group location. The community member focus group occurred immediately following a Kiwanis member meeting on Monday evening at the Wise Baptist Church, to ensure that individuals who attend the meeting also have the opportunity to attend the focus group with ease. The student focus group occurred on UVA-Wise’s campus to avoid issues of transportation. Given higher than average disability and poverty rates in Wise, group participants may need a ride to the focus group. While it was not necessary, the option existed for participants to shuttle to the focus group location. Furthermore, I ensured confidentiality as this aspect of a research study is particularly challenging in a rural context. Although I selected residents from the county which is 30,000 residents large, there is a possibility that participants know of each other before coming into the room or see each other after having left the focus group room in another context (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Furthermore, in many areas, rural culture encourages talking with others about what one has done in their day-to-day life. This might compromise confidentiality further. For these reasons, it was important for me to repeat the importance of confidentiality at the beginning and end of the focus group. To *Express Appreciation to Rural Research Participants and Communities*, research advises that any

beverages or food for the focus group be purchased from a locally owned store. Additionally, to respect the time of individuals, I compensated participants with \$20 in cash. Kiwanis members unanimously voted to donate the money to the Kiwanis Club.

5.6 Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis enables us to turn abstract or theoretical concepts into ideas that are grounded in more concrete evidence and trends that emerge from the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2014). A qualitative approach demands that the research ask questions throughout the data collection period and challenge potential answers through constant comparisons. This avoids bias, strengthens emerging trends, and directs us in subsequent data-collection and research design. The research utilizes line-by-line coding methodology to determine initial concepts and understand connections between survey and focus group data. Line-by-line, or stage, coding is a method used within the broader grounded theory coding approach. Instead of analyzing deductively, as one might do through a grand theory approach, grounded theory develops inductively starting with the data. Such an approach attains two important ends. First, it uncovers generalizable theoretical statements that are broad in scope and time. Second, it points out analysis of time-, place-, and context-dependent events or actions.

The data analysis process for this research consisted of two components. Initially, every word, line, or segment of data was named; after this process, the named elements were sorted, synthesized, integrated, and organized to draw out major trends and initial concepts, and to differentiate lower-level concepts from categories and to clarify assumptions (Gillham, 2000; Charmaz, 2011).

5.7 Validity and Reliability

The qualitative approach has been subject to several concerns regarding validity and reliability of data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings (Huberman and Miles, 2014; Corbin and Strauss, 2014). The richness of detail attained through qualitative methods is often particularistic and localized to uniquely sensitive topics and specialized populations.

Five strategies for increasing validity have been recommended in the qualitative methods literature (Silverman, 2005; Nagy Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2011). First, use of the refuting principle is a strategy for refuting assumptions against the data as the qualitative researcher proceeds through data collection and analysis. Second, the constant comparative method, described in prior sections, can be used to constantly compare concepts, categories, and cases. Third, researchers can increase validity by doing a comprehensive data treatment by incorporating all categories or cases into the analysis rather than focusing and interpreting each one separately or individually. Fourth, researchers must search for deviant cases or outliers thereby exploring the deviations in the analytic pattern of findings. Fifth, one must look for opportunities to make appropriate tabulations. Finding ways to quantify the data can further highlight trends, patterns, and deviations as well as strengthen validity.

5.8 Ethical Issues

As is the case with any social science research, careful consideration needs to be taken with each interaction between and with participants. It will be essential to keep in mind the following:

- 1) Integrity — refers to integrity of the method as well as integrity of research agreements such as confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent.
- 2) Flexibility — refers to the need to meet participants “where they live,” both literally and figuratively by ensuring participants feel safe to be open and honest in a secure and private location.

- 3) Sensitivity — refers to the subject matter and any related sensitive issues or concerns.
- 4) Empathy — refers to having a sincere humanized conversation as part of the interview process with sincerity and true interest in participants' responses.
- 5) Follow-up and follow-through — refers to the follow-up on unclear statements after interviews and focus group discussions, and follow-through on agreements/promises made with individual participants during the data collection process.

5.9 Timetable and Schedule

The research began in the fall of 2018 and go through the end of April 2019, at which time presented my findings to McIntire School of Commerce faculty. Data collection lasts a period of two months. All surveys were collected from Jan 2-March 25, 2019. Focus groups occurred Monday, March 25.

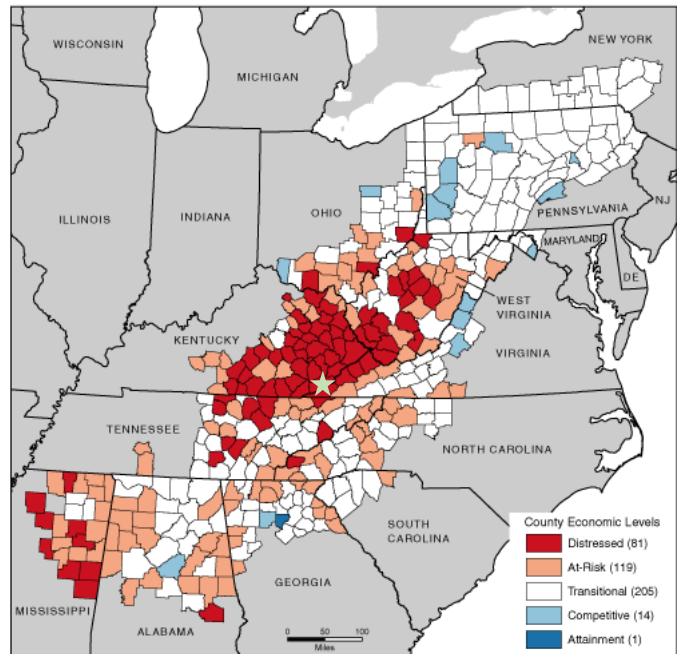
6 Historical Underpinnings

6.1 History of Wise, Virginia

The town of Wise is the county seat of Wise County. Wise County was founded in 1856 from lands previously districted to Lee, Scott, and Russell Counties. The county was named after Henry Alexander Wise, the 33rd Governor of Virginia who served from 1856-1860 after previous offices as the U.S. Minister to Brazil and a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. Because of Wise is situated on the main road from the Union state of Kentucky to the railroad through Abingdon, the area was a hub of conflict throughout the Civil War. In 1886, the Virginia Coal & Iron Company organized the first interstate railroad to reach Wise County; this rapidly pushed the region from running its economy on agriculture to lumbering and mineral extraction. Wise reached its economic peak during the coal boom in the 1970s.

Today, the town of Wise has a population of 3,145 and the county has a population of roughly 41,000, as stated by the United States Census Bureau. Over the past eight years, the population has

dropped by 8.3%. Mining, quarrying, oil, gas extraction, public administration and retail trade are the most significant industries; they, respectively, employ 7.31, 2.29, and 1.99 times more people than would be expected in a location of this size. Professional, scientific, and technical services (avg. median income: \$123,147), mining, quarrying, and oil extraction (avg. median income: \$72,083) and educational services (avg. median income: \$33,462) are the town's highest-paying industries. From 2016 to 2017, employment in the town of Wise declined at a rate of 5.28%. Meanwhile, employment in the greater county declined at a lesser rate of 2.49%. The town of Wise's median household income is \$51,329 which is nearly \$4000 less than the U.S. average. The median household income within Wise County is \$36,352, which is \$18,968 less than the U.S. average. The poverty rate in Wise



Created by the Appalachian Regional Commission, August 2018
 Data Sources:
 Unemployment data: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, LAUS, 2014–2016
 Income data: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, REIS, 2016
 Poverty data: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012–2016
 Effective October 1, 2018 through September 30, 2019

Figure 1: Wise County (represented by green star) is situated in the most distressed area of Appalachia (ARC, 2018).

lies at 13.6% while the poverty rate for Wise County is 7.6% higher, hovering at 21.2%. As figure 1 indicates, these values make one of the most severely distressed economic counties in Appalachia. 75.6% of Wise County residents have a high school diploma or higher; 13.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher. 34.9% of households do not have access to broadband internet. 20.7% do not have access to a computer. Wise County is 91.2% Caucasian. The next-greatest racial group, African American, hovers at 5.9%.

6.2 History of the University of Virginia's College at Wise

On January 5, 1954, local legislators and Wise civic leaders came together to discuss the launch of a university located in Southwest Virginia (Zehmer, 4). Although all members had a shared vision, lack

of funding led them to UVA President Colgate W. Darden Jr.'s office in Charlottesville. When they describe "the possibility of setting up a little school out there on the poor farm", Darden was intrigued by the proposal. He encouraged the group to travel to Richmond where they met with the Virginia General Assembly and ultimately secured \$10,000 of appropriations in support of the idea (Zehmer, 4). With the funds, the group purchased a building which had previously served as a home for "wayward women" before becoming known as the county's "poor house" (COR 1954). In addition to state funding, the group received the support from community members throughout Southwest Virginia who would "give as little as 50 cents" each to the initiative (Zehmer, 16).

Clinch Valley officially opened its doors as a two-year institution on September 13, 1954 with an inaugural class of 109 students. According to Joseph Smiddy, the long-time director and later chancellor of the College, "some 70 of the original 109 students were servicepersons who had recently returned home" and were able to attend the College through the help of the generous GI Bill of Rights (CP 1983). In addition to serving ex-military students, the College also catered to women. Its inaugural class was 35% female; it would be another 18 years before the University of Virginia opened its admission to women (Zehmer, 67-69).

For administrative procedures, Clinch Valley heavily relied upon the University of Virginia for support. Whenever faculty hiring decisions were made in Wise, the dean and department heads in Charlottesville assessed the candidates and passed suggestions to UVA President Darden who made the final appointments (Zehmer, 29). To check up on Clinch Valley's progress, George Zehmer, the head of the Extension Division in Charlottesville, made regular visits to Wise. Although Zehmer repeatedly told the College that "the University was not interested in the project", he cooperated and did not show his disapproval publicly (Zehmer, 4). Faculty support from librarians, professors, and administration of the University was also present (Steel Willis 41). Particularly the two presidents who would serve during Clinch Valley's earliest days, were essential in supporting the long-term success of

the College. Both presidents shared their visions for the College in their Inaugural Address: Darden commented, “The University of Virginia is not only a great center of learning, it is by all odds the most powerful instrument for the advancement possessed by our people and as an integral part of the apparatus of public instruction, its incalculable influence should be felt in every community in Virginia” (Inauguration of Colgate Whitehead Darden Jr., 36). Casteen echoed these thoughts 43 years later during his Inaugural Address when he said, “Our most profound obligation must be to the people, the public whose future we exist to enlighten and enrich” (Inauguration of John T. Casteen, 22).

Although community and University of Virginia support was high, Clinch Valley struggled with underfunding in its early years which threatened faculty moral and created a shortage of space on the small campus. The community was also plagued with feelings of transience and inadequacy. As the College and town community worked to establish and identity and promote their work throughout Virginia, many felt they needed to prove their worth as a university to their prestigious parent, UVA, and the Virginian higher education community (Steel Willis, 21-22).

Over the next few years, Clinch Valley had many firsts. In 1958, a series of faculty houses and apartments were constructed to secure capable faculty. The College’s Alumni Association was founded in 1959. One year later, Miriam Morris Fuller, the first African-American student, was admitted. This was ten years after UVA admitted its first black undergraduate student, Gregory H. Swanson. From 1960-1970, Clinch Valley’s first gymnasium, science building, and student residence halls were built. During this time, in 1966, the College also received legislative approval to offer four-year degrees. By 1991, full-time enrollment had exceeded 1,000 students. This achievement encouraged more donations and the College’s first capital campaign effort which enabled the institution to hire more faculty, start a nursing program, and build a football stadium for its young, 6-year-old football team. Resulting from increased financial support, the College was named the #2 regional liberal arts school

in the South in 1999. That same year, the College decided to officially change its name to the University of Virginia's College at Wise. Casteen, who served as president at the time, had had conversations about UVA-Wise seceding from UVA. George Mason University, which started as UVA's Northern Virginia branch, and Mary Washington, UVA's women's college, both became independent in 1972. It seemed reasonable to take a similar approach with UVA-Wise; however, Casteen knew that the College administration did not desire and feel it was established enough to operate independently. As a result, Casteen and the University's Board of Directors decided to strengthen ties and change Clinch Valley College's name to reflect that (Community Member Focus Group, 533-545). By 2004, following another successful capital campaign, reaching \$50 million in 2006, total enrollment at the College reached 1,800 students.

Wise's local newspaper, the *Coalfield Progress*, covered the founding story of UVA-Wise in-depth and, to this day, much of the newspaper revolves around UVA-Wise sports, speaker sessions, and administration news. From the very first published news articles in 1954, the paper viewed the, then Clinch Valley College, as wholly part of UVA. Headlines like "Virginia Leaders in Receiving Line at University of Va. Open House" and "University of Virginia Branch Opens, 200-Plus Enrollment is Expected" are a testament to how closely associated the town felt to the University of Virginia, despite the name change occurring 37 years later (Appendix A). Opinion articles in the early days of the College's founding exemplify the town's strong support of the College. From the town's perspective, UVA-Wise was an initiative that "went to the people" and reached the Southwest corner in a way that had not been done before (*Coalfield Progress*, October 9, 1954). Football, the sport with the strongest support in the area, also impacted the way community members interacted with the College. When the College founded its football team in 1985, the *Coalfield Progress* wrote that "Football at CVC means a home team for everyone. After opening game, Cavalier fans wore sunburns with pride" (*Coalfield*

Progress, August 29, 1985). The inaugural game against Tusculum College brought out more than 8,000 fans to Carroll Dale Stadium at J.J. Kelly High School in Wise.

News coverage from the University of Virginia's college newspaper *Cavalier Daily* was minimal. The only article, between 1953 and 1955, which discussed the founding of UVA-Wise was published on September 23, 1954. The four-paragraph news article titled *University Extension Division Plans Increased Enrollment* discusses the University's interest in expanding course offerings among its campuses in Northern Virginia and Wise. More broadly, the student newspaper had sparse news coverage on UVA's economic development projects. This exemplifies how students did not identify with the University's purpose of regional economic development; instead, newsworthy material revolved around state and national politics, sorority and fraternity life, sports, and UVA administrative decisions affecting UVA students. Given that UVA-Wise was founded with the purpose of economically developing SW Virginia, it is evident just how different UVA-Wise and UVA were, both in mission and founding history. The only article from 1954-1992 discussing economic development within the context of the University's role in Virginia was published on October 30 1990. The *Cavalier Daily* wrote a news article about a published UVA's economic impact study which stated that the University was responsible for \$344 million directly into the Charlottesville metropolitan area's economy in 1989 (*Cavalier Daily*, October 30, 1990). Nowhere is there mention of the impact UVA-Wise has had on the Virginian economy. Lack of coverage of UVA-Wise, in any capacity, from UVA students highlights just how little contact UVA-Wise students and faculty had with the University of Virginia. Even though they shared the same name and UVA-Wise might have felt a strong affiliation to UVA, the Charlottesville student body saw itself as a separate entity with little contact Southwest Virginia.

