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Contact: Carla L. James, PhD  
(540) 767-6010  
carla.jackson@education.edu

## **Roanoke Higher Education Center to Host FAFSA Fire Communitywide Event on January 13, 2024**

### *Local Financial Aid Experts to Review Financial Aid Process and New FAFSA*

**Roanoke, VA, December 19, 2023** – The Roanoke Higher Education Center will host FAFSA Fire, the first-ever communitywide event featuring financial aid experts from Roanoke region colleges and universities, Saturday, January 13, 2024 from 3:00-5:00 p.m. Representatives from Hollins University, Ferrum College, Radford University, Roanoke College, Virginia Tech and Virginia Western Community College will give an overview of the financial aid process and the newly redesigned FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).

“We are excited to offer the FAFSA Fire regional FAFSA completion event,” said Chad Sartini, Director of Financial Aid, Veteran Affairs, and Records, Virginia Western Community College. “This is the first-time colleges and universities from all across our area are coming together in one place to offer information and expert assistance with completing the FAFSA. We have an all new FAFSA this year, so this is a great opportunity to educate and assist our community on how to apply for financial aid for college. Submitting a FAFSA is the first and most important step in the financial aid process, and financial aid can be the difference between attending and not attending college. If you are a current high school senior, a current college student, or an adult learner considering college for the first time or returning to finish an unfinished credential, this event is for you.”

Completing the FAFSA is required to apply for federal aid to help make postsecondary education more affordable, but many students do not complete it. The National College Attainment Network found that the Class of 2022 left \$3.6 billion in federal Pell Grants on the table because they did not complete the FAFSA, and more than 2 out of every 5 seniors completely skipped submitting the form. According to the Virginia Department of Education’s Fall Membership report, there are 94,717 twelfth graders enrolled in Virginia public schools. Many of these students would benefit from applying for federal financial aid. The FAFSA Fire event will help get the word out about the financial aid application process and help to ensure the aid process goes smoothly for local high school seniors.

The U.S. Department of Education has overhauled the FAFSA application for the first time in 40 years, featuring a more streamlined application process, expanded eligibility for federal student aid, and better user experience. The FAFSA changes will be in place by December 31 and will go into effect for the 2024-25 academic year.

Anyone interested in applying or learning more about the FAFSA or the Virginia Alternative State Aid Application (VASA) is invited to attend. The event is free and open to the public, but advance registration

is required. Participants are encouraged to create studentaid.gov accounts (FSA ID and password) for both the student and the parent at least one week before attending FAFSA Fire for a faster application process. While the new FAFSA will have a paper option, participants are highly encouraged to complete it online. Free parking, refreshments, and giveaways such as textbook scholarships will be available.

To register for FAFSA Fire, visit <https://www.education.edu/FAFSA/>.

FAFSA Fire is sponsored by AccessU, Avis Construction Company, Inc., Bank of Botetourt, Brown Edwards, Gentry Locke Attorneys, Medmont Mercantile, and Lionberger Construction.

### **About the Roanoke Higher Education Center**

Located in the heart of downtown Roanoke, the Roanoke Higher Education Center (RHEC) develops partnerships and maintains state-of-the-art facilities that provide citizens of the Roanoke Region access to training, certifications, and degrees. The Roanoke Higher Education Center offers more than 200 programs of study from 12 partner institutions, including both undergraduate and graduate degree programs, certificates, endorsements, licenses and workforce training. With an annual economic impact of \$10 million to the region, RHEC is dedicated to stimulating economic growth in the greater Roanoke area by providing greater access to education. To learn more, visit [www.education.edu](http://www.education.edu).

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