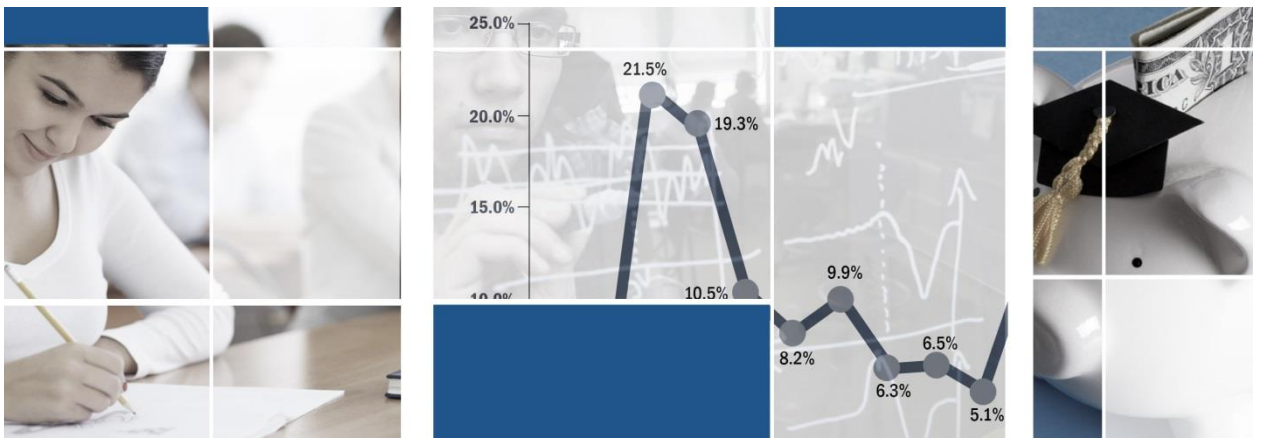


April 30, 2019



## **The Cost of Doing Nothing: An Urgent Call to Increase Educational Attainment in the Commonwealth**



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

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April 30, 2019

### An open letter to Virginians

Virginia faces a daunting challenge if it is to become the best-educated state in the nation by 2030, the Council's overriding goal. All the evidence says that we must improve educational outcomes for all students in order to achieve our goal. Persistent gaps in educational attainment threaten both our goal attainment and our status as a great place to live and work and our ability to meet our future workforce needs.

In October 2018, we embarked on an ambitious assessment of our current status. We involved some of the best minds in the state to help us understand the depth and causes of the gaps in educational attainment. No surprisingly, the gaps begin as early as childhood and often get worse through the educational system. Our higher education institutions contribute as well, through who they enroll and how they enable students to navigate the system.

The ad hoc committee on educational attainment, led by Council member Bill Murray, produced an initial report in January 2019. We gathered additional input from Council members, college and university presidents and other partners.

We are pleased to present the final report. It includes nine findings and action items. It is not an exhaustive list of action items. Rather, it focuses on items that are most actionable and urgent. We look forward to engaging the broader community to identify other strategies. The need is greater than any one person or entity can manage. A positive future of the Commonwealth of Virginia depends upon correcting the shortcomings defined in this report.

In the meantime, please let us know what you think and how you can help. As we suggest in the report name, the cost of doing nothing is not a price we should be willing to pay.

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Heywood Fralin, Chair

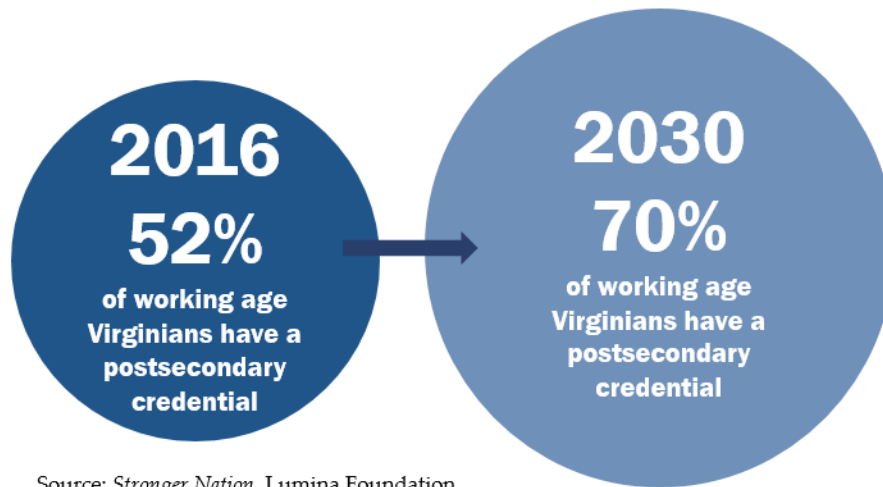
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Peter Blake, Director

## INTRODUCTION

*The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* articulates the objective that the Commonwealth will be the best-educated state by 2030. To achieve this objective, Virginia not only must increase educational attainment rates, but also must close the gaps in the differing rates of attainment that exist across its population and its regions.

