

JBL | ASSOCIATES, INC.

STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

FINAL REPORT

Submitted to the:

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

By:

JBL Associates, Inc.

with

Strategic Initiatives, Inc. and Zelos, LLC

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- Goals and Strategy Memo—Presents findings from research as well as synthesized insights and suggested Vision, Mission, Goals and Strategies developed by the project team.
- Supply Model—Facilitates discussion of what will need to happen to realize degree and certificate production goals.

The strategies included in this report are a starting point for further planning. They include suggested measures that could be used to track progress over time. In some instances, Virginia already has initiatives in place. In these cases, options are presented that might be considered as a way to improve the endeavor. The specific initiatives undertaken to achieve goals will evolve and change over time.

Certain themes are recurrent in this overview. First is the need for adequate state funding. Second is the necessity of closing the education gaps among groups of citizens. Regional differences, along with disparities between races/ethnicities and income groups, demonstrate the need for renewed effort to improve success for those who traditionally have not been successful in the college setting. Third is the need for a process that more strongly motivates achievement of state interests in a decentralized higher education system.

It is through constant attention to and consideration of these goals, strategies and initiatives in the ongoing decisions at the state, institutional, departmental and classroom levels that the plan will be realized. Regular consideration of these measures will keep the long-term strategic goals from being lost when making choices in the short term.

The foundation of the plan is a vision and mission statement. The vision statement provides a clear and inspirational long-term desired state to result from Virginia's higher education efforts.

Vision: Higher Education will transform the lives of Virginians, our communities and our Commonwealth.

Virginia higher education has the opportunity to chart a bold, distinctive course in the next ten years. Virginia can capitalize on its reputation as "The Old Dominion State," appropriately respectful of traditional values and standards of educational quality, yet willing to re-chart its course shaped by 21st century imperatives. This strategic plan articulates a compelling combination of mission, vision, goals and strategies that will achieve the transformations of individuals, communities and the Commonwealth that are needed for prosperity and well-being in the 21st century.

Embracing this transformational vision can rekindle and reaffirm the enthusiasm of the Commonwealth's citizens for public investment in Virginia postsecondary education. In order to achieve prosperity and well-being in the 21st century, greater investment and support are imperative for the learning, research and public service functions of colleges and universities. These resources need to come from a collection of sources: public appropriations, businesses, community organizations, philanthropies and other stakeholders. A compelling narrative, and commitment to its execution, can mobilize these essential levels of support.

A bold, distinctive course will also invite alignment of efforts by the leadership of Virginia's colleges and universities. The strength of Virginia's constellation of diverse institutions results from differentiated excellence. Many of the strategies recommended by the plan require distinctive regional solutions

enabled by active collaborations and public/private partnerships. Examples of such partnerships and collective action are currently gestating in Virginia. They will be even more important in the future. A bold, distinctive course will also require more diverse and active roles and competencies for the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV).

Virginia faces a future in which postsecondary education will play an increasingly important role. Employers will need a workforce with deeper and broader skills at all levels. At the same time, the demographics of the emerging generation will change, as an increasing share of young Virginians that come from racial and ethnic backgrounds that historically have not done well in higher education will graduate from high school. These changes will transpire at a time when the price of attending a higher education institution for students and their families in the state has been increasing at an unsustainable rate because of shrinking state support. Virginia needs a plan to address the problems that will develop with the intersection of these trends if the Commonwealth is to prosper and succeed in the future.

The mission statement describes the reason higher education exists in Virginia, and will help guide decisions about priorities, actions and responsibilities.

Mission: Higher education in Virginia will advance postsecondary learning, research and public service that enhance the civic and financial health of the Commonwealth and the well-being of all its people.

The strategic plan will provide a common guide for the decisions that different offices, legislators and boards will make every day, each of which leads the higher education enterprise toward its future. This should be a plan for all of postsecondary education in Virginia, not a plan for a sector or an agency. The diversity of opportunity provided by postsecondary education institutions in the Commonwealth is a strength that needs to be protected. However, the state's interests need to be clearly defined and realized.

Postsecondary education includes transmitting knowledge to a new generation, being a positive economic and social force in the community today, and helping build a prosperous future through research and development. The higher education mission in Virginia embraces all three of these important contributions that higher education makes to society, and that society should hold higher education accountable for making. The public interest in higher education was well defined by the then-Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, Robert M. Berdahl:

The legitimacy of the public university's claim as an instrument of progress in a democratic society hangs in the balance on the question of access—and not only on access, but quality and purpose. Are we providing the broadest possible cross-section of America's population access to the best possible education? Are we excluding by any means anyone who has the right to be included? Are we serving society—with our research and by teaching people to serve as leaders and citizens? Are we thereby, in

answer to all of these questions, meeting our highest obligation, clearly spelled out in our charge to fulfill the public trust?¹

The future prosperity and vitality of the Commonwealth and its people depend on finding and putting into action the right answers to these questions.

RISKS, CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The future will be different from the past in important ways. Anticipating how to achieve success as conditions change is an important function of planning. In conversations across the state and through a review of relevant data, several issues came to the surface. Two issues were present in all conversations with the key policy makers interviewed: First, college is too expensive; and second, quality must be protected. Declining state support for higher education threatens both. Part of this decline can be traced to the Great Recession, and part of it is due to choices made in the state budget based on the expressed values of the electorate. Achieving affordable access to college for all Virginians will be a challenge. Shrinking state support and climbing tuition cannot continue without increasing student loan burdens beyond the capacity of graduates to repay, or excluding low-income students altogether.

Since 2001, public support per FTE student for Virginia public higher education has declined \$3,600 (on a base of \$8,000 per FTE student in 2001). The post-recession recoveries that occurred in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s have failed to materialize in the 2000s. Public universities are currently undergoing mid-year budget rescissions for both years of the current biennium.

The number of high school graduates will plateau over the next few years. In addition, many high school graduates in the state are not adequately prepared for college-level work. Meeting the increasing need for more graduates will require colleges and universities in Virginia to reduce the dropout rate. Students who come to college well prepared with adequate financial support already have high success rates, so any increases in the number of degrees and certificates will almost entirely come from increasing the success of those who start college less academically prepared and with limited ability to pay.

The needs of the fastest-growing ethnic minority groups in Virginia should be given special consideration. By 2040, Latinos, along with African Americans, will represent the largest group of high school graduates in Virginia. Historically, students from these communities have not always prospered in postsecondary education. That will have to change if Virginia is to produce and sustain the trained workforce necessary for a successful future. Furthermore, employers will need more graduates who possess technical, scientific, engineering and mathematical skills. Half of these technically trained graduates will need a sub-baccalaureate degree or certificate, and shortages already exist in information technology occupations and health fields. A diverse, competitive workforce is necessary to attract new business and help existing businesses grow.

Averages hide important economic differences among regions across the state. As a state, Virginia's statistics are impressive; but the rural parts of the state are stagnating while the urban areas prosper.

¹ Robert M. Berdahl, "The Public University in the 21st Century," address to the National Press Club, Washington, DC, June 2, 1999

Improving the Commonwealth's future should include improving the educational opportunities for rural Virginians as well as for those who live in regions of increasing wealth.

Averages also hide important variations among public institutions of higher education in Virginia. The universities and colleges with strong market power in Virginia can raise tuition, attract private gifts and collect overhead funds from research and medical programs. Other public colleges in the Commonwealth are highly dependent on state support, which has been anemic in recent years, and tuition, which they cannot raise due to their modest market power.

Virginia's public institutions perform above expectations in terms of institutional ranking (high) compared with state investment (low). However, Virginia's public institutions as a group are not regarded as leaders in technology-enabled learning and widespread innovation. Individual institutions stand out, but as a whole, the Commonwealth is not an innovative leader. This needs to change if Virginia is to retain its reputation for excellence and ensure the prosperity and vitality that all citizens deserve in the 21st century. Depending solely on the success of the past may not be the best road to success in the future.

Colleges and universities are economic development engines in their communities across every region in the Commonwealth. This is especially true in the leading research and talent hubs that support entrepreneurship, innovation and commercialization of new ventures. Finally, public service to communities has become a defining characteristic of engaged public universities. A traveler from the 1950s would be astonished by the economic, cultural and social importance of today's colleges and universities to modern society.

A SENSE OF URGENCY: Why Virginia Must Increase and Leverage its Investment in Postsecondary Education to Advance Competitiveness:

- Other nations are increasing their public and private investments in education, research and commercialization.
- Neighboring states already spend more on education per capita than does Virginia, and have stronger research capabilities and recognized talent hubs.
- Virginia's workforce requires strengthening at many levels and in many disciplines, including STEM-H. This requires substantial increases in certificates and degrees at most levels.
- To achieve its potential, the strongest economic and talent hub, Northern Virginia, should strengthen its research clusters in areas such as cybersecurity and other IT-based disciplines relevant to federal interests that are located in the region.
- The Commonwealth should incubate/nurture/discover new enterprises and industries to complement defense spending, which is likely to continue to decline; this will prove critical to Tidewater and Northern Virginia in particular.
- Stimulating the less economically successful of Virginia's regions will require investing in and leveraging education, training and human development, economic/cultural development and public service.

Virginia needs to diversify its economy and anticipate/serve 21st century needs. Presently, Virginia has a service economy that is highly dependent on federal government spending. Significant reductions in federal contracts or military spending could have an outsized influence on the Commonwealth's economy and the resources available to higher education. For future vitality, Virginia needs to leverage innovation, entrepreneurship and high-tech manufacturing to build competitive strength in a variety of emerging sectors. New industries develop around the breakthrough research and emerging innovators that universities generate.

Charting a successful course through these challenges will require integrated solutions. It will also demand the commitment of stakeholders from classroom faculty members to the governor's office. Change will be needed to position higher education in the state to continue to be the engine of prosperity that it has been in the past.

Higher education should take advantage of existing assets and opportunities to succeed in a changing world. The business community is a positive ally and willing partner of higher education. Technology provides exciting opportunities to improve and redesign the education process and supporting operations. The citizens of the Commonwealth have positive regard for the diverse higher education institutions in Virginia, which provide options that meet the varied needs of citizens. Tapping into these strengths will be vital to higher education's success as it transitions into the new century.

GOALS AND STRATEGIES

The Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011, also known as the "Top Jobs Act" or "TJ21," calls on Virginia's institutions of higher education to create or enhance programs that lead to more college graduates, greater employability and a strong economy for the future of all Virginians. Achieving this objective is an important part of the strategic plan that will require focused and sustained attention to four major goals.

1. Provide Affordable Access for All
2. Optimize Student Success for Work and Life
3. Drive Change and Improvement through Investment and Innovation
4. Advance the Economic and Cultural Prosperity of the Commonwealth and its Regions

Success in reaching these goals depends on having clearly articulated measures to define progress and achievement. The plan includes measures and examples of approaches that have been successful in other settings that Virginia might consider. Some specific initiatives that could lead to accomplishment of the goals are included in the plan, while others are listed in the appendix. SCHEV should use these as a starting point and refine them into an action plan.