6.3 UVA-Wise's Current State

The University of Virginia's College at Wise has 31 majors, 37 minors, 8 pre-professional programs and over 20 licensures. While it provides students the opportunity to major in technical fields such as software engineering, computer science, and management of information systems, it prides itself in providing students a liberal arts education. 83% of the student body receives financial aid, amounting to \$19.4M in 2016-17; 68% is Pell Grant eligible. 59% of the Pell Eligible students have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0; this equates to around one-third of all Wise students. Full-time student tuition for Virginia residents is \$10,119 per year. For non-Virginia residents, tuition is \$27,846. This is roughly half the tuition it is for the College of William and Mary and the Virginia Military Institute which rank as the top two most expensive public universities in the Commonwealth (Appendix B). Current enrollment at the College, which has a 77% acceptance rate, is 2,021 students. The average admitted freshman has a 3.42 high school GPA, and SAT scores of 487 Verbal and 480 math. UVA-Wise's 4-year graduation rate from the most recent class that started college in 2014, is 29.7%. The average 4-year graduation rate for all Virginia public four-year institutions is 53.1%. It ranks as the public or private university with the 8th lowest 4-year graduation rate within Virginia. 4-year graduation rates in rural Virginia are lower than they are in non-rural Virginia and seems to correlate with the percentage of students receiving PELL grants (Exhibit 10).

7 Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise Region

7.1 Previously-Assessed Impact on Regional Economy

Arguably the primary reason the University of Virginia's College at Wise was built and received funding to be built was its potential to harness economic growth within Southwest Virginia. This is evident in the previously outlined founding story of the College, which hinged upon building the first public university in Southwest Virginia, and the town support in its initial fundraising efforts. Even today, economic development seems to be at the core of the College's mission statement which is rooted in "student success and service to the region" (UVA-Wise, 2019). UVA-Wise administrator

Shannon Blevins, who serves as the Vice Chancellor of the College's Office of Economic Development, said, "At the core, we are an undergraduate school that provides education and employment for faculty, staff, and students. Beyond that, the college sees ourselves as a thought-leader in helping to shepherd and helping to guide and facilitate diversification plans for the region" (Blevins Interview, 2018). To put this component of the mission statement into action, the Office of Economic Development, for which Shannon was the first employee, was created in 2007. The Office is responsible for all major initiatives regarding economic development and has spearheaded UVA-Wise's efforts to assess their impact on the community and larger Southwest region.

The University of Virginia's College at Wise's Economic Development Office has, to date, published two economic impact studies, assessing its effect on the surrounding community. Since the College's founding story is so heavily tied to the ambition to economically revitalize Southwest Virginia, this emphasis makes intuitive sense. Both economic impact reports study primary and secondary impacts stemming from the University of Virginia's College at Wise's activities. Primary impacts include operational expenditures and direct employment. Secondary impacts are divided up into indirect and induced effects, and are equally important when considering economic changes in the area. Indirect effects are the changes in sales, income, or jobs in the *same sectors* from which the direct effects stem within the region (Pennsylvania State University). To exemplify, the land management firm that UVA-Wise hires to maintain its campus are an indirect result of UVA-Wise's economic activity. Induced effects are changes in sales, income, or jobs in *different* sectors from which the direct effects stem within the region. An example of such an effect would be the increase in spending within the Wise County hospitality sector as a result of the College's existence and growth.

The first economic impact study, which can be found in UVA-Wise's history archives, was published in 1991. When the report was published, 64.58 percent of students resided in college-owned housing, while 29.17 percent were commuter students. During the 1990-91 study year, the

College, then known as Clinch Valley College, had an operating budget of \$10,175,535 (Exhibit 11). General fund finances from the Commonwealth accounted for \$4,895,750. Non-general fund dollars, represented by student tuition and fees, was \$5,279,785. At that time, the College employed 150 full-timers; payroll was \$5,340,918.61. In addition to direct college expenditures, the report assessed, through surveys and local public data, staff/faculty expenditures which amounted to \$3,020,981.53 as well as student expenditures which amounted to \$2,743,432.83 (Appendix C). Retail sales for students and housing for faculty/staff was the largest contributor to expenditure during the year (Appendix D). The biggest industry impacted by the college, as the report states, was the construction industry. The College alone already initiated activity that amounted to \$11 million at the time.

The second study was published in 2016. The economic impact of the College on the greater Commonwealth hovers at around \$84M (Exhibit 12). \$64M of that was concentrated on the Southwest Virginia coalfield counties and the city of Norton. The study was conducted by consulting firm Tripp Umbach; data for the report included capital expenditures, operational expenditures, employment headcounts, payroll and benefits, taxes, and event information for fiscal year 2015 (FY 15, July 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015). The report demonstrated that the 387 College employees generated significant spending in Virginia which supported 680 jobs in total for one year. UVA-Wise was the cause of \$33.5 in government revenues (generated by the College, employees, and students purchasing goods). 8.1% of that was specifically for the coalfield region. The College's student body and staff was responsible for \$5.8+ million in charitable donations. 17.2% of that was donated to local charities. The impact of on-campus visits amounted to \$6.1 million which supported 67 jobs and brought in \$403,000+ in state and local taxes. Research conducted by UVA-Wise generated \$2.6 million in economic impact. It supported 24 jobs in total. Data for the report included capital expenditures, operational expenditures, employment headcounts, payroll and

benefits, taxes, and event information for fiscal year 2015. Discussing the economic impact study, Vice-Provost Shannon Blevins said, “If you remove the college from Southwest Virginia, you take out almost \$65M of economic impact and you couple that with the sharp decline that the energy sector has seen since 2012, that would be devastating” (Blevins Interview, 2018).

7.2 College-Led Economic Development Initiatives

In addition to the direct economic impact stemming from the College’s operations, the Office of Economic Development directly impacts the area by working on projects related to four key areas that affect economic revitalization. These include public health, educational and professional development, community development, and entrepreneurship.

Public Health. Health is commonly understood as a positive effect on economic growth. As Finlay (2007) lays out, the first channel from which this stems is the direct labor productivity effect, which refers to healthy individuals having higher returns in labor input. The second is the indirect incentive effect, which refers to individuals being more likely to invest in education if they know they will live longer and have a longer time horizon during which to gain returns. With this understanding, UVA-Wise created the Healthy Appalachia Institute in 2006. The Institute seeks to improve health, education, environment, and prosperity for residents of central Appalachia. One aspect of health the Office of Economic Development has focused on is increasing access to telemedicine. UVA has contributed to this work by collaborating on a building a tele-mental health network. Blevins is excited about this new addition. “We have already got a very strong tele-health network across the region that we can tack into specialty care at the University, but we are taking it one step further with the University of Virginia and UVA-Wise. We are setting up a tele-mental health network. And that will go to try to help the shortage of mental health professionals” (Blevins Interview, 2019). The Institute has had a tremendous impact so far (Southwest Virginia Health Authority, 2009). Since the founding of UVA-Wise’s Healthy Appalachia Institute, Virginia has

become the 11th state in the nation to require that health insurer providers cover telemedicine services. Furthermore, through a HRSA Oral Health Workforce Grant secured by VDH and with local support by LENOWISCO Health District, Southwest Virginia has increased its dental hygienist offerings by 600% from 2006 to 2011. Through active advocacy work in various water and wastewater treatment projects for the SVHA's geography, nearly 85-90% of households are now connected to public water systems. Other successes include increasing nurse practitioners in SW Virginia and combatting alcohol dependence with more funding for in-patient and out-patient rehabilitative care.

Professional Development: In an effort to expand its educational reach beyond Wise borders, UVA-Wise partners with the Abingdon-based Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center to organize professional development programming. The Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center works with public and private colleges and universities like UVA-Wise to offer degree programs, certificates, and professional development courses locally. UVA-Wise's focus is on customized and open-enrollment professional development programs for employers in the region. While community colleges and other partner universities focus on providing trade education, the UVA-Wise Abingdon office teaches softer skills required for running a business. These include courses in organizational development, team building, project management, and human resources. Economists are slowly focusing their attention to the importance of so-called soft skills because of their strong link with higher wages and job opportunity. Social skill-intensive occupations grew 12% in the U.S. job market. Wages also grew more rapidly for jobs that had a high need for social skills like teamwork and communication, than for jobs with high math but low social skills, including STEM jobs (Appendix E). For current employees and employers, these professional development programs can be a tremendous value-add. While soft skills typically do not bring in outside business or start

transformational businesses (Spring, 2015), soft skills make existing employees good employees which is the purpose of the professional development initiative.

Community Development: UVA-Wise recognizes that only a cohesive county community can foster and encourage continued economic revitalization. For this reason, the College became a support organizer for the Virginia Initiative for Growth and Opportunity (GO Virginia). GO Virginia was created in 2016 by the Virginia General Assembly to support programs which encourage collaboration between business, government, and education all in an effort to create more high-paying jobs and strengthen the economy of every region of the Commonwealth. The initiative is based on three points, as outlined on GO Virginia’s website. First, federal downsizing has exposed an over-dependence of public sector jobs which is indicating the Virginia needs more aggressive private-sector growth. Second, Virginia must diversify its economy which can only be accomplished through substantial collaboration. Third, the state government cannot be the creator of job growth but can serve as a catalyst to incentive strategic collaboration across the Commonwealth. Two current projects which GO Virginia is dedicating its resources to are the United Way of

Southwest Virginia Ignite Internship, which provides work-based learning opportunities to recent graduates, and the SWVA Hub Link Platform, which is an online jobs platform and talent connection initiative. Region One of Virginia, for which

Key Industry Target	Employment	Average Annual Income	Reasoning
Energy and Minerals	4,163	\$73,539	High wages and competitive advantages
Information and Emerging Technologies	2,204	\$64,500	Important across many industries. CGI, DP Facilities South and Northrup Grumman are examples of emerging clusters.
Advanced Manufacturing	16,715	\$42,144	Above-average wages and competitive advantages
Agriculture and Food and Beverage Manufacturing	1,401	\$42,468	Prominence of agriculture in the region creates fertile environment

UVA-Wise serves as the support organizer, is continuing investment in four regional priority industry clusters. These include, as

Figure 2: Key Industry Targets for GO VA Region One (data obtained from Robyn Lee at GO VA 2019)

described in Figure 2, are advanced manufacturing, agriculture and food and beverage, information and emerging technologies, and energy and minerals.

Entrepreneurship: While UVA-Wise has focused on supporting initiatives which attract business, administration has slowly started investing in programs that build business from within Wise's borders. Small businesses in America represent 67% of job creation in the last 17 years (Small Business Administration, 2012). UVA-Wise sees potential in these numbers and has worked with the Appalachia Prosperity Project on a strategic blueprint to create a fertile culture of entrepreneurship in Region One. The three strategic pillars are to (i) build the entrepreneurial ecosystem, (ii) grow entrepreneurship and new ventures, and (iii) promote the region as a vibrant entrepreneurial lab (Entrepreneurship Blueprint, 2012). Opportunity Southwest Virginia, a group which sprung out of the blueprint, helps the community overcome challenges like lack of access to capital and business know-how by planning business plan competitions and starting capital access programs. To receive buy-in from community, without which sustained development is challenging since students are transient and many faculty do not live in Wise, UVA-Wise added community development programming as part of its entrepreneurship initiatives. RALLY, Real Action Learning Leadership, is an action learning program which supports community organizers in undertaking downtown revitalization projects. Examples include adding signage in towns, building community stages for events, and building greenspaces. Since its founding, the program has been able to secure over \$74,000 funding needs for all 18 programs it has hosted.

The Office of Economic Development has ambitious goals for using the University of Virginia's College at Wise as a tool for regional economic development. The College seeks smart growth. "My dream [...] is that our College becomes the anchor in the model for attracting small to medium-size businesses that want to hire hub-zone talent, that can package virtual work which will

allow our students who want to get out of those metropolitan cities and urban centers who love the outdoors, that they can come live in Southwest Virginia, work in any of the coworking spaces for companies all across the globe, and close up their laptops at 5 or 6 o'clock in the evening, get straight out on a trail or on the riverway and have the quality of life in addition to the standard of living that I think we can offer," Blevins said, in discussing her long-term vision for Wise.

7.3 Unassessed Impact on Regional Economy

While the economic impact reports published by the University of Virginia's College at Wise cover significant ground, it leaves out longer term and more qualitatively-measured economic results.

These include (1) the economic impact of key education departments that improve lifestyle in Wise, and (2) the influence on sense of hopefulness in the area. Coined the dynamic effects of economic revitalization, these impacts are consequences of broader shifts over time in societal patterns within a region (Weisbrod and Weisbrod, 1997).

Lifestyle Improvements: The two departments that keep most of their students locally after they graduate are the nursing and education department (Provost J. Sanders Huguenin Interview, 2019).

The economic impact of both are tremendous. Nurses help create a healthy Appalachia without which a healthy economy would not be possible (Finlay, 2007). Teachers bring the economic benefits of education to K-12 education. Both improve living standards in the region which enable more individuals to see Wise as a place where they can prosper and raise a family.

- **Teacher Education:** The Wise County Public School system operates three primary schools, one elementary school, three middle schools, and three high schools. In a conversation with the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, J. Sanders Huguenin emphasized that it was the single most important major offered at the University, since 70% of Wise County teachers went through one of UVA-Wise's programs. The Education program, which Professor Paul Cox chairs, offers 17 teaching endorsements; depending on the needs of the local area, it expands

those endorsements to best benefit the community. 40 students graduate from the Education department every year. According to Cox, the most popular program is the College's Pre-K through 6 degree, followed by special education. 60% of the department is enrolled in the K-6 teaching program; this is the major offers the highest number of job opportunities in the region. The second most popular program is special education. The least popular programs are STEM-oriented education. This is not because of lack of demand for STEM teachers. As Cox explains, "It's hard to convince folks in STEM to become teachers. [...] And, the way it works in Virginia, you get an endorsement² in chemistry, you can't teach biology" (Cox Interview, 2019). Because an endorsement in one subject does not allow you to also teach a course in another subject, and because most schools hire, for instance, one chemistry teacher for the single chemistry class it teaches, the value proposition of a chemistry endorsement program is limited. To accommodate the lack of STEM teachers in Wise County, Cox plans to create an add-on engineering endorsement which would allow soon-to-be teachers of different subject focuses to get licensed to teach engineering in an expedited fashion by only taking an additional four to five classes. Currently, no university offers an engineering endorsement. UVA-Wise wants to be the first mover in offering this service to meet the demands of its county and be a guide for other counties in Southwest Virginia.