### Place the Commonwealth as the best-educated state by 2030



Source: *Stronger Nation*, Lumina Foundation

For these higher levels of attainment to be meaningful, Virginia also must address problems in its talent pipeline. These problems relate to the growing out-migration of educated residents, the slowing in-migration of educated non-Virginians, the changing needs for talent in Virginia business and industry, and the increased value, especially in some areas of the state, of sub-associate-degree workforce credentials.

Within this context, in fall 2018 the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) formed an ad hoc committee<sup>1</sup> to consider ways to improve educational outcomes across the state. Already committed to the goals of *The Virginia Plan*, the Council was moved to focus intensely and expeditiously on educational attainment by the convergence of three developments: remarks from former Governor Gerald Baliles; receipt of the “Moving Rural Virginia Forward” report; and remarks from Speaker of the House of Delegates Kirk Cox.

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<sup>1</sup> This report is a summary of the ad hoc committee’s considerations, findings and proposed actions. See pages 12 and 13 of the Appendix for additional information on the committee and pages 14-22 for resources and experts utilized in its work.

In his address to the September 2018 joint meeting of SCHEV and the Council of Presidents, Governor Baliles asserted that one can “trace a line between the well-being of higher education and the well-being of Virginia.”

Regarding Virginians who are “down on their luck,” especially those in the Rural Horseshoe, he concluded that, “Education is the key to their future; for in today’s world, education and training must precede economic growth, not the other way around.”

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**“... in today’s world, education and training must precede economic growth, not the other way around.”**

**– Former Governor Gerald Baliles**

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He concluded, “Failing some concerted effort at intervention – where we face up to ... reality and do something big – the situation probably gets worse and will continue to vex Virginia’s overall future.”

Speaker Cox echoed and built upon these sentiments in his address to the SCHEV Council in October 2018, saying that Virginia has “never needed our higher ed system more than we do now ... because it is the key to the talent pipeline, and the talent pipeline is the key to our future.”

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**Higher education “is the key to the talent pipeline, and the talent pipeline is the key to our future.”**

**– Speaker of the House Kirk Cox**

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“There simply is no more important work we can do in this Commonwealth than developing our talent pipeline, ensuring that every Virginian has affordable access to it and producing measurable results for the people of Virginia.”

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

Achieving education beyond high school supports the prosperity of Virginia, its citizens and its regions. As illustrated by the eloquent calls to action of Governor Baliles and Speaker Cox, and by the recommendations offered by the public institutions of higher education in the “Moving Rural Virginia Forward” report, an educated population and well-trained workforce increase economic competitiveness, improve the lives of individuals and support greater community engagement.

Postsecondary education and training have never been more important. According to the Georgetown Center on Education and Workforce, 99% of the jobs (11.5 million) created since the Great Recession required workers with more than a high school diploma. Only 80,000 jobs required a high school diploma or less.

In addition to needing a postsecondary credential to meet current job demands, individuals with an associate degree or greater are 38% more likely to have employer-sponsored health care than those with a high school diploma. Communities and regions also prosper from higher levels of postsecondary education.

Individuals with higher levels of postsecondary education are more likely to vote in an election and to volunteer in their community. They also provide a greater net benefit to taxpayers through increased tax revenues and reduced government expenditures via income support and other services.

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**99% of the jobs created since the Great Recession required workers with more than a high school diploma.**

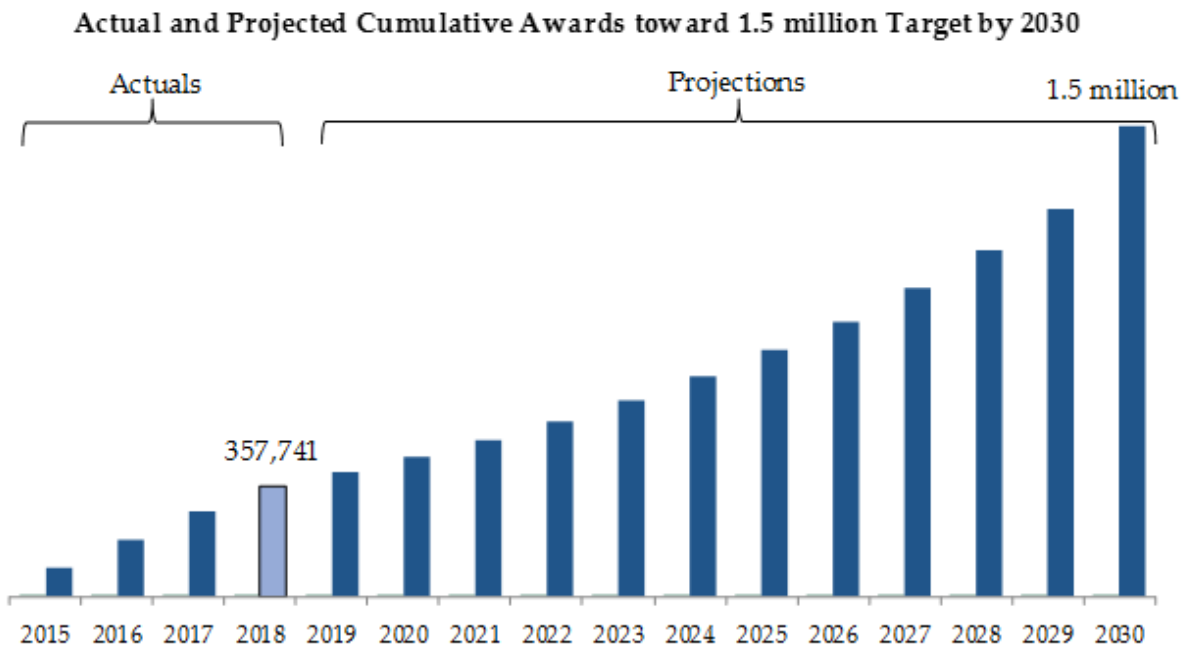
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For these reasons, SCHEV set as the objective of *The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* that the Commonwealth would become the best-educated state by the year 2030. Given current national trends, this objective will necessitate that 70% of Virginia's working-age population hold a postsecondary credential – at least 60% with an associate degree or higher and at least 10% with a workforce credential.

