

# Beamer: Let's help rural students get in the college game

**FRANK BEAMER VIRGINIA TECH FOOTBALL COACH | Posted: Monday, May 20, 2013 12:00 am**

As many of you know, I grew up in the wonderful little community of Fancy Gap, Va. For those of you not familiar with my hometown, it is nestled atop the Blue Ridge Mountains in rural Carroll County, not too far from the North Carolina border.

Fortunately for me and my brother and sister, we grew up in a home where getting an education was not a question, but a quest. Our mother, Herma, taught for 30 years in the public school system and inspired us to read and achieve.

I was fortunate enough to receive an athletic scholarship to attend college, but I knew I had to continue my education even if I had not been a student-athlete. That was more than 50 years ago.

Today, further education beyond high school is even more important. By 2020, 60 percent of all jobs in America - including Virginia - will require education and training beyond that represented by a simple high school diploma.

Like my mom and dad, we parents owe it to our children to help them find a path to success in education, a career and life. If you don't think an education makes a difference in what a person can earn, please see the nearby chart.

A person without a high school diploma earns about \$26,000 per year. With just some college - not necessarily an associate's degree, perhaps just an industry certification - an individual earns just over \$40,000 per year. Working for 40 years - ages 22-62 - people with some training and education past high school would earn an additional \$560,000 during their career over and above what they might have earned if they had dropped out of high school.

Staying in school, and reaching beyond high school, makes sense. As in dollars and cents.

While college may seem to be expensive and out of reach to many rural high school graduates, the Virginia Community College System is a very affordable alternative. For less than \$4,000 per semester, a young person could attend full time. The cost to earn a Workforce Preparedness Certificate or a Technical Certificate is often even less. With the lifetime earnings advantage, surely we should find a way to help students succeed.

The Rural Horseshoe Initiative is being undertaken by Virginia's 14 rural community colleges. This multidisciplinary initiative seeks to address the lack of overall educational attainment that handicaps

our young people who reside in rural Virginia through the increased use of career coaches.

Part-time career coaches - who are representatives of the local community college - can be found in many high schools today. These coaches help our children and their parents chart a path toward a successful future through improved education attainment in high school.

The Rural Horseshoe Initiative would, for the first time, provide for full-time career coaches who will serve every rural high school in Virginia.

There are two additional elements of this exciting program that also hold great promise for engaging other rural Virginia students. This initiative expands financial incentives for people who failed to finish high school, to encourage them to attend a community college once they have successfully completed a GED program. In addition, it targets an underserved and at-risk high school student population by expanding mentoring and coaching available to foster children.

If you are a parent who wants a better future for your children - and we all do - reach out to the high school career coach or visit your local community college. There is help available to find a path to the education and training our children will need to succeed in the future.

To this day, I do not pick up a book that I don't remember my mother inspiring, motivating and encouraging us to read and achieve. Build that kind of memory for your children. Help them chart a course to a bright future - a brighter future that is less difficult than you may realize with the help of one of Virginia's 14 rural community colleges.

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Frank Beamer is the head coach of the Virginia Tech football team. Questions about the Rural Virginia Horseshoe Initiative should be sent to Jennifer Gentry, executive director of the Virginia Foundation for Community College Education, at (804) 819-4661 or at [jgentry@vccs.edu](mailto:jgentry@vccs.edu).