GOAL 1: PROVIDE AFFORDABLE ACCESS FOR ALL

Affordable access was the most compelling issue to the students, parents, high school counselors, teachers and college administrators who were interviewed during the regional visits. It was also of concern to employers and policy makers. The prospect of tuition growing by another 25-30 percent over the next five years was unacceptable to these stakeholders of Virginia public higher education.

What's Working?

Affordability is a function of the price of attendance, student aid and family ability to pay. Virginia should develop a policy that links all the pieces together to assure that every student can afford to attend a public college.² The state should identify a cost of attendance (COA) that will be the standard used in the calculation. Each student, as the principal beneficiary, is expected to contribute toward his/her own education costs. Sources include earnings, savings, borrowing or scholarships. The total should not exceed the amount that a student enrolled in college full time could expect to earn. Next, the student's parents contribute their share, which is determined by the federal methodology. This amount can go from zero to being able to pay the entire cost as income increases. Next, the model accounts for the federal government's contribution (i.e., Pell grants, tuition tax credits). The state grant award makes up the remaining difference, up to the recognized COA. The institution is responsible for any difference between the recognized COA and its own actual COA.

In addition to affordability and the obvious issue of academic preparation is the predilection of students to consider not enrolling in college because of a cultural and social perspective that leads some students to anticipate that college is not for *people like me*.

Increasing access will require resolving financial, academic and cultural barriers to enrollment simultaneously. In addition to making college affordable, the general requirements to improve access are not unique; better high school preparation, improved first-year programs for entering college students and appropriate support for adult students are always on the list. Success often comes from personal contact that allows students to anticipate college and its costs, rewards and requirements, and helps the marginal student understand what he or she will have to do to succeed. Active outreach is critical for success.

Virginia has launched multiple efforts to strengthen these partnerships and help students prepare for college. It will take continuing resources and constant attention to build the pathways to college that will better prepare marginal students for success.

STRATEGY 1.1. AFFORDABLE NET PRICE FOR ALL STUDENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

The response to the erosion of state support for higher education over time has been steady increases in tuition and mandatory fees, at a much higher rate than that at which middle-class incomes have increased. The tuition and price of attendance at many colleges and universities in Virginia are now beyond the financial means of low- and middle-income families. Virginia needs to develop and support a financing policy that provides the lowest income families the opportunity to send their children to college and continues to provide adequate resources for colleges and universities.

² States in the Driver's Seat: Leveraging State Aid to Align Policies and Promote Access, Success, and Affordability by Brian T. Prescott and David A. Longanecker, WICHE, 2014

Virginia uses a formula to allocate state financial aid to colleges and universities based on unmet need. The funding model as used by SCHEV:

- Provides a basis for recommending funding levels for student aid.
- Provides a means of tracking annual funding progress.
- Serves as an allocation model.
- Is not an affordability measure.
- Does not determine individual student awards.
- Does not represent all of student financial need.³

Suggested initiative: *Redesign the state needs-based student aid program.*

Measure: *Percent of students who can attend a public college or university in the state at a price that does not exceed his or her ability to pay by working 20 hours a week at minimum wage*

Target: *100%*

However, increasing the amount of need-based aid under the current formula may not achieve the state goal of providing affordable access for all students.

Not only do public colleges and universities currently establish their own tuition and fees, but they also award state student aid with broad discretion. One outcome appears to be increasing gaps in affordability for low-income students among public colleges and universities. After all, a primary, and appropriate, interest of the institutions is to increase and maintain enrollment. However, this may not align with the state's interest in ensuring that high tuition and inadequate aid do not preclude qualified students from attending a public college or university in the state. Increasing net price could also run counter to the imperative to increase diversity and inclusiveness of enrollment on some campuses. The risk is that Virginia could lose an important opportunity to prepare its fastest growing demographic population for the jobs of the 21st century because college is too expensive.

The end goal for an affordable net price policy is to make certain that each student has a predictable net price that is appropriate to his/her ability to pay. One sensible target could be that a Virginia student with a median family income should graduate with a bachelor's degree free from loan debt if they so choose.

Achieving affordability will require going beyond the current approach to consider systematically all the factors that produce a net price for a student. A shared responsibility plan would go beyond an allocation formula to define how much a student would pay after considering all sources of aid and other support. The state grant should provide assurance that every student could attend the average public four-year college or university in Virginia without borrowing. To accomplish this, a student from a high-income family might not receive any grant aid, while a student from a low-income family would receive a large grant from the state.

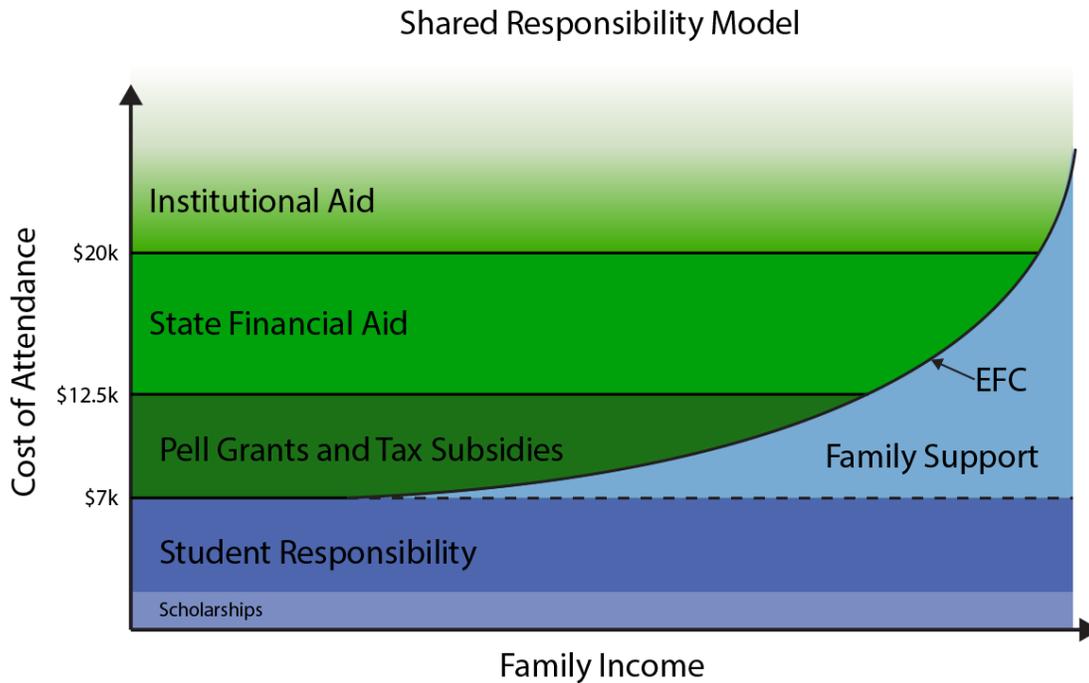
Minnesota, Oregon and Idaho use an approach where all partners contribute what they reasonably can, and by so doing, create a financing system that is cost-effective, affordable to all partners and designed

³ A Review of Student Financial Assistance, SCHEV Council meeting, January 15, 2013, by Lee Andes, Assistant Director for Financial Aid

explicitly to enhance student success. The approach helps states coordinate policies on institutional appropriations, tuition, and financial aid to ensure access and affordability for state residents. It also gives students and their families understandable information about what college will cost.

The following example of a state-level shared responsibility plan would, if implemented, help achieve an affordable net price for students and their families.

The following model recognizes the primary contribution of the student on his or her behalf, followed by parents, federal grants, state grants and the institution:



The shared responsibility approach provides a more concrete target for funding than does unmet need. The actual funding gap for a family is a more easily understood guide for appropriations decisions than the more abstract concept of unmet need.

STRATEGY 1.2. EXPAND OUTREACH TO K-12 AND TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES TO FOSTER A CULTURE OF LEARNING

Anticipating college is more than academic preparation for low-income, first-generation students. For many, going to college means leaving friends and family behind. College represents a change of identity and community, not just a chance for improvement. Overcoming these subtle barriers takes more than better information or help with application forms. Young students from these communities, be they inner city, rural or small towns, need to develop personal

Suggested initiative: *Expand active community outreach programs, with partners, to help increase the enrollment numbers of students from underserved communities.*

Measure: *The Latino and African American enrollment rate out of high school*

Target: *Equal to that of White and Asian students.*

confidence and understanding that *people like them* can succeed in college without forgoing their identity. These students need to have direct experience on a college campus through visits, summer programs or dual enrollment. They also need to understand the link between their course work and future careers, in the abstract, but also in very concrete terms. Local employers can collaborate with high schools to help make that connection. Parents need to be involved in the conversation so they do not believe that the fact that their child is going to college represents a loss to the family.

What’s Working?

Virginia could consider other options to keep college affordable. Whatever policy Virginia pursues, it is important to find a sustainable solution. One option is to guarantee that tuition will not exceed CPI inflation over the next four years for every high school senior in the state that enrolls in a public college or university, linked with a commitment from the state that institutional support would increase by a similar factor. New York, Colorado and Iowa have held down tuition by combining predictable annual increases in state appropriations with limits on tuition increases.

Oklahoma has established a program called Oklahoma Promise for eighth-, ninth- and 10th-grade students that will help pay for their college education if their parents' income from taxed and untaxed sources is \$50,000 or less at the time the student applies for the program. The student must take a challenging high school curriculum, maintain passing grades, and stay out of trouble with the law.

Building a culture of learning is more than having students study more; it is helping them see the relationship between who they are and what they can become. Across the country and in parts of Virginia, community colleges and universities are actively collaborating with pre-K-12 education to engage students and build pathways that lead to college success and preparation for meaningful careers.

Focusing narrowly on academic preparation and making sure that enough financial aid is available is only part of solution. Outreach programs should include community organizations such as churches, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA and other community agencies and groups that can help reinforce the message and build acceptance for college attendance. Colleges and universities need to help erase the cultural and personal barriers that undermine the confidence of young students from low-income and first-generation communities.

This strategy is especially important given the changing demographic composition of the pool of Virginia postsecondary learners. Pathway programs in Northern Virginia can be models for other regions desiring to help increasing numbers of Latino learners, many of whom come from a

culture in which higher education is not necessarily considered an option.

Virginia should continue to support such pre-K-16 education efforts, supporting local and regional efforts such as those flourishing in Northern Virginia.

STRATEGY 1.3. IMPROVE THE COLLEGE READINESS OF ALL STUDENTS

The best predictor of college success is achievement in high school. High school students who take a rigorous curriculum and achieve good grades do better in

Possible Measure: Number of entering students requiring developmental education

Target: Fewer than prior year

college than do those who do not. Colleges can, and should, be partners with high schools in helping define qualifying skills and finding ways to help improve the connections between high school and college. Virginia is already a leader in efforts to align basic skills competencies, such as the Virginia Department of Education's Virginia College & Career Readiness Initiative, and providing the option for dual enrollment, which are examples of best practices already being implemented in Virginia.

