

**JOINT LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND REVIEW COMMISSION
OF THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Review of the
State Council of
Higher Education
for Virginia**

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Preface

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 18, passed by the 1988 General Assembly, directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review and evaluate the area of higher education as part of the Commissions responsibility for examining functional areas of government. The General Assembly subsequently passed SJR 135, which directed JLARC to review the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). This report is one in a series on higher education in Virginia.

The General Assembly created SCHEV in 1956 to promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education. Overall, SCHEV's coordinative role in the higher education system has worked well and fulfilled legislative intent. Further, SCHEV's current structure — a citizen Council appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly, a staff director appointed by the Council, and professional staff hired by the director — reflects a deliberate choice by the General Assembly regarding the structure for coordinating higher education in Virginia.

While SCHEV is doing a good job of fulfilling its mandated responsibilities, this review noted some areas which need improvement. For example, SCHEV could make some minor improvements in its process for estimating systemwide enrollment growth and promoting the assessment of student achievement. SCHEV has been instrumental in promoting the resolution of a number of lingering problems involving student transfers from public two-year higher education institutions to four-year institutions; nevertheless, SCHEV's continued involvement is needed to resolve some outstanding problems. Further, lingering problems affecting the achievement of equal opportunity in higher education will require action by the Secretary of Education as well as SCHEV to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of programming in this area.

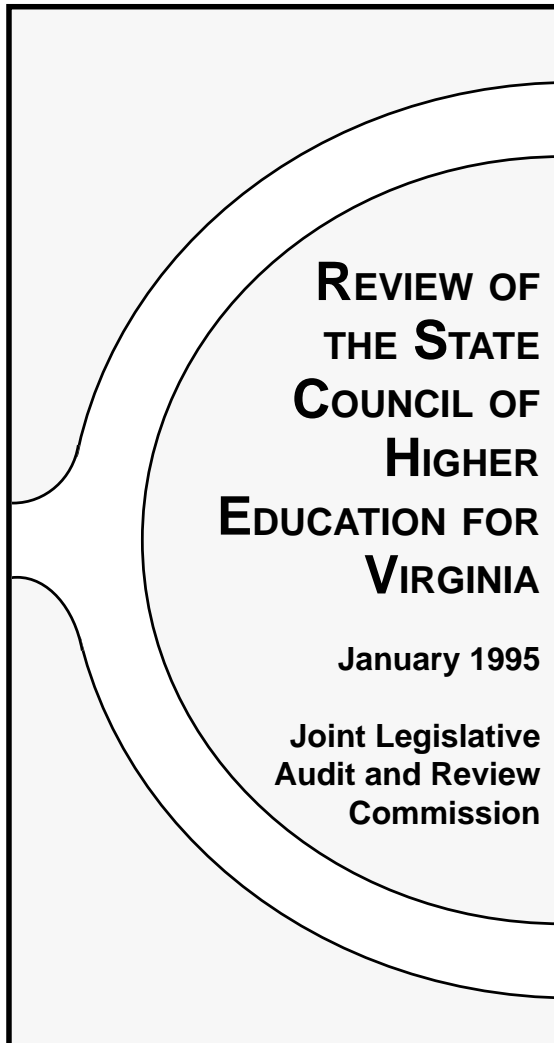
One area in which SCHEV has been less effective is in eliminating academic programs that are not productive. Of the 99 programs cited as nonproductive by SCHEV over the past eight years, only five were closed. SCHEV staff have reported that recently approved institutional restructuring plans contain a range of proposals to review and address nonproductive programs. While it is too soon to determine the outcome of institutional restructuring, it is possible that these efforts will result in the closure of a number of programs currently cited as nonproductive. In addition, recommendations in this report could strengthen the current process used by SCHEV to review program productivity.

On behalf of the Commission staff, I would like to express our appreciation for the cooperation and assistance provided during this review by the Director and the staff of SCHEV, the presidents and staff of Virginia's public institutions, the Chancellor and staff of the Virginia Community College System, and the Secretary of Education.

Philip A. Leone
Director

January 27, 1995

JLARC Report Summary



Virginia is one of 20 states that have established coordinating structures for their higher education systems. The Virginia General Assembly created the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) in 1956 to "...promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia (*Code of Virginia*, § 23-9.3)." Overall, this approach has worked well and fulfilled legislative intent.

Legislatively-assigned responsibilities are intended to promote efficiency in higher education while preserving the diversity and autonomy of Virginia's colleges and universities. Additionally, SCHEV is required to carry out some regulatory and administrative functions. A number of these functions were assigned to SCHEV in the 1970s, following close scrutiny of the higher education system by the General Assembly. In recent years, SCHEV has assumed some functions through federal mandates and by identifying additional coordinative needs for the higher education system in Virginia.

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 18, passed by the 1988 General Assembly, directed the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to review and evaluate the area of higher education as part of the Commission's responsibility for examining various functional areas of government. The General Assembly subsequently passed SJR 135 which directed JLARC to review SCHEV. This report on SCHEV is one in a series on higher education in Virginia.

This review focuses primarily on SCHEV's coordinative role in the system of higher education and its specific operations. A separate report on the capital outlay process in higher education will examine SCHEV's responsibilities as they relate to that process. This assessment revealed:

- SCHEV is appropriately structured to coordinate the higher education system in Virginia as intended by the General Assembly.
- SCHEV is effective in providing the type and degree of system oversight needed.

- Generally, SCHEV is doing a good job of fulfilling its mandated responsibilities, but some areas need improvement.

SCHEV Provides Appropriate Systemwide Oversight

The General Assembly chose the current coordinating structure in 1974, after trying a weak coordinating structure and considering other degrees of control and coordination. The enabling legislation gave SCHEV a dual reporting relationship to the Governor and the General Assembly. SCHEV's accountability to the Governor is reinforced through gubernatorial appointments to the Council. SCHEV's linkage to the General Assembly is emphasized by legislative action to define and re-define SCHEV's mission and responsibilities over the years. SCHEV also provides a critical link between the institutions and the General Assembly when it provides information and analyses on institutional budgets and conducts requested special studies.

SCHEV's authority includes comprehensive statewide planning, approval of changes to institutions' mission statements, approval of projected levels of enrollment, capital and operating budget development and recommendations, and academic program approval. The General Assembly deliberately set limits to the powers that can be exercised by SCHEV, however. These limits maintain institutional autonomy and diversity of mission. Statutory language also places specific authority for higher education operations with institutional governing boards whose members are also appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly.

As currently structured, SCHEV provides stability and leadership to the higher education system. State Council members serve staggered terms of four years which allows them to contribute eight years of service and perspective to the Commonwealth. Overlapping appointments to the

State Council provide continuity, thereby allowing SCHEV to provide leadership on issues that span executive branch administrative changes. Continuity is also promoted by the authority granted the council in appointing the SCHEV staff director.

Overall, college and university presidents favor the current system of higher education coordination. Most presidents indicated that SCHEV provides a vision for higher education and rational analyses for assessing the past and future direction for the system. College presidents' most frequently cited criticism of SCHEV was that it is not a sufficiently strong advocate for higher education when dealing with the General Assembly and the Governor.

SCHEV is Satisfactorily Fulfilling Its Mandated Responsibilities

Examination of 17 substantive areas for which SCHEV is responsible indicated that SCHEV is satisfactorily fulfilling most of its mandated responsibilities. A report card on SCHEV's provision of services (see opposite page) summarizes its performance in each of the areas examined. This review found three areas in which SCHEV could implement some needed improvements and one area in which its performance is unsatisfactory based on its current activities and statutory provisions.

A number of recommendations are made which could assist SCHEV in improving its performance. These recommendations address the following areas: enrollment projections, review of academic program productivity, student transfer policies and articulation agreements, the assessment of student achievement, and the administration of equal educational opportunity (EEO) programs.

The Process for Estimating Future Enrollments Appears Reasonable

SCHEV is responsible for reviewing and approving individual institutional enrollment projections. As part of its review,

SCHEV Report Card on Provision of Services	
Satisfactory Satisfactory with Minor Needed Improvement Unsatisfactory	
Prepare plans for a coordinated system of higher education (includes restructuring)	✓
Review institutions' mission statements	✓
Review institutions' enrollment projections	✓
Review new academic programs and organizational changes	✓
Review the productivity of academic programs	✗
Develop a uniform comprehensive data information system	✓
Develop guidelines for the assessment of student achievement	✓
Conduct site-visits and special studies as requested by the Governor and/or General Assembly	✓
Provide advisory services to private, accredited and nonprofit institutions of higher education	✓
Submit budget request recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly	✓
Coordinate continuing education offerings	✓
Coordinate post-secondary educational programs for all health professionals and occupations	✓
Administer statewide student financial aid programs	✓
Assist in the development of student transfer policies and articulation agreements	✓
Administer equal educational opportunity programs	✓
Resolve problems in student affairs	✓
Review post-secondary education	NA
NA = Not applicable given recent assignment of responsibility.	

SCHEV uses the institutional projections to estimate systemwide enrollment growth. The review assists SCHEV in determining the future needs of the system and the resources necessary to meet those needs.

JLARC staff examined: (1) the likelihood that current SCHEV estimates for enrollment growth of 80,000 students in the next ten years will materialize and (2) the process used by SCHEV to estimate future systemwide enrollments. Based on the past accuracy of systemwide estimates and institution-specific projections, and converging indicators of population growth for the traditional college-age population, it appears likely that higher education student enrollments

will increase in the next five to 15 years. However, the specific magnitude of the increase and exactly when it will peak is less clear.

SCHEV's process to determine estimated systemwide enrollment changes appears reasonable. However, some minor changes could be made to improve the process. JLARC staff recommend that SCHEV:

- review patterns and trends affecting non-traditional student enrollments, and
- work with the Department of Education to collect and review information on high school students who go on to Virginia public higher education institutions.

SCHEV Has Not Effectively Eliminated Programs with Low Productivity

One of SCHEV's mandated functions to promote the effectiveness and efficiency of academic programming in the higher education system is to review and require the discontinuance of nonproductive academic programs. The process SCHEV uses to review program productivity is ineffective and in need of change. The process does not result in the closure of programs which are cited by SCHEV as having low productivity. Further, institutions do not seem to consistently use the productivity information to guide their programming, staffing, or budget decision-making.

Recommendations are made to have SCHEV improve this process by working with the college presidents to address the 48 programs that were cited as nonproductive in 1994; to devise strategies emphasizing the connection between program productivity, assessment, strategic planning, restructuring, and budgeting; to assess the current quantitative standards used to determine productivity; to revise the productivity re-

view process to include qualitative measures of program performance, if so desired by the General Assembly; and to develop a consistent program review schedule.

Some Improvements Could Strengthen the Assessment Process

SCHEV is required by the *Code of Virginia* to develop guidelines for the assessment of student achievement and report institutional assessments in the State's master plan for higher education. Review of this mandated responsibility revealed that SCHEV has successfully developed and implemented student assessment guidelines and a reporting mechanism for the system. Student assessment activities have yielded many positive results, most notably, significant curricular reform in Virginia's higher education institutions.

Some minor improvements, however, could strengthen this process. Recommendations are included to have SCHEV collect and disseminate a common set of institutional performance standards to monitor conditions in higher education; modify the reporting procedures to lessen the burden on the institutions; and establish a stronger linkage between institutional assessment activities and restructuring efforts.

Substantial Progress Has Been Made in Resolving Student Transfer Problems

SCHEV undertakes a number of activities that are related to improving student access to higher education. One of these activities is the coordination of higher education efforts to ease student transfer from public two-year institutions to public and private four-year institutions. Review of these coordinative activities indicated that SCHEV has been instrumental in resolving lingering student transfer problems within the higher education system.

SCHEV's continued involvement in this area is needed to resolve some outstanding problems. SCHEV needs to continue its oversight of the implementation of the State Policy on Transfer and improve its coordinative efforts to address current transfer data and information system limitations. Recommendations are included in this report to address these two concerns.

Lingering Problems Affecting Equal Educational Opportunity Require Action by the Secretary of Education and SCHEV

Over time, SCHEV has been delegated responsibility by Virginia Governors and Secretaries of Education for coordinating institutional efforts to comply with federal requirement for desegregating Virginia's higher education system, and administering certain statewide programs to achieve this goal.

Three essential elements are needed to better assure that Virginia provides equal educational opportunity to all citizens. First, Virginia needs an updated statewide plan for addressing equal educational opportunity issues. Without a meaningful updated plan, any coordinative efforts undertaken by SCHEV are restricted. Second, clear articulation of SCHEV's responsibilities in coordinating and planning for equal educational opportunity is needed. Lack of this delineation results in confusion about the authority, responsibility, and accountability for the performance of statewide and institutional EEO programs.

Third, SCHEV needs to develop performance measures to assess the effectiveness of the statewide EEO programs it administers. Lack of these measures makes it difficult to consistently collect, analyze, and monitor data needed to assess the impact of these programs. Recommendations are contained in this report to address these concerns.

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I. Introduction

Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 18, passed by the 1988 General Assembly, directed JLARC to review and evaluate the area of higher education as part of the Commission's responsibility for examining functional areas of government under the Legislative Program Review and Evaluation Act (Appendix A). The 1989 General Assembly subsequently passed SJR 135 which directed JLARC to review the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) as well as capital outlay, land, and maintenance for higher education (Appendix B).

This review is one in a series on higher education in Virginia. It focuses primarily on the operations of SCHEV in the system of higher education. Although SCHEV also has responsibilities related to capital outlay in higher education, these responsibilities were not examined as part of this review. A separate report on the capital outlay process in higher education will examine SCHEV's responsibilities as they relate to this process.

SCHEV was created by the General Assembly in 1956 to coordinate Virginia's higher education system. As the State's coordinating entity, SCHEV has responsibility for promoting a diverse, efficient, and effective system of higher education. It does this by implementing a number of mandated activities. These include, but are not limited to:

- preparing systemwide plans
- reviewing and approving institutional missions
- studying and making recommendations about institutional expansions
- reviewing and approving institutional enrollment projections
- reviewing and approving new academic programs
- developing uniform comprehensive data information systems
- developing guidelines for the assessment of student achievement
- establishing uniform standards and systems of accounting, recordkeeping, and statistical reporting for the institutions
- biennially reviewing and approving changes in inventory and space at higher education institutions
- visiting and studying the operations of the institutions
- providing advisory services to private, accredited, nonprofit higher education institutions.

JLARC Review

This JLARC review assesses SCHEV's performance in meeting its statutorily-defined responsibilities. Research activities were designed to provide evaluative information on SCHEV's service functions, with a special emphasis on its primary responsibility — to successfully coordinate the provision of higher education in Virginia. Some of these research activities included: (1) document reviews, (2) structured interviews, (3) telephone surveys, (4) a mail survey, (5) analysis of SCHEV's enrollment projection approval process, and (6) analyses of secondary data on academic programs approved by SCHEV, academic programs productivity, student transfers, equal education opportunity programs, and financial aid programs.

Document Reviews. A number of documents were examined which address SCHEV's authority and responsibilities, its relationship to other higher education authorities, its organization and operating procedures, and its service provision. The primary source of SCHEV legal authority is the *Code of Virginia*, which was reviewed for applicability to the Council. Additionally, State documents were reviewed for sections relevant to SCHEV operations, including: the Acts of Assembly and Appropriation Acts (1956 to present); Senate Document No. 14, 1986 (assessment of student achievement); House Joint Resolution No. 17, 1976 (student transfer policies); and correspondence relating to Virginia's equal educational opportunity programs. Applicable federal documents were also reviewed, including the Higher Education Act of 1965 and its 1992 amendments, Public Law 102-325 (State Post-Secondary Review Program), U.S. Department of Education financial aid documents, and U.S. Office of Civil Rights reports on financial assistance to minorities.

The review of SCHEV's organizational structure and operating procedures included the use of SCHEV staff workplans and internal planning documents, SCHEV staff position descriptions, the 1990 JLARC *Review of the Community College System*, and the 1973 report titled *Commonwealth of Virginia Higher Education Management Review* (Shaner and Associates). Additional comparative information was obtained by reviewing books and reports that profiled other states' coordinating or governing entities.

SCHEV service provision was evaluated using a variety of program specific information, including: institutional assessment reports; meeting minutes of the Council, the Joint Committee on Transfer Students, and the Standing Committee on Transfer; institutional survey forms detailing enrollment projections; institutional base budgets submitted to SCHEV; SCHEV productivity review reports; SCHEV program approval and new degree status of action documents; institutional affirmative action recruitment and retention plans; SCHEV policy manuals and guidelines; and reports such as *The Virginia Plan* (SCHEV) and *The Virginia Plan for Equal Opportunity in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education (Revised 1978)*.

Structured Interviews. Numerous structured interviews were conducted during the course of this review. Interviews were conducted with: (1) SCHEV staff, (2) current and former Secretaries of Education, (3) current and former Council chairs, (4)

the presidents of the public four-year colleges and universities, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, the president of Richard Bland College, and the president of the Council of Independent Colleges in Virginia, and (5) many of the institutions' academic vice presidents or provosts, student affairs vice presidents, assessment coordinators, institutional research officers, financial aid directors, chief transfer officers, EEO or affirmative action officers, and continuing education directors.

Telephone Surveys. Two telephone survey efforts were completed. The first was a survey of the 14 other Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states' higher education coordinating or governing councils. This survey requested responses from council staff concerning their processes for program approval, productivity review, and assessment of student achievement. The response rate for this survey was 93 percent.

The second telephone survey was of all Virginia public four-year college and university Equal Education Opportunity or affirmative action officers. Respondents were asked to answer questions dealing with their position responsibilities, their institution's minority recruitment and retention efforts, their perception of SCHEV's role in minority recruitment and retention efforts, and their perception of SCHEV's role in the development of institutional affirmative action plans. The response rate for this survey was 87 percent.

Mail Survey. A mail survey of all the public senior institution and community college student affairs vice presidents and/or directors of student services was conducted in July 1994. This survey was used to assess institutional perspectives regarding the statewide provision of student affairs services and the appropriateness of SCHEV's current role in coordinating student affairs. The response rate for this survey was 100 percent.

Secondary Data Analyses. JLARC staff reviewed and analyzed secondary data related to academic program approval, academic program productivity, student transfer, student enrollment projections, minority recruitment and retention, and student financial aid. These data were analyzed to assess SCHEV's performance of assigned responsibilities. For example, data on past institutional enrollment projections were compared to actual student headcount data to assess accuracy of projections and SCHEV's systemwide enrollment estimates. Data on transfer admission rates for VCCS students compared with other transfer students, and transfer student admission rates categorized by prior academic achievement (receipt of an associate degree) were analyzed to assess SCHEV efforts to ease student transfer problems.

Report Organization

This chapter has provided a brief introduction to the JLARC review of SCHEV. Chapters II and III examine legislative intent for establishing SCHEV and its role in the higher education system. Chapter II provides an in-depth description of legislative intent in creating SCHEV, SCHEV's mission, its organization and structure, and its primary responsibilities. Chapter III builds on the descriptive information contained in

Chapter II by providing an assessment of Virginia's higher education system of coordination, including whether the system and SCHEV's role comply with legislative intent and whether SCHEV successfully carries out its statutory responsibilities.

Chapters IV, V, and VI assess SCHEV's performance in meeting its responsibilities. Chapter IV examines SCHEV's role in systemwide planning. This chapter also assesses SCHEV's role in reviewing and approving institutional enrollment projections since these projections significantly influence systemwide planning. Chapter V assesses SCHEV's activities to promote efficiency and effectiveness of the higher education system. Finally, SCHEV's activities to promote student access to Virginia's higher education system are reviewed in Chapter VI.

