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# CARC News Fall 2022

Appalachian School of Law | Averett University | Bluefield University | Eastern Mennonite University | Ferrum College

**The Commonwealth Alliance for Rural Colleges**  
1015 E. Main Street, Ground Floor, Richmond, VA 23219  
804.355.3271

*CARC is a nonprofit dedicated to providing resources and leveraging economic development and public and private sector alliances on behalf of Appalachian School of Law, Averett University, Bluefield University, Eastern Mennonite University, and Ferrum College.*

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## Inside this issue:

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO CREATE RURAL PIPELINE  
FOR PHARMACEUTICAL JOBS

FERRUM COLLEGE NAMES DISTINGUISHED ALUMNUS

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT -- BLUEFIELD UNIVERSITY

EMU RANKED THIRD AMONG VIRGINIA PRIVATE COLLEGES  
IN MONEY'S 2022 BEST COLLEGES LIST

APPALACHIAN SCHOOL OF LAW, BALLAD HEALTH, & VIRGINIA TECH  
LAUNCH A MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP

AVERETT UNIVERSITY AND DALRADA CORPORATION TEAM UP FOR A  
SUSTAINABLE AND DIGITALLY ADVANCED FUTURE

MAKE A GIFT





**MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT**

It's been an exciting fall for us. In June, we rebranded from the Virginia College Fund to the Commonwealth Alliance for Rural Colleges. I think you'll agree with me that the new name better reflects our mission and the member colleges and universities that we serve.

Our member schools are in rural areas of western, southern and southwestern Virginia in the towns of Grundy (Appalachian School of Law), Danville (Averett University), Bluefield (Bluefield University), Harrisonburg (Eastern Mennonite University), and Ferrum (Ferrum College). All are long-established fixtures of their communities, having operated continuously for a century or more. These schools provide employment, invigorate the local economy, and provide a crucial path to economic prosperity for those who attend.

Our mission is to provide our member institutions the resources to ensure their students have access to an affordable, value-based education that prepares them for success in a global economy.

As you read the CARC News, I hope the achievements of our member schools and our students will inspire you to make an annual gift in support of our collective work. A donation form is on the back page of this newsletter. Please use it to make your tax-deductible contribution, or simply use the QR Code and donate online.

The gift you make today creates tomorrow's opportunities for our students in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Thank you for your support!

Sincerely,

Carthan F. Currin, III  
President



**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!  
THE COMMONWEALTH ALLIANCE FOR RURAL COLLEGES  
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### Gupton Initiative cont.

The Gupton Initiative is starting small, probably with two students from each of the four schools. Students will study at their home school for three years, then transfer to VCU for another two years, Currin said. VCU and the alliance schools will be working out tuition details.

The goal, he said, is to create a long-term pipeline between rural schools and Virginia’s growing drug manufacturing sector, which right now is largely centered around Petersburg and Richmond. The former has seen several significant pharmaceutical industry announcements over the last 18 months, including a pledge by Civica RX to build a \$125 million factory and a plan by AMPAC Fine Chemicals to expand its existing facility.

Richmond, meanwhile, hosts Gupton’s Medicines for All Institute, which was created in 2017 to find cheaper ways to produce drugs; its work has included developing lower-cost ways of manufacturing AIDS and HIV medications and an antiviral drug used to treat COVID-19. Three years later, also in Richmond, Gupton co-founded Phlow Corp., which in the early months of the pandemic won several large federal contracts to bolster the nation’s supply of critical drugs.

That base helped the region land a piece of the billion-dollar Build Back Better Regional Challenge last month. Almost \$53 million in federal funding will be used to further expand the pharmaceutical cluster; planned initiatives include building out lab space and manufacturing facilities, and developing workforce training programs. But Currin believes that there’s potential for the state’s drug cluster to expand beyond the Petersburg-Richmond corridor, and he thinks that rural-urban collaborations like the Gupton Initiative could help drive that growth. He pointed out that Merck already has a manufacturing facility near Harrisonburg, home of Eastern Mennonite University.

“Virginia’s getting a reputation for having a pharma cluster, which we’ve been wanting for a long time,” he said. “But who’s to say that some of these opportunities down the road that we don’t even know about at this juncture couldn’t land in Danville or Bristol or Harrisonburg?”