Virginia, as is the case with many states in the United States, is experiencing a significant teacher shortage crisis. Over the past 10 years, the number of unfilled teacher positions across the state have increased by 40 percent over the past 10 years (from 760 to 1,080). This is especially the case in areas with high levels of poverty. To exemplify, Petersburg, two months before the 2017 school year began, had 142 unfilled teaching positions out of a total of 400 spots. That equates to roughly one-third of the area's teachers. Middlesex County Public Schools (20.3%), Petersburg City

² Endorsements on a teaching license indicate which subject areas and grade levels you are qualified to teach.

Public Schools (13.9%), and Danville City Public Schools (10.1%) are among the state’s divisions with the highest percentage of unfilled positions. Divisions with the highest concentrations of poverty have the hardest time attracting and retaining high-quality teachers which is why the teacher shortage crisis disproportionately affects rural poor areas.

Wise County has fared well compared to other rural areas in the region, as evidenced in figure 3. This is largely due to the efforts of the University of Virginia’s College at Wise. UVA-Wise currently only offers undergraduate education courses; therefore, the area has one of the lowest percentage of classroom

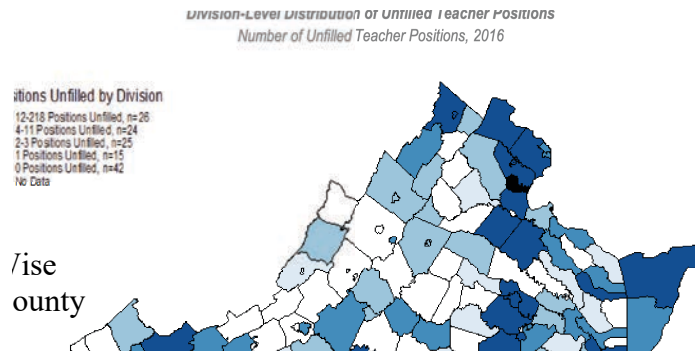


Figure 3: Compared to neighboring counties, Wise does not have a teacher shortage.

teachers with advanced (masters or doctoral) degrees (Exhibit 13). However, its teacher shortage is minimal. This is because the College educates teachers-to-be and changes its program offerings based on the needs of the area. In addition, its college internship program, which places seniors in the teacher program at schools most in need of teachers and lets them work five days a week with a veteran teacher mentor while completing their degrees, is another way the county can meet teacher demand in a flexible manner. Gregory Mullins, the superintendent of Wise County Public Schools, lauded this partnership as the holy grail of overcoming teacher shortages in an interview, stating, “We are always trying to find instructors and interns becoming teachers has been able to make that work” (Mullins Interview, 2019). Cox can amend his program based on County demands because education, he finds, is the field in which graduates tend to stay local in most rural areas of the nation (Cox Interview, 2019). By educating teachers who will go on to teach K-12, UVA-Wise is directly impacting the economic potential of students who are either looking to attend university or will

finish formal education after high school. Furthermore, good schools, which start with well-trained teachers, impact who stays and moves to Wise; this, for obvious reasons, has a significant impact on population growth and economic growth.

The current image of Wise County Public Schools among students, who are deciding whether to stay in Wise or not, is unfortunately not reflective of the department's efforts to create a program that graduates good teachers. As one student focus group participant replied, when asked about raising a family in Wise, "Education-wise, not so much for higher education but for lower schools, there's not a lot of money in public education here. The schools are run down, the teachers are understaffed" (Student Focus Group, 704-706). UVA-Wise must add more resources to its education department, to attract more students and expand the program, in order for the county school system to obtain an image of first-rate K-12 educational offerings. That way the school system can serve as a deciding factor about whether to move to Wise permanently, from a different location or after graduating from UVA-Wise.

- *Nursing Education:* The University of Virginia's College at Wise offers a fully approved Bachelor of Science Nursing Degree (BSN) which students start the spring of their sophomore year, after they complete their general requirements at the College. The department offers two programs: the Pre-Licensure Program and the RN to BSN Program. The Pre-Licensure Program is geared towards students who aim to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) upon graduation. The RN to BSN Program is geared towards registered nurses who have a diploma or associates degree but are looking to obtain a BSN. Most students in the latter program are working part-time in addition to their studies.

Nationally, the United States is facing a severe registered nursing shortage.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that RNs job opportunities will grow by 15%, from 2016 to 2026. In other words, 438,100 additional registered nurses will be needed within 10 years.

Although Virginia has the third least severe nursing shortage behind Florida and Ohio, Southwest Virginia is a region in great need of health aid. Three reasons, explained with data from the UVA Cooper Center, exist for why this is the case. First, Southwest Virginia is aging rapidly. Nearly one-quarter of the region's residents are 60+ years of age. As this population continues to age, more nurses will be needed in the area to compensate for the oncoming health troubles associated with old age. Second, 13.4% of Southwest residents do not have health insurance, compared to the state's 12.3% average. 17.1% of the population currently receives health care benefits from Medicaid. Compared to the Virginia average of 10.5%, this is 6.6% higher. If residents are not getting access to healthcare because of lack of insurance, emergency procedures are increasingly more common. The number of individuals already receiving regular care is further adding to the workload of Southwest Virginia nurses. Third, Southwest Virginia struggles with higher obesity rates, higher heart problems, higher black lung disease, and higher teen pregnancy among others. Put simply, more nurses are needed than might be the per capita norm in another region of the state.

Last year's nursing class graduated 43 nurses; while data on the number of students who stayed local does not exist, Provost Huguenin emphasized that a "substantial" number work in health centers around the Wise region (Huguenin Interview, 2019). Nurses create a healthier region which creates a healthier, more able workforce capable of contributing to the economy. In addition to keeping the employed healthy, nurses in the region can help address the rising disability rates within the County. While unemployment in Wise County is 5.2%, as of May 2018, non-employment is much higher. A significant cause of a low workforce is disability. As of 2017, one in five (19.4%) of Wise County residents under 65 years have a disability. This is three times higher than the 8.7% United States average. While nurses will not be able to cure irremediable, chronic disabilities, many of the more recent disabilities are addressable. As of 2011, the most common diagnosis for receiving a disability label from the Social Security Administration Disability Program was back pain (33.9%).

The second most common was mental illness and developmental disability (19.2%), followed by heart disease and stroke (10.6%) (Exhibit 14). In 1961, when the number of people on disability was nearly three times lower, back pain only made up 8.3% diagnoses and mental illness only made up 9.6%. Many of these health concerns are addressable and, if health professionals in Wise are adequately staffed to address these issues, they can enable more residents to become part of the workforce. Furthermore, access to better health services is yet another lifestyle improvement that, like a good public school system, can encourage individuals to stay in and move to Wise.

Community Hopefulness: Wise, Virginia is an area filled with simultaneous hopelessness and hopefulness. The region's older generation, which remembers when UVA-Wise was being built, gains significant pride, and resulting hope, from the way the College came to be. Both the older and younger generation, while split on the sense of hope they obtain from Wise's new identity as a hub of higher education, see increased levels of hope due to energy from College events and student entrepreneurship initiatives.

The founding of UVA-Wise was a project which the community rallied around. Joseph Smiddy, the leader of the initiative and first Chancellor of the College, called upon friends and educators who had left the area and asked them to come back and work on building up the College. Individuals who were part of that founding team felt a responsibility "to come home" (Community Focus Group, 64). During those early years, UVA-Wise was a project the town could rally around; the excitement of building something new excited those that were actively involved in building the College and town members who donated as little as \$1 to the cause. As one of the first math teachers of the College, who was called back by Smiddy to serve his community, said, "We were building the college. We were developing the curriculum. We got caught up in what we were doing" (Community Focus Group, 72-73). The community built UVA-Wise and it was their past success in coal which was able to fund this grand vision. The community felt pride because they felt their work

was responsible for the creation of the College. A former individual grew up on a coal camp and worked as a banker in Wise since finishing high school, said “the college wouldn’t be what it is today without the coal industry” (Community Focus Group, 93). Throughout the focus groups and surveys, it is evident that those who helped build the College in the 1950s are of the mindset that the College rests upon the shoulders of the town — their community came together and used their resources, in the form of donations and taxes from the coal mining industry, for a noble cause. While discussed later, students who have only experienced Wise as a town absent of the power of coal view it as the reverse. In their view, the College is the sole reason the town still exists. This can be attributed to the loss of power Wise has witnessed over the past decades as coal has lost its influence as the region’s primary economic engine. While the older generation readily recognizes the loss of coal, this acknowledgement has not affected their sense of pride regarding what, in their view, still maintains the College.

When asked what impact UVA-Wise has had on the community, 92.30% of community member survey³ respondents responded positively⁴. Respondents say it’s a “a major positive impact on the local economy, sports, and the arts” and that it’s the “best thing [they’ve] got” (Community Survey, 52 & 55). The College bring new energy to Wise which community members appreciate. Events, performances, and conferences, which 76.9% of survey respondents said they have attended three or more of within the past years, let community members interact with youth and see activity in their community. As individuals see the death of new business and shops on their streets, the energy and excitement stemming from the birth of new initiatives and upcoming events from the College is uplifting. Hopefulness and involvement of community members in UVA-Wise events is not more pronounced in Wise town residents who live closer to the College than Wise County

³ Community survey consisted of 34 respondents

⁴ Defined by achieving a score of “agree” or “strongly agree” on the statement “The existence of UVA-Wise creates value for Wise, VA”.

residents. This goes against a prior hypothesis that proximity to the town center strengthens a community member's relationship with the region and College. The survey responses, in fact, indicate that the reverse might be true (Exhibit 15). When asked how closely respondents' identity was tied to the identity of SW Virginia, the median score for Wise town residents was 3 (or of 5); the median score for Wise county residents was 4 (out of 5).

In addition to providing event and community gathering experiences, the College gives the community a renewed identity. In the midst of the loss of one identity, namely the identity of Appalachian coalmining, the College has offered up a new facet to Wise's culture. Those who have accepted it have built up their hope around it. One survey respondent stated that UVA-Wise "adds an intellectual ingredient to the mountain culture" because, as another respondent put it, the college "makes higher education accessible to SW Virginia at a relatively low cost" (Community Survey, 49 & 56).

Not all have welcomed Wise's new identity as a place of higher education. One survey respondent wrote, "with their ridiculous liberal ideology the university has almost single handedly ruined any hope for this town. Many large contributors have ceased giving based on UVA's liberalism" (Community Survey, 8). This comment speaks to a larger concern, namely the divide between the town and student body that has increased over the decades since the County's founding. Students and faculty have starkly different political views than community members. To exemplify, during the 2016 United States presidential election, 83.8% of Wise County voting residents voted for Donald Trump. While no survey was conducted to assess student voting patterns, students and faculty did not feel that same approval for President Trump. One indication of this is UVA-Wise administration's post-election forum on November 11, 2016 which was organized to let individuals process Trump's victory. During student interviews at the forum, some individuals voiced fears regarding their immigration status, others regarding racism towards their

minority identity. These responses are evidence that Wise County political ideologies are starkly different from those on campus.

Political differences, however, are not the only divisive force between the town and College which make it challenging for community members to deduce hope from the College. During a focus group, a local UVA-Wise student stated, “People look at the people who go to college [...] and they give you that look of ‘Oh, you think you’re better than me because you’re going to college’” (Student Focus Group, 72-75). Because coal, not college-educated individuals, built Wise, students feel that if they take a different path, community members think they are giving up on the dream of what Wise was, and in many minds, still is. Furthermore, because locals think that jobs displacing coal jobs are those that require a college education, there exists a perception that, as the same local student put it, “educated people are taking their jobs away. And that’s not what’s happening. That’s what they’re seeing” (Student Focus Group, 86-87). One student shared a story of a friend who grew up in Honaker, a rural town located in Russell County, VA. Every time she visits her family, she feels a “stigma that you don’t leave your town. You’re born in Honaker, you’re born in these small towns, you stay in these small towns. [...] That is your world and so going to college and bettering yourself, you’re not going to likely go back to these towns. [...] It’s almost like heresy” (Student Focus Group, 93-98). Envy might certainly be part of the reason non-college-educated community members might resent the College’s students. A more convincing argument which was voiced in both focus groups, is the notion that, because most think college students will not come back to serve their towns, leaving for College is their decision to forego their responsibilities to their communities. In a student focus group, a student found that, “people looked down on [students] because they think [students] are taking people from these towns. Because people who usually go to college don’t usually come back” (Student Focus Group, 925-928). In a separate focus group, a community member voiced, “with the coal declining and with the outflow of people, what kind of

people leave and what kind of people stay? I mean, if you have a marketable skill you are more likely I think to..., and if you are ambitious or motivated, maybe you are more likely to leave than someone who does not have that skills” (Community Focus Group, 340-346). Because many UVA-Wise students graduate with marketable skills, community members think that those are the young people that are more likely to leave than those who do not. This creates a culture of resentment toward the College’s ability to educate individuals to a point at which they can and will leave Wise behind. The insecurity resulting from their town’s economic viability, in addition to UVA-Wise serving as an enable in equipping students to leave Southwest Virginia, is what creates a fear for the future of Wise and sense of hopelessness.

Some might argue that the College could foster an economic environment that would encourage students to stay locally instead of leaving for jobs in Tennessee and Northern Virginia. Given that, when students were surveyed where they would want to live if money were no object, 37.5% claimed to want to stay in Wise County, this seems to be a goal for both locals and students. Unfortunately, the College does not fill this need in the community. When speaking with community members, the College is seen as a strong employer and major influencer of culture in the region. It is not seen as a vehicle for economic revitalization. One community member stated that “The College is what keeps Wise Co. thriving and stable until officials find other industries to plant here” (Community Survey, 51). There was no mention in focus group discussions or survey responses that UVA-Wise might have the ability to attract outside business. This is not to say that the community does not see the potential for the college to generate economic impact. Hopefulness exists around the ability of student entrepreneurs to affect change in the region. A student mentioned the College’s entrepreneurship program is “gonna have a huge impact on a local area” (Student Focus Group, 663). Another said, while talking about viable economic development initiatives, “it’s gotta take some individuals to say, you know, ‘I want to better myself and I also want to better my

community’, so entrepreneurship” (Student Focus Group, 667-669). Community members are equally excited about the potential for students to start new business. One community member stated the need to “continue to foster that entrepreneurial attitude throughout the students. And it’s come along quickly. Then they’ll start their own businesses” (Community Focus Group, 732-734). Instead of thinking through ways the College could leverage its network to attract business, members of the Wise community see potential in students generating their own business initiatives.

