

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
Restructuring Subcommittee
March 2, 2010

Mr. Bland called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m. in the SCHEV main conference room, 101 N 14th Street, 9th floor, Richmond, Virginia.

Subcommittee members present: Gilbert Bland, G. Gilmer Minor, Katharine Webb. Susan Magill participated by phone.

Council Member in attendance: Christine Milliken participated by phone.

SCHEV Staff present: Jim Alessio, Dan Hix, Dan LaVista, Marina Moschos, Lee Ann Rung, and Diane Vermaaten.

Ling Whitworth from Longwood University was also present.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Minor and seconded by Mr. Bland and the minutes from the January 11, 2010 meeting were unanimously approved as submitted.

REVIEW OF RESTRUCTURING

As context for the discussions, Mr. Alessio reviewed the goals from state statute that were supported by the institutions' Boards of Visitors and reminded members that each institution is obligated to meet the 12 goals. The basic operational authority was reviewed.

Ms. Webb inquired about the possibility of adding language to the Code of Virginia to protect the carry-forward dollars. Dr. LaVista felt this would need to be carefully weighed before proceeding with a legislative initiative, especially given the current environment. Ms. Milliken felt a positive message should be relayed to the institutions that achieved their targets.

Actions of the 2008 Restructuring Task Force were reviewed and members were reminded that SCHEV is required (by language in the Appropriation Act) to assess the education and financial and administrative management measures related to restructuring annually. Institutions are expected to achieve agreed upon targets and standards on all performance measures.

It was agreed that in public meetings the term "certification" should be avoided since it seemed to create some confusion last year between this term and "accreditation." However, in the final recommendations to the Governor, Council will need to use the

term “certify” to indicate if institutions met or did not meet the targets/thresholds since that is the language used in the Appropriation Act.

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE MEASURES

James Madison University (JMU)

Ms. Moschos explained that JMU did not meet its goals in degrees awarded and indicated that JMU has asked for an exemption. While JMU’s 6-year graduation rate is very good, there is still room to grow in their four-year rates. JMU has asked if Council could classify the measure as achieved. While Council cannot change the results, it could certify the institution as having substantially met all standards. The following staff recommendations were reviewed: 1) no need for remedial plan; 2) no exemption; and 3) certify as substantially meeting all measures.

In meetings with institutions in 2008, it was made clear that the institutions should look to grow but should not include goals that were so aggressive that they couldn’t meet them. The Council workgroup set certain growth measures but said if they couldn’t meet the standards, institutions were to alert SCHEV staff. Most institutions, including JMU, did change their targets at that time.

JMU did not grow in the number of graduates they anticipated but the institution thinks the reason is that some students that would have taken five years to graduate ended up graduating a year earlier. It was noted that staff has no evidence to support this assumption. Staff feels JMU is on top of this issue and is watching it very closely. Because this doesn’t appear to be a trend, the staff recommendation is to certify as substantially meeting all measures. Ms. Magill felt this was a wise recommendation. Ms. Webb was interested in how our institutions rank in these measures compared to other states. What are best practices and what is reasonable? Staff informed her that each institution is different. Ms. Milliken indicated that if it turns out that the reason for JMU not meeting their target is that their students are graduating in four or five years rather than six years, this should be applauded. Staff agreed and will try to get confirmation from JMU that would demonstrate this as the reason for not meeting the target.

Longwood University

Mr. Alessio informed the subcommittee that the institution had adjusted its degree projections but there was some confusion about enrollment projections. Since it is a technical issue that slipped through the cracks and the institution has realized the problem and has already submitted an improvement plan, staff recommends that Longwood be certified as substantially meeting all measures. Subcommittee members agreed with the staff recommendation.

Richard Bland College (RBC)

Ms. Vermaaten reported that the institution did not meet the target and threshold for number of degrees awarded. The failure to achieve degrees awarded was expected as a carryover from the institution's failure to meet this measure in the 2007-08 academic year. The remedial plan to address the college's failure on this measure was approved by the Council in October 2009, well beyond the time when the target and threshold were set for the 2008-09 academic year. Staff will be working with the institution to help make better projections in the future. Average retention rates were also not met, but this was considered an anomaly. RBC's high attrition rate was due to a program in which they recruited students in need of remediation and placed them in the new residence hall. The retention rate for RBC's non-residential students was 64% which was well above the threshold of 56% and the target of 61% for this measure. RBC has since instituted GPA requirements for the newly built residence hall. The institution is following through on its remedial plan that was required by the Council last year. Staff recommends that RBC provide Council with a progress report on its current plan by August 1, 2010 and certify them as substantially meeting all measures. As requested by one of the members, staff agreed to send the College of William and Mary (CWM) a copy of the report submitted by RBC.

There was some discussion about whether or not there should be another category for institutions making substantial progress on their remedial plans that would recognize the ongoing closer examination and working relationship with SCHEV staff. In response to a suggestion made by the subcommittee chair, Mr. Alessio suggested that staff contact RBC and CWM representatives to get an interim status report on the remedial plan and bring the results back to the subcommittee. Mr. Minor suggested that the Council might consider holding the institution harmless for a year when remedial plans are required in order to allow time for implementation of the items in the remedial plans.

Virginia State University (VSU)

Mr. Alessio stated that VSU did not meet the degrees per FTE student measure and he provided an historical perspective of VSU in the process. VSU has requested that the Council certify them and that they be allowed to change the measure for the coming year. Staff provided options for recommended actions the Council could take in this regard. Staff has concerns that VSU is the only institution that failed at least one measure three years in a row. Last year when VSU indicated that a mistake had been made, Council certified them without asking for a remedial plan. Mr. Bland stated that in every case when a remedial plan was required, the results were outstanding. Mr. Alessio said that every year that this comes up the institution seems surprised at not meeting the measures. It was agreed that Council needs to take a position and some remedy is needed. It was mentioned that the new president who will take office in June, should be made aware of the Council's priority in this regard, and that remedial action should be required. It was further mentioned that the Council should assist the institution in getting back up to speed, which could be accomplished by requiring a remediation plan. Mr. Alessio suggested that the

subcommittee meet in August to review remedial plans and updates to remedial plans and perhaps sit down with the new VSU president to lay the foundation for the new administration. Staff will change the recommendation to require a remedial plan by August 1. The remedial plan should require that the institution address what actions are needed that will put them on target to meet the measures. It should also be indicated that Council is concerned that there is a systemic problem within VSU and the institution should be asked what they will do about it. It is the hope of the subcommittee that a clear depiction of internal processes could be demonstrated. SCHEV staff can provide best practices to assist them. It will be made clear that Council is trying to be fair and help them accomplish the objectives. The actions taken by VSU last year fixed the number but did nothing to address the underlying problem. It was suggested that Dr. LaVista have a discussion with the VSU president prior to inviting the president and board chair to meet with the subcommittee in August. Revised language will be reviewed with the subcommittee at the April meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

It was suggested that institutions submit a short document showing positive things being done on campuses as they participate in Restructuring that could be highlighted at the May Council meeting. Ms. Webb mentioned that this document could be shared with the legislature to demonstrate reasons to celebrate the positive outcomes that have resulted from SCHEV working with the institutions on Restructuring. Ms. Milliken felt that perhaps the public relations staff could be involved to highlight the connection between SCHEV and the institutions to demonstrate SCHEV's role in higher education.

Staff will send the revised language to subcommittee members. Mr. Bland suggested that Ms. Milliken contact Mr. Dyke for input on addressing the issue with VSU.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:45 p.m.

Gilbert Bland
Subcommittee Chair

Lee Ann Rung
Manager for Executive and Council Affairs