Possible Measure: The number of adults enrolling in college

Target: Greater than prior year

STRATEGY 1.4. CULTIVATE PATHWAYS FOR TRADITIONAL, NON-TRADITIONAL AND RETURNING STUDENTS

College readiness of high school students is only part of the story. Virginia should also continue to provide and improve opportunities for adults to enroll or reenroll in college in order to meet projected degree and certificate goals. Adults often need convenience that allows them to integrate college attendance with family and work obligations. In many cases, adults may be concerned about their classroom skills after being out of school for so many years.

GOAL 2: OPTIMIZE STUDENT SUCCESS FOR WORK AND LIFE

Meeting degree production goals in Virginia will require improved success rates for student groups that have not done well in the past. The first step is improving access, but that is meaningless if the students do not prosper and progress to completion. Nationally, colleges and universities have been struggling to identify ways to help more students succeed in college. Success has come not because of a single program, but because of systematic and integrated efforts that address the multiple barriers that high-risk students face as they try to complete college. Significant progress has been made over the past decade in developing programs for low-income and first-generation students that can serve as models. Colleges and universities need to improve student aid programs, advising, academic support, remedial programs, student tracking and intervention tools and counseling.

Many Virginia institutions are participating in programs and initiatives to improve student success that can be the foundation for even more ambitious strategies moving forward. In general, what is effective in helping high-risk students will benefit all students. It is important to make student success a core value that drives state and institutional policy and practice, not just a program add-on that is implemented only if special funding is available.

Ideas to Consider

One option is the creation of one-stop offices within higher education centers, or in community centers of traditionally underserved communities throughout the state. These offices would provide a centralized location to help adults connect with colleges, including outreach/marketing, admissions, advising, academic and career counseling, and supportive services for working-age adults. These centers could help assess adults' previous work for credit, brush up on academic skills and help with the application process. The Graduate Philadelphia initiative provides a model for partnerships among higher education, non-profit organizations, local governments, the public and employers in developing the centers.^{4,5}

The centers could be a dissemination point for the proposed online Commonwealth Scorecard of Economic Opportunity through Education as requested by the Governor. The State Council of Higher Education, in cooperation with VDOLI and the VCCS, will submit a plan for launching an online Commonwealth Scorecard of Economic Opportunity through Education to the Secretary of Commerce and Trade. The new scorecard will provide information on post-graduation wages of Virginians attaining apprenticeship credentials and community college certificate programs as well as college and university degrees. The new scorecard will build on SCHEV's current online Economic Opportunity Metrics website that provides students, parents and counselors with data on post-graduation wages, by program of study, for associate and baccalaureate degrees, by college and university.⁶

STRATEGY 2.1. PROVIDE EFFECTIVE REMEDIATION, ACADEMIC AND STUDENT SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE TO IMPROVE COMPLETION

College success depends on having foundation knowledge, basic academic skills and work habits that lead to success. In addition, many under-prepared students enter college with such trepidation and anxiety that the first threat of failure is enough to drive them away. Effective remediation will address

Possible Measure: Retention and graduation rates of low-income students

Target: Improvement at each institution

not just the academic problems, but also all of the other factors associated with inadequate preparation for college. It is important to have a clear rationale for the content of remedial courses, which might be different for a student seeking an applied associate degree or certificate compared with someone who is working toward a

bachelor's degree. Institutions across Virginia are working on improving outcomes for high-risk students; examples can be found on the SCHEV website.⁷

⁴ Whitney Bonham, Patrick O'Brien, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Gulshan Motwani, Assessment of Opportunities and Models for Adults to Complete the Baccalaureate Degree at Virginia Four-Year Institutions, Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, March 2012

⁵ <http://www.graduatephiladelphia.org>

⁶ MEMORANDUM TO: Heads of Agencies with Workforce Development Programs Workforce Investment Board Directors FROM: Maurice A. Jones, July 30, 2014, RE: Strategic Workforce Initiative

Ideas to Consider

SCHEV can play a central role in improving readiness and reducing the necessity for remediation. While most student success actions are institution focused, SCHEV could host a committee that would provide information and data and promote successful efforts across the state. It could connect its student longitudinal data with high school information to develop pre-enrollment predictors of college success. SCHEV could also work with colleges and universities to help develop indicators and measures to evaluate ongoing efforts to improve college success:

- Evaluate the success of developmental education courses and consider options for improvement, including remedial boot camps, improved course placement process, and contextual remediation;
- Increase incentives for students to enroll in and complete 15 credits a semester;
- Assess institutional practices that impede or improve student completion rates and make the suggested changes;
- Establish a state committee that can be a focal point and a resource for student success efforts across the Commonwealth; and
- Set attainment goals and measures for low-income students' and other special populations' education progress to target support services and interventions.

Closing the performance gap between students of dissimilar economic, ethnic and racial backgrounds is a significant challenge that will be realized over time with continued concentration and effort. It takes close attention to every student, providing help proactively and not waiting for him or her to ask for help, which often does not come until it is too late. Often, the colleges and universities asked to do the most to help these high-risk students have the most limited resources. Additional resources for credible strategies to increase student success should be considered as a budget priority, subject to withdrawal without subsequent improvements in performance.

STRATEGY 2.2. PRODUCE GRADUATES PREPARED TO LIVE PRODUCTIVE, MEANINGFUL LIVES

Preparing students for productive, meaningful lives requires an operational definition. Most obviously, the majority of students will need to make a living regardless of their field of study, so occupational preparation is a critical measure of success that would apply equally to a student taking anthropology and a student taking welding. The broader charge to higher education is to help students understand their history and the context in which they live, along with literacy, creativity, analytic skills and the habit of life-long learning.

The Final Report of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Commission on Higher Education recommended that

Possible measure: Virginia's public institutions will develop competency measures by degree level and major. They will be able to provide an operational definition of concepts such as citizenship, critical thinking and employability and demonstrate how the educational programs accomplish these outcomes.

Target: Complete within five years

⁷ <http://www.schev.edu/innovation.asp>

SCHEV adopt and implement a matrix of performance measures of academic quality and institutional efficiency. Each public institution of higher education in Virginia was required to develop and implement a Quality Assurance Plan that:

- Defines core competencies for written communications, oral communications, quantitative reasoning, scientific reasoning, critical thinking and technology skills;
- Identifies measures to assess students' knowledge and skills; and
- Provides a vehicle to present results publicly.

Currently, the Virginia Assessment Group addresses issues of quality in higher education through assessment and institutional effectiveness practices in all Commonwealth post-secondary institutions. The Group serves as a network for communication and collaboration among institutions of higher education, state and federal agencies and accreditation bodies. One example is JMU's assessment model, which is a successful process for assessing student growth and development in general education and student affairs. These procedures have been in place at JMU for over 25 years. Twice a year, JMU has an Assessment Day, which is a university-wide effort to collect data for program assessment and improvement. VCCS has also developed a system-wide plan for assessing student outcomes.

Instead of requiring that all Virginia public institutions of higher education adopt a uniform set of performance standards, SCHEV has historically emphasized the development of individualized institutional assessment programs designed to stimulate instructional improvement and curricular reform. In utilizing this approach, SCHEV has chosen to stress improving the effectiveness of educational programs rather than concentrating on institutional accountability. This guiding philosophy has allowed SCHEV to work with campus leaders on assessment issues as student outcomes measures and data have evolved.

There is a suggestion that Virginia now take the next step to review and update the process to produce a systematic, statewide framework that will help colleges and universities to agree on fundamental educational outcomes and competencies. These measures will become increasingly important as assignment of credit for experience and self-paced education models become more prevalent.

Virginia should be confident that the postsecondary education system offers an education that results in the skills and competencies students will need in their lives and careers. This approach should also lead to more clearly defined curricular pathways, which help in the maintenance of Virginia's College and Career Ready Mathematics and English Performance Expectation, and a better correlation between graduate skills and employer expectations. The process could help address the following issues:

- Align assessments and certifications at the various levels of education to prevent duplication and improve timely completion of programs;
- Create and refine financial aid programs and funding models that incentivize actual outcomes — paying students and institutions for what is actually learned instead of “time on task;”
- Clearly define education and career ladders and pathways for students to follow; and
- Assure employers that graduates will have the knowledge and skills they truly need to succeed in the modern workplace, and better understand from employers what they require.

Successfully completing this process would mean having clearly defined student competencies that allow the student and the potential employer to be confident in the skills and abilities the graduate possesses.⁸

STRATEGY 2.3. IMPROVE TIMELY COMPLETION RATES FOR CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES

Virginia's public four-year colleges and universities should be proud of their high average graduation rate. However, this average masks a great deal of variation among institutions. The selectivity of the institution has a great deal to do with the eventual probability of students graduating. The completion rate for community colleges in Virginia is average compared with other states, as is the graduation rate in the state's non-profit colleges and universities.

Too many students never receive a degree or certificate, and many of those that do graduate take more than the expected time to complete. This failure, combined with the extended enrollment time, represents a cost to the student and to the state. Extending time to completion also means there is a greater chance of dropping out of college because of financial or personal issues. Timely graduation -- two years for community colleges and four years for a baccalaureate degree -- should be the norm.

Enrollment intensity positively influences time to degree for students at both the bachelor's and associate levels. Virginia might consider designing the student aid programs to reward students who take 15 credits in a semester, and institutions should receive an incentive for improving on-time degree completion. Virginia can also address this problem by doing three things.⁹

First, control credit creep by limiting program length. Colleges and universities should be required to justify credits required beyond the normal 120 for a bachelor's degree and 60 for an associate's degree. Virginia has been vigilant on this point through its program approval process, but colleges and universities should be required to justify any required coursework beyond this maximum.

Second, establish model four-year or two-year semester-by-semester road maps that students can follow for all programs. Every college should ensure that the courses students take are the ones they require to stay on track to finish their degrees. Regular advising should be available to every student as he or she makes critical decisions about choosing a major. These required courses must be available on schedule so students do not need to delay enrollment.

Third, guarantee the transfer of the general education curriculum. Students should be confident that if they take a block of required general education courses in a community college, those credits will be accepted at the receiving college.

Suggested initiative: Provide a guarantee that every entering student can complete an associate degree in two years or a baccalaureate degree in four years if he or she enrolls full-time.

Measure: State average graduation and transfer rates

Target: Improve over prior year

⁸ Jamie P. Merisotis, President, Lumina Foundation, *National Goals and Policy for Higher Education* Keynote Address, SHEEO Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, July 10, 2013

⁹ Nate Johnson, *Three Policies to Reduce Time to Degree*, Complete College America, February 2011

STRATEGY 2.4. ENGAGE ADULT LEARNERS AND VETERANS IN DEGREE COMPLETION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

Adults with some college or a high school degree comprise the largest share of Virginia adults by education level. This population should be an important source of new students ready to move to the next level. It will be necessary to include these students in postsecondary education if Virginia is to meet its goal for numbers of certificates and degrees. Adults lead complicated lives dominated by work and family, so convenience is an important consideration in their decision to enroll. The price of attendance along with doubts about their ability to succeed in the classroom may also keep them from enrolling.

