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Virginia Tech
Whole Health Consortium
Charter

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Whole Health Research is a transdisciplinary approach to investigating equitable health and well-being solutions that supports people and their communities to pursue meaningful lives.

Vision

The **Whole Health Consortium at Virginia Tech** supports people and their communities to pursue meaningful lives through transdisciplinary solution-oriented research in equitable health and well-being.

Our Mission is to harness a range of expertise to revolutionize systems, research, practices, and policies that affect holistic health and well-being.

Background (Rationale)

According to Tracy Gaudet, a national leader of the whole heath movement, "Whole Health empowers and equips people to take charge of their physical, mental and spiritual well-being, and live their lives to the fullest." A Whole Health approach shifts the paradigm of health practice and research from a focus on disease and symptoms to an emphasis on whole health, integrating the intersections of animal, environmental, and human health. This approach also works to empower multifaceted well-being by building stronger communities and systems.

The research enterprise at Virginia Tech is broad and deep. There are numerous faculty members, both individually and embedded in labs and larger centers, engaged in traditional biomedical research that provides insights to disease processes and outcomes. The Whole Health perspective integrates this knowledge with additional elements of health and well-being across multiple domains—biological, behavioral, social, and environmental—to guide research on multicomponent nutritional, psychological, and physical approaches to care (Langevin, 2021).

Research on Whole Health is complex. This emergent field will require committed transdisciplinary collaborations that integrate old and newly established methodologies (https://files.nccih.nih.gov/nccih-whole-person-research-workshop-program-book.pdf) as well as multi- system interactions, health restoration, resilience, and participant engagement.

Membership

The Virginia Tech Whole Health Consortium is composed of researchers, educators, students, practitioners, healthcare providers, community collaborators, and industry partners. While Virginia Tech provides institutional resources and foundation for the Consortium, specifically through the Virginia Tech Institute for Society, Culture, and Environment (ISCE), it is expected that membership will include participation beyond the university. The Consortium structure aims to provide a welcoming and flexible environment built around a shared interest in improving health and well-being, and we envision local, state, regional, national, and international participation that includes other universities, healthcare entities, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and industry members. The Consortium will support activities in the areas of research, education, and practice, with representatives from across academic and non-academic institutions on the leadership council.

Membership will be defined broadly, especially in the initial phases of the Consortium, with ongoing assessment of how membership definitions may best serve the Consortium's development and standards for ongoing affiliation. Membership may consist of individual members or organizational members. Member roles will correspond to levels of engagement (i.e., affiliate & active roles), with a minimum level of membership defined as providing contact information and basic information about research interests and current projects, with this information included on the Consortium's website. A higher level of engagement could include applying for Consortium's shared resources for specific projects (e.g., seed funding), in which case additional participation in the life of the Consortium would be expected (e.g., completing reports, contributing expertise to other Consortium members). Additionally, members may consider serving on the Consortium's leadership council (described below). It is expected that levels of membership engagement may vary from year to year, and additional forms of membership may evolve due to the Consortium's dynamic nature.

Specific member **responsibilities and functions** might include:
- Agenda setting – defining partnerships, establishing research priorities
- Research design – determining method(ologie)s, participants, data collection, analysis
- Research implementation – likely the same members as the designers, but potentially a subset
- Results dissemination – strategic communications
- Implementation of evidence-based service/practice – clinicians, practitioners, policy makers; some overlap with research designers
- Student/Early career professional career development opportunities

The table below is provided to describe how different forms of participation might look as the Consortium takes shape:

	Affiliate Role	Active Role
Community Partner	*Contribute information to the Consortium registry *Respond to networking requests *Participate in Consortium events	*Recommend research priorities *Contribute to project ideation/design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of results *Connect additional community partners to Consortium *Support annual events
Industry Partner		*Recommend research priorities *Provide resources including space, funding *Collaborate on research design *Support students *Support annual events
Faculty		*Recommend research priorities *Prioritize Consortium goals within research agenda *Liaise with administration to oversee activities *Support research needs in discipline as identified by partners *Contribute to project ideation/design, implementation, analysis, and dissemination of results *Support coordination between members *Share data *Support annual events
Student		*Recommend research priorities *Provide input on Consortium goals *Engage in in active research initiatives *Introduce relevant projects that align with Consortium goals *Present Consortium's achievements to student body and external stakeholders *Participate in annual events

Benefits of Consortium membership include:
- cross-disciplinary professional development & networking opportunities, such as social events, a speaker series, workshops, and mentoring;

- grant support, such as collaboration with other Consortium members, technical grant writing assistance, a curated member/expertise list, pilot project funds, and potential access to a data archive;
- connection with new community, industry and academic partners;
- strategies to increase effectiveness of partner organizations in research, education, and practice;
- project administration support; and
- additional benefits to be determined.

Expectations of Consortium members include:
- participating in professional development & networking opportunities;
- identifying and contributing core expertise to one or more of the three Consortium core areas;
- collaboration with other members on research and grant proposals;
- acknowledging the Consortium in your work when appropriate;
- responding to reports related to meeting attendance, partnerships with other Consortium members, funding received from/related to participation in the Consortium, and expanded participation in Consortium
- renewing their membership on a regular basis
- responding to other expectations that may be determined as the Consortium develops

To **partner** with the Consortium, or to learn more about the Virginia Tech Whole Health Consortium, interested parties will be asked to submit the following information via a Google form that will be widely disseminated and posted on the Consortium's website:
- Name of Individual and/or Organization
- Contact information: Phone/Email address
- Brief description of how your work connects to the mission of the Virginia Tech Whole Health Consortium, including a description of which core areas (i.e., research, education, practice) you are most interested in and indicate your expected initial level of involvement (Affiliate vs. Active Role).

