

Final Report

**Development of Wayside Kiosks for Virginia's Heritage Music Trail
In
Montgomery and Giles Counties, Virginia:
Cultural and Economic Implications**

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Final Report Narrative

Title of Project: Development of Wayside Kiosks for Virginia's Heritage Music Trail in Montgomery and Giles Counties, Virginia: Cultural and Economic Implications

Grant Period: February 1, 2014 – June 30, 2015

Grantee Name: Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Project Director: Dr. Anita Puckett

1.0 Description of Project:

1.1 Purpose

Virginia Tech's Appalachian Studies Program engaged in meeting with multiple community stakeholders, music performance groups, and individuals involved in local heritage music in order to research content, construct design, and determine placement for The Crooked Road (TCR) Wayside kiosks in both Giles and Montgomery Counties, Virginia. The goals of this project are to stimulate interest in local heritage music and other cultural assets among tourists while, at the same time, preserve and sustain the cultural significance of these counties' heritage music. Research was conducted in partnership with The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail, with headquarters in Abingdon, Virginia, but with affiliated venues in the research area of Montgomery and Giles Counties, Virginia.

1.2 Background

"The Crooked Road: Virginia's Heritage Music Trail" (TCR) is considered by many to be an economic success story (Jones 2008; Tennis 2012) that should be emulated in declining rural areas in need of economic revitalization and cultural sustainability (Perry 2010). TCR's mission is to support tourism and economic development in Southwest Virginia by celebrating and preserving this Appalachian region's unique musical and cultural heritage" (Big Walker Lookout 2012, para. 5). It is touted as accomplishing this mission well, having generated \$845,312 in taxes and fees and created 226 jobs in 2009, as well as developing a comprehensive educational plan (The Crooked Road 2009, para. 3).

TCR is actually a driving route through southern and southwestern Virginia Counties primarily along U.S. Rte. 58 that links nine major music venues into a set of regular performances that celebrate "heritage" music traditions of a given area (Major Venues 2014). Tourists can travel the "road," or deviate from it to experience any of the over 60 "Affiliated Venues and Festivals" that occur in nearby counties (Affiliated Venues 2014).

In addition, 26 Wayside Exhibit kiosks are located throughout the region and along the trail (Wayside Exhibits 2014) that is targeted towards tourists who may want a general overview of the traditional music contributions in the county represented. Kiosks contain maps, text regarding music history, and, commonly, a playback audio recording of a notable singer or instrumentalist from a given county. Currently, TCR is examining expanding the actual “Road” to reclassify some Affiliated Venues as Major Venues and to expand its number of Wayside Exhibits. Included in this possible expansion are Montgomery and Giles Counties, Virginia (Hinshelwood, personal communication, May 2, 2014).

The researched reported on here represents the second stage of an Appalachian Teaching Project initiated by Dr. Anita Puckett, project director, and Mr. Jack Hinshelwood, Executive Director of TCR in 2013 to assist in tasks necessary to complete this expansion. At that time, TCR Director Jack Hinshelwood indicated to her that more historical and current information on the traditional music history in Giles and Montgomery Counties was needed for their records and for them to seek county permission to construct Wayside Exhibit kiosks. Assistance was also needed to design the kiosk content and to determine locations for them.

Students in the Fall 2013 Appalachian Teaching Project focused on collecting some historical materials and much current information on heritage music in these two counties, as well as to interview a number of local residents interested in traditional music either as performers or as community leaders hosting music events. This 2013-2014 project therefore advanced the background search for historical information. In completing the research, it also created interest among local musicians and business owners to host the Waysides in these counties.

1.3 Fall and Spring 2014-2015 Project Goals

The Fall 2014 project, as described in this report, built on this 2013 research and moved the overall project forward into areas related to the tasks necessary to actually construct and erect Waysides. These included coming up with a Wayside design that met the needs of local stakeholders and county administrators that could also be approved by TCR; determining counties’ buy-in for the project and location approval; and expansion of local heritage music history research to obtain as complete an archive as possible.