SCHEV estimates that an attainment ratio of 70% will require an additional 1.5 million credentials between 2015 and 2030. As of the most recent data, SCHEV staff projects that the Commonwealth will meet this target.<sup>2</sup> **But warning signs are flashing.**

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<sup>2</sup> In the 2017-18 academic year, Virginia's public and private nonprofit institutions issued 89,529 undergraduate degrees, certificates and workforce credentials. With graduate degrees and certificates included, the year's total awards were 120,056. Given these and prior totals, and based on institutions' degree estimates, SCHEV staff projects that Virginia will meet the target of 1.5 million awards by 2030. Note that the 2014 premises on which staff based the projection of the award numbers may require updates to some underlying assumptions, such as those regarding migration patterns, awards per individual and workforce credential data.



## THE CHALLENGES OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

At face value, Virginia does not appear to have an attainment problem. The Commonwealth’s current rate of educational attainment for residents aged 25-64 is 52.2%, which ranks sixth nationally and has improved over the past decade. However, this overall rate masks significant differences and gaps across and within the state.

Although Virginia’s rate is above the 46.9% national average, if Northern Virginia is removed, then the remainder of the Commonwealth would fall below the national average (only 44.9%). Moreover, in the state’s Rural Horseshoe region, the rate is only 37.8%, which is similar to the poorest-performing states. While similar disparities exist in most every state, the difference between the rates of educational attainment in Virginia’s highest-performing and poorest-performing localities is the widest gap in the nation.

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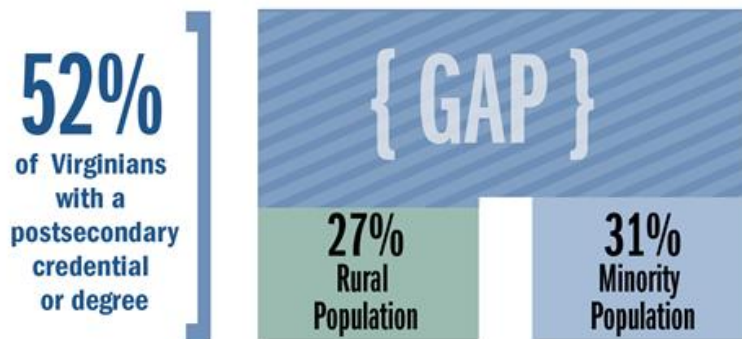
**The difference between the rates of educational attainment in Virginia’s highest-performing and poorest-performing localities is the widest gap in the nation.**

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A variety of factors contributes to these gaps and differences. One major factor is economics. Lower-income areas of the Commonwealth – regardless of geography – possess lower rates of educational attainment; and likewise, residents from low-income

families are much less likely to attend, persist and complete postsecondary education or training. Low-income students in Virginia graduate college at rates 20 percentage points below high-income students and 12 percentage points below middle-income students.

Another major factor is demographics. While over 52% of all Virginians possess a postsecondary credential or degree, in our minority (non-Asian) population, the rate is 31% – a gap of 21 percentage points. In our most rural populations, the rate is only 27% – a 25 percentage-point gap. On average, completion rates among our underserved populations are 7 to 10 percentage points below those of traditional students. Some projections predict that by 2040 Virginia's demographic profile will have shifted significantly, with 10% more residents identifying as minorities. Even today, 58% of Virginia high school graduates who attend college are economically disadvantaged.



Additional factors include enrollment declines (especially in the community colleges), out-migration of educated Virginians,<sup>3</sup> resource constraints, the absence in some areas of a college-going tradition and an overall level of satisfaction with the status quo that leads to inertia and complacency.

Without meaningful change, Virginia will not become the best-educated state by 2030 (or any other year). Given current trends, policies and lack of action, some have proclaimed, astutely, “We can’t get there from here.” This is an unacceptable outcome.