Suggested initiative: Every college will contact recent dropouts to help them reenroll and finish college.

Measure: Degrees and certificates awarded to adults in Virginia

Target: Increase over prior year

SCHEV can continue to work with institutional leaders, state workforce development authorities and the business community to coordinate effective policies for workforce development and adult learner education at the state level.

Adult learners are a diverse group, so no single policy answer will be adequate. Each campus will develop approaches that are unique and appropriate for their situation. SCHEV could help establish standardized procedures for providing credits for prior work and educational experience for returning adults who may have taken training or performed on specialized jobs for which they could show competency. This would shorten the time that it would take an adult to complete a degree or certificate.

GOAL 3: DRIVE CHANGE AND IMPROVEMENT THROUGH INVESTMENT AND INNOVATION

Goal 3 requires Virginia to invest and innovate in higher education in order to drive needed change and improvement. To prosper in the 21st century, Virginia higher education has to simultaneously:

- Identify and implement a successful, sustainable funding model;
- Achieve a dependable combination of General Fund appropriations and tuition income;
- Provide an adequate pool of needs-based financial aid managed by the state
- Invest in institutional innovation and improvement;
- Achieve greater responsiveness, resilience and readiness for future disruptions;
- Drive a diverse environment in which creativity flourishes; and
- Enhance higher education leadership and governance at all levels.

What's Working?

...in Pennsylvania, the Pennsylvania Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) Consortium provides a model for standardizing this process at a state level which Virginia's adult degree programs may find useful.¹⁰

...in Virginia, George Mason University's Bachelor of Individualized Studies (BIS) program provides an example of an innovative procedure to streamline the review process for determining prior learning experience credits. By implementing the Prior Learning Activity for Credit Evaluation (PLACE) model used by Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), the BIS program has a standardized procedure for evaluation, which they then circulate for review by external partners. For lower-level coursework credit, NVCC acts as the reviewing entity, and Thomas Edison State College provides the service for upper-level courses.¹¹

...for veterans. Veterans often have unique needs as adults returning to college. The federal government has identified steps that colleges and universities can take to help ensure the success of veterans. The promising practices outlined in "8 Keys to Veterans' Success" are:

- Create a culture of trust and connectedness across the campus community to promote well-being and success for veterans.
- Ensure consistent and sustained support from campus leadership.
- Implement an early alert system to ensure all veterans receive academic, career and financial advice before challenges become overwhelming.
- Coordinate and centralize campus efforts for all veterans, together with the creation of a designated space for them.
- Collaborate with local communities and organizations, including government agencies, to align and coordinate various services for veterans.
- Utilize a uniform set of data tools to collect and track information on veterans, including demographics, retention, and degree completion.
- Provide comprehensive professional development for faculty and staff on issues and challenges unique to veterans.
- Develop systems that ensure sustainability of effective practices for veterans.

¹⁰ http://www.portal.state.pa.us/portal/server.pt/community/prior_learning_assessment/13463

¹¹ Whitney Bonham, Patrick O'Brien, Sarah Lyon-Hill, Gulshan Motwani, Assessment of Opportunities and Models for Adults to Complete the Baccalaureate Degree at Virginia Four- Year Institutions, Virginia Tech Office of Economic Development, for the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, March 2012:

<http://www.cvent.com/events/8-keys-to-veteran-s-success/event-summary-9d85142eae7e422786691f9a4e0f3c50.aspx?RefID=8%20Keys%20to%20Success>

Possible measure and target:

Virginia will establish a funding model that assures institutions of adequate, dependable support and students of affordable enrollment options that equal those of surrounding states.

STRATEGY 3.1. IDENTIFY AND IMPLEMENT A SUSTAINABLE FUNDING MODEL

An important priority is developing a public funding model that provides adequate resources to the colleges and universities and is predictable. The success of the strategic plan will depend upon this foundation. As public support for higher education in Virginia has declined, student costs have increased. Improving access and increasing the number of degrees and certificates cannot be accomplished if public funding continues to deteriorate.

The current financial support for higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia is deficient:

- State appropriations from the general fund have declined on a per FTE student basis by \$3,600 in real dollars since 2001, and there is a \$1.3 billion gap between actual funding and the amount recommended by budget formula. Achieving the goals and incentives specified in TJ21 is not possible if this funding gap continues.
- General fund appropriations are unpredictable. Late legislative appropriation decisions require colleges and universities to realign and often reduce funding after they have made commitments to students and staff. Public institutions should be able to depend on the combination of General Fund dollars and tuition to plan and execute their programs. The current appropriation process damages the ability of institutions to deliver the education promised.
- Funding for needs-based aid is inadequate and unevenly distributed among the institutions, exacerbating the inadequacy and unsustainability of the funding model in the face of rising unaffordability for students, especially those of lower income.

Suggested Initiative: *Commit to funding the incentive system to enhance achievement of state goals.*

Measure: *Within the year, Virginia will have an active planning committee in place that represents state and institutional interests to review the current incentive funding plan to identify improvements and required resources that will meet Virginia's needs.*

Two related policies can overcome current deficiencies; improvements in the current form of incentive funding for institutions and, as indicated earlier, needs-based student aid that is awarded with consideration for tuition, federal grants and family ability to pay. Public colleges and universities in Virginia should provide explicit evidence that they are meeting state needs in the most efficient way possible. In return, the institutions should be assured that they will receive the agreed-upon state support. That has not happened in the current plan. Changes in funding policies should ensure that state priorities continue to be met and institutions do not face unmanageable shortfalls or impossibly complicated requirements.

Ideas to Consider

Principles for implementing an incentive-based funding system:

- Gain the support and involvement of key stakeholders early on in the process.
- Ensure that enough money is apportioned for performance to create incentives that are sufficiently strong to change institutional behavior.
- Develop different funding formulas for community colleges and universities, or use the same formula but weight it differently depending on the type of institution and characteristics of the student population.
- Integrate all metrics and provisions into the state higher education funding formula with constitutional protection, as this makes it more durable when Virginia faces budget cuts.
- Use indicators that measure both progress (course completion, momentum, credit attainment) and completion (degrees conferred, program completion), with an emphasis on progress.
- Incorporate stop-loss provisions that prevent institutions from losing more than a certain level of funding each year.
- Implement a year of learning during the first year that the policy is in effect, a period in which state spending does not change but colleges receive reports detailing how their funding would have been impacted under the new measures, and/or gradually phase in over a multiyear period the percentage of total funding allocated based on performance.
- Subject the system to frequent evaluation and make adjustments where needed.¹²

STRATEGY 3.2. LEAD INSTITUTIONAL INNOVATION AND PRODUCTIVITY IN ALL INSTITUTIONS

Possible measures: 1) Administrative and operating costs per FTE, and 2) percent of dropped and failed classes by first-year students

Target: 1) Reduced within three years, and 2) declines each year

Institutions should take the lead in productivity and cost realignment activities. The state can provide incentives, but those require additional funding, and the recent reductions in state support have prevented implementation of existing incentives. Productivity and program/cost realignment will need to be a key element of the 'grand bargain' to create a sustained, dependable level of institutional funding.

In addition to the pressure to improve productivity and performance, institutions are addressing the necessity to realign their distribution of resources. The cost of learning, academic support, administration and campus amenities (auxiliaries plus bonded debt) have attracted substantial attention in Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) reports and from other sources:

¹² Kysie Miao, "A Detailed Look at Best Practices in 6 States," Center for American Progress, August 2012

- Expenditures for administrative support have grown relative to expenditures for learning.
- Growth in some categories of administrative expenditures (student services, research, administration) has been driven by regulations and mandates.
- Auxiliaries (athletics, food services, residential life) have become a larger part of the enterprise.
- Institutional development and fund raising have grown in size and importance; these expenditures are critical to raising funds used to support instruction and functions relating to economic prosperity.
- Research (administration and commercialization, plus research facilities) have become a greater part of many universities' enterprises.

Suggested Initiative: *Each public college and university in the state will establish an internal committee to review strategies for improving operational efficiency.*

Measure: *Administrative and operating costs of colleges and universities should decline by three percent per FTE within three years.*

Each institution is unique in its operating culture, and two-year colleges, research universities and comprehensive colleges have a different mix of functions and programs that they support, so efforts to improve efficiency and productivity will be best addressed by each institution in light of their mission and circumstances.

College leaders suggest that external requests, requirements and regulations from accrediting agencies and government agencies impede institutional efficiency. SCHEV should review state regulations and requests for data or reports to make sure they are useful for decisions, or assure appropriate operations and functions. Those that do not fulfill a need should be jettisoned.

Increases in auxiliary enterprises such as athletics, food service and residence halls represent the necessity to attract students in a competitive market; dedicated revenue generally pays these costs, but the fees may add to the price of education to the student. The issue going forward is the fundamental question raised in the JLARC Reports: should institutions systematically revisit their cost structures and the growth of non-instructional expenditures?

The long-term reductions in state support have changed the conversation from making short-term cuts in spending that are relatively easy, but have long-term implications if they are not reversed, to the consideration that the reduced state support is a new standard that will require deep organizational changes. Institutional leaders face critical questions as to what are their priorities, and how do they rethink the balance between instructional costs and academic support and administration expenditures. Institutions face the possibility of taking steps such as reducing enrollment or cutting expensive programs in order to operate within their financial parameters. These conversations should frame the nature of the initiatives necessary to achieve Goal 3.0.

EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY

If institutions are to receive sustainable funding, a necessary quid pro quo is that they demonstrate a commitment to productivity and efficiency. The University of Maryland System has successfully utilized a continuing productivity program to mitigate state funding cuts. The state rewarded Maryland

institutions for increasing productivity and reducing costs. Many of Virginia's public universities and community colleges have productivity and efficiency initiatives. The College of William and Mary provides a good example of internal efforts to reduce costs.

Efficiency and productivity are related, but different, concepts. Improving productivity requires a college or university to graduate more students at the same or better level of preparation without spending more money. Improving efficiency means that a college could save money in one function but increase funding in another, and not necessarily increase productivity.

Colleges and universities are decentralized entities that often make decisions without regard for operations in other parts of the institution. Every college and university should take time to review operations to find ways to reduce unnecessary costs. Each college will find different ways to improve operations through a series of audits, reviews and process improvement endeavors.

Opportunities for increased efficiencies and cost savings in institutions of higher education include procurement, administration, facilities and academic support. Common symptoms of inefficiency in support operations include complexity, fragmentation, redundancy, lack of standardization, lack of automation and unneeded hierarchy. Underlying drivers of high cost include lack of alignment across units around priorities, lack of trust in central services, lack of accountability, misaligned incentives, and a strong sense of autonomy within organizational units. Actions to reduce costs include consolidating operations, improving processes, strengthening controls and revising governance and performance management. Institutions should initiate this process of improving efficiency and be held accountable for instituting the process.