1.3.1 Research Goals

To accomplish these tasks, however, findings from the Fall 2013 project had to be considered in developing a research design and project goals. Three were determined to be especially important:

1. Balancing different stakeholders’ ideologies towards what TCR purposes and goals should be. Stakeholders interviewed in 2013 indicated interests in either the continuation of traditional music as crucial to their place-based cultural identity or as a means for generating income or revenue. Put straightforwardly, what tourists want or expect are often different from why the performances, the music, and the traditions associated with them are culturally important to local residents (Puckett, in press);

2. Fully representing the diverse music traditions in the region, including African American and Native American music heritages; and
3. How to actually integrate the economic development mission of TCR with the cultural significance of traditional music, especially with respect to the identity significations of its creation, performance, and interpersonal relations. All interested parties agreed that having significant community participation in how TCR was structured, run, and presented to tourists was highly desired, but that balancing the need for stimulating tourist economic contributions along with preserving the cultural value of performances was problematic.

Resulting from these October 2013-March 2014 discussions was the need for specific research goals that produce a tangible product that clearly addresses Point 3 and also addresses concerns raised by points 1. and 2. They were

1. To design Waysides that met the expectations of community stakeholders (musicians, county administrators, involved business owners) as well as TCR;
2. To develop a strategy for engaging community members in constructing and then maintaining the Waysides so as to insure maintaining the balance between generating revenue and cultural identity.

1.3.2 ARC Strategic Goals

A. Goal 2 described above addressed the ARC strategic goal of increasing job opportunities and per capita income *among local indigenous residents* by identifying ways of getting community investment in not only maintaining Waysides in their county, but also by using the Waysides effectively to increase the number of jobs by promoting local heritage music to visitors.

B. Goal 2 described above also addresses the ARC strategic goal of strengthening the capacity of Appalachian people to compete in a global economy by assisting in creating a culturally-sensitive tourism market that is international in scope (cf. The Lane Group et al. 2012: 11-12).

1.3.3 Appalachian Teaching Project Goals

A. Efforts to achieve Goal 1 increased student leadership skills and awareness of community assets by students' engagement with community residents in community settings away from the Virginia Tech campus. Students were expected to show leadership and initiative in setting up interviews, observing community events, and in developing a research plan that advanced research goals in a manner that conformed to stakeholders' values.

B. Efforts to achieve Goal 1 also promoted active learning by requiring students to engage in at least 40 hours of active community engagement during which they were *doing* tasks with non-students in face-to-face interaction that result in their engagement with and control over the learning process rather than being lectured to or directed by an instructor in a traditional or e-technologies mediated classroom setting.

C. Student research to achieve Goal 1 also addressed the Project goal of engaging in active

research to assist communities in creative approaches to sustainability through asset development. Creating Waysides is a visible and physical cultural asset that is customized to meet the specific heritage assets of a given county or community. In the case of this project, designing new Wayside structures embodied a “creative approach to sustainability” through community input into how to make them work best to attract locals and visitors alike.

D. Other goals included meeting the Scope of Work Outcomes stipulated by the Appalachian Teaching Project (presenting at the conference, preparing a poster, presentations to community partner and a civic organization).

2.0 Activities

2.1 Classroom Activities

Eight students met in a seminar format during the Fall 2014 semester at Virginia Tech as a formally-constituted class titled “Undergraduate Community Research.” Classroom activities focused on the execution of the student research projects and on conceptual and theoretical issues foundational to the project. The class was interdisciplinary in its makeup, so students were organized into small groups according to their interests and majors. Groups were: oral histories and document collection for local music histories, observation of current music events and interviews of musicians, Wayside design, and engagement of business and local government stakeholders. Students were expected to complete at least 40 community research-based hours outside of class. The class was taught from an applied anthropological perspective in keeping with the instructor’s professional training.

One student on the Wayside design team continued her research during the Spring 2015 semester as an independent study. She worked closely with both TCR Executive Board and with the tourism committees of both counties to develop a suitable alternative design for Waysides that is more appealing to visitors than the current entirely wood structure. She is continuing her work to finalize the design during the summer and fall of 2015 on her own without seeking course credit.

