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## **A vital spinoff from JFCOM**

**Modeling and simulation is not a military-only tool. It presents tremendous opportunity to diversify the economy while providing clean, high-paying jobs.**

By JACK L. EZZELL JR.

THISMONTH, Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recommended closure of U.S. Joint Forces Command, headquartered in Hampton Roads. JFCOM develops and employs modeling and simulation tools, the centerpiece of joint training.

Modeling and simulation refers to the process of developing a mathematical model of a real-world process, such as the flow of containers through a port facility and solving the model under different conditions. The information extracted from the model can be used to enhance the effectiveness of the real-world process and increase efficiency and profitability.

M&S is not a military-only tool.

Regardless of the outcome of Secretary Gates' recommendation, the regionwide comprehensive economic development strategy, Vision Hampton Roads, has a structure already in place to coordinate existing and future efforts to grow the M&S community in Hampton Roads.

Hampton Roads is one of the country's three leading regions in M&S along with Orlando and Huntsville, Ala. The unique strength here is in three areas:

- M&S education from high school through PhD. Hampton Roads is the only place you will find that continuum of M&S education.
- Training. Significant expertise exists in how to employ M&S to perform all types of training from the military to medical.
- Decision-support command and control. The region is set apart by its expertise in employing M&S to analyze complex problems and to help individuals or groups make better decisions because of the insight they gain from the models.

The Virginia Modeling Analysis and Simulation Center at Old Dominion University is a key contributor to this sector of the economy with the past help of JFCOM.

The following are ongoing M&S diversification efforts in the region that deserve to be championed and supported:

- MODSIM World Conference & Expo, now in its fourth year and franchised in Canada, has seen a 25 percent annual growth and focuses on promoting M&S activity outside of the Department of Defense, encouraging the transfer of technology and information across domains.
- Sen. Mark Warner's M&S Taskforce has put a special focus on medical M&S for 2011.
- Hampton Roads M&S Strategy 2020 pays special attention to entrepreneurship, commercialization, research and development, expanding into new markets, educational linkages and leveraging unique assets. The strategy is designed to capitalize on, not rely on, existing DoD M&S work to expand and grow the industry base in Hampton Roads.
- Hampton Roads M&S Leadership Council was developed to coordinate the implementation of the M&S Strategy 2020 and has taken active steps to operate in-line with Vision Hampton Roads.
- Vision Hampton Roads specifically includes M&S as a cluster that deserves attention and support to continue its growth in the region as it presents tremendous opportunity to diversify the economy while providing clean, high-paying jobs.

A 2007 technology survey identified more than 2,000 direct M&S jobs paying an average of \$82,733 per year (more than double the region's average salary), with nearly 60 percent on the Peninsula and 40 percent on the Southside. Although strongly supported by the military, jobs have expanded to transportation, port operations, education and the medical world.

The survey also noted many M&S research strengths in the region: ODU, Eastern Virginia Medical School, Hampton University, National Institute of Aeronautics, NASA Langley Research Center, Jefferson Lab, Norfolk State University and

Christopher Newport University.

And, according to Virginia's Economic Development Partnership, Virginia's M&S industry employs 11,500 people in the private sector while government and military is estimated at another 2,900 people. The top two regions by employment are Northern Virginia (5,900) and Hampton Roads (5,200) and account for 97 percent of all M&S employment in Virginia.

So what is the region's next step? Focus M&S efforts with the existing regionwide strategic plan already in place, led by the Vision Hampton Roads Innovation Task Force and the Hampton Roads M&S Leadership Council. This aligns with designated community leaders in specific areas of interest, such as higher education and health care, for implementation of plan's strategic actions.

Residents can engage directly with the M&S community and learn more by attending the MODSIM World Conference and Expo, October 13-15 at the Hampton Roads Convention Center in Hampton. For more information, visit [ModSimWorldConference.com](http://ModSimWorldConference.com).

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