Two hypotheses exist for why the community might gain greater hopefulness from the idea of student entrepreneurs than they do of outside business entrants. First, Appalachian culture is independent in nature. As one female focus group participant put it, “with mountains you’re gonna get can-do spirit” (Community Focus Group, 898). Fending for oneself and hustling for one’s own success is a character trait that frequently came up in focus groups as the key ingredient in economic development and rural success. Student entrepreneurship aligns well with this belief. Second, a common sentiment exists that Virginia has forgotten about Southwest Virginia and cannot be relied upon for help. When asked whether focus group participants felt forgotten with the larger Commonwealth context, all participants unanimously agreed with this statement. In both focus groups, participants individually brought up that “there is an attitude that the state ends at Roanoke” (Community Focus Group, 588-589). These perceptions have placed the burden of generating hopefulness about the economy away from Virginia politics and administration into the hands of student entrepreneurs.

Student Hopefulness: While the University of Virginia’s College at Wise focuses its mission in part on the betterment of the Southwest Virginia community, an equally large part is devoted to student success. The student population, as a result of the College’s educational and extracurricular efforts, feels generally prepared for life and a future career; however, their sense of hope for the

future of the University and Wise are less pronounced. Personal hopefulness is stronger than community hopefulness.

When asked about changes in verbal, quantitative, and subject matter competence, 91.67% of students⁵ found that they greatly improved in at least one of these categories throughout their degree attainment. 33.33% found that subject matter competence improved most while 20.83% found all three improved equally. Quantitative improved least among the surveyed students. When asked about changes in identity and sense of morality during their time in college, 62.5% stated that both of these characteristics greatly changed throughout their time at UVA-Wise; 37.5% stated that neither had changed. Regarding their hopefulness in obtaining a job, 84.22% of students overwhelmingly praised UVA-Wise for preparing them adequately. Only 15.79% of student respondents wrote more about how UVA-Wise failed to prepare them more than they wrote about preparing them well. When breaking these numbers down by hometown and major, we find that STEM majors, education majors, and students from Wise County are generally more optimistic about UVA-Wise giving them favorable job prospects than students who study social science or business, and students who grew up outside of Wise County (Exhibit 16, Exhibit 17). These trends make intuitive sense. STEM and education are in-demand majors and are departments that orient much of their curriculum to current job demands. Social sciences like psychology and history are further removed from these job conversations and prospects. While the business program intuitively seems well-aligned to popular jobs, circa one in five American college students majors in business, as a 2019 Poets and Quants article finds. This lack of differentiation, and lack of specialized knowledge that one would get from an education or STEM degree, might make anxiety around getting a job with a business degree greater. Out of the 13 surveyed seniors who are graduating in May 2019, three already had a job lined up at the time they took the survey. The three jobs were in elementary

⁵ Student survey consisted of 39 responses.

education, software engineering, and business analysis. None of the 10 juniors surveyed had an internship set up for the upcoming summer. This indicates that, although students might not be consciously anxious about their economic situation, this does not mean they are indeed economically secure. A resulting question stemming from this is whether UVA-Wise faculty and career services are speaking with students about their futures enough for them to think critically about their futures.

One reason students might not be afraid of obtaining a job after college is that they simply have not been encouraged to think about it to a great extent. This begs the question of what faculty and career services, which students characterized as “awful” and “not approachable” (Student Focus Group, 394, 396) are doing to have these conversations with students. Based on the study focus group, it seems that students who (a) majored in a technology-oriented field, (b) are highly involved at UVA-Wise and have developed a rigorous support network with administration, and (c) come from upper-middle class families are generally less anxious about making money after college. An in-demand major, connections, and lack of student debt let students take time to find a job, instead of needing one right after they graduate, and give students various avenues from which to approach the job search process.

While students’ sense of hope regarding their life- and career-preparedness is generally high among those surveyed, students are less hopeful for the future of Wise. Around half, or 45.84%, of students surveyed displayed a sense of loyalty and love for the region. One student from Southwest Virginia, commented that “it is always a rewarding opportunity to get to show [those from other parts of Virginia] the wonderful things, beautiful scenery, and amazing people that our area has to offer” (Student Survey, 3). Another Virginia student from outside of the Southwest region, wrote “I love it here. I feel myself getting defensive when I hear people talking bad about the area” (Student Survey, 18). The other half, around 54.16%, of students are less commending of the area. One

Northern Virginia-based student noted, “I do not have a sense of loyalty to the region or area. I am not from this area and people notice that I am different and point it out. I am constantly reminded that I am an outsider by some and in a way feel ostracized by the region. It is not the fault of the college, but rather the local population seem quick to point it out with phrases such as “You aren't from around here are ya?” (Student Survey, 23). Another student from outside of Virginia commented, “SW Virginia is a terrible place to live. I have never had any hope of being able to live and survive in SW Virginia. There are very few job opportunities and the jobs that are available do not pay enough to survive. If I continue to work at Walmart I would make more money than most teachers in this area” (Student Survey, 20). While student’s connection and appreciation for Wise County is varied, the student focus group uncovered that even individuals who have a devotion to Southwest Virginia, fail to be hopeful for the region’s economic future. One student from outside Southwest Virginia who plans to stay in the region commented, “It’s sad to say that sometimes it feels like it’s just the college at some points. Because, it really feels like the college is what’s holding this town up. I know it’s kind of a negative view on it but it’s realistic in a sense because there’s, since coal’s been gone, there’s just nothing here” (Student Focus Group, 7-10). Another student, who has plans on working at UVA-Wise after graduation, commented, “Anytime that you see an economic new stuff in wise, it’s mostly the Chancellor pushing new stuff in the town that the town normally wouldn’t do because they just don’t really care that much I guess” (Student Focus Group, 16-18). Because students do not see the development activities the community engages in, it views the town as a dying community that has lost the hope and ambition to take economic revitalization seriously. While groups like the Kiwanis Club exist to advocate for the town, students are unaware of such initiatives; this demonstrates the lack of dialogue between students and community members. Students are instead aware of the less attractive aspects of Wise such as racism against

minority student groups, the town's opioid epidemic, and the disability check scams individuals pursue. Knowledge of these occurrences do not bolster a student's sense of hope for the town.

Combined with students' lack of knowledge of local town-led initiatives, undergraduates do not feel supported by the town. A UVA-Wise student athlete shared that the town shows up for high school games but neglects to care for College games (Student Focus Group, 283-285). A community member who graduated from Wise recently, echoed this sentiment at a focus group, stating that "I just wish that people came like that for the University. Like, that just kinda upsets me because people come out for high school athletics, but they wouldn't come out for a university that is in their neighborhood at all. And that's upsetting" (Community Focus Group, 804-808). Although community members shared their sense of pride and gratitude for the College in focus groups and surveys, these sentiments are not felt and heard by College students who do not feel welcomed and integrated. This lack of integration makes it easier for students to further distance themselves and be more critical of Wise problems, instead of viewing themselves as partly responsible for addressing issues. As a result, UVA-Wise students feel less hopeful for the future of Wise, harming their prospect of staying in the region.

In addition to students' low sense of hope for Wise, students are struggling to stay optimistic for the future of UVA-Wise due to their perceived lack of college identity. Speaking with students, an overwhelming amount are grateful for the rigorous education they receive. As one communications major put it, "Classes are hard. Like, our classes prepare us for grad schools. Our professors are so intelligent and give us so much information that they're always there to help but I feel very challenged, especially in our major" (Student Focus Group, 352-354). Students speak especially highly of the College's low 13:1 student-faculty ratio and the 15-person average class size. A student from New England stated teacher involvement as the primary reason for choosing to attend UVA-Wise. "When I was looking at colleges [...] and I saw the ratio of students to teachers

and I was like ‘Wow’ [...] You get a really one-on-one feel with your education so you get a direct path of knowledge from [professors]” (Student Focus Group, 371-377). While 16.6% of students voiced concerns over lack of career preparation that a liberal arts education provides, 83.4% were strongly in favor of a liberal arts education approach. Community members who were asked about their views on UVA-Wise offering a liberal arts education, instead of a more technically-oriented program, unanimously agreed on the importance of a well-rounded teaching approach in Southwest Virginia. In a UVA Appalachia Prosperity Project Bicentennial Symposium on April 23rd, Chancellor Henry supported liberal arts as well, stating, “For our region to succeed, we believe students must have a variety of different skills which can only be obtained from liberal arts” (Henry, APP UVA Symposium Keynote Speech, April 23, 2019).

While students are generally satisfied with the rigor of courses and professor involvement, students criticize the lack of tradition and sense of identity UVA-Wise has. A student from Northern Virginia stated, “We’re a college but we don’t have an alma mater in a sense. We don’t have, like, something that really unites us and makes us unique. I mean, we are a college, we got classes, we got sports teams, but we don’t have anything that is like us” (Student Focus Group, 834-838). All other participants echoed these sentiments, two students commenting that getting students out to organized events is like “pulling teeth” (Student Focus Group, 908 & 969). One student claimed that a high number of commuters might be the cause of low student engagement. Another student attributed this lack of drive to establish a university identity to the surrounding region. As they put it, “It’s this area. It almost drained it out of people. We have nothing to do” (Student Focus Group, 916). While the town might certainly influence how students operate on campus, this explanation does not answer why UVA-Wise does not have traditions. It only answers why UVA-Wise students might not have traditions associated with or in the town. Instead, I hypothesize that the school’s lack of identity stems from the fact that the university has only been around for 65 years and that,

for the first three decades of its existence, the College's culture relied heavily upon the town when a majority of its students were commuters and locals. Since the fall of coal, Wise's culture has changed, which has forced the College to establish its own identity. The challenge of this, apart from being a young institution with little time to establish traditions which make up culture, is UVA's muddled relationship with the College. A student actively involved in UVA-Wise's Student Government Association stated, "the problem is, that relationship [between UVA and UVA-Wise] hasn't been defined in a way that UVA-Wise knows what we are to Charlottesville. [...] If we don't know who we are, I don't know how we are supposed to be respected by anyone else in the state" (Student Focus Group, 825-831). UVA-Wise students have a complicated relationship with Wise since, as coal has diminished, the town went from supporting UVA-Wise to being supported and held up by the College. This aforementioned power transfer, combined with the complex power dynamic between UVA and UVA-Wise, creates a situation unfavorable to identity formation. Lack of identity has reduced the loyalty students feel to the College to the point that students say they will "never coming back to this place again" or that students feel that alumni aren't involved because "they don't want anything to do with Wise" (Student Focus Group, 935-936 & 429-430).

8 UVA-Wise Challenges and Ideas for Expanding Impact

While UVA-Wise creates significant economic and societal impacts within Wise County and Southwest Virginia, the College experiences challenges which hold it back to achieve a greater ability to revitalize the local economy. Specifically, there exist four barriers to elevating the economic impact the College can have on the surrounding area. These are (1) a jarring town-college divide, (2) a sense of being forgotten, (3) a decreasing UVA-Wise student population, and (4) differentiation challenges.

8.1 Economic Depression Perpetuating a Town-College Divide

The College's main campus is a 15-minute walk from Wise's town center which is composed of one long street, Main Street. The street is idyllic. There, you will find the historic Wise Inn, its associated local diner, the town hall building, the local middle and high school, a Subway, a Mexican-style restaurant, and several other small shops. Between January and March 2019, both the Dairy Barn and sole town coffee shop closed, making Main Street seem more deserted than usual. Closing amenities have made students less likely to spend their afternoons and weekdays in town. As a student focus group participant stated, "there's so much potential here. Like, on Main Street, there could be a bar thrown in there or something to get people to come" (Student Focus Group, 156-157). The Wise town mayor, Jeffrey Dotson, sees this problem and has plans to address it. In an interview, he stated, "We try hard to attract business to Wise, especially something that students or staff can take advantage" (Dotson, 2019). The challenge is retention. He continues, "Every few months we gain a business and lose a business. We are to the positive, but if we get two we probably lose one."

Lack of town amenities is not the only reason students fail to feel a desire to interact with community members. The visible economic depression, social anxiety, opioid use, and unemployment have made students feel as distant as ever from town's people. Students feel that the discomfort is not one-sided. They feel that residents might be bitter about the stark contrast between a local's future prospects and a College graduate's future. It is worth noting, however, that this is not apparent in community member surveys. Surveyed community members described town relations with the College to be good. 42.85% of surveyed community members voiced that they do not believe the town and College are at odds with each other. Only 29.16% of students believed this to be true. The discrepancy between student's perceptions and town's perceptions is two-fold. Firstly, when community members speak of town-College interactions, they refer to attending College events. If they attend a basketball game and, say, that year's graduation, they feel included as

part of the community. Students likely do not notice when individuals show up to one-off events. Instead, they think of town-College interactions as the town supporting and contributing to them. Students see the work UVA-Wise is putting into the community but does not see reciprocity within this relationship. For them, opening a coffee shop or organizing a social event for students on Campus is their idea of a community that supports the college, not just the other way around. Secondly, the optimistic responses stemming from the surveyed community members, in part, is due to the sample itself. Community members included in the research consisted nearly entirely of Kiwanis Club members. The Kiwanis members of Wise do not present a representative sample of College involvement. As a result, a rosier perception of community-student relations can be explained through lack of comprehensive sampling.

The town-college divide makes it harder for students to feel at home in Wise, which makes them less likely to feel responsible enough to stay in the region and help revitalize the area even if they do not have a job in the region after graduation. While many students want to stay, if there are no immediate job openings, students will not risk their economic future for Wise if they do not feel an obligation and deep connection to the town. Furthermore, community members might be less inclined to work with UVA-Wise on projects if they feel they are fundamentally different to members of the College community.

8.2 Feeling Forgotten

A sentiment frequently brought up throughout the research process was a sense of being forgotten. This is both in the context of being forgotten as a member of the University Virginia community and being forgotten as a county of the Commonwealth community.

Both community members and students have stated that UVA-Wise is seen as the “redheaded stepchild” of UVA. While individuals are aware of their association with the University, they do not feel like they are fully accepted into the UVA community. One Wise student said in a

focus group, “Everyone at UVA-Wise knows UVA and everyone at UVA does not know we exist [...] I know my degree will probably say like I’m part of UVA but I don’t.” (Student Focus Group, 180-181, 191). Another voiced similar sentiments, asking rhetorically, “At this points it’s like okay is UVA really interested in us? Or is this a one way street? (Student Focus Group, 222-223). From the beginning of UVA-Wise’s founding story, UVA’s commitment to the College was questionable. UVA faculty was outspokenly against the idea in 1954. UVA’s alumni association did not like the idea of a less-competitive UVA branch either and, when Clinch Valley College wanted to change its name to UVA-Wise in 1991, the association “thought [they] were some group trying to become part of UVA” instead of realizing that they had been a branch for the previous two decades (Community Focus Group, 577-581).

