

**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH
DECEMBER 21, 2016
MINUTES**

Dr. Murray called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. in the SCHEV Main Conference Room, 9th Floor, James Monroe Building, Richmond, Virginia.

Committee members present: Ken Ampy, William Murray

Committee members participating by phone: Minnis E. Ridenour

Committee members absent: H. Eugene Lockhart (Mr. Lockhart had arranged to participate telephonically; however, he was unable to establish a connection.)

Council members attending by phone: Henry Light

Staff present: Peter Blake, Alan Edwards, Lynn Seuffert. Al Wilson, SCHEV counsel from the Office of the Attorney General, also was in attendance.

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Murray welcomed committee members and attendees, and he disclosed the locations of those participating by telephone. Telephonic participants introduced themselves.

REVIEW OF ENABLING LEGISLATION AND ROLE OF AD HOC COMMITTEE

At the invitation of Dr. Murray, Dr. Edwards stepped through the statutes creating the Virginia Research Investment Fund (VRIF) and the Virginia Research Investment Committee (VRIC) and assigning to Council the responsibility to establish the guidelines for proposals for VRIF funds and to administer the external-review process for VRIF proposals.

REPORT ON PROGRESS OF VIRGINIA RESEARCH INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

At the invitation of Dr. Murray, Dr. Edwards summarized the October and December meetings of VRIC. He reported that the first meeting was organizational in nature, with the citizen members being briefed on discussions the ex officio members had held informally in the summer. He indicated that discussion at the second VRIC meeting spanned three realms: (i) the statutory instructions (the “task at hand”); (ii) the alignment of the other state-funded research programs and grant competitions, and how the VRIF

fits among these opportunities; and (iii) the wider academic-research enterprise in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Blake, who as SCHEV director is assigned by statute as the chairman of the VRIC, stated that some VRIC members would prefer to begin by learning more about and discussing in more detail the wider research enterprise in the Commonwealth; they are hesitant to move forward with specifics, such as organizing principles or conceptual frameworks, until they have a wider understanding.

Mr. Blake said that, in the opinion of staff, the two tasks can be undertaken in parallel. He recommended that Council move forward with guidelines that have “plug and play” features, simultaneous with VRIC members’ expansion of their knowledge base and discussion of the scope of their purview.

REVIEW OF PROPOSED ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Dr. Murray asked whether the items in the documents were more administrative in nature and asked Ms. Seuffert to review the documents. Within the proposed organizing principles, Ms. Seuffert noted some items that are more than simply administrative in nature – items that likely will require further deliberation by VRIC. She stated that the other items either were quoted directly from the statutes or were best practices of reputable grantmakers.

Mr. Blake commented that, according to the draft timeline prepared for the VRIC, no funding would be awarded until October 2017. He noted that the timeline designates the March 2017 Council meeting as the date for staff’s recommendation of Council approval of guidelines for the VRIF award competition(s). General discussion followed.

Mr. Ridenour asked for clarification of and greater details on Council’s duties in § 23.1-3133. Mr. Blake responded by reviewing the contents of the Code section, highlighting specifically the criteria required in the guidelines, and also noting the tie to the GO Virginia initiative, as well as to job creation and the spin-off of companies. He said that the work of the ad hoc committee would include prioritization of those criteria as the committee sets the guidelines and scoring.

Dr. Murray asked whether the budget appropriation language added anything else. Mr. Blake responded that the appropriation language mirrors closely the statutes.

Mr. Ridenour stated his belief that, in its development of the guidelines, the ad hoc committee should be focused on national leadership and the attraction and retention of talent. He expressed interest in understanding better how the other funding mechanisms, such as the equipment trust fund and other state-funded research grant programs, will work together.

Mr. Wilson noted that the statute requires that the criteria take into account the funding received by the proposed project from other state funds.

NEXT STEPS

Dr. Murray suggested that, at the January 10, 2017, Council meeting, the ad hoc committee receive additional information from staff on the matters above. He requested a visual aid depicting the alignment of, and/or gaps among the various state research-grant programs, and to include the dollar amounts of each program.

Mr. Ridenour suggested that the planned one-hour committee meeting in January would not be a sufficient amount of time and requested another work session, perhaps as much as a half day, be scheduled for February.

Dr. Murray offered his opinion that the VRIF grant competitions should be iterative or additive, not duplicative of other efforts. He said VRIF awards should be talent and faculty focused.

Dr. Murray concluded the discussion of next steps with an assurance that the ad hoc committee would begin in earnest its pursuit of the path forward at its meeting on January 10, 2017.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Murray requested a motion to adjourn. Mr. Ampy moved, and Mr. Ridenour seconded, such a motion. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

William Murray
Acting Chair, SCHEV Ad Hoc Committee on
Research

Lynn Seuffert
SCHEV Associate for Research Investment