II. Legislative Direction for Higher Education Governance in Virginia

Since World War II, most states across the nation, including Virginia, have had to determine how best to coordinate their systems of public higher education. Confronted by institutional aspirations for expanded missions, as well as demands for state financial support, state governments found it essential to control growth and ensure an equitable distribution of available financial support. In most states, these actions included establishing statewide higher education governing boards or coordinating councils to support a systems approach to delivering higher education.

The General Assembly has assigned responsibility for coordinating higher education in the Commonwealth to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). According to the *Code of Virginia*, the purpose of SCHEV is:

to promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. [*Code of Virginia*, § 23-9.3]

SCHEV's strong coordinative role in the higher education system is based on a number of statutorily assigned functions, which are intended to promote higher education while preserving the diversity and autonomy of Virginia's colleges and universities. Additionally, SCHEV is required to carry out some regulatory and administrative functions. A number of these functions were assigned to SCHEV in the 1970s, following close scrutiny of the higher education system by the General Assembly. In recent years, SCHEV has assumed some functions through federal mandates and by identifying additional coordinative needs for the higher education system in Virginia.

MISSION OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The need for statewide coordination of higher education institutions was recognized about 40 years ago by the Virginia General Assembly. As early as 1951, a legislative report expressed concern that Virginia's institutions of higher education were characterized by "competition rather than coordination." As a result, SCHEV was created in 1956, and it was directed to provide Virginia's public institutions of higher education with systematic coordination. Legislative intent for SCHEV's authority has subsequently evolved. SCHEV's authority is limited, however, by the individual public institutions' governing boards and the General Assembly, both of which have the statutory authority to make important decisions regarding the administration of higher education in Virginia.

Evolution of Legislative Intent for SCHEV's Mission

The mission of the State Council of Higher Education has been altered substantially over the years. In 1951, when it was first recommended that Virginia establish a coordinating council for higher education, the proposed duties of the council were limited to planning, budgeting, and special study functions. Therefore, when SCHEV was officially created in 1956, it was granted little authority. It was not until the 1970's that SCHEV's mission was expanded to include many of the functions currently associated with the agency. Review of SCHEV's present mission indicates that SCHEV now has the authority to coordinate a wider range of higher education issues than ever before.

The 1951 Virginia Advisory Legislative Council Study. The Virginia Advisory Legislative Council (VALC) report *Higher Education in Virginia* (House Document No. 8, 1951) recommended that a coordinating board for higher education be established in Virginia. The report was written in response to House Joint Resolution (HJR) 47 (1950), which requested that VALC:

make a thorough study of the State-supported institutions of higher learning . . . giving particular attention to possible consolidation of overlapping functions, and any other matters which in its opinion result in inefficiency or duplication of expense and effort.

There was legislative concern that “ever larger sums both for maintenance and operation and for capital outlay are being requested and furnished the State-supported institutions of higher education”

Accordingly, the VALC study gave primary emphasis to the problem of coordinating higher education institutions. After conducting its research, the VALC concluded that the “several institutions and their governing boards have had little occasion to develop a concept of a unified State-wide system of higher education into which the program of each institution would fit” In addition, the VALC stated that this “failure to develop a State-wide concept of higher education” had several effects, including:

- the domination of institutional concerns over statewide concerns in planning by institutional representatives and governing boards
- relationships characterized by competition rather than cooperation between institutions and the General Assembly
- development of programs not reflective of State needs
- escalation of institutional offerings resulting in duplication
- lack of an administrative entity to handle potential development of a system of higher education.

The VALC was also concerned that “there has been no policy making agency to deal on a State-wide and continuing basis” with questions such as student financial aid and graduate, as well as undergraduate, courses and instruction.

Given these findings, the VALC recommended that a coordinating board for higher education be established, and that it be assigned the functions of planning (which included academic program review), preparing a coordinated budget for higher education, and carrying out special studies concerning higher education for the Governor or the General Assembly. The VALC did recommend, however, that the individual institutional governing boards remain intact. In effect, the VALC report established many of the guidelines leading to the development of SCHEV.

Creation of SCHEV in 1956. Following the publication of the VALC report, the Virginia General Assembly struggled to resolve issues surrounding the development of a coordinating entity for higher education. Legislative bills to create such an entity failed to pass both houses in the 1952 and 1954 sessions. By the 1956 session, however, legislation creating SCHEV was passed. Much of the language in the final bill came directly from the VALC report. As a result, initial SCHEV duties included: planning; reviewing academic programs; conducting site visits, operation studies, and special studies; coordinating higher education with primary and secondary education; budgeting; and directing institutional expansion.

Despite these powers granted to SCHEV, the agency was only appropriated \$22,500 for each of its first two years of operation. Consequently, it had insufficient resources to fully carry out its mission as directed by the legislation. This minimal funding reflected an ambivalence in legislative intent in creating SCHEV. Some legislators desired a stronger coordinating board, as reflected in the powers granted; others desired a weaker board, as reflected in its appropriation.

Changing Legislative Expectations of SCHEV: 1960-1966. Between 1960 and 1966 the General Assembly removed and then restored SCHEV’s authority to review and recommend changes to the budgets of individual academic institutions. In 1960, Item 408 of the Appropriation Act rescinded SCHEV’s original budget authority, stating “no expenditure of this [SCHEV’s] appropriation shall be made for the coordination of institution budgets as set forth in 23-9.9 of the Code of Virginia.” This change in policy removed SCHEV’s primary means of promoting institutional cooperation and adherence to its directives regarding academic programs. This stipulation remained in the Appropriation Acts of 1962 and 1964.

In 1966, however, the Legislature decided to restore SCHEV’s budget review powers. This decision was probably influenced by other coinciding changes taking place in Virginia’s system of public higher education. At the same time, for example, the State was establishing the Virginia Community College System, which dramatically expanded the number of public higher education institutions, as well as student enrollments, in Virginia. Moreover, the executive branch of State government was moving toward formula budgeting, which requires some centralized coordination. Finally, Governor Godwin indicated that he was dedicated to the continued improvement of higher

education through the use of automated data processing and program budgeting. Collectively, these factors seem to have influenced the General Assembly's decision to reinstate SCHEV's budgetary authority.

Expansion of SCHEV's Authority in 1974. In 1974, the General Assembly passed legislation that substantially expanded SCHEV's authority. This decision was guided by recommendations from the Commission on Higher Education and the 1972 Shaner and Associates management review of Virginia's public higher education system. Both groups had recommended that SCHEV be given additional authority in four main areas: (1) reviewing academic programs, (2) planning, (3) determining enrollment levels, and (4) overseeing capital outlay and operating budgets. Moreover, the Shaner report concluded:

Relative to the management needs of the system, the State Council of Higher Education, as it is currently constituted, has very little substantive influence on the coordination and development of higher education in Virginia. Its influence on the financial planning and operation of the system is negligible The State Council of Higher Education does not have sufficient authority and must be considerably strengthened . . . no documented master plan exists to guide the development of the public system of higher education. However, little would be accomplished if a plan did exist because the State Council does not have the authority to implement such a plan.

Given this information, the General Assembly chose to considerably increase SCHEV's authority in all four areas. The resulting expansion of SCHEV duties is included in Appendix C.

Changes in SCHEV's Mission After 1974. Since 1974, the General Assembly has made some additional amendments to statutory language affecting SCHEV's mission, but these modifications have not been as comprehensive as the 1974 changes. The three most significant changes involve assigning SCHEV responsibility for the administration of federal higher education programs, the assessment of student learning, and the restructuring of higher education. Each of these responsibilities is detailed in a later section of this chapter.

Limits to SCHEV's Mission

Both SCHEV's mission for coordinating higher education and authority over institutional operations are limited by the *Code of Virginia*. Specific statutory language differentiates SCHEV's responsibility from that of institutional boards of visitors. In addition, specific language guiding SCHEV's operations limits the scope of its authority and reserves it for the General Assembly.

SCHEV's authority is differentiated from institutions in the following ways. First, the *Code of Virginia* ensures that the powers of the separate institutional governing boards remain intact:

the powers of the governing boards of the several institutions over the affairs of such institutions shall not be impaired by the provisions of this chapter [section of the *Code* relating to SCHEV] except to the extent that powers and duties are herein specifically conferred upon the State Council of Higher Education. [§ 23-9.14]

Second, § 23-9.6:1 of the *Code of Virginia* limits SCHEV's authority over faculty selection and student admissions.

Further, the *Code* limits SCHEV's authority for overseeing specific institutional operations in several ways. Generally, these limits reserve final authority regarding institutional operations for the General Assembly. For example, the *Code of Virginia* clearly articulates that the Legislature has the final authority for the approval of institutional mission statements.

ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The State Council of Higher Education is comprised of a coordinating council and its staff. As a coordinating board, the Council is concerned primarily with state and system perspective — the framework within which governance takes place. It does not directly govern higher education, and therefore does not control the operations of individual institutions. Instead, the Council's position in the administration and development of higher education services is such that it works to achieve coordination between the policy agendas of the academic institutions, the General Assembly, and the Governor. Descriptions of both the Council and its staff follow below.

Organization of the Council

The Council consists of 11 members appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. Members are appointed for four-year terms, except in cases where appointments are made to fill vacancies with unexpired terms. Terms of service are staggered, so that there will be stability in higher education policy through the overlapping of gubernatorial appointments. Additionally, members having served on the Council for two full terms are not eligible for reappointment until two years have elapsed from the end of their last term. The Council has the authority to elect its chairman and vice-chairman from within its own membership, as well as to appoint a secretary and other such officers as it deems necessary or advisable.

In addition to these requirements, Section 23-9.3 of the *Code of Virginia* specifies the following Council membership qualifications:

The Council shall be composed of persons selected from the Commonwealth at large without regard to political affiliation but with due consideration of geographical representation.

Appointees shall be selected for their ability and all appointments shall be of such nature as to aid the work of the Council and to inspire the highest degree of cooperation and confidence.

No officer, employee, trustee or member of the governing board of any institution of higher education, no employee of the Commonwealth, except the Superintendent of Public Instruction, or member of the General Assembly or member of the State Board of Education shall be eligible for appointment to the Council.

All members of the Council shall be deemed members at large charged with the responsibility of serving the best interests of the whole Commonwealth. No member shall act as the representative of any particular region or of any particular institution of higher education.

The *Code of Virginia* also specifies that the Council has the duty, responsibility, and authority to review and certify plans or policy recommendations for many of its assigned areas of coordination. While the Council certainly relies on SCHEV staff recommendations and policy analysis to aid its decision-making, the Council itself is ultimately responsible for rendering final decisions.

Organization of SCHEV Staff

Section 23-9.4 of the *Code of Virginia* specifies that “the Council shall employ and appoint a director who shall be chief executive officer of the Council, and such personnel as may be required to assist it in the exercise and performance of its powers and duties.” Staff support for the Council is therefore provided by the director, internal staff, and support from other departments of government as necessary. It is important to note that the *Code of Virginia* specifies that the director of SCHEV be chosen by the Council members, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. This selection system works to purposefully maintain stability in the coordination of higher education, since the director of SCHEV is indirectly accountable to both the Governor and the General Assembly.

The present director of SCHEV was first appointed in 1977 and has served as director ever since. It is the director’s responsibility to oversee the 49 SCHEV staff members (SCHEV has a maximum employment level of 56 full-time equivalent positions, but currently has seven vacancies). SCHEV was appropriated almost \$41 million in FY

1995 (\$4.2 million is for operating expenses and \$36.4 million is dispersed to institutions and supports programs administered by SCHEV).

SCHEV staff are allocated among six divisions: (1) research and financial aid, (2) finance and facilities, (3) academic affairs, (4) administration, (5) student affairs, and (6) information systems (Figure 1). Each of these divisions is assigned its own set of responsibilities. The research and financial aid division provides SCHEV with research assistance services and oversees the administration of financial aid programs. The finance and facilities division prepares operating and capital budget recommendations and administers the State's Higher Education Equipment Trust Fund. The academic affairs division oversees academic planning and coordination, policy development, legislative study preparation, and grant program administration. The administration division handles all internal financial management, as well as external communications, publications, conferences, and special events.

The newly-created student affairs division is responsible for working with college and university student affairs personnel, for administering State equal opportunity programs, and for supervising a project designed to reduce incidents of sexual violence on campus. Finally, the information systems division provides SCHEV with data management services. Collectively, these divisions work to respond to new responsibilities, such as implementing the State Post-Secondary Review Entity (SPRE) program, and to address special study assignments from the Governor or General Assembly.

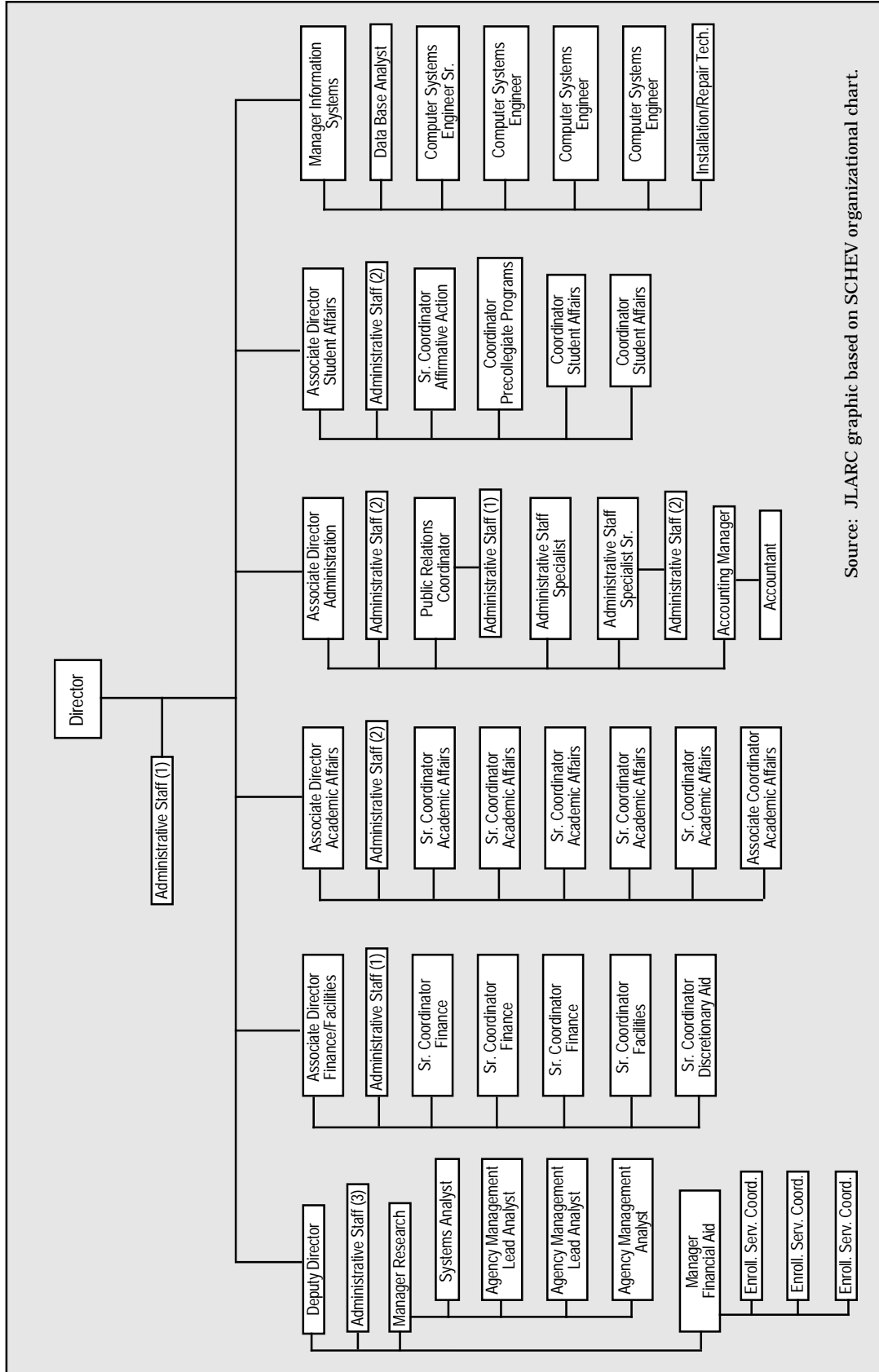
PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

As indicated by the evolution of legislative intent for SCHEV's mission, the State Council of Higher Education must now carry out a number of diverse functions in order to satisfy its statutory, administrative, and regulatory responsibilities. These responsibilities include addressing formal functions related to statutory requirements, such as higher education mission definition and academic program review, as well as less formal functions, such as the formation of work groups to conduct special projects and studies. Because SCHEV's functions are diverse, they are presented within three broad areas. These include: (1) providing mission definition and statewide planning, (2) improving the operational efficiency and effectiveness of higher education programs, and (3) improving student access to higher education.

Providing Mission Definition and Planning for the System

One of SCHEV's primary responsibilities is to provide a statewide perspective in coordinating Virginia's system of higher education. This function requires that SCHEV both prepare a statewide vision for Virginia's higher education system through

Figure 1
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia



Source: JLARC graphic based on SCHEV organizational chart.

its planning process and review the mission statements of individual institutions. As part of its planning process, SCHEV is actively involved in coordinating and making recommendations about institutional budgets which reflect projected enrollments and institutional missions.

Developing a Statewide Plan for Higher Education. The *Code of Virginia* explicitly assigns SCHEV the responsibility for statewide planning. Further, Section 23-9.6:1 of the *Code of Virginia* states:

in developing such plans, the Council shall consider the future needs for higher education in Virginia both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the mission, programs, facilities and location of each of the existing institutions of higher education, in addition to other such matters as the Council deems appropriate.

In order to meet these responsibilities, SCHEV develops and publishes *The Virginia Plan for Higher Education* on a biennial basis.

The most recent *Virginia Plan* focuses on: (1) the needs of the system to accommodate the increasing number of student enrollments that are projected during the latter part of this decade and into the 21st Century, and (2) the need for fundamental change in the higher education system to deal with declining resources, increased student enrollments, changing technology, and greater public expectations for accountability. More specific planning in these areas is carried out by SCHEV through systemwide budgeting, projection of enrollments, and restructuring.

Resource Planning. An important way in which SCHEV influences the higher education system is by providing a statewide perspective for resource planning. SCHEV does this in several ways. For example, SCHEV:

- develops policies, guidelines, and formulas for institutions to use in planning to carry out their missions
- recommends allocation of funding to institutions based on policies, guidelines, and formulas for carrying out statewide initiatives and programs for higher education
- reviews and approves enrollment projections by institutions for use in fiscal and budgetary planning
- assesses budgetary information submitted by institutions to determine how this fits into the higher education plan for Virginia
- provides recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly on institutional budget requests.

