

For immediate release

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Roane State helps build entrepreneurship among middle and high school students

By Bob Fowler

Roane State staff writer



Roane State is partnering in an effort to help middle and high school students in five local counties develop business savvy skills and learn how to become successful entrepreneurs.

The college will be assisting in the National Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education (EntreEd) ESTEAM Pitch Series. That virtual event will take place between 10 a.m. and noon on Thursday, March 11, 2021.

ESTEAM stands for the nonprofit's effort to infuse Entrepreneurship into the Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics initiatives.

Teams of students from Wartburg, Coalfield and Sunbright high schools in Morgan County as well as Scott and Anderson County high schools, Clarkrange High in Fentress County, and Jacksboro Middle in Campbell County will be pitching their business ideas via timed ZOOM events. Each school can field two teams.

The participating counties were selected because they've been hard hit by the downturn in the coal-mining industry. The Appalachian Regional Commission is funding the event.

"We know there are great ideas just waiting to be brought forward," said EntreEd Executive Director Dr. Gene Coulson. "We want this...initiative to be an engaging activity that will encourage teachers and students to develop and pitch those ideas in a competitive environment."

"Our goal is entrepreneurship education for every student. As the region begins to recover from the hardships brought on by the pandemic, there will be a great need for entrepreneurial thinking and new ideas," Coulson added.

Roane State's role includes providing judges for the competition and the campus site directors choosing ambassadors to organize and coordinate activities. Site directors are Tracy Powers, Campbell County; Michelle Adkisson, Morgan County; Sharon Wilson, Scott County; and Tinisha Key, Fentress County. Kim Harris, the college's workforce training and placement director, will serve as the Anderson County site director.

To compete, each team must consist of two or more students.

Each team on the live virtual event will present a 90-second "elevator pitch" that gives a very brief overview of their project. The teams will then give a detailed, five-minute explanation of their ideas and business plans.

Campbell County Site Director Tracy Powers said the competition is somewhat like the “Shark Tank” television show where panelists decide whether to help fund new businesses after entrepreneurs pitch their proposals.

Participating schools will be eligible for cash prizes, and 10 winners in the first round of competition will advance to a second virtual round.

For more information, visit entre-ed.org/pitch or contact Megan Westbrook at megan@entre-ed.org.

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Roane State is a two-year college providing transfer programs, career-preparation programs and continuing education. Founded in 1971, the college has locations in Roane, Campbell, Cumberland, Fentress, Knox, Loudon, Morgan, and Scott counties as well as a branch campus in Oak Ridge. For more information, visit www.roanestate.edu or call (865) 882-4554.

Remember, eligible adults can now attend Roane State tuition-free with the new Reconnect grant. Learn more at www.roanestate.edu/reconnect.