

**VIRGINIA RESEARCH INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
MEETING
APRIL 6, 2017
DRAFT MINUTES**

Mr. Blake (chair) called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. in the SCHEV Main Conference Room, 9th Floor, James Monroe Building, Richmond, Virginia.

Committee members present: Peter Blake, Ric Brown, Betsey Daley, Jim Dyke, Heywood Fralin, Karen Jackson, Robert Vaughn, John O. “Dubby” Wynne

Committee member absent: Charles “Wick” Moorman

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Blake reported that no requests for public comment had been received prior to the meeting in accordance with the process published in the public meeting notice. Mr. Blake called for public comment from attendees and there was none.

REVIEW OF STUDY LANGUAGE

Mr. Blake stated that the meeting was a work session, the purpose of which was to discuss the study language to ensure that everyone agreed on its meaning. He introduced Nancy Vorona and Bob Stolle, Vice President for Research Investment and Senior Vice President for Operations, respectively, at the Center for Innovative Technology (CIT).

Mr. Blake highlighted the importance of aligning the timeline of the next iteration of the Commonwealth Research and Technology Strategic Roadmap (Roadmap), currently under development at CIT, with the timeline for the study anticipated by the budget language. Mr. Blake stated his intention to ensure clarity regarding which entity is doing which activities and avoiding duplication. He stated that he is starting from the assumption that outside assistance is required to accomplish the activities in the budget language; it will not be a SCHEV staff function. No one objected. He expects that, after discussion today, staff will bring a Request for Proposals to the May 19 VRIC meeting for formal approval.

Mr. Wynne asked about the timeline for the development of the Roadmap.

Mr. Blake asked Mr. Stolle and Ms. Vorona to address the timeline and join the committee at the table.

Ms. Vorona said they are starting the Roadmap update now. She stated that CIT will issue a call for proposals for their grant competition in September, which is based on information they collect for the Roadmap. Therefore, a draft of the Roadmap would be available by then. Further refinement would occur in October and November, with a final document ready by the statutory due date of January 1, 2018.

Mr. Wynne stated his belief that coordination was essential.

Conversation followed, with committee members providing their insights regarding the information they expected to learn from the study. Suggestions regarding the study included ensuring an assessment of individual institution strengths, as well as statewide data; ensuring

the use of well-defined methodology to determine which areas of research have the most potential for commercialization; identifying best practices for commercialization of research and analyzing whether institutions are following best practices; and collection and analysis of data demonstrating whether research can be an economic driver in its own right, regardless whether there are products of that research to be commercialized.

Mr. Blake asked for comments from the audience.

Gary Sherman, Associate Vice President for Research Partnerships at Virginia Tech, said that universities across the country are having the same conversations about setting research priorities. Many have gone through extensive processes to identify areas of research in which they have strength and which they believe could bring them national attention. For example, Virginia Tech went through an 18-month process to identify 10 “destination areas” of expertise.

Ms. Daley asked whether commercializability was one of the factors that Virginia Tech used when choosing their areas. Dr. Sherman stated that it was not their primary focus.

Mr. Blake then brought members’ attention back to the study language to ensure each item had been discussed. Mr. Blake asked members for their perspective on item 4, “Define research and commercialization clusters.”

Mr. Fralin stated that VRIC needs to know in which areas universities are planning “cluster hires.” Secretary Jackson stated that “cluster” is also a term-of-art in industry and she asked whether other members wanted to develop an understanding of faculty hiring clusters or industry clusters? In general conversation, members seemed to convey that both were needed, because an industry cluster, which includes companies that support the research enterprise, would not be created in an area unless a critical mass of researchers were working in that area.

Mr. Blake stated that some work has already been done regarding item 5, efforts in other states. He asked whether members thought a 50-state assessment would be useful?

Mr. Wynne stated that other states have different funding commitments. If another state is investing significantly more funding, VRIC will not be able to decide to do what that state is doing.

DISCUSSION OF DRAFT RFP

Mr. Blake stated that the discussion of the draft RFP should focus on the organization of it, rather than the content, because the discussion today will be incorporated into the content of the document. Moving quickly over the standard sections that are required when issuing an RFP from a state agency, Mr. Blake directed members’ attention to the core of the document, which is the anticipated engagement near the end.

Mr. Wynne suggested that staff talk to consultants who are working on these kinds of assessments to get their input before issuing the RFP.

Mr. Blake asked members to suggest names of potential consultants.

Secretary Brown suggested issuing a formal Request for Information first, then incorporating the information gathered from the responses to that into the RFP.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Blake adjourned the meeting at 10:55 a.m.

Peter Blake
Chair, Virginia Research Investment Committee

Lynn Seuffert
Associate for Research Investment