Planning for Fundamental Systemwide Changes. As part of its systemwide planning responsibilities, SCHEV works with college and university leaders to determine how the system can best respond to fundamental changes in resources, enrollment, technology, and expectations for accountability. This planning effort, referred to as “restructuring,” became more formalized when the 1994 General Assembly adopted statutory language defining restructuring efforts as actions:

to effect long-term changes in the deployment of faculty, to ensure the effectiveness of academic offerings, to minimize administrative and instructional costs, to prepare for the demands of enrollment increases, and to address funding priorities as approved by the General Assembly. [Item 183E.1, Chapter 966, 1994 Virginia Acts of Assembly, approved May 20, 1994]

The responsibility for overseeing the restructuring of higher education became a SCHEV priority in 1993, when Governor Wilder’s proposed 1994-1996 budget contained language requiring all State-supported higher education institutions to submit restructuring plans to SCHEV. This new SCHEV responsibility was then modified by Governor Allen and the General Assembly to have institutions submit restructuring plans jointly to SCHEV and the Secretary of Education by September 1, 1994 (Appendix D). The 1994 General Assembly approved Appropriation Act language to support this proposal.

To date, SCHEV’s restructuring activities have focused on working with the colleges and universities to help them understand the objectives of restructuring and how they can best meet those objectives, reviewing and evaluating initial plans submitted by institutions in September, and working with institutions to modify plans deemed inadequate. Once this process is complete, SCHEV will begin new systemwide planning efforts to determine the best use of resources to meet upcoming changes and new demands.

Improving the Efficiency and Effectiveness of Higher Education Programs

SCHEV undertakes a number of activities related to improving the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education programs. First, SCHEV has statutory responsibility for reviewing the productivity of academic programs using statutory criteria, and closing nonproductive programs. In addition, SCHEV coordinates institutional efforts to assess student achievement and provide continuing education offerings. Finally, SCHEV is designated as Virginia’s oversight agency for post-secondary education institutional participation in Title IV Higher Education Act programs (federal student financial aid programs). This oversight responsibility will entail examination of institutional efficiency and effectiveness in reducing student loan default rates.

Review of Program Productivity. Since 1982, the majority of U.S. states have implemented an external review of academic program productivity. The most typical system relies upon either simple quantitative measures tied directly to program

discontinuance, or on a quantitative system that initiates qualitative review. The Commonwealth of Virginia was one of the first states to assign these productivity review responsibilities to its higher education coordinating council. Adopted in 1974, Section 23-9.6:1.6 of the *Code of Virginia* mandates that SCHEV “review and require the discontinuance of any academic program which is presently offered by any institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program and budgetary considerations.”

Given this responsibility, SCHEV established written procedures for the evaluation of academic program productivity. The schedule for program evaluation specifies that during the first year of each biennium SCHEV will receive and review the six-year curricular plans from each of the public institutions of higher education. Then during the second year of each biennium, SCHEV will conduct a quantitative evaluation of the productivity of all existing degree programs.

The quantitative evaluation requires that degree programs satisfy at least one of three established criteria in order to be deemed “productive.” According to SCHEV’s “Policies and Procedures for the Quantitative Evaluation of Degree Programs,” a degree program is considered productive by the Council if it: (1) confers a minimum number of average degrees per year over a five-year period varying by academic level; (2) enrolls a minimum average number of full-time equivalent (FTE) students, which vary by subject and academic level (for example, 12.5 FTE students are required for a baccalaureate program and 4.5 FTEs are required for professional and doctoral programs); or (3) is defined as having a “service function” meaning that the program provides component courses of a degree program to non-majors. The most recent review by SCHEV staff places 48 degree programs in the nonproductive category.

Implementation of Student Assessment. Section 23-9.6:1 of the *Code of Virginia* mandates that SCHEV:

develop in cooperation with institutions of higher education guidelines for the assessment of student achievement

report the institutions’ assessments of student achievement in the biennial revisions to the state’s master plan for higher education.

Statutory language on assessment was added to the *Code* in 1989, following four years of SCHEV involvement in the development of a statewide system of student assessment.

The assessment program that SCHEV developed was purposefully different from those implemented in other states. Instead of requiring that all Virginia public institutions of higher education adopt a uniform set of performance standards, SCHEV emphasized the development of individualized institutional assessment programs designed to stimulate instructional improvement and curricular reform. In making this choice, SCHEV sacrificed the ability to make performance comparisons across institutions, in favor of promoting “institutional initiatives . . . the tradition of institutional

autonomy, and the capacity of faculty and administrators to identify their own problems and solve them creatively.” Essentially SCHEV chose to prioritize the improvement of institutional effectiveness over the capacity to monitor institutional accountability.

After establishing an assessment philosophy and related guidelines, SCHEV maintained active involvement in the implementation of the program at the colleges and universities. Four separate, but related, activities were designed to assist in the implementation of assessment policy in Virginia: (1) the establishment of a comprehensive assessment reporting process to monitor institutional progress, (2) the use of Funds for Excellence grant monies to promote assessment initiatives, (3) the development of the Institutional Programs Advisory Committee to aid assessment communication among provosts and academic vice presidents, and (4) the establishment of the Virginia Assessment Group to promote collaboration among assessment professionals. All four implementation tools remain in existence and are still used by SCHEV to further the development of assessment initiatives.

Coordination of Continuing Education. Although many of SCHEV’s responsibilities focus primarily on improving the provision of undergraduate education, SCHEV does maintain some statutory responsibility in the area of continuing education. Section 23-9.10 of the *Code of Virginia* requires that SCHEV “coordinate the continuing education offerings of all state-controlled institutions of higher education including all credit and non-credit academic courses and programs.” SCHEV staff primarily define their role as one of helping institutions learn about recent advances in telecommunications and developing State guidelines for providing continuing education through distance learning programs.

Review of Post-Secondary Education. SCHEV’s involvement in the review of post-secondary education stems directly from the federal 1992 Higher Education Act amendments. These amendments, which are specifically designed to “increase the accountability of institutions participating in the Title IV Higher Education Act Programs [the student financial aid programs] by strengthening State oversight of their participation,” require that each state participating in Title IV programs appoint an agency to serve as its State Post-Secondary Review Entity (SPRE). In so doing, each state becomes responsible for sharing the risk of student loan default with the federal government. The states’ risk sharing amount is set to steadily increase from 1995 to 1997, with states responsible for 12.5 percent of the defaulted amounts in 1995, 20 percent in 1996, and 50 percent in 1997.

Governor Wilder appointed SCHEV as the Commonwealth’s SPRE in 1993. As the State’s SPRE, SCHEV entered into an agreement with the U.S. Secretary of Education detailing Virginia’s participation in the State Post-Secondary Review Program. This agreement specifies that SCHEV will: (1) develop review standards, (2) review referred institutions, (3) periodically review all institutions, and (4) provide information as needed to the U.S. Secretary of Education.

To date, SCHEV has prepared and submitted a plan and a budget for SPRE activities to the U.S. Secretary of Education. In addition, SCHEV has developed: review

standards and a process for the review of institutions, complaint procedures, and associated costs for the collection of data about institutions. SCHEV is currently waiting for federal approval of its standards and review process. SCHEV expects to begin conducting institutional reviews in the spring of 1995 and will likely complete 10 reviews each year.

Improving Student Access to Higher Education

SCHEV has responsibility for carrying out a number of activities which relate to improving access to the higher education system. Some of these responsibilities are assigned to SCHEV through statutory provisions, whereas others have been delegated to SCHEV through legislative study resolutions or gubernatorial prerogatives. Responsibilities related to improving student access to higher education include: (1) approving new academic offerings, such as new degrees, programs, or other academic expansions; (2) facilitating student transfer; (3) administering certain statewide equal educational opportunity programs; (4) administering certain statewide student financial aid programs; and (5) resolving problems affecting student affairs.

Approval of Academic Offerings. The *Code of Virginia* assigns to SCHEV the statutory responsibility and authority to review several aspects of academic program development:

To study any proposed escalation of any public institution to a degree granting level higher than that level to which it is presently restricted

To review and approve or disapprove all new academic programs which any public institution of higher education proposes.

To review and approve or disapprove the creation and establishment of any department, school, college, branch, division or extension of any public institution of higher education which such institution proposes to create and establish [*Code of Virginia*, §23-9.6:1]

In making decisions to approve or disapprove a new academic program, SCHEV is often required to balance the desire to expand educational access with the need to avoid unnecessary duplication. To assist this decision-making process, SCHEV has created a standard set of guidelines to review each of these mandated areas, as well as to review other institutional developments such as organizational change. SCHEV then provides these guidelines to the institutions of higher education and assigns to each an academic liaison from SCHEV to assist with academic program development. The use of the liaisons seems to work well, because institution officials are generally satisfied with the program approval process.

Assistance With Student Transfer and the Development of Articulation Agreements. While the *Code of Virginia* does not assign to SCHEV any specific

responsibilities in the area of student transfer, many legislative resolutions and reports have made it clear that SCHEV has long been identified by the General Assembly as the coordinating body responsible for resolving problems with student transfer in Virginia. As early as 1976, the General Assembly in HJR No. 17 requested that SCHEV “undertake steps to develop Commonwealth Articulation Agreements that will permit the orderly transfer of credits . . . from community colleges to four-year institutions funded by the Commonwealth.” By 1989, the legislative Commission on the University of the 21st Century also recommended coordinative action by SCHEV — citing the expected rise in undergraduate enrollments as a significant factor in the increasing need for well-defined relationships between the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) and the senior institutions. Such legislative actions indicate an expectation that SCHEV coordinate student transfer.

In 1990, SCHEV initiated significant action to improve the development of student transfer policies. At that time, SCHEV and the State Board for Community Colleges established a Joint Committee on Transfer Students (JCTS) and charged it with “recommending means to facilitate transfer from community colleges to senior institutions.” The JCTS was largely successful in meeting its mandate, and in 1991 it promoted the development and adoption of the “State Policy on Transfer.” This document contains guidelines pertaining to admissions, acceptance and application of credits, the tracking of minority transfer student performance, the improvement of transfer communication and information, the definition of administrative responsibility for transfer, and the establishment of a universal transfer module of courses guaranteed to transfer to any Virginia public senior institution. Subsequently, the Standing Committee on Transfer (SCT) was created by SCHEV and the VCCS to oversee the implementation of the State Policy on Transfer. Currently SCHEV staff are actively involved with the SCT, serving as its staff. In 1994, the issue of resolving student transfer problems appears to be a SCHEV priority.

Coordination and Administration of Equal Education Opportunity Programs in Higher Education. Although SCHEV does not have any statutory authority in the area of equal educational opportunity (EEO), historically it has been delegated several EEO responsibilities from the Secretary of Education. Specifically, the Secretary of Education has asked SCHEV to coordinate institutional EEO plans and to administer certain statewide programs to eliminate the vestiges of a segregated system of higher education.

These EEO responsibilities were first assigned to SCHEV in 1969, when the federal Office for Civil Rights (OCR) reported that ten states (including Virginia) were violating Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. Title VI stipulates that:

no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. [42 U.S.C. 2000d]

Following several landmark court cases, the U.S. District Court required Virginia to submit a desegregation plan in compliance with new federal guidelines, which mandated:

not only that each institution pursue nondiscriminatory student admission and faculty and staff employment practices, but also that the state system as a whole develop a comprehensive and coordinated statewide desegregation plan embodying those specific affirmative, remedial steps which will prove effective in achieving significant progress toward the disestablishment of the structure of the dual system and which address the problem of "systemwide racial imbalance." [quoting *Adams v. Richardson*, supra, 480 F.2d at 1165 n.10]

The guidelines also required that Virginia include in its plan measures to produce greater numbers of black professionals and to enhance the traditionally black colleges. To comply with these requirements, SCHEV provided staff assistance to the Governor and Secretary of Education in developing the *Virginia Plan for Equal Opportunity in State-Supported Institutions of Higher Education* in 1974. This plan was subsequently modified to meet emergent federal concerns. The most recent implementation plan included six major components for which SCHEV has some responsibility for either administering or assisting the Secretary of Education with coordinating and monitoring. These components continue to be funded by the General Assembly and administered by SCHEV even though the State is no longer required to submit a plan to the federal government. They include: (1) pre-collegiate programs, (2) minority undergraduate student recruitment and retention, (3) minority graduate student recruitment and retention, (4) minority faculty recruitment and retention, (5) institutional programs, and (6) improving human relations on campuses.

Administering Financial Aid Programs. SCHEV is required by the *Code of Virginia* to be the administering agency for certain State-sponsored financial aid programs (federal loan programs are administered by the Virginia Student Assistance Authority). Most of the programs that SCHEV administers are need-based, while some are based on merit. SCHEV's actual role in the administration of student financial aid programs varies by program. The State Council is currently involved in the administration of 13 financial assistance programs. Total State funding for the programs in FY 1995 was \$26.8 million. In addition to these programs, discretionary financial aid funding is made available to each institution of higher education through the Appropriation Act. Although the institutions directly receive State appropriations for these discretionary aid funds, SCHEV is responsible for annually approving each institution's proposed plan for the expenditure of its appropriation, and making recommendations to the General Assembly regarding how the aid is allocated. Discretionary student aid for FY 1995 totaled \$56.7 million.

In recent years, SCHEV has responded to statewide mandatory budget cuts by making efforts to streamline its administration of financial aid programs. SCHEV has done this by decentralizing financial aid administration and by recommending the consolidation and elimination of certain financial aid programs. Some of the administrative responsibilities that SCHEV decentralized include receiving, processing, and ap-

proving applications for financial aid and distributing financial aid checks. Programs recommended for elimination include the Virginia Work-Study Program, the Virginia Teachers Loan Program, and the Virginia Scholars Program. The first two programs were phased out by the General Assembly as of July 1, 1994, and the third is also targeted for closure, with its funding only continued for FY 1995.

Coordination of Student Affairs. Although SCHEV is statutorily authorized to study the operations of each of the institutions of higher education, it is not specifically required to coordinate, develop, or implement programs to address student affairs issues. Student affairs may include diverse activities affecting student campus life such as, residential living, student health services, student activities, financial aid, admissions, and campus security, among others. Until recent legislative and executive branch interest in some of these issues, SCHEV involvement was limited.

Since 1991, however, SCHEV has been involved in identifying problems affecting student affairs and coordinating institutional responses and problem-solving efforts. Due to legislative and executive branch interest in these issues, SCHEV's actions in this area include special studies and the formation of an advisory group to deal with student affairs. Recently, SCHEV reorganized its staff and created a student affairs division, which includes an associate director, a senior coordinator for affirmative action, a coordinator for pre-collegiate programs, a coordinator for student affairs, and two support staff.

III. Assessment of the Current System for Higher Education Coordination in Virginia

JLARC staff assessed the current system for higher education coordination in the Commonwealth as part of this review. Current needs for statewide coordination of higher education were identified through: (1) a review of current statutory requirements and their legislative histories, (2) discussions with the presidents of Virginia's public colleges and universities, and (3) findings from this review of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). Collectively, this assessment indicates that:

- SCHEV is structured to coordinate the higher education system in Virginia as intended by the General Assembly.
- SCHEV is effective in providing the type and degree of system oversight needed.
- SCHEV is generally fulfilling its mandated responsibilities in a satisfactory manner, although some areas need improvement.

Subsequent chapters discuss SCHEV's performance in providing certain services and recommend changes for improvement.

This review also indicates that a majority of public college and university presidents believe that the current system of higher education coordination has more strengths than weaknesses. Some perceived advantages of the current system and SCHEV's role include: SCHEV's leadership in providing a vision for higher education, SCHEV's ability to provide balanced, rational analysis on higher education issues and problems, the provision of a central mechanism for collecting data to meet extensive federal reporting requirements, and the professional leadership and competence of SCHEV staff. In contrast, some of the perceived disadvantages include: a weak advocacy posture by SCHEV, excessive reporting requirements, favoritism towards larger institutions, and inflexibility on some matters. On balance, however, this structure provides stability and leadership to the system of higher education in Virginia.

VIRGINIA'S CURRENT STRUCTURE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATION IS CONSISTENT WITH LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Like other states, Virginia requires some degree of coordination and planning among its higher education institutions. Moreover, Virginia is not unique in how it has chosen to structure its coordinating functions. The General Assembly deliberately chose the current structure in 1974, after trying a weak coordinating structure and considering other degrees of control and coordination. (For example, the General Assembly considered and rejected creating an entity with more centralized control over institutions as

well as one that functions as a specialized advisory study group.) The current structure, as configured, is consistent with legislative intent for the coordination of higher education in Virginia.

Virginia's Structure for Coordinating Higher Education Is Similar to Other States

Although Virginia is regarded by some experts as having one of the more decentralized systems of higher education governance, it has much in common with other states in terms of how its higher education system has evolved and is structured. Every state has one of two basic types of boards to carry out statewide coordinating functions: either a coordinating board or a consolidated governing board. A coordinating board is concerned primarily with the state and system perspective, but does not direct the daily operations of institutions. In contrast, a consolidated governing board has the authority to provide direction and control the daily operations of institutions. Virginia is currently one of 20 states that has a strong coordinating board structure for higher education (Exhibit 1). Several Virginia college and university presidents who had previously worked in other states' higher education systems told JLARC staff that they believe Virginia's structure works better than the other structures with which they were familiar.

1974 General Assembly Considered Alternative Coordinating Structures

As the entity with ultimate responsibility for the higher education system, the General Assembly has previously considered alternatives to the current system of coordination. In 1974, the General Assembly weighed the option of retaining SCHEV primarily as the specialized advisory study group it had established in 1956. The General Assembly explicitly rejected this option in favor of strengthening SCHEV's authority and making it a stronger coordinating board. In doing so, the General Assembly considered the advantages and disadvantages of alternative approaches to governing and coordinating Virginia's higher education system.

The 1974 report of the Commission on Higher Education articulated a number of advantages and disadvantages of different approaches to higher education coordination. The Commission explored the issue of providing higher education opportunities to an increasingly greater number of people, while avoiding wasteful expenditures occasioned by unnecessary duplication of educational offerings and capital expansion. According to the Commission:

Experience has made it abundantly clear that higher education has reached a point — nearly 150,000 students attending 39 institutions on 48 separate campuses — where reasonable coordination is imperative. [Senate Document No. 19, 1974]

Consolidated Governing Board		Coordinating Boards				Planning Agencies		
		With Program Approval Authority		With Program Review and Recommendation Authority Only				
Board for All Senior Institutions. Separate Agency for Community Colleges	Board for All Public Institutions	Consolidated or Aggregated Budget (d)	Budget Review and Recommendation (f)	No Statutory Budget Role	Consolidated or Aggregated Budget (d)	Budget Review and Recommendation	No Statutory Budget Role or Program Approval	
Alaska Georgia Hawaii Idaho (a) Maine (c) Massachusetts Montana (a) Nevada North Dakota Rhode Island South Dakota Utah Puerto Rico	Arizona Florida (a) Iowa Kansas Mississippi New Hampshire (b) North Carolina Oregon Wyoming Wisconsin (e)	Alabama Arkansas Connecticut Illinois Maryland New Jersey Ohio Oklahoma South Carolina	Colorado (f) Indiana Kentucky Louisiana Missouri Pennsylvania (a) Tennessee Texas (f) Virginia Washington	New York (a)	Florida (a,b)	Alaska (b) California Minnesota New Mexico (g) Oregon (b)	New Hampshire (b)	Delaware Michigan (a) Nebraska Vermont District of Columbia West Virginia (h)

Notes:
 (a) States with agency responsible for all levels of education.
 (b) Separate statutory coordinating agency.
 (c) Maine Maritime Academy and Vocational-Technical institutes are under other boards.
 (d) Separate institutional budgets may be included in consolidated or aggregated budgets.
 (e) State Board of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education is separate from Board of Regents.
 (f) Boards develop the formula on the basis of which allocations are made to institutions.
 (g) Statutory authority related to programs provides only for approval of new graduate programs.
 (h) West Virginia Secretary of Education and the Arts has authority to coordinate rule-making by the state's two multi-campus boards.