### *Did you know?*

**100% of all funds contributed to CARC are shared with member colleges and universities without fees for administration or overhead.**

**For information on how to donate, use the form in the newsletter or visit our website:**

**[www.commonwealthalliance.org](http://www.commonwealthalliance.org)**



### **APPALACHIAN SCHOOL OF LAW (ASL), BALLAD HEALTH, & VIRGINIA TECH (VT) LAUNCH A MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIP (MLP)**

The MLP spans two state jurisdictions, provides specialized legal aid to low-income rural and urban populations, and addresses the unmet legal needs of patients in about a dozen hospitals in the Ballard Health footprint. The ASL MLP addresses legal issues through Ballard’s hospital-to-MLP referrals. In 2021, the ASL MLP received over 1500 referrals from medical professionals in the Ballard Health system.

A distinctive facet of this MLP design is a data collection program headed by Dr. Quinton Nottingham of VT’s Pamplin College of Business. “Six students from Pamplin have been working with the MLP since it started in 2021”, he said. “With the data collected from the patients seen by the MLP, we are learning the type of patients that need help, the financials of the patients and their families, as well as the primary needs of the families. ”

ASL students handle the MLP referrals for legal services. They are supervised by ASL professors and attorneys from Southwest VA Legal Aid and Legal Aid of East TN. Typically, one attorney is assigned per case, along with one or more ASL students. The legal services included insurance matters, housing assistance, family law and estate matters, help with consumer law, Social Security, food insecurity assistance, disability claims, and advance medical directives.

“Ballad Health is thrilled to be a part of this MLP,” said Dr. Matthew Loos, Chief Academic Officer at Ballard Health. “The health of our region requires more than just access to high-quality clinical care facilities and providers. Communities, neighborhoods, and individual homes within the Appalachian Highlands must also foster health and well-being. Ballard is committed to this ideal, and the MLP is a key aspect of the regional wellness we are building.”

The Executive Director of the MLP, Suzan Moore, said “this first-of its-kind partnership among Ballard Health and ASL, with VT providing data analytics, has demonstrated in its initial year of serving low-income patients that working together, unmet needs for legal services can be effectively addressed, and the social determinants of health can be positively impacted for such patients. We look forward to continuing our work together to build upon these early favorable results.”

ASL President and Dean, B. Keith Faulkner, said “the MLP is an important piece of clinical training of law students as ASL works to prepare practice-ready lawyers. The program aligns perfectly with the spirit of ASL’s mission of increasing access to justice for the people of the Appalachian region. We are proud to partner with Ballard and VT on this project and encouraged by the data produced and results thus far. It is our hope that this MLP will become a model for others across the nation.”





## AVERETT UNIVERSITY AND DALRADA CORPORATION TEAM UP FOR A SUSTAINABLE AND DIGITALLY ADVANCED FUTURE

In a major effort toward sustainability and creating an immersive learning experience for its students, Averett University announced that it will partner with Dalrada Financial Corporation (OTCQB: DFCO, “Dalrada”) to drive significant reduction in carbon emissions and deliver savings on energy costs, while taking the university into the metaverse.

Dalrada Energy Services, a division of Dalrada Corporation, will facilitate Averett’s goal of designing a next-generation campus experience that uses cutting-edge technology and tools that enable the metaverse, powered by Web 3.0 partner, imagineer. This will include student ownership of digital assets and personalized artificial intelligence, as well as learning and understanding the impacts of digital currency.

Plans surrounding sustainability include taking steps toward achieving carbon neutrality using Dalrada’s innovative technology, including the company’s Likido™ONE heat pumps. The proprietary technology will be paired with digital twinning capabilities in the metaverse along with other measures that will optimize energy use across the campus. This will revolutionize the scale and speed at which more sustainable practices can be adopted.

These highly efficient energy resources and Web 3.0 solutions will save Averett up to 20 percent in energy costs, while decreasing its carbon footprint to help reach Net Zero goals faster. The university will capture activity data and project future energy usage.

“Partnering with Dalrada allows us to set the sustainability bar for colleges across the country and ensures that we are fostering an educational environment designed to propel our students into the digital future,” said Averett President Dr. Tiffany M. Franks. “Like never before, we will be providing students with the tools they need to be successful after graduation and preparing them for the jobs of the future that we can’t even yet imagine. Thanks to the immense generosity and ingenuity of our distinguished partners, Averett is leading the way for what campuses will look like in the next 10 years.”

Timelines for implementation on Averett’s campuses are underway, and additional partners within the Dalrada ecosystem will be enlisted as projects begin. “Working with a community leader like Averett University to help them achieve educational goals is exciting and we look forward to developing a program that takes a head-on approach to tackling global challenges while driving real change that fosters sustainability,” said Brian Bonar, Chairman and CEO of Dalrada Financial Corporation.