SCHEV should help find ways that groups of colleges can share resources to save money. Sharing goes beyond shared purchasing and cooperative libraries and should include the option for students to cross-enroll in other local colleges to increase course choices and enrich their educational experience.

Increasing administrative efficiency will help colleges and universities save money, but the most important measure for colleges and universities is their productivity. It is the job of colleges and universities to provide students with the skills they need to succeed in the world. They should be rewarded for doing this well.

Improving productivity requires a college or university to graduate more students at the same or higher level of quality, but spend less or the same amount of money to produce a graduate. It is possible to achieve this with technology. Technology by itself, however, does not necessarily improve outcomes. It is necessary to redesign courses using proven techniques.

Suggested Initiative: *Establish a state instructional improvement initiative to identify systematic improvements to increase success in high-enrollment introductory classes with low completion rates.*

Measure: *Reduction in the percent of dropped and failed classes by first-year students.*

What's Working?

The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) is an example of a course redesign process based on tested pedagogical techniques (active learning, online tutorials, continuous assessment and feedback and on-demand support) that lead to increased student completion and higher levels of learning. The approach also includes cost reduction techniques (online tutorials, automated assessment, course management systems, shared resources and staffing substitutions).

Among other colleges and universities, Virginia Tech and NVCC have implemented the NCAT approach described in the What's Working section above. Virginia should consider this option, or something like it, for introductory classes with large enrollments and high dropout rates as a way to improve student outcomes and reduce instructional costs.

Technology is one tool that can improve productivity and efficiency across the institution; however, technologies such as broadband internet and social media can actually reduce the ties that hold the building blocks of traditional higher education together. Adoption of online education is not propelled exclusively by more effective technology, but also by stresses arising from contracting state support, which puts pressure on many public colleges to reduce costs at the same time they are experiencing more insistent demands to improve performance.

The problem is that the fast-moving promises of technology have been erratic and unpredictable in their realization. Many early higher education investments in technology did not perform as expected, yet new products continue to proliferate, each making tempting new promises. Higher education finds itself in an uncomfortable limbo where the old model is no longer tenable, but the new models remain unproven. This uncertainty can be disruptive to an institution with one group pressing for change and the other remaining rooted in tradition.

Colleges must make sure of two things in order for technologies to gain the kind of foothold that could lead to substantial improvements. First, the technologies should restructure the student experience, not just improve administrative efficiency. Second, end users must adopt and use these tools in their daily practices; merely getting a product up and running will not lead to transformative change.¹³ The human factor is typically a bigger barrier to success than software.

Virginia can take a middle ground to test new uses of technology, monitor results and modify commitments where necessary. The successful ventures can grow and the less successful can fail without excessive loss to the system. The process should have built-in safeguards to prevent over-commitment to technologies whose benefits have not been well-established.

Suggested Initiative: SCHEV will reactivate the technology advisory committee to evaluate and disseminate effective educational and administrative technology methods among colleges and universities.

Measure: The technology advisory committee will produce a catalogue of promising uses of technology in Virginia's public colleges and universities in the first year.

¹³ Community College Research Center, Evaluating Your College's Readiness for Technology Adoption, Teachers College, Columbia, July 2014

Ideas to Consider

Applications for technology include:

Learning-Focused:

- Leveraging technology to create new modes of learning that enhance learning performance and productivity
- Leveraging technology to achieve greater scale and to engage multiple institutions in cross-institutional learning endeavors

Process-Focused:

- Leveraging technology to reinvent academic, support and administrative processes, gaining efficiencies and improving performance
- Utilizing collaboration and shared services to make high-performance services available to all institutions at lower costs

Program-Focused

- Realigning program priorities and resources based on performance and demand, freeing up resources for innovation funds and other reallocations
- Realigning campus cost structures/allocations

INNOVATION IN TECHNOLOGY-SUPPORTED LEARNING

Some Virginia public higher education institutions perform above expectations in term of institutional ranking (high) compared with state investment (low), but Virginia public institutions as a group are not regarded as leaders in technology-enabled learning and widespread innovation. Individual institutions stand out, but as a whole, the Commonwealth is not an innovative leader. This should change if Virginia is to retain its reputation for excellence and assure the prosperity and vitality the citizens of the Commonwealth deserve in the 21st century.

Many of the institutional strategic plans of Virginia public institutions call for advances in online and hybrid learning, personalized learning, competence-based learning, massive open online classes (MOOCs) and other initiatives. These institution-level innovations should be promoted and

encouraged to scale, as demonstrated by Northern Virginia Community College providing online services for other Virginia community colleges. Advances and expertise in these innovations and others will be critical to achieving greater resilience, responsiveness and readiness for future disruptions as described in Strategy 3.3.

STRATEGY 3.3. ACHIEVE GREATER RESPONSIVENESS, RESILIENCE AND READINESS FOR FUTURE DISRUPTIONS

Preparing to thrive in the face of unpredictable, disruptive challenges must be part of the planning process. As difficult as the specific disruptions are to predict, it is reasonable to believe that Virginia will experience disruption over the life of this strategic plan. Planning for disruptions means that institutions must be resilient, responsive and productive.

Resilience is the ability to spring back into shape after disruption; to recover quickly from difficulties; and to demonstrate toughness. Responsiveness suggests that institutions will respond to demonstrable needs

Possible measure: Number of institutions with operational processes for developing their capacity to be responsive, resilient and ready for coming disruptions

Target: All institutions within five years

to improve performance and add value. Productivity is a measure of the effectiveness and efficiency of institutions in producing value. Successful institutions must continuously assess and improve their productivity and performance, and realign their programs, priorities and resources to support the most successful, valuable and productive programs.

Colleges and universities can help ensure their success by having adequate funding, providing value to the community from which they require support, and engaging in a continuous cycle of reassessing operations and programs to make sure they are efficient and relevant.

STRATEGY 3.4. CREATE A DIVERSE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH DISCOVERY AND CREATIVITY THRIVE

Suggested Initiative: *Each public college and university will develop and implement a plan to increase the ethnic and racial diversity of the professional staff and faculty.*

Measure: *Percent of full-time faculty teaching full-time in public colleges and universities that is Hispanic or Black should increase by three percent annually.*

Successful colleges and universities are places where discovery, creativity and human development thrive. The culture, programs and experiences of Virginia's institutions represent these values, which should be embedded in all of the Goals and Strategies in this plan.

The Virginia of tomorrow will be more diverse culturally, demographically and economically than it is today. Higher education in the state needs to prepare for that future. The student body will become more diverse through the mechanisms of birth and migration. If history is a lesson, the professional workforce in the colleges and universities will be slower to change.

Diversity is a key ingredient in this equation in several ways. First, to educate and prepare the leaders of tomorrow, Virginia's institutions should represent the diversity of the current and emerging population. Second, all institutions should provide opportunity for success to all citizens of the Commonwealth and create the skilled workforce necessary for the future of Virginia. Third, from a developmental perspective, preparation of college and university students for the complex world in which they will be living is best achieved if they are exposed to the spectrum of cultural perspectives provided by both domestic and international students and faculty. To be successful, students will need to develop their abilities to work effectively with diverse teams of people from many backgrounds and perspectives.

What's Working?

The VCCS Chancellor's Faculty Diversity Initiative (CFDI), which extends faculty recruitment efforts to applicants who have traditionally not been candidates for employment within the VCCS, is an example of efforts to increase the diversity of the part-time faculty. The goal is to build a more robust recruiting pool from which to select the best part-time faculty members.

The program is open to everyone regardless of background. The goal is to have an applicant pool that reflects the diversity of Virginia. The CFDI has two parts: the Minority Professional Teaching Fellows and the Graduate Student Teaching Fellows. The only difference between the two is who is eligible for each program and how they recruit and identify applicants.

Anyone with a master's degree is eligible to apply for the Minority Professional Teaching Fellows program. Individuals who are enrolled in a graduate degree program can apply for the Graduate Student Teaching Fellows program if they have at least 18 hours of coursework in the subject area in which they will teach. A mentor is assigned to Fellows in the Graduate Student Teaching program until they have earned a master's degree.¹⁴

Comparing the diversity of Virginia colleges and universities with the population of the Commonwealth and the diversity levels of peer institutions in comparison with their overall populations shows that Virginia has room for improvement. Diversity includes socioeconomic differences and racial and ethnic differences. Most notably, the most selective Virginia public universities lag peer institutions in neighboring states on diversity measures. While these institutions across the Commonwealth are working to improve the diversity of their student and faculty populations, progress needs to be accelerated to keep up with broader population changes in Virginia. Virginia should make efforts to attract and hold a professional staff that reflects the changing demographic realities of the state and the students in the colleges and universities.

Virginia colleges and universities should develop more strategies for developing a diverse faculty to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student body.

QUALITY AND EXCELLENCE

Excellence must be at the core of any system of education that is recognized for its value to the public. Virginia should be confident in the excellence of the postsecondary education being delivered in the Commonwealth. That confidence should be built upon a foundation of objective measures of academic quality and student learning, not just reputational rankings or meeting minimum standards for accreditation.

Suggested Initiative: Virginia should institute a systematic process for ensuring excellence in all programs offered in public colleges and universities, including benchmarks.

Measure: Each public college and university will institute an assessment/program review process that is consistent across the state.

¹⁴ <http://www.vccs.edu/careers/faculty-diversity-initiative/>

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) is one example of a national effort to provide a reliable, rational framework for ensuring academic quality, but many others are in use and development throughout the nation. Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College have each used the DQP process. Scott F. Oates, Director of Assessment and Institutional Effectiveness at VCU, described how his institution and J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College sought to align the assignments in courses frequently taken by transfer students to smooth their pathway. The DQP provided a "lingua franca" that gave the faculty members at the two institutions a "shared understanding" of what they were striving toward, he said. Adopting such a framework statewide would help empower higher education in Virginia to establish its value to its students and to its many other key stakeholders. Lumina will provide consulting help if SCHEV is interested in determining the usefulness of this approach.

What's Working?

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP), which is being developed with funding from the Lumina Foundation, is an example of how Virginia might proceed.¹⁵ DQP is a framework that helps educators describe what postsecondary degrees should mean in terms of learning outcomes. DQP defines a new direction for higher education.

The student, not the institution, is the primary reference point. The DQP describes what students should know and be able to do as they progress through increasingly higher levels of postsecondary study.