Another student, new to the project, continued work during the Spring 2015 semester by transcribing eight of the project’s oral history recordings and interviewing two musicians.

2.2 Research Activities

The research project was submitted to Virginia Tech’s Internal Review Board and was determined to be exempt. We collected consent forms, however, for individuals who provided audio-recorded oral histories and at community stakeholders meetings. Meetings with the tourism council or committee were considered public and consent forms were not required.

The project itself requires administrative approval from each county administration, the towns of Blacksburg and Christiansburg, and TCR Executive Board. Therefore research completed during the period of this Appalachian Teaching Project grant moved the project forward significantly, but did not result in the construction and erection of Waysides as originally

planned (see 3.0 Outcomes and 5.0 Program Continuation and Sustainability for details).

Research activities centered around the application of applied anthropological and oral historical methods. Actual research activities are captured by Table 2.2 below, while presentations to the project partner and to local groups are displayed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.2.1
Research Activities

Type of Activity	Activity/ Researchers	Purpose	Data Collected	Date(s)
Participant-Observation	Blacksburg Farmers Market Jam/whole class	Observe/participate in old time jam to learn about cultural value	Ethnographic data on music performance structure/context/participants/ repertoire	August 27
Participant Observation	Kathy Mattea “My Coal Journey” Presentation on the VT campus/whole class	To learn about mountaintop removal through heritage Appalachian coal mining songs	Information on the labor song traditions relevant to the coal mining region of Appalachia	September 11
Participant Observation	Turkey Shoot Old Time Festival, Giles County/contemporary music team	Observe/participate in old time jam; learn about instrument making to learn about cultural value	Ethnographic data on music performance structure/context/participants/ repertoire/ info on Giles County music scene	September 27
Participant Observation	Barn dance in commemoration of major old time musician Bill Richardson’s life/whole class	Observe/participate in a barn dance hosted by major traditional music groups in the area to learn about cultural value and identity	Ethnographic data on music performance structure/context/participants/ repertoire within a context of grief and commemoration of a highly valued traditional music organizer and performer’s death	October 25
Participant Observation	Various local traditional music jams and concerts/ current traditional music team as individuals or as a team; attendance at approximately one-five events including Floyd General Store, depending on student	Observe/participate in blue grass/old time music jams and performances to learn about cultural value and how performances construct a local cultural identity	Ethnographic data on music performance structure/context/participants/ repertoire/ info on Montgomery and Giles County music scene	September-October
Oral History Interviews	Various local musicians knowledgeable on local music performers, styles, and history/history team	To obtain as much information as possible on local music history for Wayside content	Oral historical interview methods. Three audio recordings of 30-90 minutes with consent forms.	September-November
Networking Activities	Contacts with local business owners and managers interested in heritage	To stimulate interest in community investment in Wayside design,	Contact made in person, phone, email, or texting along with a printed or electronic invitation. Approximately 25	September 15-October 31

	music/stakeholders team + project director	placement, and content via focus group meetings	businesses were contacted.	
Design Activities	Visitation to two existing Wayside sites (Floyd and Hillsville) plus analysis of two other photographed sites (Wise and Grayson Counties)/design team	To view existing Wayside designs and learn about their positive and negative attributes	Industrial and architectural design methods	September
Focus Group Activities	Discussions with two stakeholders <i>business and non-profit</i> groups, one in Montgomery and one in Giles County/all available class members	To obtain their views on Wayside placement, design, and content, as well as possible ways to cover construction and maintenance costs	Focus group format. Students presented questions to a small group of business and non-profit stakeholders at each location for discussion. Snowballing from their responses led to in depth discussion of the issues from a local, insiders' points of view. Audio recorded with permission.	October 24 (both counties on same day)
Focus Group Activity	Informal meeting with approximately 20 <i>musicians</i> at Bill Richardson memorial celebration/all available class members	To obtain their views on Wayside placement, design, and content, as well as possible ways to cover construction and maintenance costs	Informant chat format in event host's home. Informality prompted a spontaneous and rich interaction that led to the collection of rich data and volunteering to obtain Wayside supplies and labor to construct one.	October 25
Group meetings	Presentations to county tourism committee or council in both Montgomery and Giles Counties	To obtain information regarding their stance towards the project and how to proceed to receive local governmental approval	Short presentation of the project followed by a question and answer period during which they asked questions of project personnel and project members asked questions of them regarding how to proceed	November 3 (Montgomery); November 4 (Giles)
Oral history transcription	Transcription of seven oral history audio recorded interviews from the Fall 2013 semester/undergraduate research student Spring 2015 semester	To create printed versions of audio files for easier access to the public, TCR personnel, and those involved in designing Wayside content	Standard oral history transcription methods as modified by sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological transcriptional needs per Project Director Puckett's expertise.	Spring 2015 semester