Source: McGinnes and Paulson, State Postsecondary Education Structures Handbook 1991, Education Commission of the States, used with permission.

The Commission considered three potential alternatives: (1) to continue having SCHEV function as a specialized advisory study group with no real coordination or control, (2) to establish a statewide controlling board for all State-supported institutions, and (3) to give SCHEV the authority it needed to effectively coordinate and direct higher education, by clearly establishing it as the coordinating agency responsible for statewide higher education policies.

The 1974 Commission, and in turn, the General Assembly supported the third approach to coordinating Virginia's higher education system. The Commission made this recommendation having found no coordination unacceptable, and the efficiency and effectiveness of a central governing board questionable. In choosing this option, the Commission articulated a number of advantages to strong coordination. These advantages include the following:

- the involvement of a large number of knowledgeable lay persons through appointments to institutional boards of visitors
- a decentralized operational approach that promotes institutional effectiveness as well as systemwide guidance
- a statewide approach to planning and implementation of those plans
- greater institutional autonomy and diversity of mission.

In order for SCHEV to have a meaningful coordinating role rather than merely an advisory role, the Commission concluded that SCHEV's authority had to be expanded to include: comprehensive statewide planning, approval of changes to institutions' mission statements, approval of projected levels of enrollment, development and recommendations of capital and operating budgets, and academic program approval. The 1974 General Assembly supported these proposals by making statutory changes to expand SCHEV's authority in these areas.

SCHEV PROVIDES AN APPROPRIATE TYPE AND DEGREE OF SYSTEMWIDE OVERSIGHT

The need for statewide coordination was articulated through examination of SCHEV's legislative history as well as interviews with key higher education leaders. This need primarily addressed the necessity for systemwide planning to avoid duplication and the waste of public resources. SCHEV meets this identified need for coordination in several ways. Its role allows the system to maintain diversity in institutional missions, and provides flexibility that allows for institutional initiative and innovation. SCHEV serves as a liaison between higher education institutions and the executive and legislative branches of State government. SCHEV provides stability and leadership to the higher education system. Overall, perceptions that SCHEV provides the type and degree

of oversight necessary to meet systemwide needs are supported by interview responses of most public college and university presidents.

Statewide Coordination of Virginia Higher Education Is Needed

As discussed in Chapter II, the 1951 Virginia Advisory Legislative Council described the negative effects of not having statewide coordination in higher education, which prompted the creation of SCHEV in 1956. At that time, many states were considering establishing coordinating boards like SCHEV, but were experiencing resistance from the colleges and universities, which were fearful of losing their autonomy. Much of this resistance came not only from institutional board members, but especially from college and university presidents.

In contrast, interviews conducted by JLARC staff revealed that the current presidents of Virginia's public colleges and universities believe there are ongoing needs for statewide coordination of Virginia's higher education system. Among the needs mentioned by the presidents are the following:

- the need to set a general policy direction and vision for the entire higher education system
- the need for a unified point of contact between higher education institutions and the Governor and General Assembly
- the need for regular communication and collaboration among institutions
- the need for coordination of the budget for higher education, to avoid the tendency for college presidents to act out of institutional self interest
- the need for review of academic programs and guidance in developing new programs to avoid duplication
- the need for systemwide research efforts that use rational, dispassionate analyses to guide institutions in important areas for taking action, and the need for an informed higher education critic to encourage change
- the need to collect information across institutions (for example, to meet federal reporting requirements for student financial aid programs)
- the need for an advocate for higher education.

Three of the presidents independently stated that if there were no coordinating agency in existence, then some entity would have to be created to carry out these functions. In contrast to opinions of college presidents in earlier decades, none of the presidents expressed an opinion that there was no need for coordination of the higher education system.

The Current Coordinating System Promotes Institutional Autonomy, Diversity, and Initiative

In defining SCHEV's role as a coordinative body, the General Assembly has deliberately set limits to the powers that can be exercised by SCHEV. These limitations are placed on SCHEV by the very structure of the system and in specific statutory language guiding SCHEV's operations. These limits were intended to maintain institutional autonomy and diversity in the various institutional missions. Consequently, institutions are granted considerable flexibility to take initiative and engage in entrepreneurial activities.

Statute Explicitly Limits SCHEV's Authority. The legislation creating SCHEV in 1956 and subsequent statutory changes that define SCHEV's current role provide a clear indication of the General Assembly's intent to limit SCHEV's authority over individual institutions and to preserve institutional autonomy and mission diversity. Statutory language which sets out the structure of the higher education system places specific authority with institutional governing boards whose members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. In addition, the structure provides that these boards are accountable to the General Assembly, not SCHEV. For example, statutory provisions for Old Dominion University include the following statement: "The rector and visitors of Old Dominion University shall at all times be subject to the control of the General Assembly." [*Code of Virginia*, §23-49.11]. This language is similar to statutory language covering most of the senior public institutions.

Additionally, provisions in the *Code of Virginia* guiding SCHEV's operations limit its authority over public higher education institutions. Specifically, SCHEV's authority is limited in the following ways:

- SCHEV has no direct authority to modify institutional missions once the General Assembly has adopted institutional mission statements.
- SCHEV has no powers over the selection of faculty.
- SCHEV has no authority for determining standards or criteria used for student admissions; this remains a function reserved for institutions and their governing boards.
- SCHEV cannot disapprove the creation or establishment of any departments, schools, colleges, branches, divisions, or extensions of institutions once created and established by the General Assembly.
- SCHEV cannot prohibit institutional representatives from appearing before the General Assembly or the Governor on budgetary issues.

- SCHEV activities cannot impair the powers of institutional governing boards except where specifically allowed in statute.
- SCHEV has no authority over the solicitation, investment, or expenditure of endowment funds held by public higher education institutions.

Limits to SCHEV's Authority Are Consistent With Maintaining Diversity of Institutional Missions. Limitations on SCHEV's authority over institutions arose over concern for the higher education system's ability to maintain diversity in institutional missions over time. This diversity is supported by statutory provisions for SCHEV's operations. The *Code of Virginia* clearly states:

In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the Council, insofar as practicable, shall preserve the individuality, traditions and sense of responsibility of the respective institutions. [§23-9.6:1, *Code of Virginia*]

Even though the purpose and mission of some Virginia public institutions have changed over the years, they still maintain a strong sense of individuality. This appears to be consistent with legislative intent.

Many of Virginia's higher education institutions were in existence when SCHEV was created in 1956. These institutions had already developed considerable diversity in mission. For example, the 1951 Virginia Advisory Legislative Council study described Virginia's higher education system as having four categories of services, provided primarily by four different types of institutions: comprehensive universities; liberal arts colleges; a military school; and teacher training institutions. At that time, the comprehensive universities included: (1) the University of Virginia with its women's division, Mary Washington College; (2) the Virginia Polytechnic Institute with its women's division, Radford College; (3) the Medical College of Virginia; and (4) Virginia State College. The liberal arts colleges included the College of William and Mary and 32 privately run colleges in Virginia. The military school was Virginia Military Institute. The teacher training institutions included Longwood College and James Madison College. These institutions had long-standing traditions at that time that gave them distinct purposes and missions.

Even though the purposes and missions of some of these institutions have changed substantially between 1951 and today, the institutions still maintain their individuality. For example, in JLARC staff interviews, officials at several public institutions said that their primary mission was still high quality undergraduate education, rather than graduate or research programs. While several institutions have also moved up in the level of degrees they grant, SCHEV's approval processes have allowed these institutions to maintain their individuality. For example, SCHEV characterized Mary Washington College and Norfolk State University as "bachelor's degree granting" institutions in 1974; by 1984 they were in the "master's degree granting" category. Yet, they both maintain differentiated missions built on their individual history and tradition.

Similarly, George Mason University moved from the “master’s degree granting” category in 1984 to the “doctoral degree granting” category by 1994. SCHEV’s role in approving institutional missions and institutional changes have allowed an institution such as George Mason University to emphasize its research mission as well as its mission to serve an older, commuting or “placebound” student population. This contrasts with other doctoral-granting institutions which may wish to emphasize a mission involving residential education for traditional-age college students.

SCHEV’s Authority and Structure Promotes Institutional Initiative. SCHEV’s limited authority over institutions and its structure within the higher education system promotes institutional initiative and the pursuit of entrepreneurial activities. This premise is supported by the interview responses of college and university presidents. Their responses indicated that they favor Virginia’s system because SCHEV’s role allows for individual institutions to be proactive.

A number of these presidents have worked in the higher education systems of other states. Consequently, they are uniquely positioned to make comparisons between Virginia’s and other states’ higher education systems. When comparisons were made, a frequently mentioned advantage of Virginia’s system was that it allows for greater initiative and innovation by individual institutions. For example:

One president stated that Virginia is fortunate not to have any “mega-universities” or large multi-campus university systems, because they tend to stifle innovation, become unmanageable, and suffer from gridlock. In a state with a large multi-campus university system, smaller institutions or individual campuses have less ability to innovate or try new ways to market their strengths.

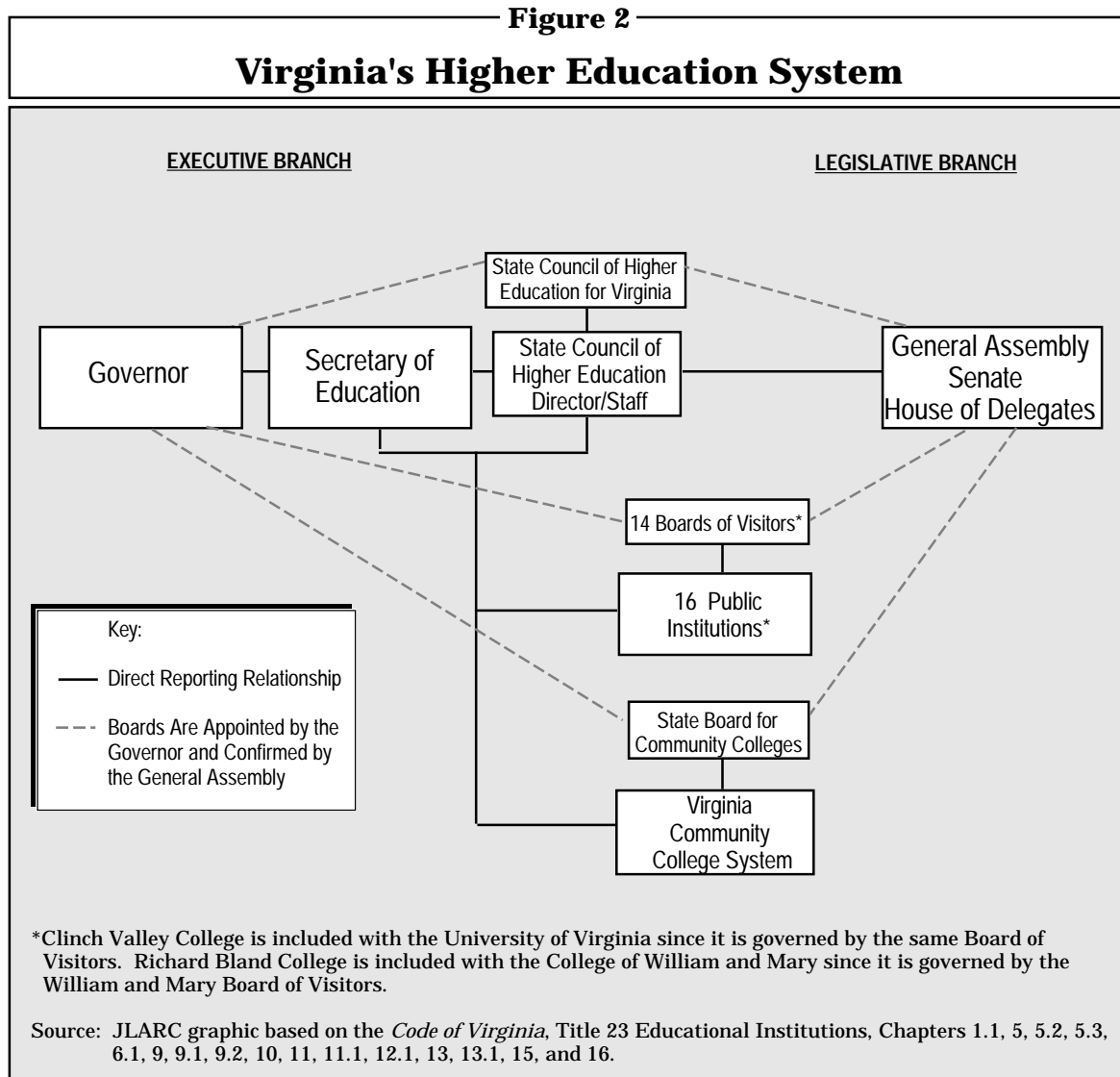
* * *

Another president stated that a centralized governing board such as one that could be found in some other states, would be a “dead hand” on individual institutions.

Additionally, SCHEV’s coordinative role allows the universities in Virginia to be more entrepreneurial. Presidents and institutional governing boards can tailor institutional missions and programming to meet specific market demands. Success in such an entrepreneurial system, however, requires strong, proactive leadership at the institutional level.

SCHEV Serves as a Liaison between Higher Education Institutions and the Legislative and Executive Branches of State Government

According to statute, SCHEV has a dual reporting relationship to the Governor and the General Assembly, and is intended to serve as a point of contact between these branches of State government and the individual institutions (Figure 2). SCHEV’s



accountability to the Governor is reinforced through gubernatorial appointments to the Council. However, SCHEV serves the legislature more directly than most executive-branch agencies. This linkage to the General Assembly is emphasized by legislative action in defining and re-defining SCHEV's mission and responsibilities over the years. SCHEV is a critical link between the institutions and the General Assembly when it provides information and analyses on institutional budgets and conducts requested special studies.

In interviews with JLARC staff, several college and university presidents stated that SCHEV's role as a central liaison between the institutions and State government demonstrates one particular strength of the current system. This role appears to shield the institutions appropriately from some of the pressures associated with the daily political processes in the legislative and the executive branches. Presidents also said that SCHEV presents a balanced statewide perspective and a unified

voice for the system to the legislative and the executive branches. In this respect, the system is not reliant on the separate liaison functions of the various institutions, which could reflect more parochial interests.

SCHEV Provides Stability and Leadership to the Higher Education System

The structure of SCHEV, and the continuity of the State Council and its staff, promote stability in the higher education system. Gubernatorial-appointed State Council members serve staggered terms of four years. These terms can be successive, permitting members to contribute eight years of service and perspective to the Commonwealth. In addition, stability is promoted by the appointment of the staff director by the council members. The current director has served in his position since 1977. Overlapping appointments to the State Council and the appointment of the director by the Council provide continuity at the State level when other leadership positions in higher education may change. For example, leadership from the executive branch, including the Secretary of Education, usually changes every four years with each new administration. One recent Secretary of Education served only six months.

Institutional leadership is more stable. While the tenure of university presidents nationally averages about four or five years, in Virginia it averages approximately seven years for presidents of public senior institutions and 11 years for presidents of community colleges. However, SCHEV provides overall system continuity because it also serves as the system's historian and as a repository for information about both institutional and systemwide changes involving policies, programs, and budgetary decisions.

Besides continuity, the current structure allows SCHEV to provide leadership on issues that span executive branch administrative changes. SCHEV is able to provide leadership by urging the institutions to address key issues that have long-term systemwide impact, require complex solutions, and may negatively affect institutional interests. For example, SCHEV was proactive in raising issues and promoting systemwide dialogue on the future direction of higher education, given shortfalls in general fund revenues. This dialogue resulted in SCHEV advocacy of institutional restructuring that found support by two separate executive branch administrations and the General Assembly. SCHEV's structure provides a consistent, stable mechanism that allows for systemwide initiatives and leadership on a number of issues.

Perceptions of SCHEV by College and University Presidents Are Generally Positive

In interviews conducted for this study, higher education presidents had many observations regarding the strengths and weaknesses of Virginia's system when discussing their perceptions of SCHEV's role in the higher education system and its performance. Exhibit 2 provides a summary of some of the perceived strengths and weaknesses they noted. The opinions of presidents reflect a diversity of perspectives regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the current system in light of SCHEV's performance.

Exhibit 2

College and University Presidents' Perceptions of the Strengths and Weaknesses of SCHEV's Role in the Current System of Higher Education

Perceived Strengths	Perceived Weaknesses
SCHEV provides a vision for higher education in the State and rational analysis in assessing the past and future direction for the system.	SCHEV lacks follow-through as a policy development mechanism. It should support long-term planning better. Better planning for distance learning is needed to avoid institutional duplication of programs.
SCHEV attempts to represent institutional needs in the budget process.	The budget allocation process used by SCHEV is disparate. SCHEV needs to revisit its standards and use a rational basis for budget allocation.
SCHEV has been responsive to individual institutions' needs.	SCHEV does not account enough for diversity or uniqueness of institutions. SCHEV favors large institutions and the status quo.
SCHEV provides meaningful guidance, discipline, and coordination of academic programs to avoid duplication.	The program approval process is too lengthy.
SCHEV provides a meaningful mechanism for collecting data on a statewide level, often to meet extensive federal reporting requirements.	The volume of data SCHEV requests is burdensome, especially to small institutions. SCHEV should emphasize data analysis over data collection.
SCHEV facilitates information sharing and provides a discussion forum for university presidents, and serves as an information source for new college presidents.	SCHEV should conduct more field visits to institutions to obtain better information on institutional problems and challenges.
SCHEV staff are competent professionals and bring as high level of expertise. In addition, they bring stability to the system.	Institutions should have more flexibility to make their own decisions in areas such as capital outlay, purchasing, and personnel.*
Citizen membership on the Council helps to remove SCHEV staff from the political process, somewhat.	

*A number of presidents' perceptions involved the need for more flexibility in areas which are clearly not controlled by SCHEV such as purchasing and personnel. These perceptions appeared to reflect their frustrations in dealing with other State agencies as well as SCHEV.

Source: JLARC staff interviews with 15 presidents of Virginia's public senior institutions, the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System, and the president of Richard Bland College (a two-year public institution), January 1994 through August 1994.

They also reflect, to some extent, the degree to which individual institutions have been advantaged or disadvantaged by recent SCHEV initiatives and actions. In addition, some of their comments clearly conflict with each other. On balance, however, most presidents indicated that the advantages of the current system substantially outweigh the disadvantages.

The majority of the 17 presidents interviewed appear to favor the current system as it is currently constituted and SCHEV's role in it. Ten presidents appeared to be more satisfied than dissatisfied with how the current system (including SCHEV) operates. Additionally, two presidents appeared to be mixed in expressing satisfaction and dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, a minority of presidents expressed overall dissatisfaction with SCHEV. Much of the dissatisfaction appears to stem from instances in which SCHEV has not approved their institutions' initiatives. Although these presidents may have legitimate reasons to disagree with SCHEV's decisions, some measure of dissatisfaction is to be expected because SCHEV provides a systemwide perspective in its decision-making and does not unconditionally "rubber stamp" approval of all institutional initiatives. Instead, SCHEV appears to exercise independent judgment with a statewide perspective, which the majority of the presidents appear to accept. Most presidents also indicated that this independent judgment is beneficial to the current system as a whole, even though it may generate periodic disagreement with SCHEV on specific issues.

