

**State Council of Higher Education
Director's report
July 19, 2016**

Our Students, Our Future: Nearly 280 people participated in the SCHEV-sponsored one-day forum on June 8. Attendees included representatives of local school divisions, college access providers, universities, Governor's staff and the General Assembly. The program focused on efforts to improve student access, success and completion.

New board member orientation: The Governor appointed 60 new members of college and university boards. (The Governor also appointed two new Council members – Ken Ampy and Tom Slater.) SCHEV has assembled a planning group to develop the agenda and select speakers for the October 18-19 orientation session for new appointees. Council members Henry Light and Katie Webb serve on the committee.

Virginia Research Investment Fund and Committee: The Governor and the 2016 General Assembly created this fund and committee to promote research and development excellence in Virginia, with a particular focus on commercialization, economic development and job creation. The SCHEV director chairs the committee. We have convened the ex officio members of the committee twice, met with institutional research officers and began the search for a dedicated staff member to support VRIC.

Tuition and fees: Thanks to a significant increase in state general fund support and to ongoing institutional efficiencies, undergraduate tuition and fee increases for continuing students in 2016-17 will be the lowest since 2003. Overall, 97% of in-state undergraduate students attending Virginia public institutions will have tuition increases that are 3% or less. SCHEV will publish its annual report on tuition and fees by August 1.

Quality and assessment of student learning: SCHEV is pursuing a partnership with Virginia institutions and other states on a project to assess student learning. SCHEV also convened a task force on quality and assessment, which is an essential element of a Council priority initiative.

GEAR UP Virginia (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs): SCHEV recently convened over 75 school-based GEAR UP coordinators. The coordinators reported on successes and challenges in implementing the program in middle schools. SCHEV also coordinated a four-day camp at the University of Virginia with 125 rising 9th grade students.

Out and about: Beverly Covington and I have been meeting with legislators in different parts of the state to talk about the The Virginia Plan, legislative initiatives, and Council priorities. We are planning other meetings throughout the fall. I recently attended the annual meeting of the State Higher Education Executive Officers and the legislative meeting of the Southern Regional Education Board.