- DQP proficiencies are not statements of aspiration, but descriptions of what every graduate at a given level ought to know and be able to do.
- The DQP presents outcomes for three levels of degrees by defining increasing levels of challenge for student performance for each of the learning outcomes it includes.
- The DQP emphasizes the degree, not the field of study. The DQP provides a general profile, with the assumption that faculty responsible for fields of study and programs will provide the specific expectations for student accomplishment in their particular areas.
- The DQP's learning outcomes are written using active verbs such as "identifies," "categorizes," "prioritizes" and "evaluates" because such verbs describe what students actually do when they demonstrate proficiency through assignments such as papers, performances, projects, examinations and exhibits. Nouns such as "ability," "awareness" and "appreciation" are avoided because they do not lead to assessments of proficiency.
- The DQP is transformational in that it provides a qualitative set of important learning outcomes — not quantitative measures such as number of credits and grade point averages — as the basis for awarding degrees.

¹⁵ <http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/DQP/DQP2.0-draft.pdf>

INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM

Discovery and creativity thrive in a free and open community. The public universities and colleges in Virginia should be allowed to operate without direct political intrusion in the substance of teaching and research. This should be included in the strategic plan as a core operating principle that needs to be respected.

Suggested Initiative: *SCHEV should develop a workshop on the privileges and limits of academic freedom in public colleges and universities as part of the training for Boards of Visitors and other public decision makers.*

Measure: *SCHEV should hold at least five seminars each year that include a review of academic freedom.*

At its heart, academic freedom is the freedom of scholars to pursue the truth in a manner consistent with professional standards of inquiry. Liberal democracies protect academic freedom because the open pursuit of knowledge and truth provides substantial benefits to society, and because freedom of thought is essential to the fulfillment of human nature. In this context, freedom applies narrowly to the pursuit of truth in universities and requires adherence to fundamental principles of intellectual integrity and responsibility—obligations that are not applied in the broader community.¹⁶

STRATEGY 3.5. ENHANCE HIGHER EDUCATION LEADERSHIP, GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY AT ALL LEVELS

Suggested Initiative: *A common report tracking success toward meeting critical Commonwealth goals will help focus efforts on achieving the broader long-term mission of higher education in Virginia.*

Measure: *SCHEV will develop an annual report that tracks progress toward meeting Virginia's higher education goals.*

LEADERSHIP

Leadership in higher education takes place in a decentralized system where decision-making is spread throughout the enterprise. Leadership requires having a clear vision and communicating that message effectively so everyone knows how his or her work contributes to the mission of the institution and the state. A leader should be able to explain the mission and value of the higher education enterprise to outside audiences. Maintaining and growing support from legislators, alumni, foundations and local employers is critical to institutional success.

GOVERNANCE

SCHEV should provide all key stakeholders information that helps improve the education governance process in Virginia. The Strategic Plan can be a guide for key decision makers in Virginia to help them understand the mission for higher education in Virginia and what responsibility each participant has in realizing that mission. SCHEV should develop clear measures of progress on a regular schedule to help keep all actors aware of improvement.

¹⁶ Donald A. Downs, *Academic Freedom; What It Is, What It Isn't, and How to Tell the Difference*, John W. Pope Center for Higher Education Policy, North Carolina, 2009

ACCOUNTABILITY

Education Sector rated Virginia's higher education accountability system in 2009.¹⁷ Their assessment was largely positive, but they made some suggestions for improvement as well:

Virginia's current higher education accountability system's strengths are that it:

- Helps align state priorities with concrete goals for achievement;
- Provides a process that allows colleges and universities to align their efforts with state priorities; and
- Provides information to prospective students, parents, and the general public about the performance of state colleges and universities.

Initiative: Virginia will develop and update an accountability plan with incentives that meets the needs of Accountability in Virginia as defined by the Top Jobs Act.

Target: Confer an additional 100,000 credentials by 2025.

Virginia's higher education accountability system needs work in:

- Separating data by important socioeconomic factors (race/ethnicity, gender, first-generation status, transfer students, etc.);
- Providing consistent and meaningful incentives to institutions for achieving the goals; and
- Comparing data across time and/or against peers

Virginia has addressed some of the areas where needed work was suggested since the publication of the report. The important question that remains is what is done with results from the accountability system? Has the accountability process actually changed operations in any meaningful way? Can SCHEV provide a clear, focused set of measures against which institutional progress can be measured and make the results easily accessible to the public?

The Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011, or the "Top Jobs Act," put in place specific performance-based goals for higher education in Virginia. These objectives are consistent with the Strategic Plan and provide the basis for the current accountability system. These measures could be refined as part of the sustainable funding model described earlier in the plan.

¹⁷ <http://www.educationsector.org/publications/virginia-score-card>

What's Working?

The Top Jobs Act specifies the following goals for the state's public higher education institutions:

- Increased enrollment of Virginia students, including underrepresented populations;
- Increased degree completion for Virginia residents who have partial credit
- Increased degree completion in a timely or expedited manner
- Improved retention and graduation rates;
- Increased degree production in high-demand areas such as Science, Technology, Engineering, Math and Healthcare (STEM-H);
- Increased research, including regional and public-private collaboration;
- Year-round utilization of resources and facilities (beyond the traditional semesters and class times);
- Technology-enhanced instruction, including course redesign, online instruction and resource sharing among institutions; and
- Enhanced community college transfer programs.

GOAL 4: ADVANCE THE ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL PROSPERITY OF THE COMMONWEALTH AND ITS REGIONS

The role of higher education in advancing the economic and cultural prosperity of the Commonwealth has reached new heights. In the 21st century, virtually every citizen, every household, requires some form of postsecondary learning to thrive. Developed talent is critical to Virginia's competitive standing.

Young, ambitious and talented college graduates want to be somewhere that will take advantage of that talent and provide opportunities for interesting work and an engaging lifestyle. In the 21st century, education, training and the evolution of vibrant research and talent clusters have become increasingly important to economic vitality and prosperity. Across the world, governments and collaborations at state, national and regional levels are investing in education, training, human development and research to build and sustain these centers that focus the talent necessary for competitiveness and prosperity. Other world cities offer opportunities to the best American talent. Young college graduates may consider jobs in Sydney, London, Hong Kong or Tel Aviv. Virginia is in competition with the whole world for the best talent.

Virginia's colleges and universities have become vital centers of learning, research, commercial application and the economic/cultural/community development necessary for continuing economic success in Virginia. These institutions enrich both the communities and regions in which they are located and the Commonwealth as a whole. Over the next decade, the contributions of colleges and universities are likely to increase substantially along the following five dimensions:

- **Build a Competitive Workforce at All Levels and Regions.** Virginia postsecondary education is critical to the competitiveness of the workforce at all levels of training and education – from post-high school certificates to PhDs. To achieve competitiveness in today's global economy, virtually all members of the workforce must achieve some form of human development post-

high school and continue it throughout their lives. The Top Jobs Act articulated the necessity of producing more certificates and degrees, and its goals should be updated, pursued and extended to all regions of the Commonwealth.

- **Achieve Economic and Cultural Development for Cities and Regions.** Economic development has become an increasingly important contribution of postsecondary education to the Commonwealth. Colleges and universities are major employers in their communities, helping local agencies through community service programs, offering cultural programs, and providing educational opportunity to citizens. These community benefits are especially important in Virginia, with its dramatic differences in regional economies. Colleges and universities are a crucial resource in lifting up the rural regions of the Commonwealth.
- **Foster entrepreneurship and incubate new business ventures.** Research, the commercialization of new ideas, business incubation, and entrepreneurship have become increasingly important parts of the fabric of Virginia colleges and universities. Over the span of the five-year strategic plan, and beyond, we expect the scope and scale of these activities to expand dramatically, contributing to the discovery of the new ideas and products, business start-ups and new occupational fields that will drive Virginia’s economy in the future.
- **Nurture Research and Talent Hubs.** Across the globe, the most competitive regions are the knowledge hubs that attract creative talent and grow as centers of research, innovation and entrepreneurship. Colleges and universities are critical in the development of these hubs. For the Commonwealth to remain competitive, it must purposefully nurture its research and talent hubs. This involves collective action that targets and leverages investments and attracts partners willing to help with funding and support.
- **Support Public and Institutional Service.** Virginia colleges and universities have a long history of public service. Cooperative extension and related services have proven their worth. In recent years, public service has expanded in scope and scale. Moreover, institutions are providing substantial services to their local communities and the active engagement of students, faculty, staff and alumni in community service endeavors. Virginia’s public institutions are engaged with their communities. These public and institutional services are likely to become increasingly important over the next years as campuses “open up” and welcome greater participation from a wide variety of external partners as well as reach out to serve their communities.

Put simply, all five of these elements are instruments of vitality and prosperity that should be encouraged. Virginia should increase its capacity in all five elements if it is remain competitive and secure the continuing prosperity of the Commonwealth and its citizens.

STRATEGY 4.1. BUILD A COMPETITIVE, WELL-EDUCATED/TRAINED WORKFORCE - AT ALL LEVELS AND FOR ALL REGIONS

It is tempting to tie educational efforts to occupations in high demand in the immediate economy. In many cases, the STEM programs are

What’s Working?

Examples of investment in competitiveness:

- State University of New York Strategic Plan – organized around big ideas, including SUNY and the Entrepreneurial Century
- See the strategic plans of Maryland, State University System of Florida, Arizona State University, ConnSCU, University System of Georgia

more expensive to offer than other programs, so the state should consider these cost differentials in the funding formula. It is important to remember that specific occupational skills need to be complemented by competencies in communication, problem solving, creativity and engagement with others. Demand for specific occupations varies across Virginia. Headquarter jobs, which demand specific high-level skills such as IT, cluster in the urban areas, while all regions require teachers, nurses, accountants and technical specialists below the associate level.

Possible measures:
Performance measures based on Top Jobs Act and New Virginia Economy Workforce Initiative

Target: SCHEV will publish the results annually in a report and online

What’s Working?

Partnerships provide higher education institutions with an understanding of evolving employer and community needs that can help sustain them in times of crises. An example is the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) in California that developed the PowerPathway™ program with community colleges and public Workforce Investment Boards across the state. It started as a network of educational programs designed to enlarge the talent pool of qualified candidates for entry-level skilled craft jobs, such as utility workers or linemen. The PowerPathway™ model has expanded to include four-year universities, new job classifications, and reaching out to military veterans who are transitioning into the energy sector. The PG&E PowerPathway™ Training Network is now cultivating career pathways in four areas: clean tech vehicles, energy efficiency and renewables, engineering and the smart grid, and skilled crafts.¹⁸

The goals in TJ21 called for increasing degree production and providing incentives for institutions to increase production and align their offerings with identified areas of high demand. Virginia postsecondary education will succeed in large part because the graduates meet the requirements of employers at all levels, from certificates through doctorates. The new Strategic Plan for the Virginia Community College System provides for tripling the number of degrees and certificates awarded over the next decade. Following the completion of the Strategic Plan, new targets for certificate/degree production should be established that recalibrate the goals of the Top Jobs Act, Governor McAuliffe’s initiatives, the new VCCS plan, and this Strategic Plan.