A majority of presidents believe that one weakness of the current system is that SCHEV is not a sufficiently strong advocate for higher education to the General Assembly and the Governor. One president called SCHEV an arm of State government, saying that it served the General Assembly more than it served the institutions. Two presidents felt that SCHEV should be more centrally involved in using its influence with legislators for funding, so that college presidents would not have to exert this type of pressure.

Another specific area of dissatisfaction to a minority of presidents was their perception that SCHEV requires excessive amounts of institutional reporting. When probed for details, it appeared that these reporting requirements included mandatory reports needed for SCHEV and other State agencies (such as the Department of Planning and Budget, the Department of Accounts, the Department of General Services, and others). In addition, many reports sent to SCHEV are also needed to fulfill federal reporting requirements. Numerous reporting requirements appear to more negatively impact smaller institutions than larger institutions with separate institutional research offices that coordinate the reports.




















SCHEV IS SATISFACTORILY FULFILLING ITS MANDATED RESPONSIBILITIES

Examination of 17 substantive areas for which SCHEV is responsible indicates that SCHEV is satisfactorily fulfilling most of its mandated responsibilities. A report

card on SCHEV's provision of services summarizes its performance in each of the areas examined (Exhibit 3). As indicated in later chapters of this report, the JLARC review found three areas in which SCHEV could implement some needed improvements and one area in which its performance was unsatisfactory based on its statutory mandate and current activities. Further, SCHEV could improve its performance by establishing clear linkages between a number of its operations and ensuring that the institutions understand the connections. For example, restructuring efforts should include efforts to incorporate program productivity data, as well as the use of information gathered from student assessments and efforts to revise curriculum.

On balance, most of the recommendations for change in this report reflect minor performance problems, which do not require major changes in SCHEV's operations. SCHEV should address recommendations regarding the review of academic program productivity, student transfer policies and articulation agreements, the assessment of student achievement, and the administration of equal educational opportunity (EEO) programs. However, some direction and assistance in improving the administration of EEO programs may be needed from the General Assembly and the Secretary of Education.

Exhibit 3

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia: Report Card on Provision of Services		
 Satisfactory	 Satisfactory with Minor Needed Improvement	 Unsatisfactory
Prepare plans for a coordinated system of higher education (includes restructuring)		
Review institutions' mission statements		
Review institutions' enrollment projections		
Review new academic programs and organizational changes		
Review the productivity of academic programs		
Develop a uniform comprehensive data information system		
Develop guidelines for the assessment of student achievement		
Conduct site-visits and special studies as requested by the Governor and/or General Assembly		
Provide advisory services to private, accredited and nonprofit institutions of higher education		
Submit budget request recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly		
Coordinate continuing education offerings		
Coordinate post-secondary educational programs for all health professionals and occupations		
Administer statewide student financial aid programs		
Assist in the development of student transfer policies and articulation agreements		
Administer equal educational opportunity programs		
Resolve problems in student affairs		
Review post-secondary education		NA
NA = Not applicable given recent assignment of responsibility.		JLARC staff graphic.

In conclusion, SCHEV was created as a result of legislative perceptions about the need for a coordinated system of higher education. As indicated in Chapter II, these perceptions were articulated by the Virginia Advisory Legislative Council report in 1951, the Commission on Higher Education report in 1974 (and the consultant report to this Commission by Donald Shaner and Associates), and changing statutory responsibilities passed by the General Assembly over the course of SCHEV's existence. Collectively, these sources articulate the General Assembly's intent for the role that SCHEV should play in meeting the needs for systemwide coordination. SCHEV's actual operations appear to closely match this evolving legislative intent, as it has been expressed in the *Code of Virginia* over time. This indicates that the present structure of higher education coordination, as constituted in SCHEV's current form, appears to meet the system needs that have been recognized by the General Assembly.

IV. Systemwide Planning

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is responsible for providing statewide planning. As mentioned in Chapter II, the *Code of Virginia* requires SCHEV to “consider the future needs for higher education in Virginia both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, the mission, programs, facilities and location of each of the existing institutions of higher education, in addition to other such matters as the Council deems appropriate.” In carrying out its planning activities, SCHEV plays an important role in establishing a framework for the overall direction of higher education and examining what resources will be necessary to help the system achieve its goals.

JLARC staff assessed SCHEV’s activities in systemwide planning to determine if planning addressed the future needs of the system. This assessment also examined SCHEV’s role in reviewing institutional enrollment projections because SCHEV’s current planning efforts are based on expectations that the system will experience enrollment increases of approximately 80,000 students over the next ten years. This type of an increase will impact future operating and capital resource needs.

Overall, this review indicates that SCHEV’s systemwide planning provides general direction for the higher education system. Additionally, SCHEV proactively develops the strategies necessary to help the system achieve its future “vision,” while preserving the individual traditions and sense of responsibility of the respective institutions. Finally, specific examination of SCHEV’s role in reviewing and approving enrollment projections indicates that the process for estimating systemwide enrollment changes appears reasonable, although SCHEV could begin conducting additional data analyses to better monitor the future magnitude of these changes. It appears that the system will encounter future growth in student enrollment in the next five to 15 years, however, the exact amount of the increase and its exact timing is less clear given the impact of policy decisions on student admissions and the lack of precision in making long-term projections.

SCHEV’s Systemwide Planning for Higher Education in Virginia

Review of SCHEV’s systemwide planning indicates that, overall, SCHEV is adequately planning for the future needs of the higher education system. While the format and content of the systemwide plans have changed over time, review of SCHEV’s plans for the higher education system in Virginia indicate that typically SCHEV has provided a framework for:

- systemwide access goals and attendant program requirements
- systemwide enrollment projections
- defining the research and public service needs of the State

- considering the availability of State resources for the delivery of higher education services.

This framework has usually been articulated in SCHEV's *Virginia Plan*, which is updated every two years.

More recently, however, SCHEV has structured systemwide plans around a series of special reports which were developed through a number of different vehicles such as, the work of the 1989 Commission on the University of the 21st Century, and working sessions with college and university presidents. These reports include:

- *The Case for Change*, the Commission on The University of the 21st Century, 1989
- *Colleges and Universities for the 21st Century: A Report and Proposals for Continued Improvement in Virginia Higher Education*, SCHEV, July 1991
- *Higher Education for the 21st Century*, SCHEV, November 1992
- *The Continuum of Instruction*, SCHEV, November 1992
- *Change and Improvement in Virginia Higher Education: A Preliminary Report to the Governor and General Assembly*, SCHEV, 1993.

These recent plans reflect the perception that the system of higher education has a new set of priorities and must develop strategies to meet these needs in an era of declining State resources. Recent SCHEV planning documents, meetings, and activities reflect a commitment to promoting continued excellence in the Virginia higher education system and accommodating future projected enrollment growth through the more efficient and effective use of available resources.

Collectively, SCHEV's more recent planning efforts have promoted the need for adopting fundamental changes in how Virginia institutions provide higher education. For example:

The 1989 Commission on the University of the 21st Century (or U-21) report, titled "The Case for Change," questioned how Virginia could promote constructive and fundamental change within its colleges and universities so they would be ready to meet the demands of life in the 21st century. Central themes in the report included undergraduate curriculum reform and forging stronger linkages between higher education and society. The Commission presented a vision of a curriculum that: (1) responds to the need for mathematical, scientific, and technological competence; (2) helps students develop competence in public speaking, writing, listening, and seeing the world around them; (3) offers students a global perspective on subjects they choose to study; and (4) introduces students to American thought in all of its complexity.

However, when the U-21 report was issued, it assumed a “predictable flow of funds to institutions” to support efforts toward change. The sustained reduction in State funding to higher education, beginning in 1990, was not foreseen. As a result, SCHEV became proactive in developing a series of papers addressing how to change the direction of higher education to deal more effectively with the reality of reduced general fund appropriations while maintaining institutional excellence. These papers advocated restructuring Virginia colleges and universities by changing administrative structures, reviewing curricula, redefining necessary services, and emphasizing teaching over research, among others.

The success of such planning efforts is illustrated by the support SCHEV has garnered for institutional restructuring from both the executive and legislative branches of government. It appears that through its planning documents and activities, SCHEV has shown leadership in providing a “vision” for higher education in an era of diminishing resources.

The Process for Estimating Future Enrollment for Planning and Budgetary Purposes Appears Reasonable

SCHEV is responsible for reviewing and approving individual institutional enrollment projections. As part of its review, SCHEV uses the institutional projections to estimate systemwide enrollment growth. This is done to assist SCHEV in planning future needs of the system and in determining the resources necessary to meet those needs. SCHEV staff do not generate their own independent enrollment projections, rather they use the institutional projections to arrive at the systemwide estimate of future enrollment.

JLARC staff examined past systemwide estimates and institution-specific enrollment projections to assess their accuracy. This review indicated that past systemwide estimates of enrollment and institutional projections tended to underestimate future student enrollments. This analysis was used as the basis for: (1) assessing the reasonableness of the current estimation process and (2) determining if current SCHEV estimates for enrollment growth of 80,000 students in the next ten years appear likely. Based on their past record of accuracy and converging indicators of population growth for the traditional college-age population, it appears likely that higher education student enrollments will increase in the next five to 15 years. However, the specific magnitude of the increase (40,000, 63,000, or 80,000 students) and exactly when it will peak (in the year 2000, 2004, or 2,008) is less clear.

Institutional Enrollment Projections Drive the Systemwide Estimate of Student Enrollment Growth. It is important to understand that SCHEV’s estimate of systemwide student enrollment growth is based on individual institutional enrollment projections. Because individual institutions and their governing boards are statutorily responsible for their admissions policies, each institution has substantial influence over

its enrollment. Therefore, an institution's enrollment is more subject to its own admissions policy and practices than to factors such as future forecasts of growing or declining high school graduation rates.

Institutional enrollment projections are based on past enrollment growth patterns, although future projections can also be affected by changes in admissions policy from year to year. For example, if an institution projects increasing enrollments over the next five years, it can take action to ensure that its actual enrollments more closely resemble its projections. The institution simply has to accept more students from its waiting list or relax its admissions requirements to accept more students. Some institutions have more flexibility to do this than others, however, due to the market demand for admission to their institutions, the length of their waiting lists, and their ability to modify admissions requirements. Institutions with more open admissions policies, less market demand, and more competition may encounter more difficulty in achieving their enrollment projections.

JLARC staff interviews with institutional research directors revealed that there appears to be some overall agreement that a substantial increase in statewide higher education enrollments should be expected. Nevertheless these directors varied in their opinions of the magnitudes and the timing of the increase. Some indicated that the system could experience increases closer to 40,000 students (rather than 80,000 students) and that the increase would occur later (in the year 2008, rather than 2000 or 2004). Their opinions appeared to be based on their own institutional experience with student enrollments.

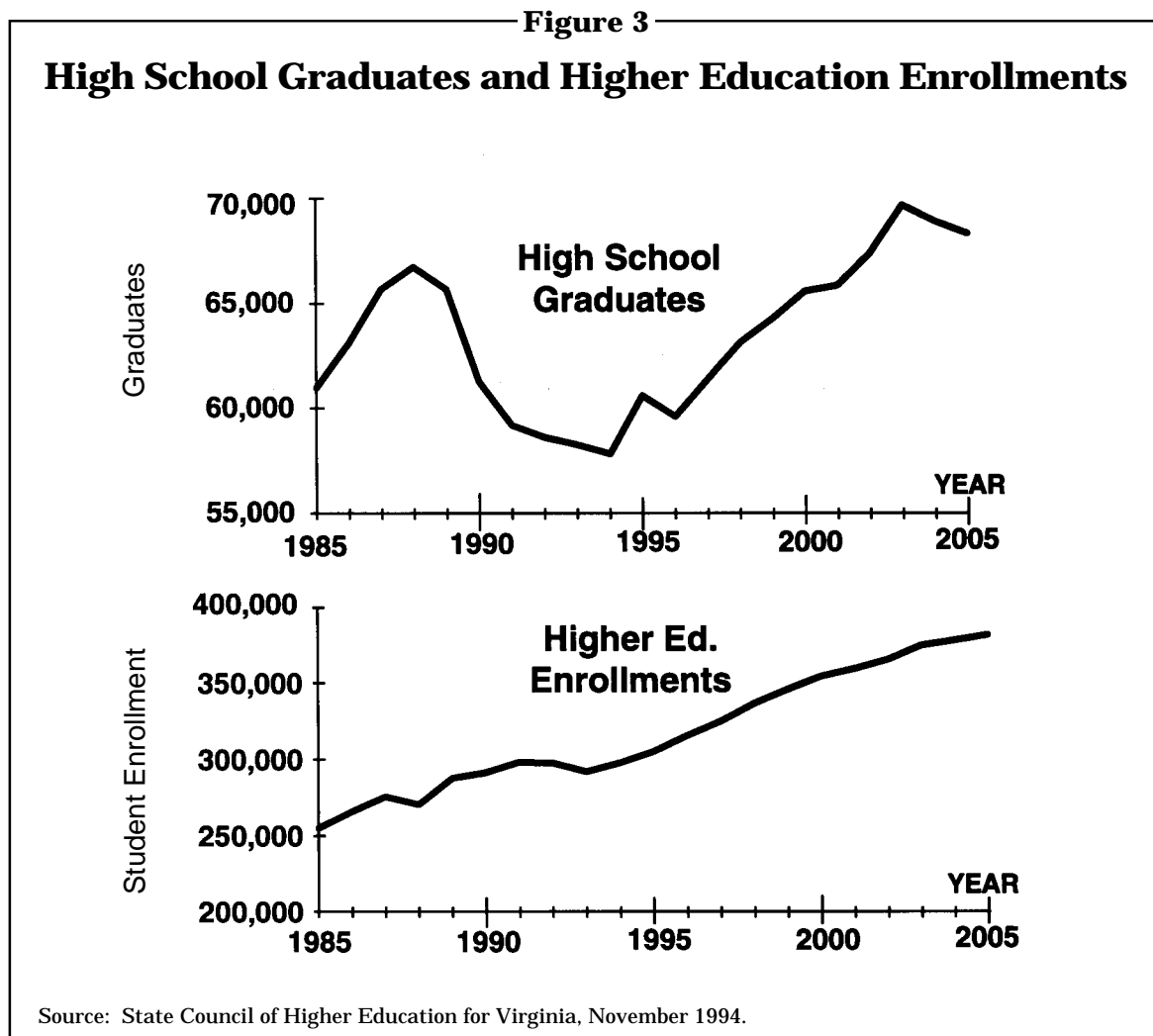
The Process for Determining Systemwide Estimated Enrollment Changes Appears Reasonable. SCHEV currently estimates that systemwide student enrollments will increase by approximately 80,000 students over 1994 headcount enrollment by the year 2004. JLARC staff review of the process used by SCHEV to estimate systemwide enrollment changes indicated that it appears to be reasonable, but could be improved by additional systemwide review of patterns and trends affecting non-traditional student enrollments and high school graduates. As mentioned above, SCHEV does not generate its own independent systemwide enrollment projection; yet, at this time, it does not appear that there would be much to be gained from requiring this of SCHEV staff. SCHEV staff use other secondary data to assess the reasonableness and accuracy of individual institutional projections and to examine systemwide trends. Further, other related population growth indicators appear to support projected increases of the college-age population through the early years of the 21st century.

Generally, SCHEV's systemwide enrollment estimate is obtained by reviewing institutional projections for reasonableness, checking them against secondary data sources, and then summing up institutional projections to derive a statewide total number of future student enrollments. After SCHEV arrives at a systemwide estimate, SCHEV staff again use secondary data sources to check related patterns and trends. These secondary data sources provide an independent, but related, estimate of potential changes in the traditional college-bound population. For example, SCHEV uses projections of Virginia high school graduates made by the University of Virginia Weldon Cooper

Center for Public Service to compare trends in these rates with trends in overall higher education enrollment (Figure 3). However, it is important to note that there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the number of high school graduates and college enrollments. Precise data on the number and characteristics of high school graduates who actually go on to attend a Virginia public higher education institution are currently not available. Therefore, SCHEV uses these data as one indicator of future trends.

A JLARC staff review of a number of alternative indicators of population growth indicated that the number of people in the traditional college-bound age groups should increase between the years 2000 and 2010, compared to 1990 or 1994. Therefore, it appears reasonable to expect a substantial increase in college enrollments when this cohort reaches college-going age, between the years 2000 and 2010. Some of these alternative sources of population growth include:

- University of Virginia Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service projections of educational statistics



- Virginia Employment Commission State Data Center demographic forecasts
- U.S. Department of Education state-level projections of Virginia high school graduates
- Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education state-level projections of high school graduates in Virginia
- Department of Criminal Justice Services projections of the “crime-prone” age group of persons 15 to 24 years of age.

One weakness noted in this review of the current process used by SCHEV to estimate systemwide enrollment changes is the lack of data about high school students who go on to Virginia public higher education institutions and statistical monitoring and systematic projections for the non-traditional student population (commuter students or older students who enter college at later stages in their careers or re-enter college for retraining due to economic changes). Better data on high school graduation patterns could assist SCHEV in better gauging how these patterns affect systemwide enrollment projections. However, these data would need to be supplied to SCHEV periodically by the Department of Education (DOE).

In addition, SCHEV staff could better track and examine past patterns that may have some bearing on future trends regarding “non-traditional” students, once they have sufficient historical data in their student-specific database. For example, SCHEV staff could examine: (1) what proportion of students are “traditional age” versus “non-traditional age”; (2) how these proportions have been changing over time and what factors may have a bearing on these changes; (3) what proportion of “non-traditional” students are full-time or part-time students; or (4) what factors other than age may distinguish “non-traditional” students from “traditional” students, such as previous or current employment, whether they have children, and other characteristics that may cause them to be more “place-bound” than “traditional” students.