Presentations to local groups consisted of a proposed project presentation to the official county tourism organization in both counties and to interested members of the public at a county museum. Two other presentations came after our Conference presentation and represented our findings for the semester. Finally, two presentations occurred this Spring 2015 semester to the Executive Board of The Crooked Road.

Table 2.2.2
Presentations to Governmental Organizations, Community Partner, ARC, and Community Civic Group

Type of Activity	Audience	Purpose	Location	Date(s)
Project Presentation	Appalachian Teaching Project Conference, Crystal City, Virginia	Presentation of research to conference participants. The whole class participated.	Crystal City Marriott at Reagan National Airport	December 5, 2015
Project Presentation	The Crooked Road Executive Board	Presentation of our project to our community partner. The whole class participated.	Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway, Abingdon, Virginia	December 11
Project Presentation	General public/museum affiliates	Presentation of our project to interested community members via the Montgomery County museum and its affiliated members. Limited audience, but a very engaged one.	Montgomery Museum and Lewis Miller Regional Art Center.*	April 17, 2015
Revised Wayside design presentation	The Crooked Road Executive Board	One student continued design project into Spring semester; she presented her revisions to TCR for its approval. Preliminary approval granted, pending minor revisions to be submitted later in 2015 when convenient for Board.	Heartwood: Southwest Virginia's Artisan Gateway, Abingdon, Virginia	March 11, 2015

2.3 Interactions with Community Partners

Interactions with our community partner, The Crooked Road, were sparse during the semester of the research for a number of reasons. These include:

- The partnership created the previous year in 2013 and continued into this 2014-2015 project had established clear guidelines that reduced the number of interactions necessary

during the research period, but not during the reporting period.

- The Crooked Road administration, and its director, Mr. Jack Hinshelwood, were extremely busy planning for the June 2015 Mountains of Music series of festivals and performances throughout the entire TCR – served region. They trusted us to complete the task as they devoted their time to this 17 county endeavor.

Communications were generally by text message, phone calls, or in person when Mr. Hinshelwood and Dr. Puckett were at music jams together or at the Appalachian Studies Conference in March 2015. The occasional email is archived in the Attachments section of this report. Our main communication with TCR, however, was through the presentation to the Executive Board in December and the following presentation in March. Another is planned sometime after the Mountains of Music events.

2.4 Social media or documentation of partner interactions

There was no documentation or social media reporting on partner interactions. As indicated in the tables above, most of the project’s research was with non-partner groups or individuals. They were contacted in person, by handout given to them by an employee, by telephone, by email, or by use of the New River Old Time Music listserv. The nature of the project actually discouraged any video recording or Facebook entries with non-TCR participants since we were negotiating Wayside design, placement, and content matters, and, to some extent, funding, cost, and construction issues, with different stakeholders who all had different visions and expectations of what was needed. Video recordings could have derailed these discussions. We needed to achieve consensus, not create dissention by unintentionally foregrounding a particular point of view via video recordings or social media messages. Presentations to TCR’s Executive Board were captured, however, in the Board’s minutes, as were discussions with the tourism committee or council of the two counties involved. Minutes are not available to attach to this report.

A post project synopsis with the official group picture has been posted to the Appalachian Studies at Virginia Tech Facebook page.

