



2026 UEDA Washington Conference

April 15-16, 2026

Virginia Tech Executive Briefing Center, Arlington, VA

Day 1: April 15, 2026

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| 8:30AM-9:00AM | Registration, Coffee & Pastries |
| 9:00AM-9:15AM | Welcome |
| 9:15AM-10:15AM | <p>National Priorities, Local Impact: A Conversation with Federal Innovation Leaders</p> <p>Moderator: Lenore VanderZee, SUNY Canton & UEDA Board President</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Erwin Gianchandani, Assistant Director of the Directorate for Technology, Innovation and Partnerships National Science Foundation - Ally Bain, Acting Chief Operating Officer, U.S. Economic Development Administration <p>This fireside chat features federal leaders at the forefront of the nation's technology and economic strategy. Participants will gain insights into the current and upcoming initiatives from NSF and EDA, with a specific focus on strengthening the synergy between federal research funding, university talent, and regional industry needs.</p> |
| 10:15AM-11:00AM | <p>The Architecture of Impact: Economic Modeling and Strategic Alliances</p> <p>Moderator: Carolyn Fryberger, NCGrowth, UEDA Board Member</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shreeya Gurav, Economic Analyst, REMI - Peter Evangelakis, Senior Vice President of Economics & Consulting, REMI - Swati Ghosh, Vice President, Insights and Innovations, New Growth Innovation Network |



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| | <p>Strong economic outcomes rely on more than just high-quality data; they depend on the regional networks that put that information into motion. This session pairs the New Growth Innovation Network (NGIN) with REMI to examine how the forthcoming Economic Partnership Alliance report identifies the organizational structures necessary to drive measurable results. By combining REMI’s modeling capabilities with NGIN’s research on strategic alliances, attendees will explore how to better forecast the long-term effects of regional investments and ensure that resources reach the specific areas where they can provide the greatest benefit.</p> |
| 11:00AM-11:45AM | <p>Reciprocity in Action: Solving Real Challenges Together</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Michael Hendrix, Marketing Lead, Civic Roundtable <p>Economic development leaders in higher education are navigating increasingly complex challenges — advancing industry partnerships, strengthening commercialization outcomes, aligning with institutional leadership, and responding to shifting regional priorities. Many of these issues are shared across campuses, yet they are often addressed in isolation.</p> <p>This interactive session featuring Civic Roundtable uses a structured reciprocity ring exercise to surface real challenges from participants and activate the collective experience of the room. Attendees will have the opportunity to present a current issue they are facing and receive targeted insight, ideas, and connections from peers who have navigated similar situations.</p> <p>Designed as a highly engaging working session, this format emphasizes practical problem-solving and professional exchange rather than presentation. Participants should come prepared with a specific challenge or opportunity and expect to leave with actionable guidance, new relationships, and expanded capacity to support fellow members long after the conference concludes.</p> |
| 11:45AM-12:15PM | <p>Lunch (provided)</p> |
| 12:15PM-1:00PM | <p>Economic Development Partnerships in Action: The City of Alexandria and Virginia Tech Innovation Campus</p> |



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| | <p>Moderator: Melody Flowers, University of Kentucky & UEDA Board Member</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stephanie Landrum, President & CEO, Alexandria Economic Development Partnership - David Baker, Associate Vice President and Chief of Staff, Virginia Tech <p>Located in the Greater Washington, D.C. innovation corridor, the Virginia Tech Innovation Campus represents a deliberate effort to integrate graduate education, industry engagement, and place-based economic strategy. In partnership with the City of Alexandria, the campus is advancing shared goals around technology commercialization, workforce development, and long-term economic growth.</p> <p>Session participants will explore how the city and university structured their partnership and governance approach, strategies for aligning academic program growth with regional industry needs, and coordinated investments in infrastructure, placemaking, and innovation assets.</p> |
| 1:00PM-1:15PM | Break |
| 1:15PM-2:00PM | <p>From Outcomes to Influence: A Masterclass in Impact Storytelling</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Denise Kennedy, Founder, Anthology Communications - Jessica Gnad, Director of Economic Development, Office of External Engagement at Kansas State University <p>Strong results alone do not secure long-term support—especially in shifting legislative and funding environments. University economic development leaders must translate outcomes into institutional influence that endures beyond a single initiative or budget cycle.</p> <p>In this masterclass, communications strategist Denise Kennedy from Anthology Communications introduces a practical framework for moving beyond dashboards to uncover the strategic narrative within complex metrics. Participants will learn how to prioritize key decision-makers, align reporting with state and institutional strategy, and communicate impact in ways that strengthen credibility.</p> |