***Recommendation (1).* The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should work with the Department of Education to obtain data on high school graduates who go on to Virginia public higher education institutions. As part of this responsibility, the State Council and the Department of Education should develop an agreement as to the frequency of the data collection and how to transmit the data for usage.**

In addition, the State Council of Higher Education should begin tracking and examining enrollment data on non-traditional students to consider historical trends and future impacts of this population on current and future systemwide enrollment estimates. Consideration should be given to including an examination of: (1) the changing proportion of these students in overall student enrollment over time, (2) the changing proportion of full-time and part-time students and its effect on enrollment changes, and (3) other

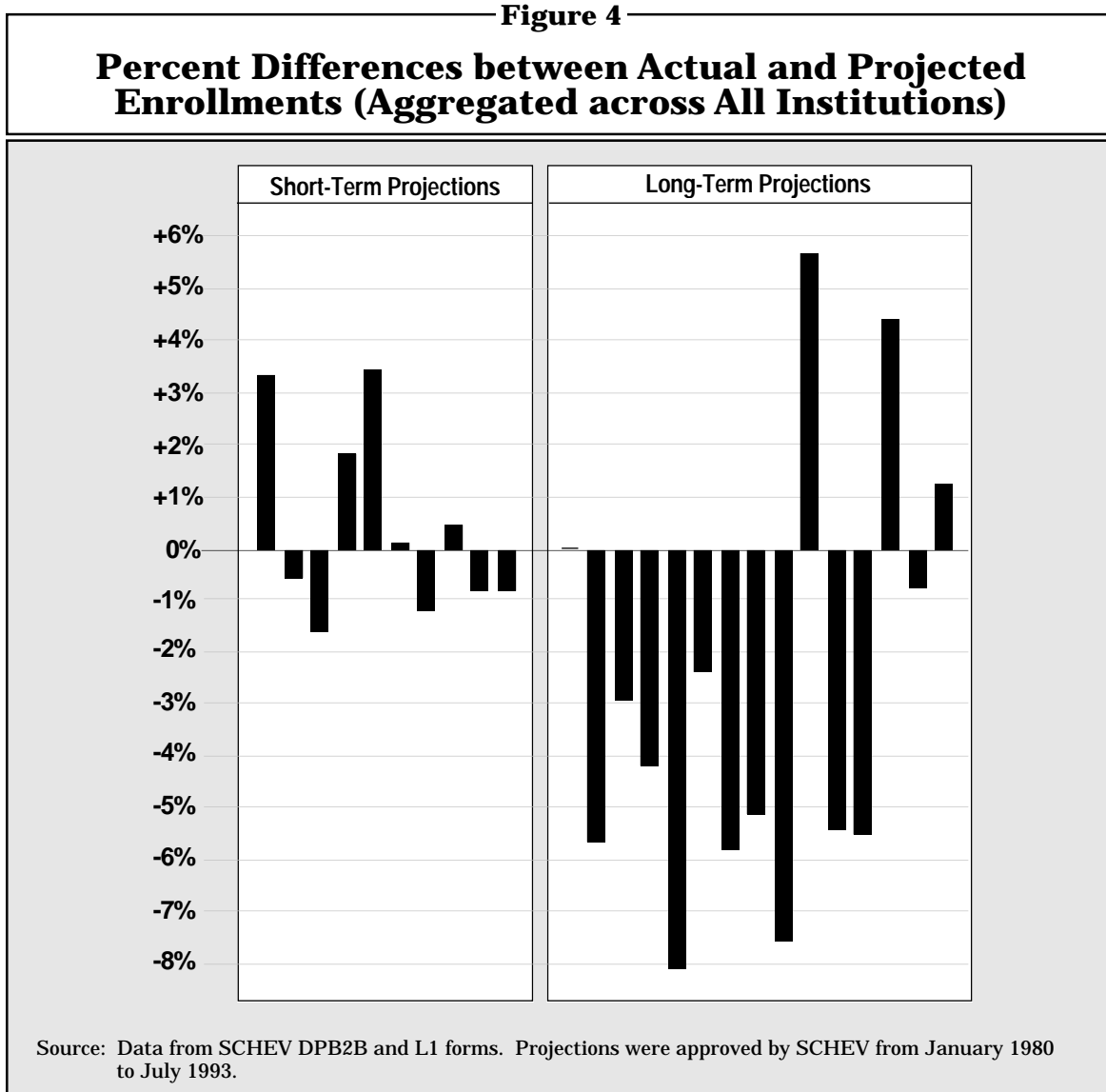
factors which may differentiate this group from the traditional college-bound population cohort.

Past Institutional Enrollment Projections and Systemwide Estimates Are Conservative. To assess the soundness of the current process used to project and estimate future enrollment changes, JLARC staff also examined past estimates and institution-specific enrollment projections for accuracy in predicting actual student enrollment. This review found that past systemwide estimates of enrollment changes and institution-specific enrollment projections have been conservative and tend to underestimate actual student enrollment. Consequently, if the historical experience from the past six years is an indication of what to expect from future projections, it is possible that future projections may be lower than the actual number of students who might enroll in public colleges and universities.

As part of this assessment, JLARC staff reviewed both short-term and long-term enrollment projections from the last six years for accuracy. “Short-term” projections are those which the institutions submit to SCHEV approximately one to two years prior to the year projected. These projections are collected for use in determining operating budgets for the next biennium. “Long-term” projections are those which institutions submit to SCHEV approximately three or more years prior to the year projected. These are often used for capital planning purposes. Two factors were considered in examining the accuracy of short- and long-term projections: (1) whether the enrollment projections over- or under-estimated actual student enrollment figures, and (2) the magnitude of the differences in situations where there were over- or under-projections.

Review of enrollment projections aggregated across the Virginia public higher education system revealed that in the last six years (which encompasses 10 short-term projection periods), more institutions (especially the doctoral and research universities) experienced enrollments that exceeded their projections. For the 10 short-term projections examined on an aggregate basis, about one-half under-estimated actual student enrollment figures and about one-half over-estimated actual enrollments (Figure 4). In terms of the fifteen aggregated long-term projections, more projections were lower than the actual enrollment figures (eleven projections under-estimated enrollments while four over-estimated enrollments).

Review of the magnitude of error in the systemwide enrollment projections revealed that it is low in most years. For eight of the ten short-term projections, the absolute percent error is less than two percent; in five of these projections, it is less than one percent. For the long-term projections, the magnitude of error on average is greater than that of the short term projections (which is expected), but it is still relatively low considering the time horizons (five and ten years in the future). In particular, in 13 of the 15 long-term projections, the absolute percent error is less than six percent; in five of them, it is less than three percent. It is important to note that aggregate systemwide projections generally appear more accurate because they benefit from the canceling effect of over-estimates by some institutions and under-estimates by other institutions. Therefore, while the error of systemwide projections may be small, individual institutional projections may actually show more variance.



An examination of institution-specific enrollment projections and actual enrollment figures indicated that a majority of the institutions under-estimated both short-term and long-term student enrollments. Twelve of 17 institutions' short-term projections and 13 of 17 institutions' long-term projections under-estimated actual enrollments (Table 1). Of these 13 institutions long-term projections, almost one-half of these (six institutions) experienced under-estimates in all of their 15 separate long-term projections.

A small number of institutions were exceptions to the main trend, however, by having more over-predictions of actual enrollments than under-predictions. Institutions with more short-term over-predictions are: Christopher Newport University, Mary Washington College, Old Dominion University, Virginia Military Institute, and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS). Institutions with more long-term over-

Table 1

**Number of Institutional Enrollment Projections
that Are Lower than Actual Student Enrollments
Fall 1988 - Fall 1993**

	Short-Term (out of 10)	Long-Term (out of 15)	Total (out of 25)
All Institutions (aggregated)	5	11	16
Research and Doctoral Universities:			
College of William and Mary	8	15	23
George Mason	7	12	19
Old Dominion	2	1	3
University of Virginia	7	15	22
Virginia Commonwealth	7	11	18
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	7	15	22
Master's Colleges and Universities:			
James Madison	9	15	24
Longwood	6	19	16
Mary Washington	2	14	16
Norfolk State	8	2	10
Radford	9	15	24
Virginia State	6	4	10
Baccalaureate Colleges:			
Christopher Newport	4	12	16
Clinch Valley	7	15	22
Virginia Military Institute	2	4	6
Associate of Arts Colleges:			
Virginia Community College System	4	11	15
Richard Bland	8	11	19

Source: The State Council of Higher Education fall headcount enrollment data for FY 1989 - FY 1994 and SCHEV DPB 2B and L1 institutional forms.

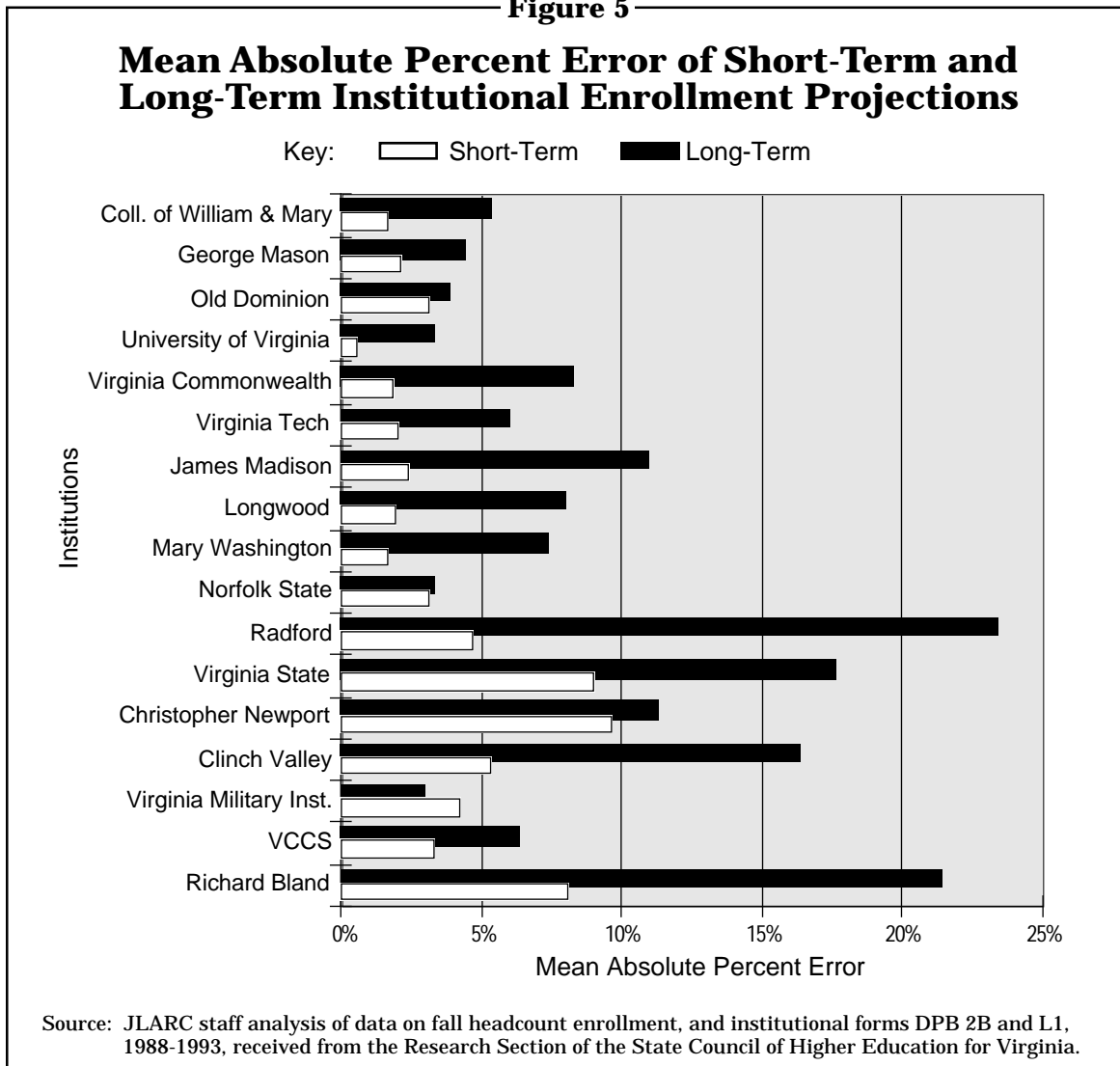
predictions are: Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Virginia Military Institute, and Virginia State University.

The mean absolute percent error (a commonly-used measure for assessing the accuracy of projections) from individual institutions was examined to assess the accuracy

of institution-specific projections. The mean absolute percent error (MAPE) for each institution was calculated separately for short-term projections and for long-term projections. These are shown in Figure 5. On average, the institution-level MAPE is substantially higher than the aggregated MAPE, indicating that on the individual institutional level, the magnitude of error is generally higher.

Further, some patterns emerge when distinguishing the six doctoral and research universities and the VCCS from the other ten institutions. As shown in Figure 5, the six doctoral and research universities (the College of William and Mary, George Mason University, Old Dominion University, the University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) each show a smaller MAPE, on average, than the other institutions. On average, the VCCS has a MAPE that is larger than those of the doctoral and research universities but smaller than those of the remaining ten institutions.

Figure 5



It is important to note that projections involving larger enrollments generally result in smaller error rates. For this reason, it is not surprising that the error rates for the six doctoral and research universities and the VCCS are lower than for smaller institutions. Collectively, these six doctoral and research institutions have a combined enrollment greater than 100,000 students. Likewise, the VCCS has enrollments greater than 100,000 students for the years examined. Together, the doctoral and research universities and the VCCS account for more than 80 percent of total higher education enrollments.

In summary, past systemwide and institution-specific enrollment projections have tended to underestimate the actual student enrollments at Virginia's public colleges and universities. Short-term enrollment projections appear to be more accurate than long-term projections, as would be expected. Because long-term systemwide enrollment projections play a crucial role in planning large capital expenditures, it may be important for SCHEV to promote the refinement of these projections to account for the impact of non-traditional students on enrollment growth. However, it appears likely that the system will experience significant increases in the long-term, given alternative data sources on population growth.

V. Promoting Effectiveness and Efficiency in the System of Higher Education

A number of statutory responsibilities of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) involve promoting the effectiveness and efficiency of academic programming in the higher education system. SCHEV meets these responsibilities by reviewing the productivity of academic programs and promoting the development of student assessment programs for institutions to use in determining student achievement of higher education learning objectives.

A comparison of SCHEV's statutory responsibilities in these areas with their related activities revealed that SCHEV's performance is varied. SCHEV's performance of its statutory responsibilities for productivity review has been inconsistent and not fully effective, partially due to the unresponsiveness of colleges and universities. Of the 99 programs placed under "close scrutiny" for low productivity over the past eight years, only five were closed. Further, the process is not well linked to other institutional efforts to assess student achievement, restructure institutional operations, allocate resources, or develop strategic plans. Moreover, greater efforts should be made to examine the quantitative and qualitative aspects of additional academic programs across colleges and universities.

SCHEV's work in the area of assessment, however, has yielded positive improvements in institutional effectiveness. Significant curricular changes have resulted from SCHEV's leadership in this area and many institutions feel that assessment activities have helped prepare them to meet accreditation requirements. Some minor changes to the assessment process would improve SCHEV's efforts, however.

PRODUCTIVITY REVIEW

One of SCHEV's primary responsibilities is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education by regularly reviewing the productivity of all academic programs offered at State-supported colleges and universities. Section 23-9.6:1 of the *Code of Virginia* specifies:

the Council of Higher Education shall have the duty, responsibility, and authority: To review and require the discontinuance of any academic program which is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program and budgetary considerations.

Examination of this mandated function indicates that SCHEV's productivity review process is largely ineffective and in need of improvement.

As currently structured, the productivity review process does not consistently result in the closure of programs which are cited by SCHEV as having low productivity. Further, institutions do not seem to routinely use the productivity information to guide their programming, staffing, or budgeting decision-making. While institutional budgeting formats make it impossible to estimate how many resources may be consumed by operating these identified nonproductive programs, it is likely that resources are being used inefficiently to support low enrollment programs. The review process could be improved if it were more comprehensive and incorporated some qualitative measures of program performance.

Review Process Has Not Effectively Eliminated Low Productivity Programs

After an extensive effort to close nonproductive programs in 1987, SCHEV's current productivity review process has not consistently produced intended results, that is, to "require the discontinuance" of programs with low productivity. SCHEV staff have indicated that from 1981 to 1992 more academic programs were closed than were opened (373 programs were closed and 231 programs were opened). However, these closures occurred largely independent of SCHEV's productivity review process. Over time, higher education institutions have chosen to close many academic programs, sometimes at SCHEV's informal urging and sometimes at their own initiative. Nevertheless, JLARC staff found that most academic programs cited as nonproductive by SCHEV from 1987 to 1994 remain in operation. Consequently, JLARC staff concluded that the productivity review process was not an effective agent for change during that time. As indicated, there are two main reasons why the review process was not fully effective: (1) most of the programs cited by SCHEV as having low productivity from 1987 to 1994 were not closed and continue to operate through this period of review, and (2) SCHEV's current application of its productivity criteria are narrowly applied so that many programs are exempt from further review.

Using the *Code of Virginia* for guidance, SCHEV currently evaluates degree programs on the basis of the three criteria: number of degrees conferred, number of majors enrolled, and service function of the program to other programs. The minimum acceptable standards for each of these criteria are displayed in Table 2. Programs that are unable to meet any of the three quantitative criteria and are not found to be exempt from review due to "non-quantifiable considerations," are labeled nonproductive by SCHEV. Although SCHEV has the statutory authority to discontinue these programs (*Code of Virginia*, §23-9.6:1.6), historically, it has not consistently required this. Since 1987, it has placed nonproductive programs under "close scrutiny" and waited for improvement.

From 1987-1994, 99 different academic programs offered at senior institutions were put under close scrutiny by SCHEV (Appendix E). A review of these 99 programs yielded three findings: (1) most of these nonproductive programs are still in operation,

Table 2

**Minimum Quantitative Standards for Productivity
by Type of Academic Degree, Averaged over Five Years**

Average Annual Minimum Quantitative Standards	Associate in Arts or Associate in Science	Associate in Applied Science	Baccalaureate	Master	Professional or Doctoral
Number of Degrees Conferred	10 Degrees	7 Degrees	5 Degrees	3 Degrees	2 Degrees
Number of Majors Enrolled	25 FTEs	17.5 FTEs	12.5 FTEs	6.0 FTEs	4.5 FTEs
Number of Students Served	20 FTEs	15 FTEs	12 FTEs	10 FTEs	N/A
Note: FTEs = full-time equivalent students. Source: <i>Policies and Procedures for the Quantitative Evaluation of Degree Programs</i> , State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, 1987.					

(2) a majority of the 99 programs are cited more than once between 1987 and 1994, and (3) four senior institutions are responsible for over one-half of all the nonproductive programs.

As of March 1994, only five of the programs cited as nonproductive between 1987 and 1994 were officially closed, 13 were organizationally modified, and five were merged with another existing program. An additional seven programs were re-classified as exempt from normal review due to their contributions to other graduate programs. The remaining 69 programs are still offered, without significant alteration, at the senior colleges and universities (See Table 3 and Appendix E). It can, and has been reasonably argued by institution officials that some of these programs are central to their institution's mission, and therefore need to be maintained irrespective of their actual enrollments. But this explanation is suspect in many cases, because if students are not required to enroll in the programs' courses, then the program is probably not an institutional priority. Instead, the continuing status of so many nonproductive programs seems to suggest that senior institutions are not compelled to make program changes once they are notified that a program is under close scrutiny.

Additional evidence of the ineffectiveness of the productivity review process is provided by the fact that programs are often cited more than once for non-productivity;

Current Status of Programs SCHEV Cited as Nonproductive 1987-1994						
Status of Programs	Programs First Cited in 1987	Programs First Cited in 1989	Programs First Cited in 1991	Programs First Cited in 1993	Programs First Cited in 1994	Total Citations 1987-1994
Number of Programs Remaining Unchanged	15	19	12	10	13	69
Number of Programs Closed	1	2	1	1	0	5
Number of Programs Organizationally Modified	6	5	1	1	0	13
Number of Programs Merged With Other Programs	3	1	1	0	0	5
Number of Programs Exempted From Further Review	N/A*	1	N/A*	N/A*	6	7
Total Number of Programs Cited By SCHEV As Nonproductive	25	28	15	12	19	99
*Exempted programs were not included in SCHEV Productivity Review Reports for these years.						
Source: SCHEV Productivity Review Reports (1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1994) and Institutional Inventory of Degree Programs (3/3/94).						

yet they remain in operation mostly unchanged. For example, of the 99 academic programs labeled nonproductive, 57 were cited more than once in the five productivity reviews conducted between 1987 and 1994 (Table 4). Twenty-five programs were cited three or more times; while 16 programs were cited four or more times. Four programs were cited in all five productivity reviews. It is important to understand that in order for

Table 4
**Frequency of Nonproductive Program Citations
 by SCHEV, 1987-1994**

Frequency of Citations	Programs First Cited in 1987	Programs First Cited in 1989	Programs First Cited in 1991	Programs First Cited in 1993	Programs First Cited in 1994	TOTALS
Number of Programs Cited Once	9	4	6	4	19	42
Number of Programs Cited Twice	5	14	5	8	N/A	32
Number of Programs Cited Three Times	2	3	4	N/A	N/A	9
Number of Programs Cited Four Times	5	7	N/A	N/A	N/A	12
Number of Programs Cited Five Times	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	4
TOTALS	25	28	15	12	19	99

Source: SCHEV Productivity Review Reports (1987, 1991, 1993, and 1994) and Institutional Inventory of Degree Programs (3/3/94).

these four programs to be cited in all five reviews, each had to average less than the required number of degrees conferred (three for master's programs and five for baccalaureate programs) for an 11-year period (1983-1994). Yet, three of the four programs still operate essentially unchanged, and the fourth was only modified slightly (the classification of the Master's degree was changed from a Master in Science/Master in Arts to a Master in Science/Master in Education). These numbers indicate that the productivity review process is not consistently providing a sufficient impetus for program discontinuation or improvement.

