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Old Dominion University Partners With Hampton Roads Community Foundation to Speed Severe Weather Recovery

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By Joe Garvey

Old Dominion University is partnering with the Hampton Roads Community Foundation in a significant regional effort to lessen the expected displacement of vulnerable populations following damaging hurricane winds and flooding.

ODU researchers at the Virginia Modeling, Analysis and Research Center (VMASC) will use a five-year, $500,000 grant from the foundation to help establish Recover Hampton Roads (RHR), an organization that will focus on speeding housing repair and recovery.

ODU researchers will begin developing a Convergence, Inventory, Matching & Assignment (CIMA) platform, which is the linchpin to the objectives of RHR.

"This is an important effort not just for the region, but nationally as the management platform is innovative and addresses a known gap in recovery efforts and may be deployed in other coastal areas," said Joshua G. Behr, research associate professor at VMASC. He is leading the effort with Rafael Diaz, who specializes in solutions to manage the complexity inherent in dynamic supply-chain environments.

"The CIMA tool will facilitate the management of converging volunteer labor and donated materials flowing into Hampton Roads, and the matching of these with damage assessments that estimate the labor and materials needed to make the home basic-functional (so that a household may again quickly occupy the home rather than be displaced), the generating of repair work packages, and the prioritizing and scheduling of repairs within a resource-dynamic environment," Diaz said.

RHR is focused on harnessing best practices and developing an organization ahead of time that has the tools, knowledge and leadership necessary to anticipate and take immediate action, coordinating material and labor that begins to converge even prior to a severe weather event making landfall, and sustaining that effort throughout the longer-term recovery. Over time the ODU team will be engaging municipalities, nonprofits and other stakeholders within Hampton Roads.

"Coastal resilience is one of the most serious issues facing our region, and ODU is becoming a leader in this arena. The Hampton Roads Community Foundation awarded this five-year grant after seeing how people in other coastal regions struggled when hurricanes devastated their neighborhoods," said Deborah M. DiCroce, president and CEO of the Hampton Roads Community Foundation. "ODU's innovative efforts will put systems in place to help area residents living in economically stressed neighborhoods quickly recover when disaster strikes."

The Hampton Roads Community Foundation is the largest grant and scholarship provider in southeastern Virginia. Since its founding in 1950 it has put more than $301 million into action helping improve the region through grants and scholarships.

VMASC is an enterprise research center of ODU focusing on advances in modeling and simulation, data analytics, and cybersecurity.