Averett continues to be a forward-thinking leader in education by creating new and exciting learning experiences that will shape solutions and fulfill workforce needs of the future.



## PARTNERSHIP AIMS TO CREATE RURAL PIPELINE FOR PHARMACEUTICAL JOBS

Thanks to more than \$50 million in federal funding, a new academic collaboration is intended to help rural Virginia students gain a foothold in the state’s pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, which has recently surged and is poised for further expansion.

The **Gupton Initiative** creates a pathway for students at four member schools of the **Commonwealth Alliance of Rural Colleges (CARC)** – Averett University, Bluefield University, Eastern Mennonite University and Ferrum College – to also study at Virginia Commonwealth University’s College of Engineering and earn dual bachelor’s degrees. Students will also have the option to pursue post-graduate programs. The initiative received a \$100,000 grant from **GO Virginia**, a statewide economic development initiative.

“Employment demand for talent in the pharmaceutical cluster in central Virginia is strong, and graduates of our program will become leaders in streamlining advanced manufacturing processes that are essential to the pharmaceutical and chemical industry,” Frank Gupton, a professor and founder of the Medicines for All Institute at VCU, said in a news release announcing the initiative.

The initiative also could provide a recruiting boost for the schools, said Carthan Currin, president of CARC, which worked with VCU to launch the program. “None of the four private schools offers a chemical engineering major, and this could help them attract students who want to pursue jobs in pharmaceuticals.” *(continued on p.4)*

*Frank Gupton (right) founded the Medicines for All Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University and lent his name to a new initiative designed to lead rural students to jobs in the pharmaceutical manufacturing industry.*







## STUDENT SPOTLIGHT -- BLUEFIELD UNIVERSITY

A native of Henderson, N.C., Bennie White, Jr. grew up knowing he wanted to make a difference in the lives of others and his community. Through various challenges and setbacks, he learned, with the help of his mentors, how to be a guiding light for others. After graduating from Southern Vance High School, he went on to become a member of the football and track and field teams at Concord University in Athens, W.Va. While working to earn his Bachelor's in Social Work, Bennie's mom passed away in 2017 during his sophomore year. "It was hard to handle because she was my best friend," shared White. "She could almost predict my life before it happened. When I lost her, I lost a part of myself in physical form. This impacted me as an undergraduate student, leaving me confused and hurt because this life mentor and best friend had been taken from me."

Despite a life-altering loss, he persevered and graduated with his bachelor's degree two years later. He knew he wanted to go further in his education and looked into pursuing a master's degree. "I wanted to make sure the role I played, at the companies I would find future employment with, had a significant enough impact to allow me to help everyone involved," shared White. "I wanted to get an MBA because of what I had learned through research. Having a knowledgeable background in business could open doors for me to be able to make a greater impact on people. I wanted to come to Bluefield University because it offered the opportunity and a chance to start over, creating a different path for myself through Christ."

In the fall of 2020, after applying to the master's program, White joined the coaching staff at Bluefield University. Unable to transfer his red-shirt year to BU, he became one of the assistant coaches. "It felt like a family," shared Bennie. "I was also invited and able to participate in tryouts for both the National Football League (NFL) and the Canadian Football League (CFL)."

Bluefield University prides itself on offering academic assistance for every student, no matter the degree program. Needing some help with his business courses, he was connected with Dr. Darrin Martin, Dean of the Academic Center for Excellence. After hearing of his need, he connected him with a recent MBA graduate, Corey Mullins, BU Director of Athletics.

In the fall of 2020, after applying to the master's program, White joined the coaching staff at Bluefield University. Unable to transfer his red-shirt year to BU, he became one of the assistant coaches. (continued on p. 5)



## Bennie White, Jr. cont, -- Bluefield University

I had the chance to work with Bennie through a number of his MBA courses," shared Corey Mullins. "The growth I saw in him academically and professionally was incredible. He is driven and thoughtful, which made the projects we worked on enjoyable. The professional opportunities he is now experiencing are a testament to his hard work.""

White faced even more challenges on the way to earning his degree. While navigating his online courses, he was involved in a car accident and got COVID-19 during the pandemic.

"Bennie used his life's adversities, challenges, and obstacles to strengthen him," shared Dr. Darrin Martin. "Instead of them being stumbling blocks to overcome, they seemed to be the fuel to help him achieve his goals." White also credits Dr. Sharon Perot, retired business professor and dean of the Caudill School of Business, during his educational journey.