3.0 Project Outcomes

Project outcomes are classified into research, educational, community, partner, programmatic, and student outcomes.

3.1 Research Outcomes

Results of the research to date are

- Approval, pending minor revisions, of a Wayside design by TCR Executive Board that is to be applied to kiosks in Montgomery and Giles Counties, pending approval by the counties and towns involved. A schematic of this design follows as Attachment B;
- Significant advancement in the collection of historical information on traditional music, both white and non-white, in the two researched counties;
- Fruitful discussion among stakeholders concerning the need to have replaceable content

displays on the Waysides so that updates on local events, tourism sites, and other matters pertinent to attracting visitors and tourists to a given county can be made. This need was incorporated into project redesigns of Wayside kiosks;

- Creation of a viable stakeholder base to contribute to the construction, design, and content of the Waysides. Placement will be decided by those governmental administrative units having jurisdiction over location in consultation with community stakeholders;
- Transcription of eight oral history interviews for distribution to TCR, the Virginia Tech Appalachian Studies online archive site, and for the Montgomery-Floyd County Public Libraries archives. Given the tediousness of this task, having this many transcribed is a major outcome;
- Establishment of County/Town administrative units, TCR, community, and Virginia Tech Appalachian Studies collaborative relations that have brought the need for these Waysides to the attention of the two counties and the community stakeholders involved. What had been simply discussion about “someday” having Waysides is now in process to actually construct them;
- The poster created for the Appalachian Teaching Conference is being submitted for review for display at the Virginia Tech *Save Our Towns Summit* in Abingdon, Virginia, September 10, 2015.

3.2 Educational Outcomes

- Students acquired new research skills that have direct applications to workplace environments in which cross-cultural exchanges and situations are normative;
- Students learned about community constructions of civil society and civic space and why it is important to the future sustainability of Appalachian residents and their communities;
- Through involvement in actual local government proceedings, students learned first hand about the impact of political stances and ideologies on the successes and failures of local community sustainability initiatives;
- Students further developed their leadership and personal initiative skills through their implementation of a research schedule and plan of work that, in turn, placed them in face-to-face situations with people they did not know and, in some cases, expressed cultural values and orientations quite different from what they knew;
- Students applied what they had learned in their majors to real-life situations in ways that developed applications of knowledge that they couldn't have attained in traditional classroom settings;
- Students experienced a different pedagogy than they were habituated to (i.e., the classroom or laboratory setting) in a manner that enhanced their self-valuation and validation as valued citizens and human beings; and
- As has been the case every year Virginia Tech's Appalachian Studies students have participated in the Conference, they thoroughly enjoyed their Washington experience. Meeting other students from the other participating colleges and universities was a learning experience they found enlightening, especially in the context of having the opportunity to present and field questions.

3.3 Community Outcomes

- The major community outcome was the involvement of community stakeholders in the design, content, placement, construction, and potential funding process. The Montgomery County Tourism Council and the Giles County Tourism Committee are receptive to their input to a certain degree, but wish to maintain their authority over placement and decisions regarding funding. Nevertheless, particularly in Montgomery County, traditional music musicians are especially interested in having a significant leadership role in Wayside construction and content design;
- Involvement of local non-profits, such as the Montgomery Museum and the Town of Blacksburg Museum and Cultural Foundation, introduced historical and preservational components into the project that will insure accurate and well-designed content for the project;
- Involvement of those for-profit businesses interested in local traditional music was minimal, but is expected to increase as the project moves forward and specific outcomes, such as placement, are determined. Owners have expressed interest in having a stake in advertising relevant events via ancillary billboards next to the Waysides;
- The director of the Montgomery County Tourism Council accepted one student as an intern and then elevated his position to an “assistant” for data management for the Mountains of Music festival planning process. He obtained this position based on his work with this project. She was quite pleased with his work, thus building better Virginia Tech/local government partnerships.