While UVA devotes resources to the maintenance of UVA-Wise, many of these resources are administrative in nature. This means that, while administration knows the two institutions support one another, the students do not feel active support. Pace Lochte, the Vice President for Economic Development at UVA, works closely with UVA-Wise Vice-Chancellor Shannon Blevins on revitalization initiatives. Lochte discussed that UVA supports UVA-Wise by sharing key university resources such as IT, HR, and accounting support. In addition to day-to-day administrative aid, UVA helps the College strengthen its offerings. With a \$3.5 million strategic investment and support from the Batten Institute of the Darden School of Business, the University is expanding the College’s entrepreneurship program. However, these are initiatives that students at UVA-Wise are not exposed to. What they see is lack of student invitations to UVA, lack of cross-faculty engagements, and the lack of awareness of Charlottesville undergraduates regarding Southwest Virginia. Even though administration might be closely linked with one another, these initiatives do not trickle down to the students who feel forgotten. This affects their sense of hope.

Similarly, Wise students and community members feel that Southwest Virginia is a forgotten part of the state. One community member stated, “There is an attitude that the state ends at Roanoke. Or even a little east of that. It’s not that I think anybody is trying to be mean to us or anything else. It’s just that we don’t come into their minds” (Community Focus Group, 588-591). Funding and other resources being distributed to more densely-populated parts of the Commonwealth does not seem to outrage locals. They have come to terms with the government’s constraints, however unfair it may be to Southwest Virginia. Students who are younger and less in touch with Virginia politics across the decades are more upset at these trends. One student explained, “I’m getting in-state tuition here. This is Virginia. And I think people need to start treating it like that. Like, or just give us to West Virginia. Maybe someone will care about us” (Student Focus Group, 810-812). Another student, regarding funding allocation, commented, “When money goes to schools in Virginia, it’s NOVA. It’s NOVA. And it’s going to these schools that already have all this money” (Student Focus Group, 803-805). Whether individuals are more outraged or more understanding of why Southwest Virginia is left out of government discussions, both students and community members feel the same sentiment of inattention to Wise County.

Lack of visible care from UVA and lack of attention the state of Virginia contributes to students’ and community members’ sense of hopelessness. Furthermore, these sentiments make it more challenging for the College and wider region to push for increased support and collaboration from UVA. The apathy that can stem from hopelessness prohibits students and administration from taking action and requesting more aid which could help expand UVA-Wise and help grow the local economy.

8.3 A Shrinking UVA-Wise

Over the past nine years, the College has experienced a significant decline in student applications. Competing universities, community colleges, or alternative paths after high school are all

contributing to the increased difficulties the College faces trying to recruit new students. From 2009 to 2018, UVA-Wise experienced a

22.4% decrease in student applications, plummeting from 1,068 applications to 828 students, as evidenced by figure 4.

Throughout this timespan, the

acceptance rate has hovered stood at

77.5%. When analyzing the number of

enrolled students relative to the number of accepted students, it is apparent that the College has

struggled with applicant yield. 33.4% of applicants end up enrolling as freshman. 43.0% of admits

convert into enrolled students. J. Sanders Huguenin, the Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic

Affairs is making student recruitment one of his top priorities for this upcoming year, stating, “You

know, we don't need to do anything revolutionary: just going to the Richmond and getting a couple dozen students [...] and those students really could benefit from us for being here because we pay

attention to our students and they get opportunities that they wouldn't elsewhere” (Huguenin

Interview, 2019). Unfortunately, increasing UVA-Wise's student population by even a couple dozen

is proving challenging. A shrinking student population is making it harder for the College to sustain

itself, increase its impact on students, and to increase the population of Wise County which has

fallen roughly 20% over the past five years. Furthermore, shrinking population negatively impacts

students' sense of hope and pride for their university which is proving to be less attractive to

prospective students, as evidenced by enrollment rates. A new initiative by the Appalachian Regional

Commission, passed by the Virginia General Assembly in March 6, 2019, can help address shrinking

student application numbers. The new law lets UVA-Wise offer in-state tuition for anyone within

the Appalachian Regional Commission Territory, which stretches from rural New York to

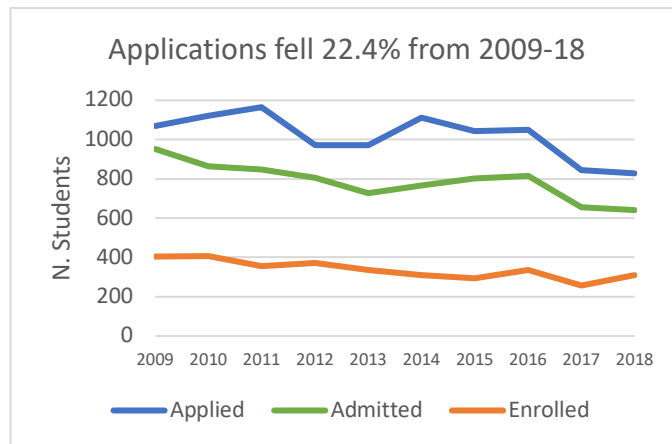


Figure 4: UVA-Wise application and enrollment numbers have fallen since 2010 (Data obtained from UVA-Wise Registrar's Office).

Mississippi. Chancellor Henry mentioned in a statement after the legislation had passed, “the ability to offer reduced tuition throughout the Appalachian Regional Commission will open new opportunities for students from all parts of Appalachia and will allow us to substantially expand our recruiting efforts. It is a game changer for UVA-Wise” (WJHL, 2019). In order to address this problem effectively, UVA-Wise cannot simply expand its outreach efforts. It must also address its lack of differentiation around its value proposition as a university.

8.4 Lack of Differentiation

According to the National Student Clearinghouse, 1.7 million fewer undergraduate and graduate students are enrolling in university since 2011, equating to a 9 percent decline enrollment. Liberal arts degrees are having a particularly hard time making a case for themselves. As Burning Glass Technologies finds, the number of history graduates has fallen 25 percent since 2007; the number of English language, literature and composition by 22 percent, and philosophy and religious studies by 15 percent (Burning Glass Technologies, 2018). A number of reasons are driving this trend. Rising tuition, student debt, and the loss of faith in a college degree yielding a well-paying job—just 16% of Americans think that a four-year degree prepares students very well for a well-paying job in today’s economy, according to a 2016 Pew Research Center study—are all to blame. Regardless of the primary reason, more colleges are shutting their doors due to low enrollment and increasing costs. Harvard Business School Professor Clayton Christiansen has gone as far as to predict that 50% of colleges and universities will close or go bankrupt in the next decade (Christiansen, 2011). In light of these trends, higher education institutions must find a competitive edge to stay in-demand.

UVA-Wise is struggling in this realm. UVA-Wise competes with 22 other liberal arts colleges in Virginia for applications. Lack of differentiation and specialization, which could attract a niche pocket of student interest, and a remote location which make it hard to market to regions in Virginia, make UVA-Wise’s value proposition for non-Southwest-based high schoolers a challenge.

According to U.S. News and World Report, the College ranks as the 173rd best liberal arts college out of 229 colleges nationally. While rankings certainly are not the holy grail of college assessment, being ranked in the bottom 25% makes attracting students who are not familiar with the College a challenge. If UVA-Wise wants to sustain itself, it must attract students from around the Commonwealth since the SW student population is not large enough and not growing to a degree which could sustain the College. In order students from around Virginia, it must work to differentiate itself in a convincing way.

9 Solution

To play off of the University of Virginia's College at Wise's strengths and address its aforementioned challenges for expanding impact, the College must consider (i) specializing in a field of study, (ii) partnering with UVA to run exchange programs between students and faculty around said field of study, and (iii) rallying student entrepreneurs around said field of study to drive more business around relevant skillsets students will obtain from the College's efforts of specialization.

In order to bolster its value proposition and stand out among other liberal arts colleges with a similar profile, UVA-Wise must assess its advantages and invest heavily in one field of study that showcases these strengths as a means of differentiation. One example could be an investment in environmental science which, unlike nursing and teacher education, has potential to drive export-based business. Wise County is located in one of the most ecologically diverse regions of the county. To capitalize on this geographic benefit which is not replicable by competing universities, administration should consider investing in the environmental science department. It must expand research and supplement the department with opportunities to learn relevant skills like geographic information system (GIS), Computer-aided design software (CAD), sustainability ethics. It must offer summer programming, internship experiences, and school-exchange opportunities to further differentiate the program from existing ones at universities. Specialization is what several other

schools have done to compete in the higher education market. Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University differentiates itself by focusing on engineering and a strong agriculture program⁶. Similarly, Virginia Commonwealth University stands out with its nationally-recognized performing arts program⁷. Differentiating oneself by serving as a liberal arts college is not specialized enough; 22 other universities of the same or higher caliber are attracting liberal-arts-seeking students, which is in itself a decreasing student population. A specialty that plays off UVA-Wise's strengths can help the College address its shrinking student application rates and generate interest from environmentally-focused businesses to locate themselves in the area.

To strengthen the specialty they have chosen, UVA-Wise must partner with UVA to share faculty and let students from both institutions mingle with one another. One approach is starting a faculty-exchange program; UVA faculty could spend a semester at UVA-Wise and vice versa. Vice-President Pace Lochte mentioned that, while she had thought of the idea, she does not think UVA faculty would be interested in relocating (Lochte Interview, 2019). To incentivize this exchange, UVA faculty who agree to spend a semester or two in Wise County could get research grants, have less teaching requirements the following semester, or receive a fast track to tenure. Students at UVA-Wise could be taught by some of UVA's most renowned professors which would elevate the College's image, expose students to more research opportunities, and let UVA-Wise feel a belonging and care from UVA in Charlottesville. In conjunction with faculty exchanges, UVA-Wise students could spend a semester at UVA, studying and being exposed to new ideas and people. The set-up would not similarly to other student exchanges UVA engages in with international universities. The benefits for both faculty and students could prove transformative while the downside risk of such a program, which can start small and scale over time, remains minimal.

⁶ While Virginia Tech is ranked #76 nationally, it has the 4th best industrial/manufacturing systems engineering program and the 7th best environmental/health engineering program in the nation ([U.S. News, 2019](#)).

⁷ While Virginia Commonwealth University is ranked #157 nationally, its fine arts programs ranks 2nd in the nation ([U.S. News, 2019](#)).

The final component that builds upon UVA-Wise's investment in a specialized field of study involves invigorating student entrepreneurs to activate business ideas around UVA-Wise's new specialization. The purpose of this would be to capitalize on strengths when creating potential new business ideas and to attract the attention of specialty-specific businesses who might, as a result of student caliber and natural resources, be interested in relocating to Wise. Pitch competitions, trips to entrepreneurship conferences, and collaboration between student entrepreneurs at UVA and UVA-Wise are the first steps to creating an entrepreneurial ecosystem able to take advantage of the College's investment in a specialty and its long-term goals around economic development and student success.

10 Conclusion

The University of Virginia's College at Wise was founded with an original purpose to help Wise County and neighboring Southwest Virginia counties economically revitalize. In 1954, when the College was built, civic leaders knew that youth from their region did not get the same opportunities as those residing in Virginia's densely-populated and more centrally-located regions. Understanding the value of higher education as a driver of economic growth, population growth, and community hopefulness, UVA-Wise was founded. Today, it acts as a steady employer and customer to the region. Currently, the College devotes much of its time and financial resources to economic development initiatives. These fall into four major buckets: (1) public health which helps create a healthy and able workforce, (2) professional development which equips current employees with soft skills needed to continue their educational pursuits while employed, (3) community development helps include residents in conversations around economic revitalization and receive their buy-in for programming, and (4) entrepreneurship which focuses on students to start businesses and growth the local economy without having to wait on external business to be attracted to Wise.

UVA-Wise's ancillary economic initiatives show the administration's interest and devotion to helping the local economy; however, what the College neglects to see is that its primary function, namely educating students, is an economic lever in itself. Since most of the College's attention is focused on this aspect of school operations, I argue this is also where the greatest potential for economic change exists. UVA-Wise's education generates two economic outputs. First, it improves Wise's living standards by educating teachers that improve K-12 education in the area and by educating nurses that contribute to the rural region's access to good healthcare. Second, it contributes to the community's and student's sense of hope for their economic future, the future of their community, and the future of Southwest Virginia. Sense of hope and aspiration, as described in the research's literature review, has a significantly positive effect on economic outcomes. As a result, UVA-Wise, simply by encouraging students and enabling locals to envision a future of prosperity and youth, affects the local economy.

While the University of Virginia's College at Wise has a significantly positive impact on the region, it is not proving to be enough. The town and College population are deeply divided, harming individuals' sense of hope and belonging to the region. Additionally, the College feels forgotten from its parent university UVA, and the town feels unsupported by the Commonwealth government. This, in addition to not receiving important resources from these two powerful institutions, further harms the population's sense of hope for change and feeling of support. Another challenge is UVA-Wise's decreasing student population which in large part can be attributed to decreasing higher education enrollment trends and the College's inability to differentiate itself from proximate liberal arts schools. UVA-Wise must consider utilizing its main lever for economic change, education, to combat this challenge. To do so, I recommend UVA-Wise invest in the environmental science, a specialized field

which is place-based and non-replicable by other universities, to drive student interest and start developing an expertise around an industry which can drive in and build up business.

In the beginning of this paper, we discussed whether small-town America can viably exist in the long-term. Throughout interviews, focus groups, and surveys, I conclude that this is the wrong question to answer. It is not about what is economically feasible. It is about what is right. Small-town America exists to survive. To preserve Appalachian culture and care for members of our country who helped build our country and still sustain our existence, we must work to keep small towns like Wise alive. One way to do this is to help rural higher education institutions keep their doors open — we cannot see universities and colleges as business that do not need outside support. Colleges like UVA-Wise build community, generate hope, and improve standards of living in addition to acting as an employer and consumer like any other business. University administrators and local governments must maintain their important role in rural economies by supporting them and investing where it counts.