"Working with this wonderful trio has been the ultimate reason for my success at Bluefield University," shared White. "Dr. Martin and Corey helped me put a plan together that I could execute for Dr. Perot. During this time, Dr. Perot would meet with me individually and give me feedback. I am glad this was able to turn into something as beautiful as it did, and I was able to network and make long-lasting relationships."

On May 7, 2022, his dream of earning an MBA came true. Lining up for the processional before the start of the commencement ceremony, he unknowingly found himself standing beside one of his mentors, Dr. Martin. Ironically, over the past months, the two had only spoken over the phone. However, looking at one another, at that moment, they knew who the other was and embraced with tears in their eyes.

With degrees in social work and business, he now serves as the program director, managing staff and clients at Southern Highlands Community Mental Health Center in Princeton, W.Va. Southern Highlands offers a variety of addiction services, including outpatient, detoxification, long-term residential treatment, and DUI classes.

White is also involved with his business venture, Sweet Feetz, which provides the latest and trendy items such as shoes, games, and consoles, and is a brand ambassador for Goorin Bros., a creative and expressive hat company that has been in operation since 1895. "Getting my degree through Bluefield has opened up so many doors," said White. "I just want to thank BU. It helped mold me into who I am and helped me reach my dreams and goals. It wouldn't be possible without the people I had around me."





## EMU RANKED THIRD AMONG VIRGINIA PRIVATE COLLEGES IN MONEY'S 2022 BEST COLLEGES LIST

The list was compiled using schools with sufficient data and above-average graduation rates, using three areas: quality, affordability and outcomes.

Quality measures focus on graduation rates. Affordability weighs the net price of a degree, student and parent borrowing, and loan repayment rates. Outcomes considers median earnings, the share of alumni working and the share of alumni earning more than a high school grad. Money's analysis also includes four "value-added" calculations, which compare a school's performance against its predicted performance, after accounting for the standardized test scores and percentage of low-income students among its enrollees.

Money magazine has been providing financial news and advice since 1972. Their mission is "to guide people to financial victories through up-to-date information, education, and tools." Money's staff has provided commentary on Good Morning America, ABC News, NPR, and many more media outlets.

Read more about EMU's other rankings, including 34th out of 50 on Academic Influence's Best Colleges and Universities by Academic Stewardship 2022, and sixth overall on 'Washington Monthly' ranking for contributions to the public good in 2021.

Additionally, EMU's online RN-BSN program ranked No. 1 in Virginia in 2022.

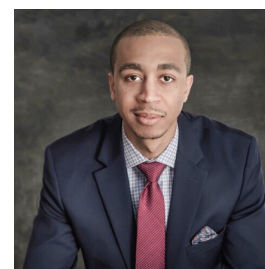
### Did you know?

- \*92% of all our students receive some form of financial aid;
- \*57% are from low-to-moderate income families;
- \*55% of our students are female;
- \*28% of our students have minority status.



## FERRUM COLLEGE ANNOUNCES 2022 ALUMNI AWARD RECIPIENTS

Ferrum College is pleased to announce this year's three annual alumni awards: Young Alumni, Distinguished Alumni and Beckham Medallion. The awards are part of a tradition begun with recognition of several college founders and leaders from the 1920s. Winners are nominated by alumni, faculty, or staff, vetted by the Nominations Committee of the Alumni Board of Directors, and approved by the president.



### Young Alumni: Matthew Woods '11

The Young Alumni award is given to a young alumnus/ae who has demonstrated professional and personal success since graduating from Ferrum College within the last 15 years.



### Distinguished Alumni: Carthan Currin '84

The Distinguished Alumni Award recipient exemplifies a record of exceptional career achievement and service to their community, church or other organizations; were active in college life; and remain involved and supportive of Ferrum College as alumni.



### Beckham Medallion: Phyllis Karavatakis '76

The Beckham Medallion, named after Dr. Benjamin M. Beckham, the first president of Ferrum College, is the highest tribute bestowed upon an alumnus. The distinction honors those who exemplify the College motto, Not Self, But Others and who have demonstrated exceptional career success, service to their community, and dedication to Ferrum College.

Read the full story at [www.ferrum.edu](http://www.ferrum.edu)



*Since its inception in 1965, CARC has contributed over \$26M toward educational attainment for generations of Virginia students. CARC continues to rely on the generosity of donors who help students at CARC member colleges and universities achieve their dream of a college education. Your support can be life-changing!*