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| | <p>Jessica Gnad of Kansas State University shares how K-State aligned its messaging with the Kansas Board of Regents and the Kansas Department of Commerce around a shared statewide strategy. The reporting discipline, partnership governance, and cross-sector alignment developed through that work positioned K-State as a trusted implementation partner in subsequent statewide efforts.</p> <p>This session demonstrates how disciplined impact storytelling and strategic alignment build durable institutional influence, equipping universities to lead, adapt, and maintain relevance across changing political and funding landscapes.</p> |
| 2:00PM-2:45PM | <p>Measuring What Matters: Using IMPLAN to Strengthen Your Economic Impact Story</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bjorn Markeson, IMPLAN <p>Universities are increasingly expected to demonstrate their economic contribution with clarity and credibility. From legislative briefings to board presentations and community engagement, being able to quantify institutional impact is essential to advancing strategy and support.</p> <p>This session will feature Bjorn Markeson from IMPLAN and explore how institutions can use economic impact modeling to measure, interpret, and communicate their role in regional growth. The discussion will examine practical applications of IMPLAN data, including how to assess direct, indirect, and induced effects; evaluate research and capital investments; and translate findings into messages that resonate with policymakers, industry partners, and institutional leadership.</p> <p>Participants will gain insight into how peer institutions are using impact analysis to inform decision-making, support funding conversations, and strengthen their economic development narrative. Whether your campus already conducts impact studies or is considering launching one, this session will provide practical guidance on using data strategically rather than simply reporting it.</p> |
| 2:45PM-3:00PM | Break |
| 3:00PM-4:00PM | From Blueprint to Reality: Help Us Re-Imagine a University Center Program |



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| | <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Ken Poole, Executive Director, UEDA- Craig Buerstette, Senior Fellow for National Investment and Readiness, Lead for America <p>EDA cut funding to the University Center program last summer. But, it doesn't mean we should accept the termination without deliberation. We've prepared a concept plan for a newly imagined University Center program designed to leverage and more sustained impact. We need your voice in helping us to refine the idea and to build advocacy for reinstatement of the funding.</p> <p>Join us for an interactive roundtable discussion where we'll collaborate on the ideas and rebuild it for the future. This focus group discussion will allow you to help us design "What's Next" for university center funding and to help us consider ways to leverage resources from other federal agencies to make the program more impactful. We'll dive into the proposed revisions for the program, debate the new program structures, and brainstorm how to better serve our campus community. The draft concept paper will be available to any conference registrants.</p> <p>What to Expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Breakdown: A quick-fire summary of the current white paper.• The Deep Dive: Facilitated breakout groups to tackle specific program revisions.• The Synthesis: A collective "pitch" session to refine the Center's new direction. <p>View the concept paper excerpt</p> |
| 4:00PM | Adjourn |



Day 2: April 16, 2026

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| 8:30AM-9:00AM | Coffee & Pastries |
| 9:00AM-10:00AM | <p>Federal Policy & the Innovation Economy: What University Leaders Need to Know Now</p> <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Megan McKeown, Director of Governmental Affairs at the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) <p>As federal priorities shift and Congress reexamines the role of research institutions in national competitiveness, university economic development leaders must stay closely attuned to the policy environment shaping industry partnerships, technology commercialization, and regional innovation strategies.</p> <p>Join us for a timely briefing on the current political landscape in Washington. This session will explore how lawmakers and congressional staff are viewing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University–industry collaboration • Technology transfer and intellectual property • Federally funded research and commercialization outcomes • Regional innovation, workforce alignment, and domestic competitiveness <p>Participants will gain insight into how higher education institutions are being positioned in federal conversations around economic growth, national security, supply chains, and technological leadership — and what that means for campus-based economic development strategy.</p> <p>The session will include time for discussion and audience questions, offering an opportunity to better align institutional messaging and engagement with current congressional priorities.</p> |
| 10:00AM-10:15AM | Break |
| 10:15AM-11:00AM | Advocacy That Works: Winning Federal Support for Regional Growth |



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| | <p>Speaker:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jack Ruddy, Senior Vice President of Government Relations, AxAdvocacy <p>Securing federal attention requires more than good data, it requires the right narrative. Featuring insights from the lead staffer behind the EDA’s historic reauthorization, this session deconstructs how to advocate effectively within a conservative-led Capitol Hill. Participants will learn how to translate complex university-led economic development into high-priority federal wins, focusing on practical outreach strategies that build credibility and overcome partisan hurdles.</p> |
| 11:00AM-11:45AM | <p>Federal Landscape Town Hall: Peer Exchange on Policy, Partnerships, and Positioning</p> <p>Following the policy briefing and before our session on strategic positioning, this facilitated town hall creates space for candid conversation among peers navigating similar pressures and opportunities.</p> <p>This discussion is designed for open exchange — what are you hearing from your federal delegation? Where are you seeing shifts in tone, oversight, or expectations? How are policy conversations affecting your research enterprise, industry partnerships, commercialization strategy, or regional engagement efforts?</p> <p>Rather than a presentation, this session invites practitioners to share observations, concerns, and emerging practices in real time. It offers an opportunity to compare notes across institutions, identify common themes, and surface practical approaches to engaging policymakers and stakeholders effectively.</p> <p>Come prepared to contribute perspective, ask questions, and learn from colleagues operating at the intersection of higher education, innovation, and federal policy.</p> |
| 11:45AM-12:00PM | Closing |
| 12:00PM | Adjourn |