## EXISTING ACTIVITIES RELATED TO EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The Council and its staff and partners are involved in initiatives directly related to educational attainment and its relationship to state and regional prosperity.

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<sup>3</sup> In each of the past four years, more college graduates have moved out of the Commonwealth than have moved in. Virginia seeks to export many things; our college graduates should not be among them.

- **The Virginia Plan for Higher Education:** SCHEV recently published and submitted to the Governor and the General Assembly an annual report on *The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*, including a set of recommendations related to the Council's long-standing goals and initiatives.
- **Transfer Improvements:** "Transfer Virginia" is a high-level collaboration among all Virginia higher education institutions, with support from the Aspen Institute, HCM Strategists and Sova. The initiative is designed to improve the efficiency of the transfer system, thereby leading to higher levels of educational attainment.
- **Strategic Finance Plan:** The SCHEV strategic finance plan, in coordination with staff leadership from the Governor and the General Assembly, is designed to align state funding formulas with goals included in *The Virginia Plan*, many of which are focused on educational attainment.
- **Access Initiatives:** In an effort to increase student college enrollment and success and to transform the lives of low-income families and their communities, the federally funded GEAR UP Virginia program began offering college preparatory services and skills development to a cohort of seventh-grade students at 28 middle schools in 15 school districts beginning in 2014-15. As many as 4,500 students will receive support through their first year of college, following high school graduation in 2020.
- **International Participation in Study of Labor Market Outcomes:** SCHEV recently was selected as one of four states to participate in a study with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, a Paris-based research organization. The purpose of the project is to conduct a review of the higher education systems in four states to answer this question: What can states do to ensure that graduates develop the skills they need for good labor market outcomes?
- **Colleges Access Network:** The Virginia College Access Network is a nonprofit organization with a mission to support and enhance post-high school education for Virginians. It supports state and local college access programs and fosters new initiatives, develops information and financial resources for students and families and promotes the benefits of greater access to post-high school education.



- **Internship Pilot:** The Governor and the General Assembly directed SCHEV to award competitive grants to institutions and businesses to establish an internship pilot program, with a focus on a connection to employment and reducing student loan debt.
- **Rural Virginia Study:** The University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University partnered to produce “Moving Rural Virginia Forward,” a report on the revitalization of rural Virginia. It includes both near-term opportunities as well as those that will require further research and analysis.
- **High School Graduation Requirement Changes:** The Virginia Board of Education recently approved the Profile of a Virginia Graduate, which describes the knowledge, skills, experiences and attributes that students must attain to be successful in college and/or the workforce and to be “life ready.” (See <http://doe.virginia.gov/instruction/graduation/profile-grad/index.shtml>.)

Also, legislative and budgetary actions taken by the 2019 General Assembly and the Governor will contribute positively to educational attainment. These efforts include initiatives in early-childhood and Pre-K-12 education, broadband deployment, need-based financial aid, tuition-moderation funds and a new Tech Talent Investment Fund.

## **OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT**

From the outset, the ad hoc committee on educational attainment was mindful of the roles of the Council and of SCHEV as an agency; and as a result, members and staff focused on matters within our scope. Although discussions expanded into secondary education, economic development and various other topics, the findings and potential actions described below are higher education-centric and involve topics connected to Council's statutory duties and responsibilities.

The committee structured its activities – especially its conversations with external experts – to work toward proposals that were: (a) new and bold; (b) actionable; and (c) supplementary/complementary to existing initiatives. (See above.)

With this guidance, the ad hoc committee reviewed a list of over 60 recommendations (see the “parking lot” list on pages 16-21 of the Appendix) and identified a set of key opportunities and major themes. Outlined below are nine major findings that each posits a need and a broad action (each involving sets of detailed recommendations not described here).

**Finding #1: We need healthy development in young children.**

Action: Advocate for improved professional development for providers of early childhood education.

**Finding #2: We need recovery of past “failures” of attainment.**

Action: Initiate a full-court press to assist those residents who have some college credits to complete their degree or credential.

**Finding #3: We need alignment of funding formulas and programs.**

Action: Align higher education funding, including financial aid, with greater access and student success, especially for first-generation students and students from low-income communities.

**Finding #4: We need support services for potential and enrolled students.**

Action: Expand and enhance outreach, advising, counseling, mentoring, work-based learning, career planning and credit transfer, especially for those at most risk of non-enrollment, non-persistence and non-completion.

**Finding #5: We need investment in public institutions that serve individuals who might not ordinarily pursue education beyond high school.**

Action: Drive additional state funding to those public institutions that meet a set of criteria such that they can lower tuition, enhance student services and provide financial aid.

**Finding #6: We need alignment of Pre-K-12 and postsecondary education, economic development and employment sectors.**

Action: Ensure opportunity for all students at all levels to be ready for what comes next, by aligning program offerings with business needs and supporting innovations to recruit and retain students and talent.

**Finding #7: We need fresh leadership for specific high-impact issues affecting attainment.**

Action: Challenge the Council of Presidents to be key players on a small list of

top issues (e.g., early childhood, addiction crisis, entrepreneurship, rural broadband deployment).