3.4 Community Partner Outcomes

- The research data will clearly assist TCR in expanding its presence in Giles and Montgomery Counties, Virginia, in ways that can be used to construct effective Wayside kiosks in these counties. These kiosks, in turn, will encourage greater tourism and therefore economic development in the area.
- The project’s research made clear both strengths and weaknesses in TCR strategies and goals that can assist counties, communities, and TCR in developing more carefully designed marketing strategies for the region, as well as for the two counties studied, in terms of how to balance cultural heritage preservation with commodification of traditional music according to tourist expectations and wants;
- The research data indicate that incorporating existing and developing new TCR venues in Giles and Montgomery Counties is warranted and that constructing Waysides in these counties is feasible, economically viable, and has both local governmental and community buy-in for long term maintenance and support.
- Arguments for expanding TCR major venues into these two counties are now realistic future goals;
- The research data on local heritage much can be used by a number of groups (TCR, Montgomery and Giles County governments, Virginia Tech Appalachian Studies, and others) to seek external grant or foundation funding for specific TCR projects that will enhance its economic and cultural impact;
- The historical content collected and to be archived can be used to construct a more accurate representation of the music heritage in these two counties via revolving

Waysides' content.

- The interaction of Virginia Tech students and the instructor with TCR administration and community musicians constructed a foundation for continued work on this project to bring it to completion.

3.5 Programmatic Outcomes

- The Appalachian Studies Program at Virginia Tech benefitted significantly from this particular project because it was so product focused and students did deliver a final Wayside design for it that provided TCR, community residents, and county officials with a tangible outcome. Furthermore two students continued to work on this project into the Spring 2015 semester, demonstrating University investment in completing it, and a third applied what he had learned to a related internship context. This follow-through is enhancing the visibility of both the Appalachian Studies Program and the Appalachian Regional Commission in both counties.
- The project as a whole enhances the educational resources of the Appalachian Studies Program so it can perform its educational mandate more fully, especially for courses, internships, independent research, apprenticeships, and graduate study leading to masters and Ph.D. degrees that focus on Appalachia;
- As has been the case in nearly all other Appalachian Teaching Project Conferences in which Virginia Tech Appalachian Studies students participated, students found the conference experience extremely rewarding. They found the opportunity to listen to presentations from other colleges and universities enlightening and the conversations with these students engaging. They also found the chance to present their research and field questions from the audience professionally useful for future job opportunities. In addition, the extra free time to explore the Washington area was personally satisfying
- Finally, the partnership with the ARC has, once again, yielded more positive visibility of the Appalachian Studies Program with University administration, at least at the college level, where Appalachian Studies are becoming known. To this end, Puckett was awarded her college's Land Grant Award in 2015 primarily on the basis of her work on this project. This award required community letters of support; that they were positive is an indication of the strength of Program/community relationships formed primarily by the investment of time and commitment to the project by students.

3.6 Student Outcomes

Several major student outcomes occurred as a result of this TCR project for the last two years both as a class group and as individuals as follows:

- As a whole, students developed leadership abilities and project planning skills. Each was required to engage with non-campus residents and officials through taking the initiative to attend local music jams (they determined which ones and why), leading focus group meetings (developing a question/response protocol in consultation with their professor, but then being able to guide discussions to stay on topic or to pursue other relevant topics), and in contacting local music and business stakeholders to attend focus group meetings and to make them aware of the project more generally. These activities led one

student to comment in her final report, “as someone who is an old pro at making the rounds at cocktail parties and fundraisers, I surprised myself this fall when, for one of the first times in my college career, I tried to make connections rather than contacts.”