STRATEGY 4.2. PROVIDE FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITIES AND REGIONS OF THE COMMONWEALTH

Suggested initiative: *Form regional community development planning structures that will develop and implement specific plans for each region*

Measure: *Number of institutions in a regional community development planning structure*

Target: *All institutions within five years*

As economic development has become a more active and recognized function, the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP), University-Based Economic

¹⁸ <http://www.pge.com/en/about/careers/powerpathway/about/index.page>

Development (UBED), and partnerships such as the Tobacco Commission have helped increase the economic development potential of Virginia’s colleges and universities. Economic development begins with the financial contribution of physical campuses as employers, buyers of goods, and bringing in visitors, all of which provide economic stimulus to the communities in which they are located.

Such economic development contributions are likely to grow in importance over the next five to ten years as Virginia develops the competitive positions of its metropolitan regions that are the primary economic engines for the Commonwealth, and improves the economies in the less developed regions.

STRATEGY 4.3. BECOME A MODEL OF BUSINESS INCUBATION AND CATALYZING ENTREPRENEURSHIP STRATEGY

Many campuses in Virginia have business development and incubation centers that have played an important role in the development of their regions. Over the span of the strategic plan, entrepreneurship and innovation experiences will become essential elements of many academic programs and of the co-curricular experiences of students. This is already happening on many campuses. Virginia Tech, UVA, George Mason, VCU and many community colleges currently sponsor substantial entrepreneurial activities and are streamlining their policies and practices for even greater regional and statewide collaborations.

Possible measure: Percent of students who have the opportunity to participate in experiences (curricular, co-curricular, or free range) designed to increase entrepreneurial skills and opportunities

Target: 100%

STRATEGY 4.4. DEVELOP WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH CENTERS AND TALENT HUBS

Suggested initiative: *Virginia will develop a strategic research center plan in partnership with universities, key businesses and state agencies*

Target: *Complete plan within two years.*

The research and development activities in Virginia’s public institutions are critical to the Commonwealth’s competitive position in the 21st century knowledge economy. Virginia’s level of sponsored research has grown over the past decade. Institutions such as Virginia Tech have made substantial strides in raising their standing in the research ranks. However, the growing

competitiveness for federal funding may limit the trajectory of future growth. Moreover, Virginia should accelerate the growth of research centers in its major metropolitan areas to take advantage of the existing research and talent clusters that support the competitiveness of those regions and the Commonwealth.

Virginia should consider three approaches:

- 1) Concentrate its efforts on building a few carefully chosen research centers of excellence, building on existing areas of strength;
- 2) Encourage institutions and researchers to

Initiative: *Virginia should develop a plan with private businesses to make strategic investments in research and training partnerships.*

Measure: *Virginia will institute a feasibility study to develop three academic research centers in the Commonwealth.*

- engage in collaborative efforts that build scale in key areas of expertise; and
- 3) Promote collaborations that focus research efforts in research and talent centers. For example, all the institutions with program/research presence in Northern Virginia in IT/cybersecurity could work together to achieve critical mass for the region. Moreover, Virginia should find ways to expand research opportunities and experiences for students through regional and state-level collaborations.

The basis for a strategic state/industry partnership in Virginia is the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT). The Commonwealth Research Commercialization Fund (CRCF) supports science- and technology-based research, development, and commercialization to drive economic growth in Virginia. In support of these goals, former Governor McDonnell and the General Assembly appropriated \$4.8 million to the Fund in both FY2013 and FY2014. Partners include Technology Councils, Mid-Atlantic Venture Association, Virginia Biotechnology Association, Virginia Manufacturers Association and the Virginia Technology Alliance.¹⁹

What's Working?

One example of state/industry partnership in academic research comes from California. In 2000, the governor announced four new interdisciplinary research institutes on University of California campuses, to be chosen by a competitive process and funded through a three-way partnership among government, industry, and the University. The California Institutes conduct fundamental and applied research across many disciplines to achieve the scientific breakthroughs and new technologies that will drive California's economy and improve its society. Educating future scientific leaders is part of their mandate as well, which means that students participate in all phases of research. Each institute involves two or more UC campuses, with one campus taking the lead:

- The California Institute for Telecommunications and Information Technology (Calit2), with UC San Diego as the lead campus in partnership with UC Irvine;
- The California Institute for Quantitative Biomedical Sciences (QB3), with UC San Francisco as the lead campus in partnership with UC Berkeley and UC Santa Cruz;
- The California NanoSystems Institute (CNSI), with UCLA as the lead campus in partnership with UC Santa Barbara; and
- The Center for Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society (CITRIS), with UC Berkeley as the lead campus in partnership with UC Davis, UC Merced and UC Santa Cruz.

Each Center collaborates with a wide variety of researchers, students and private companies. State government contributed \$100 million in capital support for each institute, with the requirement that the institutes raise matching funds on a two-to-one basis to the capital funds. Today, the State of California provides \$4.75 million annually in operating funds; the University provides \$5.25 million. The rest of the institutes' support comes from federal grants and industry partnerships.²⁰

¹⁹ <http://www.cit.org/initiatives/crcf/#sthash.UlfOssuS.dpuf>

²⁰ Richard C. Atkinson and Patricia A. Pelfrey, *Science and the Entrepreneurial University*, Research & Occasional Paper Series: CSHE.9.10, University of California, Berkeley, July 2010

STRATEGY 4.5. EXPAND PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

Over the next decade, Virginia’s colleges and universities will become far more “open” to public service and to collaborative activities that operate in two directions:

- Facilitate faculty, students, staff and alumni in “reaching out” to the communities in which their institutions are located; and
- Attract businesspeople, entrepreneurs, venture capitalists, social entrepreneurs and community problem solvers to campus to become part of the 21st century institution as a great vibrant community.

Possible measure and target: Every public college and university in Virginia will have a formal community service program that provides an opportunity for every student and staff member to participate.

Formal structures such as Cooperative Extension will become even more active, and can be the basis for informal and network-based activities that will engage with campus expertise and bring external knowledge to campus.

Partnerships also provide a way to serve community needs.

What’s Working?

Goodwill of Greater Washington (GGW) has collaborated with NVCC and works closely with local employers to develop in-depth programs that prepare people for jobs in specific industries, such as banking, building maintenance and environmental services, retail, and construction. In addition to formal classroom training, GGW often prepares clients for permanent jobs through a combination of supported, temporary, or transitional employment at a Goodwill facility or in the community. Completion of Goodwill training can earn students up to five credits at Northern Virginia Community College, which can be a stepping-stone to further education

CONCLUSION

Virginia’s promise should be to provide an affordable postsecondary education opportunity to every student who is motivated and qualified. The educational opportunity should be provided in the most cost-effective way possible, and be of the highest quality. The degree or certificate should prepare the student for a meaningful occupation and a fulfilling life.

In order to realize this promise, Virginia should agree to a public contract with its citizens and the institutions that serve them. The legislature and the governor should agree to provide adequate funding to support an inclusive and excellent education after high school. The institutions should commit to providing the most cost-effective and productive education process possible. The faculty and students should commit to the rigor and quality of education that will produce the skills and qualities to sustain graduates in their life after college.

The erosion of public support for higher education in Virginia has been taking place over several years. This cannot continue. Resetting the public foundation support is necessary and warranted. Ensuring

adequate state support is essential to providing an affordable education for every Virginian who is qualified, regardless of his or her income. Developing all the talent available in the Commonwealth will be necessary for the future prosperity of the state.

As part of this new contract, colleges and universities should continue to increase productivity and efficiency. Simply asking for more from the state without evidence of improvement will not breed the willingness of public decision makers to grant the request. The state should develop measures that document the claims of progress made by the institutions. Making positive works visible will be the best argument for funding.

Finding ways to help those who historically have been the least successful is the basis for a more prosperous future. Virginia already does a commendable job in providing success for those who come to college well-prepared. Closing the regional education gaps among the students from the cities, suburbs and rural areas is an important measure of success, as is affordability.

Positioning higher education in Virginia to meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond will take commitment, resources and cooperation. The effort will evolve and change over time as conditions change, but commitment to the mission and its realization should be the guiding principle through these fluctuations.

SCHEV will be the keeper of this strategic plan. Key measures of progress should guide the decisions of the Council. Measuring progress, making modifications as conditions change, and keeping the stated goals at the core of decisions will help Virginia higher education continue on a path of evolving success and achievement.

APPENDIX

Possible initiatives for Virginia higher education strategic plan

This list provides, in greater or less detail, initiatives that could be utilized to achieve the goals in the Strategic Plan. During this planning process, these could be modified, while other initiatives could be added or dropped. The final list should lead to agreement on who will be responsible for the initiatives and the appropriate measures by which to judge success.

Strategy 1.1. Affordable net price for all students and their families

- Design and implement a state needs-based aid program that assures that every student can attend a public college or university in the state at a price that does not exceed his or her ability to pay by working 20 hours a week at minimum wage
- Guarantee tuition for entering students for four years
- Provide the option to pay no tuition, but pay a percentage of future income back to the institution instead
- Provide a promise to low-income students in Virginia that the state would pay tuition in a public college or university if they meet certain conditions

Strategy 1.2. Expand outreach to K-12 and traditionally underserved communities to foster a culture of learning

- Each public college and university in the state will develop an active community outreach program with partners to help increase the enrollment numbers of students from underserved communities; measure: the Latino and African American enrollment rate out of high school will equal that of White and Asian students.
- All high schools will develop rigorous basic skills programs in math and English that align with requirements for college enrollment. The number of entering students requiring developmental education will decline.
- Appoint a state committee/working group charged with linking with outreach and mentoring programs and/or developing local outreach programs with the help of local businesses, community groups, schools and colleges
- Host summer enrichment programs for elementary school students that receive free or reduced-price school lunches
- Create STEM summer programs that offer high school students access to research and professionals to encourage interest and success in STEM fields
- Collaborate with local high schools to create programs that span high school and provide a guarantee of admission to college with financial support upon program completion
- Encourage current college and university students to tutor low-income high school students
- Offer real-world learning experiences in partnership with businesses to help students understand career options and postsecondary requirements
- Distribute content that inspires high school students to advanced academic achievement, guides them through the steps they will need to take, and highlights the resources already available nationally and in their communities

- Offer college faculty to interact with high school students
- Fund micro-scholarship programs for high school students to increase their achievement
- Offer high school students the chance to participate in college-level courses²¹

Strategy 1.3. Improve the college readiness of all students

- Create summer courses for high school students on college campuses
- Allow high school juniors to take the local community college placement test to see if they are ready for entry-level English and mathematics or need to catch up in their senior year
- Provide a report to all high schools that tracks their graduating seniors to tell them if the student enrolled in a Virginia college or university, whether they were required to take remedial classes, and whether they persisted past the first year
- Provide college counselors on high school campuses to help students understand their opportunities and responsibilities as a college student
- Build pathway partnerships among high schools, local colleges and employers to help students see the connection between their studies and employment

Strategy 1.4. Cultivate pathways for traditional, non-traditional and returning students