**Finding #8: We need a vehicle for ongoing dialogue and action related to educational attainment.**

Action: Launch a “center for education attainment,” either as a new entity or part of an existing entity, to facilitate regular and meaningful conversation, monitoring, research, data analysis, goal setting, reporting, convening and advocacy.

**Finding #9: We need stable and sustainable public funding, especially funding dedicated to keeping college accessible and affordable.**

Action: Establish reserve funds and pursue dedicated funding from potential new sources, such as future multi-state settlements.

**CONSEQUENCES OF A LACK OF URGENCY OR A FAILURE TO ACT**

The nine statements of need identified above derive from irrefutable evidence. If the Commonwealth commits to the nine associated actions and moves promptly to support these steps with resources over a sustained period, then our next generation will become the best-educated workforce in the nation and perhaps the world. If we dawdle or do nothing, the consequences – as Governor Baliles and Speaker Cox forewarned – will be dire.

Consider that in Virginia today:

- Although language, cognition and social-emotional development by age four have significant influence on future achievement or failure, many Virginians are not adequately prepared for further development by this age and never catch up. Research shows that nothing is more important than a highly qualified provider of early childhood education. Research also shows that continued high-quality learning experiences throughout the Pre-K-12 years is critical to success. Without them, the early success will be lost, increasing the likelihood of future negative outcomes for the individual and society.
- Nearly 650,000 Virginians have earned some college credit but do not have a degree or workforce certificate to show for it. As former Virginia Supreme Court

Judge John Thomas lamented in January 2019 to the SCHEV Council, "All they got was a transcript." Of those, about 130,000 have more than 30 credits and earn less than \$44,000. Unless and until these individuals complete a credential of value, few will have the earnings potential of college graduates. We either can mount a campaign to get more of them back in the game, where they will become better positioned to contribute more to our communities, economies and tax base, or we can leave them behind and suffer as a state.

- Although people in every community, school and institution across Virginia say that student support services in Pre-K-12 and higher education are critical to success, student-to-counselor ratios across the Commonwealth's secondary and postsecondary educational systems are deplorable. Students – especially those in Pre-K-12 who are at risk of not attending college and those in college at risk of not graduating – are in need of more outreach, counseling, mentoring and career planning. Again, evidence supports that such interventions have positive impacts for individuals and society.
- Some of our colleges, by mission and location, serve students who have limited experience and/or resources to attend college. As a result, many of these students drop out. Although we could dismiss such outcomes as, "Life happens," the reality – as Reynolds Community College president Paula Pando recently advised the Council – is that, "Life happens a lot more often to broke folks." Virginia could and should be an example for the nation by providing additional public funds to colleges and universities that enroll a disproportionate number of students who fall into underserved categories.
- Although the idea of making institutions' tuition increases smaller and more predictable seems to have widespread support, absent a more stable and sustainable funding commitment from the state, the institutions might hedge against future shortfalls in funding by charging even higher tuition. Year-to-year increases in tuition and fees can be a shock to students who already are enrolled and committed to an institution; such increases also can price qualified, lower-income students out of college altogether. Unless and until both funding at the institution level and cost at the student level are more predictable, no one at any level will be able to plan or have confidence about the future.

## CONCLUSIONS

To meet Virginia's current and future needs, and to ensure its economic and cultural prosperity, more and better educational attainment will be necessary. However, improved attainment alone will be insufficient. Likewise, keeping more college graduates in Virginia will be necessary; but alone, it too will be insufficient. The Commonwealth's economic and cultural prosperity will benefit most from both educating more Virginians and keeping them (and the talents they have developed) in Virginia, thereby leading to more engaged citizens and more high-paying jobs.

Two major announcements in the Commonwealth have demonstrated this important connection between higher education and economic development. The decisions by major corporations, such as Rolls-Royce and Amazon, to expand or locate operations in Virginia depended on the advanced levels of education and training available at our colleges and universities. The implications are undeniable: the better the Commonwealth educates its workforce and retains that pool of talent, then the better the economic return on its investment will be.

Standing by and expecting any material gains is a dead end. If we aspire to be the best state for business, to be the best-educated state in the nation and to ensure opportunity for *all* Virginians, then we must act with urgency to address the nine findings offered in this report. If we fail to take any new action, then we will have chosen by default the option that will prove most costly in the long run for the Commonwealth and her citizens.

## APPENDIX

### Council Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Attainment

Created: October 30, 2018

Members: Bill Murray (chair), Marge Connelly, Victoria Harker and Henry Light

Council Participants: Ken Ampy, Rosa Atkins, Heywood Fralin, Gene Lockhart, Stephen Moret, Carlyle Ramsey, Minnis Ridenour, Tom Slater and Katharine Webb

Purpose: Consider ways to improve educational outcomes across the state; also, consider the consequences of failing to become the best-educated state by 2030. (See following page for full statement of purpose.)

Goal: By the March 2019 Council meeting, recommend strategies for improving educational attainment and addressing talent issues and needs in the Commonwealth.