Initial review of membership requests will be screened by the Consortium Leadership Council to ensure appropriateness of the request and clarify any need for additional information from the applicant.

Goals

The aims of the Consortium consist of short-term, medium-term, and long-term goals. They are described as follows:

Short-term (Years 1-2)

- We have maintained and expanded active membership comprised of researchers and community partners with diverse interests.
- Research interests of members are cataloged (e.g., the consortium has a map of who does what and a way of reaching them.
- Interest groups are broadly defined, with a set of identified members.
- We have a working governance structure.
- There is a clear mechanism for input and feedback.
- Members are connecting over shared research interests and pursuing new or expanded interdisciplinary projects.
- Members have identified shared cross-cutting interests and begun to map our seed or pilot project plans.
- Opportunities for student/post-doc engagement and early career professional development have been identified.
- Consortium has made a set of seed funded awards to support member teams in developing preliminary project plans.
- Speaker series, social events and other networking events are established (e.g., meet-and-greets with community partners, with at least one in the first semester
- Community partners have engaged in and contributed to Consortium activities with sustained involvement.
- Web presence has been established, initial outreach has been conducted, branding developed.
- Resources (e.g., data) and means of resource sharing have been identified.

Medium term (Years 2-5)

- Track use of seed funds; create targets for return on investment from seed funds.
- Create regular structure for feedback from community (i.e., request community feedback, document, use for process improvement).
- Review the interface between the Consortium and Virginia Tech's Office of Sponsored Programs, and take initiatives to improve fluidity.
- Determine how sponsored research might generate sustainable revenue for the Consortium.

Long term (Years 10+)

- Consortium members are routinely successful in receiving large collaborative external Program Project, Center grants, and Training grants that impact health and well-being on a global level.
- People are living meaningful lives as a result of Consortium partnerships and activities.
- Research in health and well-being at Virginia Tech is notably interdisciplinary;
- Whole Health research has been established, and Virginia Tech is considered a leader in this space.
- Research on topics of health and well-being with whole health at the center has

increased, i.e. Whole Health has become central to the culture of the university;
- Consortium members are making collaborative scholarly contributions to whole health research.
- Partner institutions have implemented policies and practices that meaningfully support whole health thinking.
- Members have access to helpful data and other resources.
- Consortium is making a difference in the community; community partners who begin working with Consortium elect to continue working with it.

Governance

The Consortium will be housed within the Virginia Tech ISCE, which reports to the Office of Research and Innovation. The ISCE administrative structure will provide support to the Consortium, including providing guidance related to the need for an advisory board, navigating university structures, and liaising with the Virginia Tech Office of Sponsored Programs.

A proposed governance structure consists of the following:
- A leadership council will be formed that includes 7 members, including a Chair and faculty or community members.
- The ISCE Director will serve as an *ex-officio* member of the leadership council.
- The leadership council will work with Virginia Tech administration including ISCE on logistics and coordination of Consortium activities; review internal grant applications; recommend research priorities; facilitate annual events; and serve as ambassadors of the Consortium to the broader communities of Virginia Tech, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and beyond.
- The leadership council members will meet regularly to ensure the Consortium is meeting the goals set out in this charter, as well as new goals and objectives that may be identified by leaders and members.
- In conjunction with ISCE, the leadership council members will also consider how to approach development needs of the Consortium, including partnerships with Virginia Tech Colleges to pursue resources such as cost-sharing and GRA support.
- Efforts will be made to include diverse representation from Virginia Tech, community partners, and industry, with further deliberations needed to determine how to best incorporate members from each sector. For example, it is anticipated that at least one community consultant will be serving as an at-large representative at any point in time.
- Additionally, efforts will be made to ensure that students/post-docs, early career professionals, and members from diverse geographical areas are represented in the council's composition.

Anticipated Resource Needs

The following represents a list of short-term, medium-term, and long-term budget needs that coincide with the goals outlined earlier in this document:

Short-term needs, prioritized:

1. Staffing needs:
    a. Program manager (Oversee the entirety of the Consortium, manages resources, consults with the Council in ensuring that the Consortium goals are being met)
    b. Administrative assistant (Supports day-to-day operations, including scheduling, communication, data entry, and other general administrative tasks, including website maintenance).
    c. Grants administrative support person (shared, or consider contractor to help with this function; focused on tasks related to grant administration such as preparing grant applications, managing budgets, ensuring compliance with grant conditions, handles reports).
2. Web Presence (includes website design/development; maintenance/updates, portal functionalities, digital marketing).
3. Seed money for grants
4. Funds for event planning/Speaker series
5. Leadership council support
6. Community education/engagement

Medium/Long-term needs (building upon short-term needs):

1. Additional staffing
    a. Expanded time for grants administrative support person
    b. Data manager position
2. Course development funding
3. Visiting professorship