Finally, the review of these 99 nonproductive programs indicated that some senior institutions are more likely than others to offer nonproductive programs. Of the 15 senior institutions, four (Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, University of Virginia, and Virginia State University) accounted for 58 of the 99 nonproductive programs (Table 5). While the University of Virginia had the largest number of nonproductive programs, at 17, five of these programs are classified as exempt, given their contributions to other graduate programs. Norfolk State University and Virginia State University each had 15 nonproductive programs, and Old Dominion University had 11 nonproductive programs. Virginia State University's programs, in particular,

Table 5

Nonproductive Programs Identified, by College or University 1987-1994

College or University	Number of Programs Cited as Non- Productive	Number of Cited Programs That Were Closed	Number of Cited Programs That Were Merged or Modified	Number of Cited Programs That Were Exempted From Further Review
University of Virginia	17	1	4	5
Norfolk State University	15	3	0	0
Virginia State University	15	0	2	0
Old Dominion University	11	0	3	0
James Madison University	7	0	0	0
Virginia Commonwealth University	7	1	1	1
Radford University	6	0	4	0
Mary Washington College	4	0	2	0
Christopher Newport University	3	0	0	0
Clinch Valley College	3	0	1	0
George Mason University	3	0	1	0
Longwood College	3	0	0	0
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	3	0	0	0
College of William and Mary	1	0	0	1
Virginia Military Institute	1	0	0	0
TOTALS	99	5	18	7

Source: SCHEV Productivity Review Reports (1987, 1989, 1991, 1993, and 1994) and Institutional Inventory of Degree Programs (3/3/94).

comprise seven of the 16 programs which were cited by four or more reviews and three of the four programs cited in all five reviews. While SCHEV needs to work with all institutions to improve the productivity of their low-enrollment programs, it should take special efforts to target these four institutions for improvement.

Recommendation (2). **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should work with the presidents and provosts of Virginia's public senior institutions to ensure that the 48 programs cited as nonproductive in 1994 are either closed, merged with another program, or organizationally modified. The status of these programs should then be reported to the Governor and the General Assembly as part of an ongoing review of program productivity.**

Productivity Review Process Rarely Impacts Institutional Decision-Making

Ideally, campus administrators should use the results of SCHEV's productivity review process to re-evaluate academic program offerings, and then to reallocate staff and other resources. Likewise, SCHEV, as the coordinating body for higher education, should see to it that productivity review information is used consistently to improve the productivity of Virginia's colleges and universities. Interviews with institutional vice presidents, provosts, and deans indicate that neither activity is occurring. University programming, staffing, and budgeting decisions are often made without reviewing productivity information. For example:

The University of Virginia recently decided to close its Rhetoric and Communications department. The chairman of that department reported to JLARC staff that although the program had 150-175 majors per year and approximately 1000 students taking courses, it was not strong. The former chairman stated that the decision to close the program was not influenced by SCHEV's productivity review, but was instead the result of a finding by a UVA ad hoc committee on curriculum. This committee reported that the rhetoric program "did not have a solid theoretical base," and should not be continued. The Rhetoric and Communications department was therefore closed, while nine other UVA programs on the 1994 SCHEV "nonproductive programs" list were continued.

The application of productivity information to assessment, restructuring, budgeting, and strategic planning has the potential to foster some of the efficiencies higher education has been seeking. While it is important to understand that each of these activities has its own objectives, the information generated by one process can be used to aid decision-making in each of the other areas. For example, institutional restructuring could benefit from the use of information on academic program performance. Unfortunately, productivity information was not sent by SCHEV to institutions until one month before restructuring plans were due in September 1994. Nevertheless, SCHEV staff indicated that a number of institutions used 1993 productivity review results to plan their recent restructuring efforts.

As of December 12, 1994, the Secretary of Education and SCHEV have approved 10 institutions' restructuring plans. SCHEV staff reported that these plans contain a range of proposals to review nonproductive programs and take action to address problems with program productivity. While it is too soon to determine the outcome of institutional restructuring efforts, it is possible that these efforts will result in the closure of a number of programs currently cited as nonproductive.

Based on the restructuring plans submitted by Virginia institutions (including the 10 approved plans and the six plans which have not been approved as of December 12, 1994), SCHEV staff indicated that institutions have closed or are planning to close 11 of 48 programs cited as nonproductive in 1994. Three programs were targeted to be merged with existing programs, while 11 programs are either interdisciplinary or provide a service function to other programs. The remaining 23 programs are targeted by the institutions for ongoing review; some will be examined as part of institutional restructuring efforts that are targeting entire colleges within a university for internal review.

It is important to note that institutional restructuring is an evolving process and implementation of the plans has not yet occurred. Consequently, it is too early to evaluate the impact of the plans on increased program productivity. However, if SCHEV wants institutions to take productivity results seriously, then it needs to consistently apply the results of its productivity analysis to its other coordinative efforts such as restructuring, planning, and budgeting.

***Recommendation (3).* The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should devise specific strategies to consistently emphasize the necessary connection between productivity review, assessment, strategic planning, restructuring, and budgeting. As a part of this process, SCHEV should work to ensure that colleges and universities are provided with the results of their productivity review in a timely manner.**

Productivity Review Process Is Not Comprehensive

The productivity review process currently used by SCHEV inadequately addresses many important aspects of program evaluation. Although this process is structured to assess productivity in accordance with the review criteria set forth in statute, it misses opportunities to better assess effectiveness by employing measures of quality. Documenting the number of degrees conferred, the number of majors enrolled, and the number of students served by a program is valuable, but insufficient. The decision to limit the review of programs to certifying compliance with these three standards means that many programs which could be targeted as nonproductive are not closely scrutinized for potential closure. Moreover, cross-institutional comparisons of programs should be made so that issues of program duplication, cost, and statewide market demand can be addressed. These types of comparisons could be better made if all programs within a given subject area are reviewed on a systemwide basis. To improve the effectiveness of the program review process, statutory changes are necessary to

incorporate the use of qualitative measures. Additionally, a better review scheduling mechanism needs to be adopted to supplement the current statutory standards.

Current Use of Quantitative Standards Is Inadequate to Address Program Performance. The effectiveness of productivity review in Virginia is reduced by SCHEV's decision to limit its productivity review process to the narrow application of three minimum productivity standards. This decision is problematic because a narrow application of the standards results in the exemption of many programs from further review. The end result is that SCHEV's use of three minimum productivity standards fails to address many program performance concerns.

As mentioned earlier, SCHEV evaluates degree programs according to three criteria: number of degrees conferred, number of majors enrolled, and service function of the program to other programs. JLARC review of the application of these productivity criteria indicates that they are not very broadly applied and do not capture many programs with questionably low enrollments. This is because SCHEV staff consider a degree program productive if it meets *any one* of the three quantitative evaluation criteria.

As indicated in Table 2, this means that a baccalaureate program is considered productive if it averages five degree recipients per year over the last five years. If the baccalaureate program fails to meet this standard, but averages 12.5 full-time equivalent students enrolled in the program over five years, then it is still considered productive. Finally, if the program fails to meet both of these first two minimum standards, but can demonstrate that it provides component courses of a degree program to at least 15 full-time equivalent non-major students per year, then it is deemed productive.

The qualification that a program fail all three standards before being classified nonproductive removes a large number of questionable programs from further review. For example, in 1994, 167 academic programs offered at Virginia's public senior institutions averaged less than the requisite number of degrees conferred (this represents 16 percent of the 1066 programs offered; see Appendix F for a listing of these programs). Yet only 48, or less than one-third, failed all three criteria and were placed under close scrutiny by SCHEV (Appendix E). Therefore, when considered collectively, these three standards allow many programs with seriously low enrollments to continue. SCHEV's application of the quantitative standards does not result in effective monitoring of the performance of many program offerings.

Recommendation (4). **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should assess its current application of the three quantitative standards used to classify nonproductive programs. Consideration should be given to more broadly applying the standards and to raising the minimum standards to a level that would capture more programs with low enrollments.**

Productivity Review Would Benefit From the Addition of Qualitative Measures of Productivity. The quantitative standards described above provide information about the number of students served by a degree program. They do not

address the quality of the education received by a student in a particular degree program. Although SCHEV's policies and procedures for productivity review specify the use of "non-quantifiable considerations," these are more narrowly applied in Virginia than in most Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) states. Moreover, while SCHEV does look at program quality via its assessment process, it does not appear to incorporate this information into the productivity review process. SCHEV staff state that they currently lack the statutory authority to do so, and therefore they have not undertaken this type of review.

A review of other SREB states' productivity review processes suggests that one-half incorporate some measure of program quality (Table 6). For example, a program review checklist used by the Florida Board of Regents routinely incorporates a number of qualitative measures into program evaluation — assessing the quality of the program, its students, its faculty, and its facilities and resources. Similarly, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board has developed nine quality measures with which to evaluate programs. These include assessments of curriculum, admissions policies, program objectives, and staff and support services. In both cases, information about program quality is an essential component of the productivity review.

Productivity review in Virginia could benefit from the adoption of similar qualitative standards. Although SCHEV staff have expressed dissatisfaction with their current productivity review process, movement to incorporate some measures of quality has been slow. This is due in part to SCHEV staff perceptions that statutory authority is necessary to initiate this type of review and concerns about current staff levels to absorb the additional work. Currently, SCHEV uses non-quantifiable performance indicators only to justify the continuation of a low enrollment program that has failed to meet all three of the quantitative productivity standards. Quality considerations are therefore not part of the regular review process. If quality considerations are to be made a standard aspect of program review, then the *Code of Virginia* may need to be modified.

While both quantitative and qualitative approaches to productivity review can result in the elimination of nonproductive programs, qualitative measures have the added advantage of allowing selectivity in decision-making. Using qualitative measures, large ineffective programs could be evaluated and reformed. Likewise, low enrollment programs could be justified on the basis of importance to institutional mission, anticipated employer demand, or ability to serve an under-represented student population. Under either set of circumstances, the addition of qualitative information would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of productivity review.

***Recommendation (5).* The General Assembly may wish to consider revising the *Code of Virginia* to allow for the use of qualitative measures in assessing academic program productivity. If the *Code of Virginia* is revised, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should then revise its productivity review process to include some qualitative measures of program performance. Consideration should be given to including measures such as the appropriateness of a program's curriculum, the quality of its faculty teaching**

Table 6
Comparison of SREB States' Program Review Processes

	State												
	AL	AK	FL	GA	KY	LA	MD	NC	OK	SC	TX	VA	WV
All Academic Programs Reviewed on Regular Cycle	A ¹	A ¹	A			A ¹	A ¹		A ¹	A	A ¹		A
Programs Reviewed Collectively By Subject Area			A		S			S	S	A	A	S	A
Program Cost Data Used in Review Process		F	A						A	A	F		A
Data Documenting Degrees Conferred and/or Enrollment Used In Review Process	A	A	A		S	A	A	S	A	A	A	A	A
Site Visits Used By The Board/ Commission To Review Programs			A							A	F	S	
Outside Consultants Used By the Board/ Commission To Review Programs			A		A ²					A	A	S	A
Some Measure of Program Quality Incorporated Into Review Process			A		A			S	A	A	A	S, F	A
Colleges/Universities Required to Submit Program Justification Reports	F	F			S	F			F, S				A
Board/Commission Has Authority To Close Program			A		A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A	A
Institutions Given Authority to Make Final Program Status Decisions	A	A		A			E		A		A	A	
<p>Key to Abbreviations:</p> <p>A= Applies to all programs. F= Applies to only those programs that have been flagged at an earlier stage in the process. S= Applies to only programs that are reviewed as a result of a special study. D= Applies only to special cases, where it is determined that two programs are duplicative. E= Applies to all programs not covered under D. 1= The intention is to establish a regular review process, but the existing process is too new to be certain. 2= This is an option, not a requirement.</p> <p>Note: The State of Mississippi declined to provide JLARC staff with information on their program review process.</p> <p>Source: SREB states' program approval procedure manuals and JLARC interviews with other states' coordinating/governing board staff.</p>													

and scholarship, the adequacy of its facilities and resources, and the satisfaction of its students with the educational services received. Some linkage should also be developed with current program assessment activities to evaluate program performance.

A More Comprehensive Program Review Scheduling Mechanism Is Needed. As indicated above, the current productivity review process is not highly successful. Therefore, in addition to the improvements that could be achieved by incorporating quality measures into the program review process, Virginia could also benefit from conducting its reviews on a regular basis, organized collectively by subject area. Conducting reviews on an established schedule should induce colleges and universities to act on recommendations promptly. Similarly, reviewing programs collectively by subject area should give SCHEV the ability to make cross-institutional program comparisons, thereby aiding their ability to make decisions for the entire higher education system about acceptable program costs, duplication, and market demand. Such a systemwide review process would complement current institutional restructuring efforts, which focus instead on institution-specific reforms. In turn, each of these productivity review process reforms should improve the efficiency and effectiveness of academic programs offered throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The establishment of a regular program review schedule should increase institutional compliance with review recommendations. A long-term, set schedule sends a clear signal to institutions that program review is a constant undertaking; one that will not disappear if its results are ignored. As a result, institutions could be prompted to take corrective action in order to avoid further scrutiny.

SCHEV could also improve its ability to serve as a statewide coordinator for higher education if it were to review programs collectively by subject area. Four other SREB states (Florida, South Carolina, Texas, and West Virginia) successfully use this practice. SCHEV has also used this practice in the past when, as a result of a special study request by the General Assembly, it reviewed teacher education and foreign language programs. In both cases, the review process resulted in a significant number of program changes — 44 teacher education programs were closed and 5 foreign language programs were merged. These 49 programs represented 74 percent of the total number of programs (66) recommended for discontinuance or merger in 1989. The subject area reviews were therefore highly effective in eliminating or reforming low enrollment and/or poor quality programs. Accordingly, program review in Virginia could be expected to benefit from more extensive use of this type of review procedure.

Recommendation (6). **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should review programs: (1) collectively by subject area and (2) selectively on a consistent, periodic basis.**

ASSESSMENT OF STUDENT LEARNING

The ability to ascertain how well students are acquiring the knowledge and skills traditionally associated with a college education is essential to evaluating the efficiency and effectiveness of a public system of higher education. In 1984, studies by the National Institute of Education, the Association of American Colleges, and the Southern Regional Education Board all cited the need for this type of evaluation, recommending that states develop assessment programs which: (1) measure students' knowledge, capacities, and skills; and (2) nurture institutional autonomy and diversity while stimulating educational excellence. In response to these studies, the 1985 Virginia General Assembly, in Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 125, required SCHEV to "investigate means by which student achievement may be measured to assure the citizens of Virginia the continuing high quality of higher education in the Commonwealth." SCHEV complied with this resolution in 1986 and developed Virginia's first student assessment program.

JLARC review of SCHEV's implementation of student assessment indicates that assessment in Virginia yields many positive results. Most notably, it appears to result in significant curricular reform. Additionally, according to institutional officials, it helps Virginia colleges and universities maintain good standing in terms of accreditation. Overall, SCHEV has performed its duties in this area well.

Some minor improvements could be made to strengthen SCHEV's assessment process, however. These improvements should allow SCHEV to better meet efficiency and accountability needs of the State. Specifically, SCHEV should lessen the administrative burden of its assessment reporting requirements, develop a better measure of institutional accountability, and better orient campus administrators toward using assessment information as a decision-making tool.

Student Assessment Has Yielded Positive Results

Evidence indicates that SCHEV's assessment program is successfully generating improvements to institutional effectiveness. First and most importantly, assessment appears to be prompting institutions to make significant curricular changes, many of which reflect a renewed focus on general education. Second, according to institutional officials, assessment is improving the accreditation performance of Virginia's colleges and universities. Collectively, these results are impressive. In the words of a national assessment expert reviewing Virginia, "the track record of assessment in inducing local improvement has been quite positive."

Significant Curricular Changes Are Resulting From Assessment. As one of its initial guidelines for assessment, SCHEV requested that each institution have in place "curricular development programs to address identified areas of weakness." This guideline emphasizes SCHEV's basic strategy of implementing an assessment program with the purpose of advancing student learning through curricular reform. Interviews with institutional assessment coordinators and a review of biennial assessment reports

indicate that this requirement works. The assessment process appears to initiate serious curricular reforms, as evidenced by the following examples:

In 1993, the College of William and Mary approved its first significant curriculum reform in over 20 years. According to the College's dean of arts and sciences, "our assessment program made major contributions to shaping our new curriculum. We learned from earlier senior and alumni surveys [1990-1991] that the majority of our graduates do not believe they are liberally educated in the natural sciences and mathematics, and that they would not be very comfortable participating in informal discussions about some of the most important scientific issues facing society today. We have learned from the historical knowledge test that, in particular, women and those majoring in the natural sciences may have important gaps in historical knowledge that need to be considered. We have learned from more recent surveys of seniors [1992] and sophomores [1993] that the benefits of specialization in the major, when combined with the very flexible area/sequence requirements of the past two decades, may entail costs in terms of general education knowledge."

To meet these assessment-identified concerns, William and Mary faculty adopted a new "General Education Goals and Objectives" statement, which requires, among many things, that all students take at least two natural science courses (one in biological sciences and one in the physical sciences), one mathematics and quantitative reasoning course, and three history courses (at least one in the European tradition and one not in the European tradition). In the closing words of the dean, assessment "became the guiding light in showing us what we wanted."

* * *

James Madison University's 1991 assessment of their undergraduate general education program included a survey of the alumni to determine how prepared they felt for professional life upon graduation from the University. This survey indicated that alumni were dissatisfied with their computer training. As a result, JMU developed a computer-literacy program that has already generated increased satisfaction among recent graduates.

* * *

Longwood College's 1993 assessment report, titled "Towards the 21st Century: Change in the Context of Crisis," states "as a result of assessment data presented in our 1991 assessment report [which came from a general education course criteria survey], the Department of Mathematics has modified substantially the Math 121 course," [that had been designed to meet their general education goals]. "A separate

pre-calculus course was designed for mathematics majors, thereby freeing the Math 121 course for more applied applications.” Citing assessment as the “catalyst for change,” Longwood College also reported that it was awarding a faculty member an assessment mini-grant to follow-up on the changes made in mathematics and the extent to which they improved the performance of both general education students and mathematics majors.