#### Work Plan Adopted by the Committee:

November 14, 2018: Meeting to review background information and initiate discussion of issues and foci. (Meeting minutes are posted online.)

December 21, 2018: (rescheduled from December 10 due to weather): Meeting to review additional information and receive input from external experts. (Meeting minutes are posted online.)

January 7, 2019: Meeting to review key opportunities and major themes identified from 60+ recommendations and proposals suggested by members and experts, and to provide guidance to staff on preparing report to Council. (Meeting minutes are posted online.)

January 14, 2019: Discussion of the draft report with the full Council. (Meeting minutes are posted online.)

January 28, 2019: Discussion of draft report with the General Professional Advisory Committee (public-institution chief executive officers).

March 19, 2019: Presentation of final report to Council for approval.

## **Best-Educated State Strategy: Addressing the Educational Attainment Gaps and Economic Prosperity**

**October 30, 2018**

The Council has adopted an overall strategic goal of the Commonwealth to be the best-educated state by 2030. As recent remarks to the Council by Governor Gerald Baliles emphasized, the Rural Horseshoe of the Commonwealth, as a stand-alone state, would actually rank among the lowest educated. Similarly, there are significant educational attainment gaps in the state's urban areas, including but not limited to the state's capitol. Achieving the best-educated state goal will be a hollow victory if it is not a truly statewide accomplishment.

Also recently, Speaker of the House Kirk Cox offered his vision of a higher education system more involved with meeting workforce needs and economic development. The imperative of higher educational attainment is directly linked to our ability to build a competitive, future-ready workforce for all regions.

Accordingly, the Council is creating a special ad hoc committee on addressing educational attainment gaps and economic prosperity. This review will include both the Rural Horseshoe, other parts of the Commonwealth or other features of our population where there are notable gaps in educational attainment and workforce supply. It will be informed by the speeches from Governor Baliles and Speaker Cox, as well as by a recent report from the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University on the revitalization of rural Virginia. The ad hoc committee will be asked to report to the full Council at its January 2019 and March 2019 meetings. Specifically, the committee will be asked to complete the following.

- Identify notable educational attainment gaps and workforce shortages.
- Examine contributing factors, including but not limited to geographic access, financial access, health status (physical health, behavioral health and substance abuse disorder issues), workforce development efforts and availability of needed supports.
- Identify opportunities for alignment of existing programs, services and resources.
- Solicit regional and stakeholder input.
- Align project with existing SCHEV initiatives.
- Recommend overall and region-specific options and strategies for improving educational attainment and addressing economic development needs.
- Identify crucial issues that will require further examination.

## **Summary of Literature Review for the Ad Hoc Committee on Educational Attainment**

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia created an ad hoc committee on educational attainment following receipt of three related but distinct sets of information:

- (i) remarks from former Governor Gerald Baliles regarding the “Rural Horseshoe” (see: <http://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/about-section/council-files/2018-council-meetings/september/gov-baliles-remarks-at-joint-meeting.pdf>);
- (ii) a report by the University of Virginia, Virginia Tech and Virginia State University on “Moving Rural Virginia Forward” (see: <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2018/RD374/PDF>); and
- (iii) remarks from House Speaker Kirk Cox regarding the “talent pipeline” (see: [http://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/about-section/council-files/2018-council-meetings/october/schevprepared-remarks-\(speaker-cox\).pdf](http://www.schev.edu/docs/default-source/about-section/council-files/2018-council-meetings/october/schevprepared-remarks-(speaker-cox).pdf)).

These resources center on aspects of the current and future well-being of the Commonwealth and its citizens. Each connects a broad definition of well-being to a narrower one involving economic prosperity and higher education. While all describe an inexplicable link between Virginia’s future economic viability and postsecondary education opportunities (and results), the description of the role that higher education can and/or should play varies.

Each resource also contains a statewide call to action, with Baliles and Cox outlining specific roles for SCHEV; the universities’ report offers ideas that could involve SCHEV but does not mention Council or the agency by name. These proposals and recommendations are bold and large-scale – especially from Baliles and Cox – requiring major changes in thinking, in policy and in action. All identify needs for more, or at least different, investments in higher education, but with very different strategies for doing so.

Governor Baliles seeks to reduce or eliminate the gaps in economic prosperity between Virginia’s rural and non-rural areas through education. He calls for a “Marshall Plan” to bring more and better postsecondary opportunities to rural citizens and to bring rural citizens to postsecondary opportunities. To support this plan, he recommends a trust fund or some other dedicated-funding mechanism, which could include



re-appropriating the Tobacco Commission's remaining corpus. His proposal posits (higher) education as the answer to a worsening problem and seeks new efforts from colleges, universities and SCHEV without expecting these entities to change much themselves.

Delegate Cox seeks much change from higher education as a precursor to the new partnerships he sees as necessary between business, government and education to meet the Commonwealth's growing and evolving need for human talent. He seeks to change "business as usual" in Virginia higher education via new institutional performance agreements – with SCHEV playing roles via its oversight of the six-year-planning process and the performance-review process. He calls for more transparency in, accountability of and performance-based funding for public higher education to drive talent development through affordable access, internships, work-study and industry-informed curricular planning.

