



# State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

## COMMUNICATIONS AND GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

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### **Summit Connects Higher Education, Well-Being of Graduates, and Workforce**

**RICHMOND** — A feeling of well-being regarding purpose, social life, financial circumstances, community engagement, and physical fitness—these are the elements of the Gallup-Purdue Index of Great Jobs and Great Lives. Recent college graduates surveyed for this index were asked to rate their satisfaction in each of these areas. More than half of the graduates reported a meaningful sense of purpose. However less than 11% responded that they have a feeling of well-being in all five areas. Why do these findings matter to the greater community?

Brandon Busteded, executive director of education and workforce development at Gallup, presented at yesterday's Summit on Quality & Value in Virginia's System of Higher Education. Gallup's research shows a strong correlation between these elements and how college graduates contribute to the workforce. Those with a greater feeling of well-being make fewer mistakes on the job, have lower health care costs, take fewer sick days, and contribute to lower turnover. Busteded said colleges can help create graduates with a spirit of well-being with what he calls "experiential and deep learning." Specifically, students need professors who make them excited about learning, long-term projects that take more than one semester to complete, internships where learning is applied, and meaningful involvement in carefully selected extracurricular activities.

Another major component of well-being for both graduates and the Commonwealth is robust employment. The needs and views of *employers* were also addressed at the Summit. A recently completed survey conducted by Hart Research Associates and commissioned by the Association of American Colleges and Universities as part of its Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative provides some insight. Those employers surveyed are looking for writing skills, spoken communications skills, and the ability to work in teams. "In one of our focus groups we interviewed those responsible for hiring at several engineering firms," said Debra Humphreys of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. "They all said they need good engineers, but they need engineers who can write!"

The skill that received the highest employer rating was the ability to solve problems in diverse settings. The following practices were endorsed by employers who believe these experiences encourage problem solving: internships, senior projects, writing-intensive courses, collaborative research, and study abroad. "Experiences in the classroom and outside of the

classroom need to be connected in order for students to apply what they have learned to real problems and then take that knowledge and skill into the work place,” said Humphreys.

A panel of former students who graduated from Virginia institutions between 2006 and 2014 described their experiences both on campus and in the workplace. Most said their success depended on at least one professor who got them excited about learning and encouraged them to succeed. The panel was moderated by Delegate Kirk Cox, chair of the Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee.

“What we’re hearing today is that there are many elements to preparing students for success in both work and life. Higher education can and should play a bigger part in contributing to that process,” said SCHEV Council member Gil Bland. “That’s why we need events like this Summit to bring people together and share ideas.”

The Summit was hosted by SCHEV and the Virginia Assessment Group and attended by more than 200 stakeholders from across Virginia. The summit is an initiative of the statewide strategic plan for higher education. It was intended to engage institutions, government, and the private sector in developing a unified vision that recognizes both the inherent value of higher education and its instrumental value as an engine of economic and personal prosperity.

Presentations and additional information about the Summit can be found at <http://www.schev.edu/QualitySummit.asp> and on Twitter at *#VirginiaQuality*.

SCHEV is the Commonwealth’s coordinating body for Virginia’s system of higher education. The agency provides policy guidance and budget recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly, and is a resource for information on higher education issues.

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