- Also as a class, students developed professional presentational skills by having to organize their research findings into a collaborative Appalachian Teaching Project Conference presentation and poster; two presentations to county tourism organizations; a presentation to our community partner, TCR; and a community presentation to the general public.
- Through engagement with approximately 120 community residents in their various meetings, event participation and observation activities, and interviews, students developed a keen awareness of community cultural assets as they relate to the importance of traditional music within local identities and place-based values. By working on a project to promote sustainability of this music via an interfacing product, which is a tangible Wayside kiosk, they confronted first hand issues related to how to sustain not only this music, but the communities and dedicated individuals who want it continued, while, at the same time, nurturing a positive tourist experience that enhances economic stability and even growth.
- On an individual level, one student from the 2013-2014 obtained a job from his engagement in this TCR project and a subsequent independent study on local resistance to a proposed National Park Service affiliation by TCR. Email describing his position and how this happened is contained in Attachment 8.2
- Another student majoring in architectural design has continued with the project through the Spring 2015 in order to complete the TCR Wayside design approval process. It was her conceptualization of a new design that motivated the various community stakeholders to get involved in the project and to commit to building Waysides. She plans on continuing the process through 2015 or until TCR approves the final design. Preliminary approval has been given; what is now needed is incorporation of ancillary features such as the local FM radiobroadcast function and specific construction materials and their cost. Her initiative allows her to include listing this design project on her resume as an actual community project. Her final project report is included as Attachment 8.3
- Still another student used his relationship with the director of the Montgomery County Tourism Council to obtain an internship in the Spring 2015 semester that developed into a distinct (but unpaid) position for him. His computer software skills resulted in the development of several crucial programs that facilitated cross-county coordination in planning and executing the Mountains of Music Homecoming events as well as technical materials for keeping track of how the approximately 30 Montgomery County events were unfolding. His work was recognized by the CEO of the Virginia Tourism Commission. Given that this project directly links to the Virginia Tech partnership with TCR and the ARC, and that the student develops this relationship in his final report, it is also attached in Attachment 8.3
- Finally, a new student joined the project in the Spring 2015 as a public history major interested in the history of traditional music in this region. She willingly engaged in oral history transcription and in conducting additional interviews. Her training in her major allowed her to also discover new documents and individuals, whom she interviewed, who were previously unknown. She is also interested in continuing the project through 2015.

As a result of the extent and depth of these outcomes, students recognize that this class and this ARC initiative is an excellent opportunity for them to obtain the kinds of community-based applications for their education and training in their various majors that will, in turn, assist them in obtaining employment after graduation.

4.0 Problems Encountered:

Most of the problems encountered with this 2015-2016 project relate to achieving the final goal of having Waysides erected in the two targeted counties. The project is just too complex for it to be addressed even in two years. Some specific issues that arose are the following:

- Arguments by Montgomery County residents and government officials that at least two Waysides are needed in this county due to population size and communities' local history concerns. This needs expands the original project significantly so that it now requires buy-in from both Christiansburg, the county seat, and Blacksburg, each of which have their own tourism committees;
- Funding is an issue. While volunteers for labor and materials have been offered in both counties, organizing and coordinating these offers will be a major task. Other TCR Waysides have been built primarily with funds from the Virginia Tobacco Commission. These funds are not available to Giles and Montgomery Counties. Consequently, this piece of the project is one that will take much time with governmental stakeholders, local business people (who can donate funds), non-profits for labor and in-kind contributions, and heritage music musicians who are committed to the project through donating labor and supplies.
- Design coordination and buy-in from both TCR and the various town and county offices involved. Blacksburg in Montgomery County recently redid its signage for important locations and will want the TCR Wayside to conform to this design. Similarly, Pearisburg in Giles County has recently erected its own unique signage so a location there may be difficult.
- Placement issues. The project was and is committed to having community resident engagement in the design, content, and placement process. In so doing, however, where to locate the Waysides becomes a significant issue that must be resolved. While taking more time than in other Wayside projects, agreement can and must happen if the Waysides are to be signs of community identity and investment that, in turn, can support sustainability.
- Continuation of Virginia Tech student involvement in the project over time so it gets done. All offices and government officials involved in the project are understaffed or overcommitted so that they need assistance in simply getting the work done. In addition, it is important for the goals of the ARC and the Appalachian Teaching Project to engage communities in promoting sustainability. Therefore it is critical for Virginia Tech Appalachian Studies students to stay involved in the project and move it forward. The Program Continuation section (section 5.0) describes how we plan on doing this.

Other problems encountered center around having students from diverse majors who had difficulty engaging in the off campus, community focus of the project. These were very few

however, and they were supported by their classmates who were comfortable in this type of research so that they performed adequately to well by the end of the semester.