The universities' report also presents an investment plan, but one focused, like Baliles', on rural Virginia. Here the recommendations and strategies include, but go far beyond, higher education, involving economic development, civic/public management, healthcare and Pre-K-12 education. It calls for a data-informed Rural Prosperity Dashboard (or Index) and the convening of a working group of partners from the public, private and non-profit sectors.

In addition to each resource's connection of economic prosperity with higher education, a common theme is a need for advocating, promoting and marketing the value and benefits of higher education to Virginians, with SCHEV posited as a – or the – leader in this endeavor.

## **Ideas for Improving Educational Attainment: The [January 7] Parking Lot List**

### **1. Student Pipeline and Progression**

#### **A. Pre-K-12**

- i. Establish a more integrated and purposeful P-20 system. Create a “continuity of experience” from birth, especially for at-risk children. Fund programs for children that require mentorship throughout childhood.
- ii. Create a plan and budget for ensuring high quality, statewide Pre-K. Ensure affordable access to quality early-educator coursework and credentialing from high school to baccalaureate degree, in a stackable sequence. Explore and support alternative pathways for early educators to acquire competencies and skills, including coaching and apprenticeships.
- iii. Encourage school districts to collaborate and partner with local non-profits and higher-ed institutions to expand Pre-K education and child care and to offer after-school programs.
- iv. Focus on STEM, and especially the Computer Science SOLs, earlier and more rapidly in the educational process.
- v. Address issues of teacher pay and retention.
- vi. Invest more in shop/trades/technical curricula and marketing to students. Focus on credential attainment while still in high school. Encourage members of the business community to visit middle and high schools regularly.

#### **B. Dual Enrollment and Transfer**

- i. Assist the VCCS with deploying more advisors for dual enrollment and addressing inconsistencies in offerings across the Commonwealth. Foster guidelines for higher standards of quality and more just rate structures.
- ii. Incentivize additional dual enrollment for both college-track and vocational-track courses.
- iii. Establish accessible, affordable pathways – including online/distance education – for high school students with no or limited access to dual enrollment. Highlight pathways from dual enrollment courses, especially in STEM, into regionally aligned programs such as those at UVa-Wise and Radford.

- iv. Continue to improve the transfer process through Virginia-specific initiatives and participation in national efforts.
- v. Create more consistent programs for awarding credit for experience in business/industry and the military at four-year institutions.

C. Adult Engagement/Re-Engagement

- i. Promote the College Transfer Grant (2+2 option), regional higher education centers and the Online Virginia Network in a coordinated strategy to reengage with people who have college credits but no degree/credential.
- ii. Develop adult-/veteran-targeted programs with job/skill training and certifications.
- iii. Expand and/or replicate the RU IMPACT model, wherein students have one year to complete a certificate online with credit hours that can be transferred to a degree program. (In Southside, NCI also provides an on-site component.)

**2. Alignment of Resources with Outcomes**

A. Pre-K-12

- i. Revise public school funding allocation formulas/methods to offset lower revenues from declining enrollments.
- ii. Increase teacher compensation, especially in districts with low attainment rates. Pursue proven strategies to address the teacher shortage and issues of teacher quality.
- iii. Implement strategies that support appropriate value and compensation for early educators who attain credentials that reflect mastery in these distinctive competencies.
- iv. Create a Virginia "Promise" program to encourage students in secondary schools to plan and prep for college.
- v. Create a need-based financial aid program for students in dual enrollment courses.

B. Higher Education

- i. Offer "free" or supported tuition at all or some (i.e., rural) community colleges.

- ii. Reduce tuition at and/or provide more aid funds to open-access public institutions in certain regions of the state.
- iii. Review funds available and distribution models of need-based state financial aid to ensure equitable provision to students who are low-income, part-time, first-generation, co-enrolled, non-traditional pathway and/or adults. Focus more aid dollars at institutions that serve more of these students.
- iv. Assist institutions in determining the breakpoint of the percentage of "need" that must be met to ensure that each student persists and completes.
- v. Create a state program of emergency financial aid funds (and perhaps personnel/advocates) to prevent students from dropping out when unforeseen life events occur.
- vi. Fund more adequately the workforce financial aid model.
- vii. Create a "Super TAG" (Tuition Assistance Grant) award for students who meet certain criteria at selected institutions.
- viii. Set attainment goals for public institutions using criteria relevant to *The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* (by student region, socio-economic status, race/ethnicity, gender, etc.).
- ix. Fund "learn and earn" student employment programs that provide funding and career skills during college.
- x. Implement more collaborative career training programs, tied to business internships and entry-level work programs.
- xi. Create programs that reduce or forgive tuition or loans for students who complete their studies in high-demand fields and/or through non-traditional pathways.
- xii. Expand the list of institutions to which students may use the College Transfer Grant.
- xiii. Commission a study of best practices in financial aid that maximize degree completion.

