Discussion of Reforms to the SCHEV Program Approval and Productivity Policies

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Initiative Purpose

- Enhance "nimbleness" in bringing new degree programs to Council for decision

- Lower threshold for approval of new degree programs

- Raise threshold for post-approval evaluation of degree program outcomes (program productivity).

Council Duties, a Reminder

Code of Virginia § 23.1-203

5. Review and approve or disapprove all new undergraduate or graduate academic programs that any public institution of higher education proposes.

6. Review and require the discontinuance of any undergraduate or graduate academic program that is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is (i) nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program, the program's effectiveness, and budgetary considerations or (ii) supported by state funds and unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education.

Proposed Program Approval Reforms

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER
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Proposed Program Approval Reforms 1

1. Eliminate (or modify?) Program Announcement stage.
- o Rationale: one less stage of process to fulfill; institutions would not have to address objections.

2. Reduce "back and forth" resulting from SCHEV staff evaluation. Provide feedback to institutions once only—proposals would go on Council agenda after any revisions.
- o Rationale: save time and effort; greater predictability about when new degree programs will go to Council.

Proposed Program Approval Reforms 2

3. Streamline information presented to Council—shift from summarizing proposals to verifying specified objective data.

- Verify consistency among degree designation, degree name, curriculum, CIP code, and employment skills.
- Verification of select data from a specialized Virginia Office of Education Economics (VOEE) report:
  - aligned occupations and five-year projections
  - current degree production in Virginia degree programs aligned with those occupations
  - degree production difference made by the proposed degree program
  - wage data for existing CIP-identical degree programs at the same level
- Verify attestations, including: information presented to Boards of Visitors; state funding requested (or not).

  - Rationale: process of bringing proposed degree programs to Council will be simplified and shortened; use of VOEE report could reduce effort in writing proposals.

Proposed Program Approval Reforms 3

4. Bring doctoral degree programs to Council to decide whether they can go to external review.

- o Rationale: process leading to final action on doctoral degree programs would be shortened.

5. Submissions made electronically via modified forms/templates; full proposals posted publicly.

- o Rationale: streamline process by moving to one method of submission of documentation to SCHEV; public availability of proposals will improve transparency.

Proposed Program Productivity Reforms

Proposed Program Productivity Reforms 1

1. *Modify the program productivity policy to include annual review of new degree programs at specified intervals.*

- Rationale: new degree programs would be subject to a timelier post-approval review.

Proposed Program Productivity Reforms 2

2. Modify the program productivity policy to include measurable outcomes in addition to student enrollment and degree production.

➢ VOEE data points—identical or similar to data used to justify <u>establishing</u> new degree programs.
➢ Program-specific performance metrics, e.g., retention/persistence and satisfaction of student enrollment projections.
➢ Program-specific outcomes, e.g., tracking graduates' employment outcomes.

   o Rationale: productivity criteria would be better aligned with criteria used to justify approval of the degree program; incorporation of performance metrics and employment outcomes would make the productivity review better aligned with Council priorities.

Timeline

- March (or May 2025)—Council adopts policy reforms for new degree programs.

- July 2025—Council adopts policy reforms for program productivity by July 2025.