Exhibits

Exhibit 1: Breakdown of Economic Footprint by Function and Source (Dollar Denominated Values Expressed in Present Value, Billions of 2015 Dollars)

Table 3.3 Breakdown of Economic Footprint by Function and Source (Dollar Denominated Values Expressed in Present Value, Billions of 2015 Dollars)

	GDP	Industrial output	Personal income	State revenues	Employment
Human capital effect	25.668	42.673	21.686	2.301	N/A
University Startups	0.177	0.273	0.101	0.011	1,584
Total expenditures effect	10.277	17.985	8.912	0.945	165,693
Capital	0.160	0.275	0.105	0.011	2,048
Hospitals	2.911	5.174	2.501	0.265	36,752
Research	0.557	0.983	0.539	0.057	10,165
Portion attributable to out-of-state funds	0.334	0.590	0.324	0.034	6,103
Other institutional expenditures	5.209	9.192	5.049	0.536	95,078
Portion attributable to out-of-state student tuition	0.584	1.030	0.565	0.060	10,653
Portion attributable to other out-of-state funds	0.862	1.522	0.835	0.089	15,739
Student expenditures	1.392	2.276	0.689	0.073	20,809
Portion attributable to out-of-state students	0.335	0.546	0.163	0.017	4,850
Visitor expenditures	0.049	0.085	0.028	0.003	842
Total attributable to out-of-state revenues	2.165	3.773	1.916	0.203	38,186

Exhibit 2a: Student Survey

Q2 I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old, and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary.

- o I accept (1)*
- o I do not accept (2)*

Q2 Where did you grow up?

- o Wise County (1)*
- o Southwest Virginia, outside Wise County (2)*
- o Virginia, outside Southwest Virginia (3)*
- o Outside Virginia (4)*

Q3 What year are you at UVA-Wise?

- o Junior (1)*
- o Senior (2)*
- o Other (3)*

Q4 What do you study?

Q5 Click to write the question text

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
My identity is closely tied to the identity of SW Virginia (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel hopeful for my own economic future. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wise's economic conditions are improving (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My education from UVA-Wise is enabling me to stay and work in SW Virginia. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My education from UVA-Wise is giving me promising job prospects. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 How has your verbal, quantitative, and subject matter competence improved over the course of your degree attainment? Which ones have improved most and which ones have improved least?

Q7 How has your identity and sense of morality changed throughout college? If it didn't, how has it remained the same?

Q8 How has your sense of loyalty to SW Virginia changed over the course of your time at UVA-Wise?

Q9 How do you wish it had prepared you?

Q10 How satisfied are you with your decision to attend university?

	Extremely satisfied (1)	Somewhat satisfied (2)	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (3)	Somewhat dissatisfied (4)	Extremely dissatisfied (5)
1 (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 In one sentence, if you had not decided to enroll in UVA-Wise, what would you have done instead?

Q12 Do you feel that the town and university are at odds with each other? Briefly describe why or why not.

Q13 Are you graduating this year?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q14 Do you have a job offer?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q15 Briefly describe where and what you will be working as.

Q16 Briefly describe your summer plans.

Q17 If money were no object, what would you want to do professionally and where would you like to live?

Q18 Please share with us your email address so that you can be entered to win one of \$50 Amazon gift cards and be contacted for any future follow-on interview requests (these would all be completely optional)

Q19 Thank you for participating in this survey! If you have any questions about the project, please reach out to the researcher Kate McGinn at 703-789-2516 or kmm8zy@virginia.edu.

Exhibit 2b: Community Survey

Q1 I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old, and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary.

- I agree. (1)
- I do not agree. (2)

Q2 Where did you grow up?

- Wise County (1)
- Southwest Virginia, outside Wise County (2)
- Virginia, outside Southwest Virginia (3)
- Outside Virginia (4)

Q3 Where do you currently live?

- Wise Town (1)
- Wise County (2)
- Outside Wise County (3)
- Other (4)

Q4 Where do you work? If you are retired, please write "Retired".

Q5 What is your job role? If you are retired, please write "Retired".

Q6 How many years have you worked at that organization/company?

Q7 Please rate your responses (1-5) to the following statements.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)
My identity is closely tied to the identity of SW Virginia (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel hopeful for my own economic future. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Wise's economic conditions are improving (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The existence of UVA-Wise creates value for Wise, VA. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am emotionally invested in UVA-Wise. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 I have attended multiple events/sports games (>3) at UVA-Wise within the past year.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

Q9 I have:

- Considered sending my children to UVA-Wise. (1)
- Never considered sending my children to UVA-Wise. (2)
- Sent my children to UVA-Wise. (3)
- I don't have any children. (4)

Q10 How would you characterize Wise?

Q11 How has Wise, VA changed over the past 20 years?

Q12 What impact does UVA-Wise have on the community?

Q13 Do you feel that the town and university are odds with each other? In what ways, if any?

Q14 What impact do you wish UVA-Wise had on the community?

Q15 Please share with us your email address so that you can be entered to win one of \$50 Amazon gift cards and be contacted for any future follow-on interview requests (these would all be completely optional)

Q16 Thank you for participating in this survey! If you have any questions about the project, please reach out to the researcher Kate McGinn at 703-789-2516 or kmm8zy@virginia.edu.

Exhibit 3: Focus Group Questions

Community Member Focus Group:

- 1) How would you characterize Wise, VA?
- 2) How would you characterize Wise, VA 50 years ago?
- 3) How have changes in economic policy, technological development and outsourcing changed job opportunities in Wise?
- 4) How do residents respond to these changes?
- 5) How has that affected levels of hope in the town?
- 6) Are you hopeful for Wise? Why?
- 7) What impact does UVA-Wise have on the community?
- 8) What impact do you wish UVA-Wise had on the community?
- 9) How can Wise help students stay local? How can Wise help business grow locally?
- 10) What antagonism, if any, do you feel between students and community members in Wise?

Student Focus Group:

- 1) How would you characterize Wise, VA?
- 2) For anyone who has family here, how might Wise have changed over the past 50 years?
- 3) How has your sense of loyalty to SW Virginia changed over the course of your time at UVA-Wise?
- 4) How has UVA-Wise prepared you for your future?
- 5) How do you wish it had prepared you?
- 6) Why do you wish to stay or not stay in Wise, VA after graduation?
- 7) Are you hopeful for Wise? Why or why not?
- 8) Are you hopeful for your own economic future? Why or why not?
- 9) What impact does UVA-Wise have on Wise, Virginia?
- 10) What antagonism, if any, do you feel between students and community members in Wise?

Exhibit 4: Survey Consent Form (students and community members)

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: This purpose of the study is to investigate the indirect and direct economic effects of the University of Virginia College at Wise on Wise, Virginia (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

What you will do in the study: As part of this study you will be asked to fill out a survey consisting of open-ended and structured questions. Your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. The University of Virginia wants to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts.

Time Required: This study will take approximately 10 minutes of your time.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. Indirectly, your participation may benefit you by giving you a time to reflect upon your thoughts and feelings regarding life in Wise, and the effect the College has had on the community of which you are a part.

Confidentiality: Should you choose to participate in the survey, your responses will remain confidential although we will be collecting email addresses in order to potentially follow-up with optional interviews and for you to be entered into the Amazon gift card raffle. Once follow-up contact has been made and gift cards have been sent out, email address information will be destroyed. Researchers within the University of Virginia will analyze the data, but your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, simply exit out of the survey form. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you have submitted and would like to withdraw, please email the researcher Kate McGinn and she will delete all your data permanently. There is no penalty for withdrawing. You are still eligible to be entered into the gift raffle for the study if you decide to withdraw.

Reward: You will be entered to win one of five \$50 Amazon gift cards for participating in the study. The researcher will inform you of your selection via email.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact:

Kate McGinn, UVA IRB-SBS #2213
507 16th Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903 USA
(703) 789-2516
kmm8zy@virginia.edu

William Wilhelm
Rouss, Hall and Robertson Hall
125 Ruppel Dr. Office 369, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: 434-924-7666
wjw9a@virginia.edu

To obtain more information about the study, ask questions about the research procedures, express concerns about your participation, or report illness, injury or other problems, please contact:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D.
Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences
One Morton Dr. Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392
Telephone: (434) 924-5999
Email: irbsbshelp@virginia.edu
Website: www.virginia.edu/vpr/irb/sbs
Website for Research Participants: <http://www.virginia.edu/vpr/participants/>

Exhibit 5a: Student Member Focus Group Consent Form

Project Title: Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: This purpose of the study is to investigate the indirect and direct economic effects of the University of Virginia College at Wise on Wise, Virginia (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

What you will do in the study: As part of this study you will be asked to participate in a focus group of 8-10 individuals and answer structured and open-ended questions. A moderator will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. As approved through the University of Virginia’s Institutional Review Board, this focus group will be audio-recorded. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. The University of Virginia wants to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts.

Time Required: This study will take approximately 60-85 minutes.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. Your participation may benefit you by letting you learn about what fellow residents think about economic future of Wise. Additionally, the conversation over the next 85 minutes will give you a time to reflect upon your own thoughts and feelings regarding life in Wise. No risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation.

Confidentiality: Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Researchers within the University of Virginia will analyze the data, but your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. Your grades and academic standing will in no way be affected by your participation in the study.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the researcher and exit the room during the focus group. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to withdraw after the focus group finishes, please email the researcher Kate McGinn and she will delete all your data permanently. There is no penalty for withdrawing. You will still be compensated for your participation even if you withdraw at any time during the study.

Payment: You will receive \$20 compensation in cash after the focus group, and will be given complimentary lunch during the focus group discussion.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact:

Project Title: Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

William Wilhelm
Rouss Hall and Robertson Hall
125 Ruppel Dr, Office 369, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: 434-924-7666
wjw9a@virginia.edu

If you have questions about your rights in this study, please contact:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board
One Morton Dr. Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908
(434) 924-5999
irbsbshelp@virginia.edu

Consent to Participate: *I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old, and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary.*

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit 5b: Community Member Focus Group Consent Form

Project Title: Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Please read this consent agreement carefully before you decide to participate in the study.

Purpose of the research study: This purpose of the study is to investigate the indirect and direct economic effects of the University of Virginia College at Wise on Wise, Virginia.

What you will do in the study: As part of this study you will be asked to participate in a focus group of 8-10 individuals and answer structured and open-ended questions. A moderator will ask you several questions while facilitating the discussion. As approved through the University of Virginia's Institutional Review Board, this focus group will be audio-recorded. However, your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in the final report. The University of Virginia wants to hear the many varying viewpoints and would like for everyone to contribute their thoughts.

Time Required: This study will take approximately 85 minutes.

Risks: No risks are anticipated.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you for participating in this research study. Your participation may benefit you by letting you learn about what fellow residents think about economic future of Wise. Additionally, the conversation over the next 85 minutes will give you a time to reflect upon your own thoughts and feelings regarding life in Wise. No risks are anticipated beyond those experienced during an average conversation.

Confidentiality: Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to respect the privacy of other focus group members by not disclosing any content discussed during the study. Researchers within the University of Virginia will analyze the data, but your responses will remain confidential, and no names will be included in any reports.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

How to withdraw from the study: If you want to withdraw from the study, tell the researcher and exit the room during the focus group. There is no penalty for withdrawing. If you would like to withdraw after the focus group finishes, please email the researcher Kate McGinn and she will delete all your data permanently. There is no penalty for withdrawing. You will still be compensated for your participation even if you withdraw at any time during the study.

Payment: You will receive \$20 compensation in cash after the focus group, and will be given complimentary lunch during the focus group discussion.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact:

Kate McGinn
UVA IRB-SBS #2213
507 16th Street
Charlottesville, VA 22903 USA
(703) 789-2516
kmm8zy@virginia.edu

irect

William Wilhelm
Rouss Hall and Robertson Hall
125 Ruppel Dr, Office 369, Charlottesville, VA 22903.
Telephone: 434-924-7666
wjw9a@virginia.edu

If you have questions about your rights in this study, please contact:

Tonya R. Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board
One Morton Dr. Suite 500
University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392
Charlottesville, VA 22908
(434) 924-5999
irbsbshelp@virginia.edu

Consent to Participate: *I acknowledge that I am at least eighteen years old, and that I understand my rights as a research participant as outlined above. I acknowledge that my participation is voluntary.*

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Exhibit 6: Survey Debriefing Form (Students and Community Members)

Survey Debriefing Form

Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect
Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to understand the direct and indirect economic effects of UVA-Wise on Wise County (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

We invited people from four stakeholder groups to participate in the survey study: local business leaders, Wise County community members, Wise County civic and government leaders, and upperclassmen students at UVA-Wise. In this study, you were asked to fill out a survey asking about how UVA-Wise has impacted you and your life in Wise, VA. These included personal and professional questions regarding economic outcomes and general sense of hope in Wise. In answering these questions, the study will determine the effect of UVA-Wise has had Wise’s economy and the stakeholder group you represent in the community. The results from this study will clarify how the existence of a university and a high degree of individual hope stemming from a university, can act as a mechanism for rural America’s revitalization.

If you feel especially concerned about your anonymity or any triggering statements that may be written in your survey responses, please feel free to phone Kate McGinn about options for counseling. Alternatively, you could also phone the UVA Counseling and Psychological Services (434-243-5556) or Rachel Carter from the UVA-Wise Counseling Services (276-376-4035).

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please contact Kate McGinn via email (kmm8zy@virginia.edu) or phone (703-789-2516). In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Tonya Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, One Morton Drive, Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392. Telephone: (434) 924-5999.

Additional Reading:

Travis J. Lybbert and Bruce Wydick. "Poverty, Aspirations, and the Economics of Hope," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 66, no. 4 (July 2018): 709-753, <https://doi.org/10.1086/696968>.

“How Can We Create an Economics of Hope?” *Yale Insights*, 19 June 2017, insights.som.yale.edu/insights/how-can-we-create-an-economics-of-hope.

Exhibit 7a: Student Focus Group Debriefing Form

Focus Group Debriefing Form

Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to understand the direct and indirect economic effects of UVA-Wise on Wise County (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

We invited UVA-Wise undergraduate juniors and seniors to participate in this focus group. In this study, you were asked to participate in a focus group to discuss the impact of the College on the economy and social dynamics of the stakeholder group of which you are a part. In answering these questions, the study will determine the effect UVA-Wise has had on the economic outcomes and general sense of hope of students. The results from this study will clarify how the existence of a university can act as a mechanism for rural America’s revitalization.

If you feel especially concerned about your anonymity or any triggering statements that may have been said during the focus group discussion, please feel free to phone Kate McGinn about options for counseling. Alternatively, you could also phone the UVA Counseling and Psychological Services (434-243-5556) or Rachel Carter from the UVA Wise Counseling Services (276-376-4035).

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please contact Kate McGinn via email (kmm8zy@virginia.edu) or phone (703-789-2516). In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Tonya Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, One Morton Drive, Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392. Telephone: (434) 924-5999.

Additional Reading:

Travis J. Lybbert and Bruce Wydick, "Poverty, Aspirations, and the Economics of Hope," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 66, no. 4 (July 2018): 709-753, <https://doi.org/10.1086/696968>.