### **3. Governance and Innovation**

- i. Establish income-based family savings accounts so families are encouraged to and assisted in saving for college.
- ii. Review comprehensively and regularly all higher-education funding formulas and allocation methods.
- iii. Rethink policies regarding public institutions' setting of tuition and fees and enrollment of out-of-state students.

- iv. Provide for funding reserves.
- v. Encourage selective public institutions to rely less on standardized test scores in admission considerations.
- vi. Encourage and incentivize four-year institutions to offer 2+2 options at regional higher-ed centers, especially in high-demand fields. Aggressively market the 2+2 model in rural areas.
- vii. Utilize regional higher-ed centers to provide support services/personnel and learning resources/facilities to students taking online courses/programs and/or participating in the Academic Common Market.
- viii. Expand list of institutions eligible to apply for grants and related opportunities that seek to generate and fund solutions to educational challenges, including attainment gaps and pipeline leaks.
- ix. Authorize institutions that offer degree programs at higher-education centers near the state border to offer in-state tuition rates to out-of-state students from neighboring non-Virginia counties.
- x. Support legislation that seeks to unify/integrate early childhood funds and programs at VDOE (e.g., this year's "Early Childhood Success Act").
- xi. Create a more aggressive economic development program (statewide and rural).
- xii. Fund the SCHEV study of outcome results for graduates of Virginia institutions.

#### **4. Outreach and Advising**

- i. Offer college-readiness and financial-literacy programs for families of middle and high school students as a resource for postsecondary planning.
- ii. Utilize Cooperative Extension offices and programs to provide information, services and programs to parents, especially of young children, and potential-student adults who otherwise have no or limited knowledge and/or experience in higher education.
- iii. Provide access through "bridge" programs and other pre-enrollment initiatives to support readiness of incoming students.
- iv. Scale a case management/social worker intervention model to provide support to students, especially first-generation students, in navigating college processes (e.g., structured counseling/coaching in decision-making and strategies for success).
- v. Foster mentoring programs that target and support specific types of students/needs.

- vi. Provide funding to institutions to support technology that identifies at-risk students.
- vii. Beef up career planning/development functions in higher education and Pre-K-12. Perhaps deploy state matching funds.
- viii. Create a nation-leading online portal to help students better understand career pathways, as well as employment outcomes tied to different educational programs, ideally for students like them (interests, prior academics, geographic preferences, etc.). Provide self-directed planning, including assessments on interests, skills and values.
- ix. Aggressively address: new simpler admissions application; on-boarding via cutting-edge technology; fillable financial aid forms to eliminate intimidation; structured pathways leading to a career; course scheduling that is focused, efficient and career oriented; credit for prior learning in a variety of ways in addition to the veteran credits in place; new marketing plan to promote student interest and career opportunity.

## 5. Targeted Intervention

- i. Establish contracts with selected community colleges and private colleges to expand access for and completion by students in localities with low educational attainment (e.g., keep the students closer to home).
- ii. Invest in rural broadband to facilitate online education in underserved areas.
- iii. Incentivize college graduates to stay in or relocate to certain areas (rural, inner-city, low-income).
- iv. Create a talent-attraction tax-credit program (like in Maine) for localities with declining populations.
- v. Incentivize start-up-company creation in areas that underperform economically and/or in attainment by providing time-limited tax exemptions for both the companies and their employees. Such incentives also could include assistance with student loans after an employee has remained employed with the start-up for a certain period of time.
- vi. Support apprenticeships for early childhood educators.
- vii. Ensure that parents, especially those who are low income or living in high-risk communities, have access to opportunities that match low- or no-cost training and education directly to open positions in fields and with employers who value trained candidates and will reward them with sufficient wages.

- viii. Ensure, through policies including within TANF, that for low-income individuals who are striving to achieve educational and employment goals, childcare, transportation, and other real-life factors are better supported.
- ix. Explore means of surveying non-completers to understand the barriers that prevent them from achieving their goals, and identify effective ways of addressing.
- x. Deploy the “skills first” concept and stackable credentials in workforce-training programs in community colleges, especially at rural community colleges, where students are more likely to remain closer to home.
- xi. Support “Return to Roots” programs so that community colleges, especially in rural areas, are not educating/training people to leave their local areas.
- xii. Market and utilize better the Online Virginia Network, Old Dominion University, Liberty University and the Virginia Community College System in providing online courses and programs to underserved populations.
- xiii. Facilitate meaningful “gap year” learning opportunities for graduating high school students or enrolled undergraduates, especially in underserved areas, similar to the Domestic Study Away proposal below.
- xiv. Facilitate a Domestic Study Away program that employs college students in short-term jobs in high-demand fields in targeted (e.g., rural, inner-city, low-income) areas. Consider using regional higher-ed centers as hubs.
- xv. Create programs that largely pay for additional education to overcome specific barriers for specific groups (e.g., free additional English language training, including the use of technology for ESL students and “teaching the test” so that the English SOL is not an inappropriate barrier to immigrant students; free SAT prep classes for all rural students; more investment in accommodations for students with disabilities so that they have more career options and more frequently choose to further their education).

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