

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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GO Virginia Region 5 Awards \$788,700 to Launch Eastern Shore Community College UAS Workforce Program

NORFOLK, VA — On Friday, Governor Spanberger announced a \$788,700 GO Virginia grant to Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) to establish a comprehensive unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) workforce and business development program aligned with regional industry demand and statewide aviation strategy. The program will expand credentialing opportunities, develop new engineering and electronics curricula, and provide hands-on training through real-world applications, building a scalable workforce pipeline for Virginia's growing aerospace and unmanned systems sector.

The program will establish a living laboratory for real-world UAS missions in partnership with the U.S. Navy, NASA Wallops, research institutions, businesses, and local governments. A \$1.8 million donation of Proxy Fixed Wing UAS aircraft and systems, combined with existing drone investments, expands ESCC's capabilities significantly. Grant funding will support system upgrades, new UAS curricula, and engineering and electronics programs. Students will gain hands-on experience through internships and coursework in UAS operations, electronics, cybersecurity, GIS, and manufacturing, while applying UAS technology across fields including healthcare, environmental stewardship, and law enforcement. The initiative will also expand STEM pathways and improve healthcare access and medevac capabilities in rural communities on the Eastern Shore.

"This investment strengthens one of the most distinctive assets in Region 5, the Eastern Shore's capacity to serve as a real-world testing and training environment for unmanned systems," said **Tom Frantz, Chair, GO Virginia Region 5**. "By building a scalable workforce pipeline at ESCC, we are ensuring that Hampton Roads and the Eastern Shore can meet the growing demand for UAS talent and position the region for long-term leadership in advanced aviation."

"This GO Virginia grant will allow Eastern Shore Community College to expand our UAS programs, create hands-on workforce opportunities, and strengthen the regional economy," said **Daryl Minus, Ed.D., President, Eastern Shore Community College**. "It is a major step forward for our students and the Eastern Shore community."

About Eastern Shore Community College

Eastern Shore Community College (ESCC) is a public two-year institution in Melfa, Virginia, and a member of the Virginia Community College System serving Accomack and Northampton counties with accessible higher education and workforce training. The College offers a range of associate degrees, certificates, and career-focused programs designed to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions or direct entry into the workforce and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges to award associate degrees. ESCC's mission is to welcome all learners, provide supportive educational pathways, and strengthen the Eastern Shore community through diverse academic, technical, and lifelong learning opportunities.

About GO Virginia

Growth and Opportunity (GO) Virginia is a statewide initiative that supports regional collaboration among business, education, and government to foster private-sector growth and create higher-paying jobs. GO Virginia Region 5 is comprised of 16 cities and counties located in Hampton Roads and Virginia's Eastern Shore. [GO VA website](#)

About Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable

The Hampton Roads Executive Roundtable brings together corporate and higher education CEOs and Presidents with the mission to enhance the region's economic advantage and growth trajectory. The Roundtable also serves as the support organization for Region 5 of Virginia's innovative GO (Growth & Opportunity) Virginia program. [Roundtable website](#).