- Colleges should contact recent dropouts to help them reconnect with the college and continue their studies
- Provide a Veterans outreach program through veterans organizations in the state
- Colleges should provide a block enrollment option so that students can be assured that all of their classes are in the morning, afternoon or evening
- Offer hybrid programs that would allow students to spend less time on campus
- Increase options for awarding credit for competencies gained while working
- Find ways to help adults, many of whom enroll part-time, to pay their expenses
- Establish adult reconnect programs that would help returning adults freshen up their academic skills before enrolling

Strategy 2.1. Provide effective remediation, academic and student services infrastructure to improve completion

- Every college and university in the Commonwealth will improve the retention and graduation rates of low-income students by a measurable amount annually
- Create highly intensive academic boot camps
- Provide summer bridge programs for entering students
- Link developmental education with mandatory student success class
- Embed basic skills work in ongoing credit coursework
- Evaluate and refine developmental course placement standards
- Offer self-paced technology-provided course with human assistance on the side

²¹ The Executive Office of the President, Increasing College Opportunity for Low-Income Students Promising Models and a Call to Action, January 2014

- Provide funding incentives given to colleges and students for successful completion of remedial work

Strategy 2.2. Produce graduates prepared to live productive, meaningful lives

- Virginia's public colleges and universities will have developed competency measures by degree level and major within five years; colleges and universities will be able to provide an operational definition of concepts such as citizenship, critical thinking, and employability, and demonstrate how the educational programs accomplish these outcomes
- Offer workshops for faculty and academic leaders on defining and measuring competencies in different fields
- Produce a SCHEV publication on the benefits and risks of moving to competency models of education
- Evaluate trial efforts to award credits based on competency
- Require faculty members in each department to define expected competencies of graduates and provide measures that assure outsiders that graduates have achieved these competencies

Strategy 2.3. Improve timely completion rates for certificates and degrees

- Provide a guarantee that every entering student can complete an associate degree in two years or a baccalaureate degree in four years; state average graduation and transfer rates will increase measurably annually
- Encourage dual enrollment and recognition of AP credits from high school
- Encourage bridge and pathway programs from high school
- Create incentives for students enrolling in and completing 15 credits a semester
- Guarantee that all courses needed to graduate in four years will be available – utilize online learning and relationships with partner institutions to increase the diversity of offerings
- Incentives for institutions graduating low-income students and a further incentive for the number of students graduating on time
- Establish a year-round enrollment option
- Provide qualified high school students who accumulate at least 15 units prior to college enrollment free tuition for their first full-time semester in college

Strategy 2.4. Engage adult learners and veterans in degree completion and lifelong learning

- Every college will contact recent dropouts to help them reenroll and finish college; degrees and certificates awarded to adults in Virginia colleges and universities will increase measurably annually
- Provide options for sequential degrees and certificates that allow an adult to achieve a certificate that would lead to employment, but would also be part of a sequence leading to progressively higher degrees
- Build strategic partnerships with businesses and employers to help connect the classroom experience with practical outcomes
- Provide alternative funding options to make it possible for adult students to pay as they go
- Offer adult advising and counseling to help in life planning and college planning

- Improve institutional and state data collection on enrollments in credit-bearing and non-credit-bearing courses

Strategy 3.1. Identify and implement a sustainable funding model

- Commit to a funding model that assures institutions of adequate, dependable support, and students of affordable enrollment options that equal those of surrounding states
- Make funding for higher education a constitutional requirement, putting K-12 and higher education on equal footing
- Extend “rainy-day funding” to include higher education and enhance the capacity of institutions to use fund balances to dampen cutbacks (only if such fund balances could be protected)
- Assure every student with need that the state will provide adequate student aid so they can afford to attend a public college in the state
- Virginia should provide per student institutional funding amounts that match states with which it competes for employees (e.g., Maryland, North Carolina, Delaware, Tennessee)
- Assure institutions of state funding to support a tuition guarantee to every entering student
- Review existing funding incentives that have not been launched due to budget shortfalls
- Provide adequate funds to support a meaningful incentive funding model
- Allow tuition to increase even further at Virginia’s most selective institutions, giving them even greater autonomy; reduce their General Fund support commensurately and use those resources to fund needs-based aid and partially fill the funding gap

Strategy 3.2. Lead institutional innovation and productivity in all institutions

- Administrative and operating costs of colleges and universities should decline measurably per FTE within three years, at the same time that the percent of dropped and failed classes by first-year students declines by five percent annually
- Each public college and university in the state will establish an internal committee to review strategies for improving operational efficiency; administrative and operating costs of colleges and universities should decline by three percent per FTE within three years
- Establish a state instructional improvement initiative to identify systematic improvements that can be made to increase success in high-enrollment introductory classes with low success rates; the result should be a reduction in the percent of dropped and failed classes by first-year students
- SCHEV will reactivate technology advisory committee to evaluate and disseminate effective educational and administrative technology methods among colleges and universities; the technology advisory committee will produce a catalogue of promising uses of technology in Virginia’s public colleges and universities in the first year
- Virginia should reward institutions for improvements in efficiency by letting them keep the savings
- Colleges in a region should review opportunities for shared services and cross-enrollment options that would save money and increase student options
- Streamline state regulations and unfunded mandates; this should be part of the quid pro quo associated with institutions aggressively addressing productivity and cost concerns

- Expand or launch institutional programs to improve productivity, efficiency and value (set stretch goals); pursue shared services opportunities among departments and schools in academic support and administrative services
- Build resilience through a process of ongoing program reinvention and new offerings that are responsive to emerging needs
- Refine capital construction model to fit 21st century needs that include upgrades for technology and communication tools. Virginia has done a better job of providing capital funding than operating funding.; the Capital Funding Model should be recalibrated to fit 21st century needs – more research space, recognition of the impact of technology on learning and services, other design advances
- Consolidate back-office functions and specialized offerings through shared services; examples already exist in Virginia institutions

Strategy 3.3. Achieve greater responsiveness, resilience and readiness for future disruptions

- Every public college and university in Virginia will create operational processes to develop their capacity to be responsive, resilient and ready for coming disruptions
- Each college and university should have an emergency fund that is adequate to help survive in case of downturns or unexpected emergencies
- Establish an internal review team that assesses external threats and institutional strengths and weaknesses, and recommends policies or programs that would be appropriate in the face of the threats
- Establish a state incentive funding program that would help colleges and universities maximize activities that contribute to the realization of Commonwealth goals

Strategy 3.4. Create a diverse environment in which discovery and creativity thrive

- Each public college and university will develop a plan to increase the ethnic and racial diversity of the professional staff and faculty; the percent of Hispanic or Black faculty teaching full-time in public colleges and universities should increase by 3 percent annually
- Virginia should institute a systematic process for assuring excellence in all programs offered in public colleges and universities, including benchmarks; each public college and university will institute an assessment/program review process that is consistent across the state
- SCHEV should develop a workshop on the privileges and limits of academic freedom in public colleges and universities as part of the training for Boards of Visitors and other public decision makers; SCHEV should hold at least five seminars that include a review of academic freedom each year
- Increase minority enrollment to levels comparable to peer institutions in neighboring states
- Encourage participation of area minority professionals on faculty search committees
- Use minority media in recruitment campaigns
- Recruit through business and industry partnerships
- Include Hispanic and African American faculty members on interview committees
- Determine which universities have minority candidates in the pipeline by discipline and start early recruitment efforts

- Establish curriculum vitae banks
- Establish summer teaching and research opportunities to interest minority graduate students²²

Strategy 3.5. Enhance higher education leadership, governance and accountability at all levels

- Virginia will develop and update an accountability plan with incentives that meet the needs of Accountability in Virginia as defined by the Top Jobs Act
- Develop higher education emerging leadership workshops with Virginia universities and SCHEV
- Create board member workshops to help define their role as board members
- Sponsor leadership seminars with invited national and international experts on higher education

Strategy 4.1. Build a competitive, well-educated/trained workforce - at all levels and for all regions

- A common report tracking success toward meeting critical Commonwealth goals will help focus efforts on achieving the broader long-term mission of higher education in Virginia; SCHEV will develop an annual report reporting progress toward meeting Virginia's higher education goals
- All students enrolled in a Virginia public college or university will have the opportunity to participate in experiences (curricular, co-curricular, or optional) designed to increase entrepreneurial skills and opportunities
- Actively align curricula/offers with TJ21 goals/workforce needs
- Adjust completion measurements to include all postsecondary certificates and degrees, and recalibrate measures and targets to account for TJ21, Governor McAuliffe's initiatives, VCCS Strategic Plan and Virginia PSE Strategic Plan
- Monitor progress against goals and targets and refine Workforce goals, targets and incentives as needed; regularly update to reflect the impacts of new technologies and the emerging jobs of the future
- Provide adults with opportunities to work with employers, employment offices, WIBs, other job prep programs and adult education programs
- Regularly verify the availability of needs-based aid and the ability of median-income learners to complete their objectives without accumulating excessive debt

Strategy 4.2. Provide for the economic development of communities and regions of the Commonwealth

- Work with Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) and University Based Economic Development (UBED) to expand economic development impact of Virginia's colleges and universities
- Leverage community colleges, research centers and universities in the "Rural Horseshoe" to expand economic development in the communities in which they are located

Strategy 4.3. Become a Model of Business Incubation and Catalyzing Entrepreneurship Strategy

- Support campus-based business incubators and business development centers in launching ventures; these already exist in many campus/community settings

²² Tronie Rifkin, Public Community College Faculty, AACC, <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/pastprojects/Pages/publicccfaculty.aspx>

- Support the opening of campuses to greater levels of entrepreneurship, commercialization and interaction, and make efforts to streamline commercialization and venturing and eliminate impediments to such activities
- Support entrepreneurship networks and enable students across the Commonwealth to participate in entrepreneurial experiences, even at other institutions or in regional relationships

Strategy 4.4. Develop world-class research centers and talent hubs

- Virginia will institute a feasibility study to develop three academic research centers in the Commonwealth in partnership with universities, key businesses and state agencies within two years; the plan should include agreements about strategic investments in research and training partnerships
- Support the growth and development of sponsored research at Virginia universities and colleges; encourage businesses to participate in advisory councils and corporate partnerships to tap intellectual property through the institutions
- Focus on the development of university research centers of excellence and large-scale collaborations to leverage the impact of research capabilities at different Virginia institutions and other partners
- Support regional, collective action to develop and leverage the research, innovation, entrepreneurship and commercialization assets in the Commonwealth's knowledge hubs: Northern Virginia, Tidewater, Greater Richmond and Roanoke/New River Valley
- Support participation by undergraduate students in research and entrepreneurship through regional and statewide collaborations

Strategy 4.5. Expand participation and engagement in public service and institutional service to the community

- Every public college and university in Virginia will have a formal community service program that provides an opportunity for every student and staff member to participate
- Extend the work of Virginia Cooperative Extension to reach new stakeholders around new issues
- Encourage institutions to engage their communities in public and institutional service activities that mobilize the energies of faculty, students, staff and alumni