Previous reported issues regarding institutional policies regarding class size have been addressed.

5.0 Program Continuation and Sustainability:

Continuing the Appalachian Teaching Project at Virginia Tech is certain as long as there is someone qualified to teach it and the ARC reviews our project proposals favorably. Earlier issues regarding college concerns about the lower enrollment figure when 16 are generally considered the minimum have been addressed, at least for the short term.

Of concern, however, is continuing the TCR Wayside placement project as described in section 1.0 of this report. The project, as described above, is not complete. At some point, TCR and local government officials in both counties will make decisions concerning whether to proceed with construction or not. At this time, however, all want to. The role of Virginia Tech's Appalachian Studies Program will then be to facilitate community representation in this process so that it does come to a successful and community sustainable conclusion. For, if the decisions are made at the governmental administrative level, the buy-in students have constructed in the last two years will be lost. Therefore Project Director Puckett is committed to continuing the project in the future.

Therefore, she will continue to encourage independent studies and undergraduate research studies that address specific details of the project, as was done by the public history student during the Spring 2015 semester. In addition, she will list the project with the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences Undergraduate Research Institute to solicit students who would be interested in continuing the work. She will also work with various Virginia Tech departments, such as public history, landscape architecture, and architectural or industrial design, to identify students who will want to work on the project, perhaps under the direction of another professor. Finally, she leaves open the possibility of offering another class, perhaps a graduate class, to obtain a group of students who are dedicated to working together to finish the project.

6.0 Conclusions and Recommendations:

By focusing on producing a distinct product that will be a visible sign of ARC goals to promote economic sustainability, increase per capita income, and compete in the global economy. this year's project was, in many ways, Virginia Tech's best one. This focus permitted numerous diverse groups to bring their interests to bear in manner that fostered cooperation and collaboration. It therefore permitted engaged student learning activities that benefitted them in their career goals, as well as the communities involved, the counties involved, Virginia Tech's Appalachian Studies Program, and The Crooked Road. Virginia Tech's involvement in the Appalachian Teaching Project is developing in directions we see as strongly positive as a result.

With respect to the Appalachian Teaching Project itself, it has advanced to a very worthwhile project and is an Appalachian Regional Commission success story. The level of the

presentations continues to improve every year; the projects are often visionary and address critical issues in sustaining communities. It is a privilege to be a participant.

Recommendations are to continue to develop two semester projects so participating institutions can choose the semester that works best for them to participate, to increase the number of educational institutions participating because of the rich resources present in the region, and to assist participants in developing a more public venue for dissemination of project findings than currently exists. The ETSU website is very useful and nicely done, but it would be good to have the ARC itself support publication of at least some of the presentations, project findings, or research reports on its website or in some other online venue such as an open access proceedings site. Then students could refer to their work in the resumes by listing a specific Web location. This option could, in turn, assist them in seeking post baccalaureate employment or graduate school acceptance.

7.0 References:

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Wayside Exhibits (2014) Abington, VA: The Crooked Road. <http://www.myswva.org/tcr/venues/waysides> (May 30, 2015).

8.0 Attachments:

8.1 Written Correspondence with Partner, The Crooked Road (Jack Hinshelwood, Executive Director (Attached to report submission email as a pdf file)

8.2. Student Materials (Attached to report submission email as a pdf file)

8.2.1 Wayside Diagram Submitted for TCR Approval after Community Stakeholders Approved It as Compared to Existing Waysides

8.2.2 Email Documenting Student Employment as a Result of Participation in the Appalachian Teaching Project and a Follow-up Undergraduate Research Course.

8.3 Student Reports (Attached to report submission email as a pdf file)

8.3.1 Breanna LaTondre’s Spring 2015 Report Detailing Her Wayside Design Project and the TCR Approval Process

8.3.2 Christopher Waddell’s Spring 2015 Report Describing His Internship with Montgomery County Tourism Council and How It Related to the Appalachian Teaching Project Experience Fall 2014.