“How Can We Create an Economics of Hope?” *Yale Insights*. 19 June 2017.

Exhibit 7b: Community Member Focus Group Debriefing Form

Focus Group Debriefing Form

Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study! The general purpose of this research is to understand the direct and indirect economic effects of UVA-Wise on Wise County (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

We invited members of the Kiwanis Group to participate in this focus group. In this study, you were asked to participate in a focus group to discuss the impact of the College on the economy and social dynamics of the stakeholder group of which you are a part. In answering these questions, the study will determine the effect UVA-Wise has had on the economic outcomes and general sense of hope of community members. The results from this study will clarify how the existence of a university can act as a mechanism for rural America’s revitalization.

If you feel especially concerned about your anonymity or any triggering statements that may have been said during the focus group discussion, please feel free to phone Kate McGinn about options for counseling. Alternatively, you could also phone the UVA Counseling and Psychological Services (434-243-5556) or Rachel Carter from the UVA Wise Counseling Services (276-376-4035).

Thank you for your participation in this study. If you have further questions about the study, please contact Kate McGinn via email (kmm8zy@virginia.edu) or phone (703-789-2516). In addition, if you have any concerns about any aspect of the study, you may contact Tonya Moon, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences, One Morton Drive, Suite 500, University of Virginia, P.O. Box 800392, Charlottesville, VA 22908-0392. Telephone: (434) 924-5999.

Additional Reading:

Travis J. Lybbert and Bruce Wydick, "Poverty, Aspirations, and the Economics of Hope," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 66, no. 4 (July 2018): 709-753, <https://doi.org/10.1086/696968>.

“How Can We Create an Economics of Hope?” *Yale Insights*, 19 June 2017,

Exhibit 8: Recruitment Email for Survey (Students and Community Members)

Project Title: Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Dear {{Student Name}},

Kate McGinn, a fourth-year student at the McIntire School of Commerce, is currently conducting academic research to understand the direct and indirect economic effects of UVA-Wise on Wise County (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

The research consists of surveys to four stakeholder groups: local business leaders, community members, civic and government leaders in Wise, and 18+ year upperclassmen from UVAWise who have been at the College since their freshman year. Since you are an upperclassman at UVAWise, I was wondering whether you would be open to sharing your insights by filling out the following survey:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. All information that participants provide throughout the survey will be kept confidential. Your grades and academic standing will in no way be affected by your participation. Participants have the right to stop the survey at any time. All participants will be entered to win one of five \$50 Amazon gift cards.

I would greatly appreciate if you could fill out the survey and participate! If you have any questions about the experiment, please feel free to contact the researcher, Kate McGinn (kmm8zy@virginia.edu or at (703) 789-2516).

Thank you in advance for your and your support of this research!

Best regards,

Kate McGinn, UVA IRB-SBS #2213
McIntire School of Commerce | Class of 2019
(703) 789-2516
mcginn@virginia.edu

Exhibit 9: Recruitment Email for Focus Group Participation (Students and Community Members)

Project Title: Hope in the Midst of “American Carnage” — Assessing the Direct and Indirect Economic Impact of UVA-Wise on Wise, Virginia

Dear {{First and Last Name}},

Kate McGinn, a fourth-year student at the McIntire School of Commerce, is currently conducting academic research to understand the direct and indirect economic effects of UVA-Wise on Wise County (UVA IRB-SBS #2213).

A couple weeks ago, you filled out a survey for this research which surveyed four stakeholder groups: local business leaders, community members, civic and government leaders in Wise, and students at UVAWise. I am contacting you again because I am doing a follow-up focus group session with [stakeholder group PI has chosen to learn more about]. I was wondering whether you would be interested in participating in the focus group which will be held [time] at [location which will be at UVAWise in a meeting room].

To be eligible, you need to [eligibility for given stakeholder group] and have participated in the previous survey I sent out a couple weeks ago. Participation in this research study is voluntary. All information that participants provide throughout the focus group will be kept confidential. Participants have the right to stop the focus group session at any time. All participants will be given \$20 cash in compensation and be provided with a free complementary lunch during the session.

If you would like to participate, please let me know by filling out this form with your contact information:

{{Survey Link}}

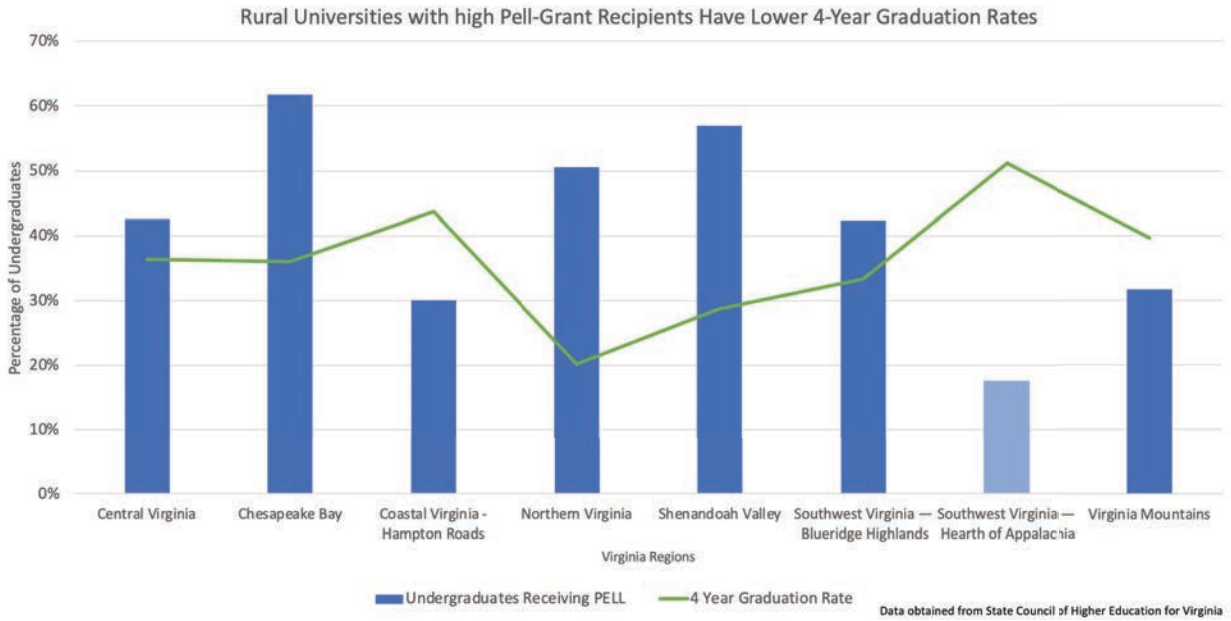
If you have any questions about the experiment, please feel free to contact the researcher, Kate McGinn (kmm8zy@virginia.edu or at (703) 789-2516).

Thank you in advance for your and your support of this research!

Best regards,

Kate McGinn (UVA IRB-SBS #2213)
McIntire School of Commerce | Class of 2019
(703) 789-2516
mcginn@virginia.edu

Exhibit 10: 4-Year Graduation Rates and Undergraduate PELL Recipient Percentages by Virginia Region



** Data of PELL grant recipients based on 2018 data; data from graduation rates based on the 2014 incoming class which graduated in 2018. Both represent the most recent available data.

Exhibit 11: UVA-Wise Direct College Expenditures, 1990-1991 Economic Impact Report

SUMMARY OF DIRECT COLLEGE EXPENDITURES	
Local Employment (Full Time Equivalents)	
Authorized:	169.24
Allocated:	150.00
Payroll:	\$ 4,340,918.61
Budget	
Total Operating:	\$ 10,175,535
General Fund:	\$ 4,895,750
Non-General Fund:	\$ 5,279,785
Local Expenditures	
Municipal Services:	\$ 211,747.42
Retail Purchases:	\$ 373,152.09
12.66 percent of the budget other than personnel and benefits is spent locally.	
Total Local Direct College Expenditures:	\$ 584,899.51

** Obtained from UVA-Wise Archives

Exhibit 12: Economic Impact of UVA, FY15

IE COMBINED ECONOMIC IMPACTS OF UVA ACADEMIC DIVISION, UVA HEALTH SYSTEM, AND UVA-WISE, FY15						
Organization	Economic Impact	Employment Impact	Government Revenue Impact*	Community Impact†	Research Economic Impact‡	Research Employment Impact§
UVA Academic	\$ 1.8 billion	23,779 jobs	\$ 92.5 million	\$38.8 million	\$ 213.8 million	3,606 jobs
UVA Health System	\$ 4.0 billion	27,194 jobs	\$143.9 million	\$25.7 million	\$ 428.1 million	7,215 jobs
UVA-Wise	\$ 84.0 million	680 jobs	\$ 3.5 million	\$5.8 million	\$ 2.6 million	24 jobs
TOTAL TO VIRGINIA	\$5.9 billion	51,653 jobs	\$239.9 million	\$70.3 million	\$644.5 million	10,845 jobs

Government Revenue impacts are in addition to the overall economic impact.

Community impacts are in addition to the overall economic impact.

*Data obtained from University of Virginia 2015 Economic Impact Report (Tripp Umbach, 2015)

Exhibit 13: Educational Attainment of Public School Teachers in Virginia, 2016

Educational Attainment of Public School Teachers in Virginia, 2016 Geographical Access to Institutions Offering Advanced Degrees in Education

Data Source: School Report Cards, Virginia School Divisions, 2016
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov>

Virginia's Public Colleges and Universities

* UVA-WISE offers only undergraduate education courses

Private Universities with Accredited Teaching Programs Located in Virginia

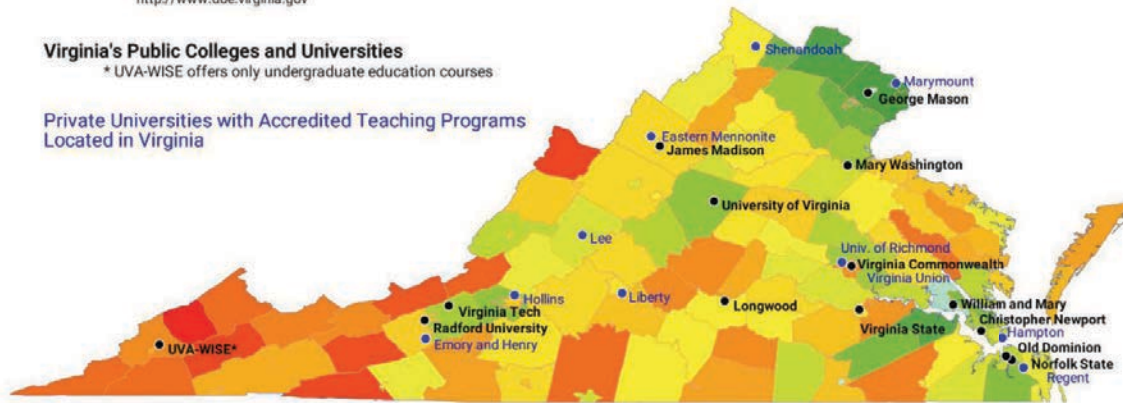
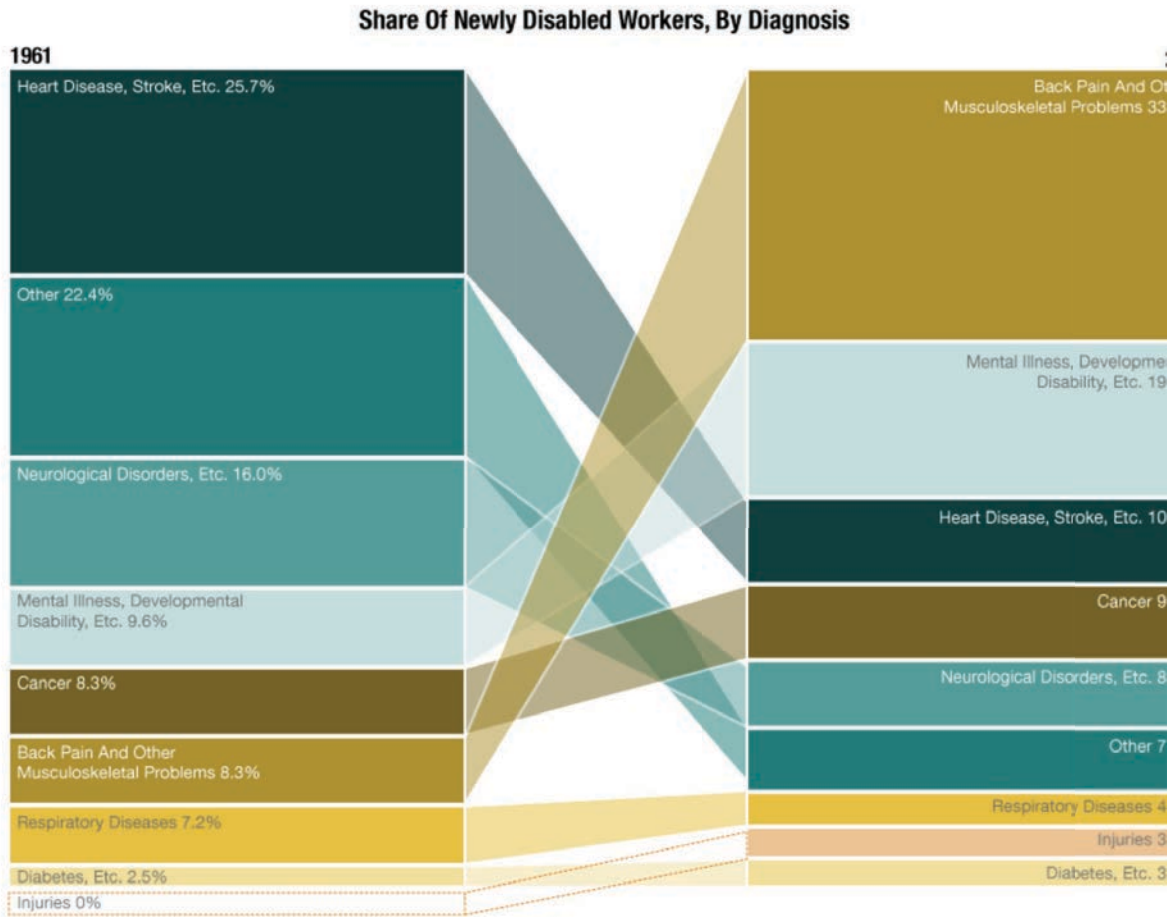


Exhibit 14: Share of Newly Disabled Workers, By Diagnosis, in 2011 Compared to 1961



