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Higher Education Center Plans New International Programs

(Abingdon, VA) The SW Virginia Higher Education Center in Abingdon will launch a major new international program to prepare area college students for globally-focused technology and engineering jobs in the 21st century. The Center has received a $189,000 grant from the US Dept. of Education’s Business and International Education (BIE) program along with a $174,000 matching challenge grant from the Virginia Tobacco Commission. Seven community and four-year colleges in SW Virginia will participate.

This is the third BIE grant awarded to the SW Virginia Higher Education Center. The first two awards provided funding for over 100 area faculty and students to participate in short-course international business study programs in China and Mexico. The Tobacco Commission’s economic development fund has also provided key financial support for international and internship programs at the Center.

The new grants will focus on Germany and will be linked to the Engineers PRODUCED in Virginia online Bachelor’s degree program and
the SW Virginia Higher Education Center’s new Clean Energy Field Research and Development facility. Dr. Rachel Fowlkes, Executive Director, noted: “These new international grants are truly cutting-edge programs in rural America. We are committed to developing faculty, students, and business managers who are prepared to meet the challenges of the global economy. The planned academic and business linkages between SW Virginia and Germany will strengthen innovation and trade across our region.”

A series of short-course study programs in Germany will be offered. The grants will also provide funding for new international internships for area college students and faculty. George Hiller, J.D., Director of International and Internship Programs at the Center, and project director for the new grants added: “Many employers now prefer college graduates with internship experience. We will work with companies in our region that have operations in Germany along with major German companies to develop internship placements.”

For more information about the international grants, internships and other program opportunities at the SW Virginia Higher Education Center, please contact George Hiller at: ghiller@swcenter.edu The website is: www.globalvirginia.com

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**MISSION STATEMENT:** The mission of the Southwest Virginia Higher Education Center is to strengthen the regional economy of southwest Virginia by providing higher education and professional development training of the current and future workforce.