Created by Liam Flaherty / ENR

Exhibit 15: Community Member Survey Responses on Connection to UVA-Wise and Wise County

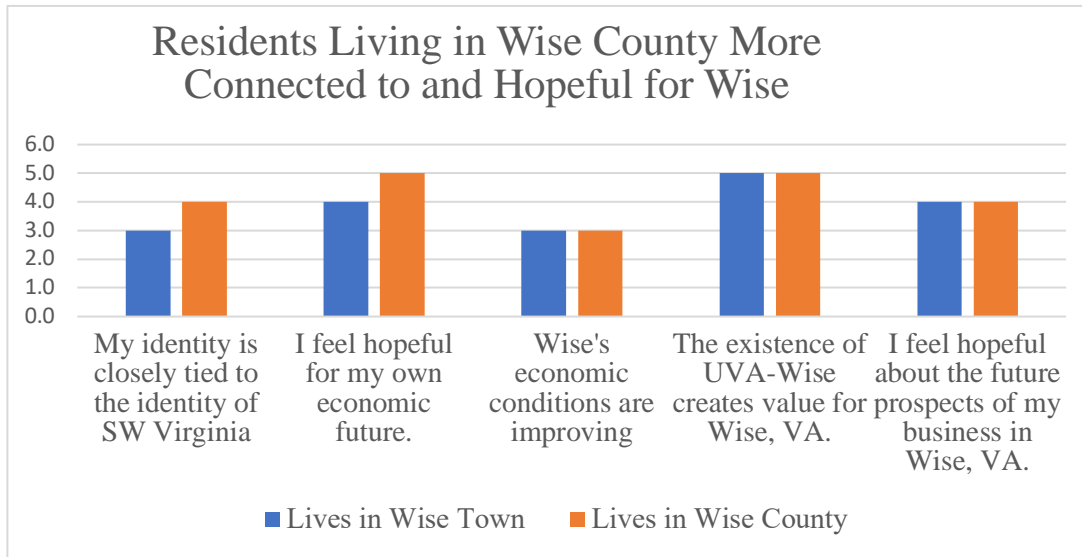


Exhibit 16: Student Survey Responses on Connection to UVA-Wise and Wise County, categorized on major

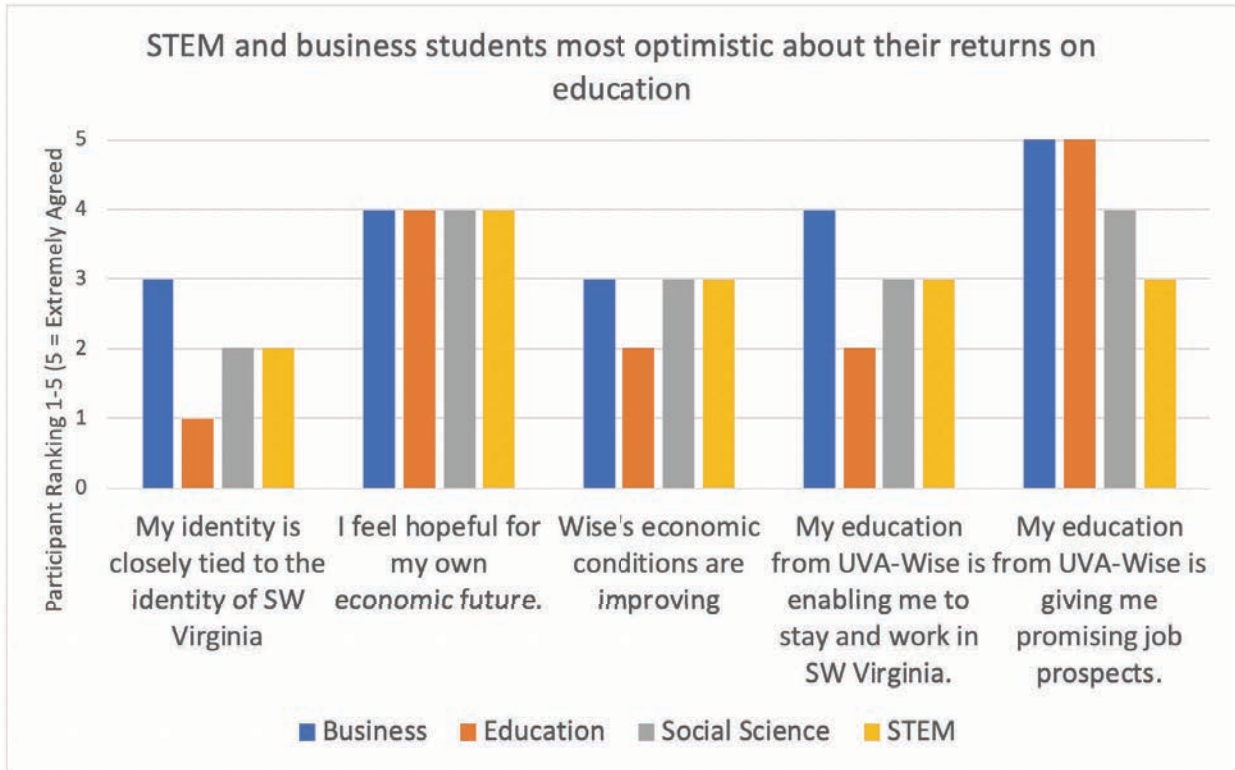
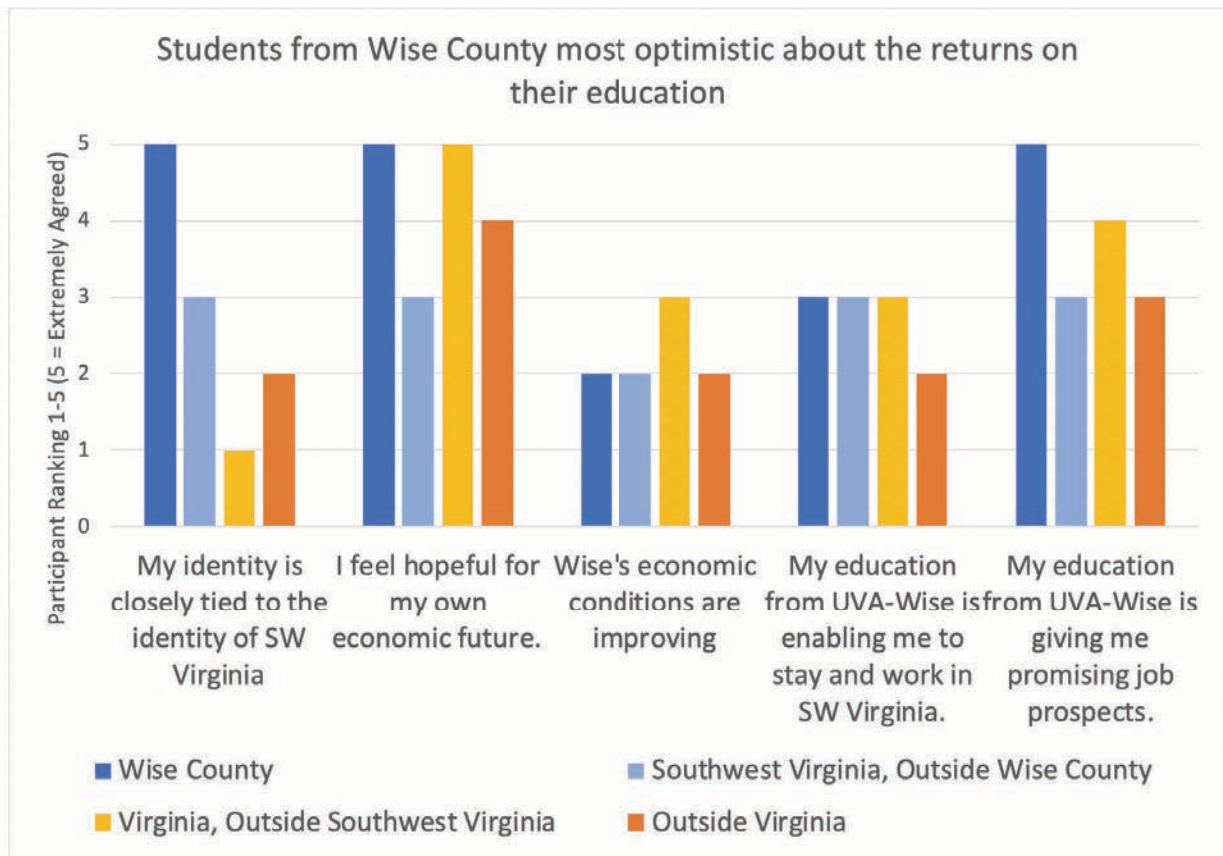
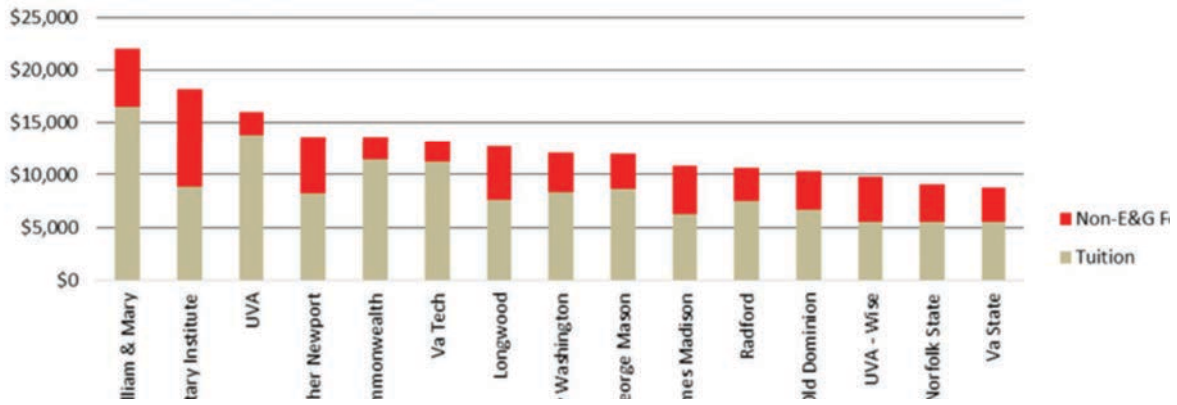


Exhibit 17: Student Survey Responses on Connection to UVA-Wise and Wise County, categorized on hometown



Appendix B: Virginia Public University Tuition Comparisons

Virginia Publics Comparison Weighted Average Undergraduate In-State Tuition and Fees



*Data obtained from Economic Development Office Internal Memo, 2019

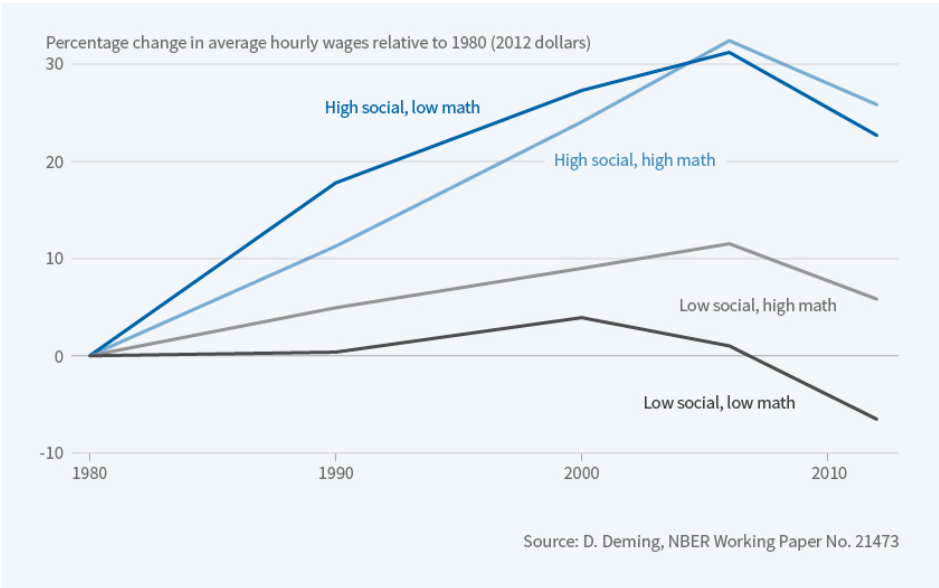
Appendix C: Summary of Faculty and Staff Expenditures, 1991 UVA-Wise Economic Impact Report

SUMMARY OF FACULTY AND STAFF EXPENDITURES	
Housing	
Mean Value:	\$ 77,166.00
Median Value:	\$ 62,500.00
Total Housing Value:	\$ 6,713,422.00
Mean Monthly Rent:	\$ 331.54
Median Monthly Rent:	\$ 350.00
Total non CVC Rent:	\$ 103,440.00
Yearly Utility Cost:	\$ 211,949.00
Retail Sales	
Faculty and Staff:	\$ 2,466,292.88
Visitors:	\$ 154,333.18
Total Retail Sales:	\$ 2,620,626.06
Visitor Days:	3,787
Local Government Taxes	
Real Estate:	\$ 36,397.66
Personal Property:	\$ 15,507.73
Consumer Utility:	\$ 8,208.00
Motor Vehicle Decal:	\$ 2,045.00
Meals Tax:	\$ 5,317.17
Visitor Meals Tax:	\$ 2,171.09
Sales Tax:	\$ 14,187.42
Visitor Sales Tax:	\$ 1,036.63
Visitor Motel Tax:	\$ 95.94
Total Local Tax Revenue:	\$ 84,966.47
Total Local Faculty & Staff Expenditures:	\$ 3,020,981.53

Appendix D: Summary of Student Expenditures, 1991 UVA-Wise Economic Impact Report

SUMMARY OF STUDENT EXPENDITURES	
Expenditure Per Student During Academic Year:	\$ 1,906.16
Housing	
Mean Non-College Rent:	\$ 250.00
Yearly Rental Payments (9 months)	\$ 229,500.00
Yearly Utility Payment (9 months)	\$ 91,800.00
Retail Sales	
Students:	\$ 2,259,060.00
Visitors:	\$ 113,236.09
Total Retail Sales:	\$ 2,372,296.09
Visitor Days:	3,362
Local Government Taxes	
Estimated Real Estate:	\$ 9,743.00
Consumer Utility:	\$ 7,344.00
Meals Tax:	\$ 13,167.00
Visitor Meals Tax:	\$ 1,927.74
Sales Tax:	\$ 16,554.00
Visitors Sales Tax:	\$ 1,053.91
Visitor Motel Tax:	\$ 47.09
Total Local Tax Revenue:	\$ 49,836.74
Total Local Student Expenditures:	\$ 2,743,432.83

Appendix E: Changes in Real Wages by Occupational Skills, 1980-2012



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