As each of these examples indicates, assessment can yield substantial improvements in faculty and student satisfaction with the provision of higher education. SCHEV’s decision to have both education providers and recipients involved in curriculum design has helped to ensure that the end product satisfies consumer needs. Ultimately, such a policy improves the effectiveness of higher education.

SCHEV’s Emphasis on Assessment Has Helped Put Virginia Colleges and Universities in Good Standing in Terms of Accreditation. SCHEV’s emphasis on developing meaningful student assessment programs at the institutional level has benefited the public institutions. The assessment programs developed at Virginia’s institutions have complemented, without duplicating, the accreditation process. SCHEV’s assessment process requires that institutions conduct annual evaluations of a broad range of academic activities, and that they use the information collected to make targeted improvements. Accreditation, meanwhile, requires that reviews be conducted once every ten years to ensure that institutions are, on the whole, performing satisfactorily.

Recognizing that Virginia public colleges and universities must participate in both processes, SCHEV granted institutions the flexibility to design their assessment programs so that annual reports can be summarized to satisfy accreditation requirements. This flexibility appears to help assessment coordinators fulfill both tasks, since all nine assessment coordinators interviewed agreed that SCHEV’s assessment requirements have put Virginia colleges and universities in good standing in terms of accreditation. Their standing was so good, in fact, that several institutions recently re-accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) won awards for their assessment programs.

Improvements to the Assessment Process Could Better Meet Efficiency and Accountability Needs

While SCHEV’s assessment program is working to improve institutional effectiveness, it is not satisfying systemwide efficiency and accountability needs. Interviews with institutional assessment coordinators and a national assessment expert indicate that although assessment in Virginia is generally well-done, there are some changes that could be made to lessen its administrative burden and increase its overall impact. First, SCHEV could develop and require the use of some statewide performance indicators as a part of assessment, so that legislative concerns about institutional accountability are better satisfied. Second, assessment reporting requirements could be restructured to achieve two ends: (1) a reduction in the man-hours devoted solely to

report production and (2) an increase in the amount of user-friendly information. Finally, SCHEV could strengthen its emphasis on the link between assessment and other programs and initiatives such as institutional restructuring and long-range planning. These changes should help campus administrators learn to use assessment information as a valuable decision-making tool.

Statewide Performance Indicators Would Improve Institutional Accountability. Unlike the centralized and standardized assessment initiatives developed by Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, and Mississippi, Virginia's assessment program was purposefully designed to improve student achievement by improving programs offered at individual institutions. This means that SCHEV does not collect any statewide performance measures. Instead, each public college and university in Virginia develops its own assessment measures, which are applicable to institution-specific achievement goals, and are used to reform individual courses and teaching strategies. In order for assessment to be used to monitor institutional accountability, however, some uniform performance indicators should be adopted and implemented by all Virginia State-supported institutions.

SCHEV's choice of assessment strategies reflects a conscious decision to focus on the improvement of institutional effectiveness and the promotion of curricular reform. Virginia colleges and universities are asked to review student achievement to determine what curricular modifications can be made to further advance student learning. For example, if an institution's faculty determine that graduating seniors have inadequate critical thinking skills, then the faculty must review and revise the college's general education curriculum (those courses that all students are required to take) to better ensure that this educational objective is achieved. An assessment program is considered successful if it produces institutional reform initiatives. Therefore, by their very design, Virginia assessment programs are typically well-suited to improving institutional effectiveness.

These same assessment programs are not structured to provide the information necessary for statewide planning and the assurance of institutional accountability, however. Because institutions are not mandated to use uniform performance indicators or to collect common data elements, institutional comparisons can not be made. Consequently, Virginia's assessment program is unable to answer questions such as how many college graduates are computer proficient, and how many additional resources are needed to assure that each student has access to a computer. While individual colleges may be able to use their assessment techniques to address questions such as these, SCHEV is unable to do so on a systemwide basis.

The 1993 SCHEV report, *Change and Improvement in Virginia Higher Education*, acknowledged the need for some uniform performance indicators. It proposed that the Council collect and disseminate a common set of institutional performance statistics to monitor conditions in higher education, including:

- admissions standards for first-time students and the actual scores achieved to meet these standards

- “profiles of teaching and learning at each institution,” consisting of average class sizes, the proportion of undergraduate students who experience courses taught by full or associate professors, the proportion of undergraduate students who experience small classes or seminars, and the proportion of undergraduate students who graduate with a “summarizing experience” such as a thesis, recital, or comprehensive examination
- graduation rates in four, five, six, and seven years, broken down by race and gender
- post-graduation profiles of recent graduating classes, including levels of enrollment in graduate schools and employment placement rates
- amount of extramural research funds attracted by the institution.

These indicators were, in fact, originally proposed by SCHEV staff, but the Council has not yet required their use. In 1994, however, SCHEV staff have been working on an “indicators” project, which uses focus groups to develop agreed-upon performance measures. This action is consistent with the General Assembly’s expressed interest in developing uniform performance indicators, as noted in SJR 83, passed in 1986. If the Council is to fully address the General Assembly’s interest in measuring student achievement, then some uniform indicators of this kind should be adopted, collected, and disseminated to provide external audiences with simple answers to questions about higher education’s performance.

Recommendation (7). The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should comply with the recommendation it made in the 1993 report, *Change and Improvement in Virginia Higher Education*, which proposes that the Council collect and disseminate a common set of institutional performance statistics to monitor student achievement and conditions in higher education.

Assessment Reporting Process Could be Restructured to Lessen Administrative Burden and Improve the Usefulness of the Information Provided. The assessment reporting process currently used by SCHEV is, according to a national expert, “too bulky in documentation . . . causing the center of institutional energy to be the production of a report.” SCHEV staff have acknowledged this problem, and in 1994 they initiated a pilot project to reform the reporting process by asking five senior institutions (The College of William and Mary, Clinch Valley College, Longwood College, Virginia Commonwealth University, and Virginia Military Institute) to participate in a two-hour oral review and submit an assessment summary in lieu of the standard reporting requirements. Problems with the assessment reporting process are not limited, however, to the amount of time and effort expended for compliance. They also include problems with the content of the finished reports. SCHEV should continue to implement measures to streamline the reporting process while ensuring continued usefulness of assessment results.

Traditionally, SCHEV has interpreted compliance with the assessment reporting provisions of Senate Document No. 14 (1986) to necessitate that each State-supported institution of higher education submit to the Council a full assessment report every odd-numbered year, and an interim report every even-numbered year. Full reports contain narrative of up to 75 pages, with an additional 12-page summary and mission statement, and appendices of unlimited length. Interviews with institutional assessment coordinators indicate that varying with the size of their staffs, these reports take from three to six months to prepare. This means that in odd-numbered years, assessment coordinators spend between one-quarter and one-half of their time drafting such reports. Given competing needs, such as developing assessment indicators, evaluating assessment data, and implementing reforms based on assessment results, reporting is consuming a disproportionate amount of staff time.

JLARC review of the 1991 and 1993 assessment reports revealed that they contain little, if any, information with which to make statewide planning decisions or to monitor institutional accountability. The reports are insufficiently standardized to be used for comparative purposes. For example, while most institutions include an assessment budget in their report, the content of these budgets varies substantially across institutions. Some budgets are highly detailed, including estimates for employee salaries and benefits, testing materials, office supplies, etc. Other budgets are no more than a single estimate of yearly expenditures. It is impossible to use these budgets to derive a valid estimate of per student assessment cost by institution. Similarly, many other important legislative questions about assessment go unanswered due to a lack of standardized information in the reports.

Problems with the length and content of the assessment reports could be corrected in several ways. First, as indicated by SCHEV's current pilot project and the suggestions of several of the institution assessment coordinators, SCHEV could use site visits in lieu of many of the reporting requirements. For example, assessment coordinators could be assigned to teams, with each team spending a day at each of its assigned colleges, evaluating the assessment programs and making suggestions for improvement.

Second, as suggested by a national assessment expert, SCHEV could require institutions to submit a documentation book (containing all minutes and associated memoranda from faculty and administrator assessment meetings, as well as departmental assessment/accreditation reports) in lieu of a formal report. This book would contain roughly the same information as is presently included in the reports, without requiring the additional draft preparation. Finally, after adopting either the first or second new method, SCHEV could ask institutions to prepare brief, standardized reports on topics of particular interest to the State (such as the performance of transfer students, the status of curricular reforms, the assessment of off-campus programs, etc.). These reports could consist solely of the answers to specific questions and would require less preparation time than the current reports require.

***Recommendation (8).* The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should continue to work with the institutions of higher education to develop modified assessment reporting procedures. Consideration should be**

given to revising procedures to include: (1) using site visits and a documentation book in lieu of existing formal reporting requirements and (2) limiting written reports to brief, standardized documents which address issues of particular interest to the General Assembly (such as the performance of transfer students, the status of curricular reforms, or the assessment of off-campus programs).

Link Between Assessment and Other Programs Could Be Strengthened.

Finally, no matter how valuable assessment information may be, it will not improve institutional effectiveness, efficiency, or accountability if it is not used by higher education administrators. JLARC interviews with college and university presidents, provosts, vice presidents, and assessment coordinators indicated that assessment information is not commonly used as a decision-making tool. On many campuses, the assessment coordinator does not work in conjunction with the staff responsible for restructuring, budgeting, strategic planning, or institutional research. The result is that assessment information is not widely used in these processes. SCHEV could improve the effectiveness of all these processes by strengthening institutional understanding of the link between assessment and other decision-making activities.

Although SCHEV staff maintain that they are making this connection by directly linking Funds for Excellence grant monies with institutional assessment activities, several institutions do not believe the two programs are interconnected. Nevertheless, SCHEV should continue to make this link a required element in future awards to institutions. SCHEV staff also indicated that the Funds for Excellent grant monies may not provide adequate incentive to ensure that strong linkages between assessment and other institutional activities are made by institutional officers. Therefore, SCHEV should work with the institutions to ensure that restructuring efforts reflect the importance of integrating assessment information into other campus operations.

***Recommendation (9).* The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should continue working with the higher education institutions as they implement their restructuring plans to ensure direct linkages between assessment and institutional reforms.**

VI. Improving Student Access to Higher Education

In carrying out its mission to “promote the development and operation of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education” (*Code of Virginia*, §23-9.3), the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) undertakes a number of activities that are related to improving student access to higher education. First, SCHEV is directed to coordinate Virginia’s efforts to ease student transfer from public two-year institutions to public and private four-year institutions. Likewise, to expand minority participation in higher education, SCHEV has been delegated authority from the Governor and the Secretary of Education for administering statewide equal educational opportunity programs and reviewing institutional affirmative action plans. In both cases, the aim of SCHEV’s activities is expanded access to higher education.

While review of these activities indicates that overall SCHEV is satisfactorily meeting its assigned responsibilities, some changes should be considered to improve SCHEV’s efforts to expand educational access. Although SCHEV has made substantial progress in addressing complex student transfer issues, the resolution of lingering problems in this area will require that SCHEV continue its oversight of the implementation of the State Policy on Transfer and its efforts to address data and information system limitations.

Similarly, in the area of equal educational opportunity, the accountability of statewide EEO programs administered by SCHEV could be strengthened if Virginia clearly articulates: (1) how these programs fit into a statewide framework for achieving equal educational opportunity, and (2) the extent of SCHEV’s responsibilities for these programs. Moreover, the development of program performance measures and increased efforts to monitor the performance of EEO programs could increase program effectiveness. These changes are necessary if SCHEV is to address the concerns of the General Assembly as expressed in House Joint Resolution (HJR) 628 (1993). This resolution established a joint subcommittee to examine the State’s progress in attaining equal educational opportunity in higher education.

STUDENT TRANSFER

An important way in which SCHEV is involved in improving student access to higher education is in coordinating system efforts to improve student transfer from Virginia’s two-year institutions (primarily public community colleges and Richard Bland College) to the State’s public and private four-year institutions. SCHEV’s involvement in this area is the result of legislative study requests made over the years to examine specific problems affecting student transfer. The Virginia General Assembly has perceived student transfer to be a problem for many years. Consequently, it has

authorized a number of special transfer studies from 1976 through 1994, many of which have requested SCHEV's involvement in resolving perceived problems.

Review of SCHEV's activities to improve student transfer indicates that:

- SCHEV has successfully facilitated the resolution of a number of long-standing transfer problems.
- Despite SCHEV's efforts to coordinate student transfer, some problems and perceptions of problems continue to exist.
- The higher education system needs SCHEV's continued involvement to resolve some lingering student transfer problems.

It is important to note that some problems affecting student transfer are likely to continue because of the evolutionary nature of college curricula. As curricula change, two- and four-year institutions will need to be responsive in adapting coursework to meet new requirements. Further, it is important to remember that in the current system, institutions ultimately control their own admissions policies. This institutional control makes it impossible to dictate transfer requirements for every given situation that may arise. However, SCHEV's continued involvement in this area should assist in reducing both existing and future student transfer problems.

SCHEV Has Facilitated the Resolution of Many Transfer Problems

Over the past few years, SCHEV has been instrumental in helping to resolve many of the long-standing problems affecting student transfer. Responsibilities for assisting institutions in addressing problems related to articulation agreement development and credit transfer have been largely fulfilled. JLARC staff review of the first year of data collected by SCHEV from its new student-specific database allowed for the preliminary determination of some patterns of student transfer. These data indicated the following information:

- The overwhelming majority of students (93 percent) who earn an associate degree from the VCCS and apply to one or more Virginia public senior institutions are offered admission to at least one of these institutions.
- Students who earn their associate degree have a better chance of being accepted at one of Virginia's public senior institutions than those who have not yet completed the degree requirements at the time of their application (78.7 percent compared with 69.7 percent).
- First-time transfer students have roughly the same acceptance rates at the Virginia public senior institutions as first-time freshmen (from 1974-1992 the average rate for transfer students was 73 percent and the average rate for freshmen was 75 percent).

- The system-wide acceptance rate for transfer students from the VCCS is higher than for other transfer students (75.4 percent compared with 69.4 percent).

This review also indicated that SCHEV took several important actions to facilitate this reform. First, SCHEV worked to build a coalition of community college and senior institution admissions personnel, so that these important parties in the transfer process would have a voice in reform. Next, SCHEV, in cooperation with the VCCS, established the Joint Committee on Transfer Students and, subsequently, a Standing Committee on Transfer. These two committees respectively developed and implemented a statewide transfer policy. It is this transfer policy, and the accompanying transfer module (a list of academic courses that are guaranteed to transfer at full credit to all Virginia public senior institutions), which has resolved many articulation and credit transfer uncertainties. Finally, SCHEV approved a Funds for Excellence project at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) that improved faculty communication in the area of student transfer. Collectively, these actions worked to reduce many transfer difficulties.

SCHEV's Coalition-Building Between the Community Colleges and the Senior Institutions Facilitated Transfer Reform. SCHEV took an important step in the fulfillment of its coordinative responsibilities when it brought all parties with a stake in student transfer together to discuss long-standing issues and work cooperatively toward their resolution. This action was different from SCHEV's previous efforts to address transfer because it established both specific goals and dates for completion. SCHEV recognized that while it had been assigned the lead role in implementing transfer policies, it needed to enlist the support of the colleges and universities if it wanted to impact admission and credit approval standards. SCHEV therefore created the Joint Committee on Transfer Students (JCTS) and the Standing Committee on Transfer (SCT) to better ensure the successful completion of its coordinative duty.

SCHEV worked with the VCCS in October of 1990 to establish the JCTS. This group was charged with recommending the means to facilitate transfer. After effectively resolving several philosophical issues that had impeded progress for years, the JCTS (with the approval of SCHEV and the VCCS) completed its report. The report's recommendations for a uniform State Policy on Transfer were subsequently adopted by SCHEV and the State Board for Community Colleges (Appendix G).

SCHEV created a Standing Committee on Transfer (SCT) in February of 1992 to follow-up on the activities of the JCTS. The SCT is composed of representatives from both the two- and four-year colleges, as well as staff from SCHEV and the VCCS central office. SCHEV directed the SCT to oversee the implementation of the new "State Policy on Transfer." After three years and many rounds of negotiation and further specification, four institutions (Christopher Newport University, George Mason University, Longwood College, and Norfolk State University) were deemed by the SCT to be in full compliance with the transfer policy. Of equal importance, almost all of the remaining senior institutions have moved within range of full compliance and are making good

faith efforts to complete their task. SCHEV's ability to build coalitions to resolve student transfer problems proved a valuable component of reform.

SCHEV's Approval and Continued Involvement in VCU's Funds for Excellence Project Facilitated Improved Faculty Communication on Transfer Issues. SCHEV's decision to award VCU \$83,819 for a 1992-1994 Funds for Excellence project represented another step forward in the resolution of transfer problems. The project, titled "A Statewide Initiative to Facilitate Transfer," provided for a series of meetings among faculty in selected disciplines in both two-year and four-year colleges, with the aim of discussing transfer issues. Faculty groups in each discipline were asked to "identify curricular issues that assist or hinder transfer and articulation in the disciplines and seek common solutions to problems so that community college students may more easily transfer to senior colleges." These disciplinary discussions then yielded suggestions for curricular improvement, enhanced faculty interaction, and improved transferability of courses.

While the development of reform suggestions was important, it was SCHEV's continued involvement in the VCU project that resulted in the implementation of system-wide improvements. For example, when a conference for institutional transfer officers revealed that the colleges and universities each possessed their own understanding of what constituted the responsibilities of a "chief transfer officer," SCHEV staff worked with the SCT to develop a uniform classification. Similarly, after it was discovered that the content of general mathematics courses offered at community colleges and senior institutions varied significantly, SCHEV staff worked with VCCS staff and the VCU project coordinator to establish regional partnerships in mathematics. These partnerships were then charged with revising the mathematics curriculum to improve consistency. Actions such as these represent the critical difference between developing ideas for reform and implementing substantive changes.

Student Transfer Problems Exist Despite SCHEV's Efforts

Despite recent efforts by SCHEV, the VCCS, and the senior institutions to resolve long-standing student transfer problems, problems in this area continue to exist. Resolution of some of these problems is still needed to satisfy concerns of the General Assembly about student transfer. Most recently, two legislative study resolutions have requested that certain perceived problems affecting student transfer be examined. Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 182 (1994) and HJR 199 (1993 and continued in 1994) requested that SCHEV and the VCCS study the transfer of academic credits. Specifically, SJR 182 required that SCHEV and the VCCS:

- determine the percentage of minority students enrolling in two-year institutions and subsequently transferring to four-year institutions
- monitor the implementation of the State transfer policy

- encourage special articulation agreements between two- and four-year programs
- ensure the dissemination of information related to transfer
- monitor the development of an on-line computer database to inform students and their families about transfer policies.

HJR 199 supports the above goals and requests that SCHEV and the VCCS report to the joint subcommittee on “the transfer of academic credits and the pilot on-line database system of information contained in college catalogs and handbooks.” Both resolutions expressed concern that transfer, especially for minority students, remains problematic.

Concerns with student transfer can be grouped into several categories: (1) problems with articulation agreements, which are used to guarantee admission to an institution in general or to a professional program, in particular; (2) problems with the transferability of community college courses to senior institutions; and (3) concerns with the State’s ability to track the academic performance of transfer students (especially minority transfer students) and thereby assess the effectiveness of certain academic programs. Each of these problems is discussed in more detail below.

Concerns about the Status of Articulation Agreements Persist. The Virginia system of public higher education has never had a universal set of well-defined articulation agreements. Articulation agreements are important documents used on the institutional level to define the extent to which credits earned from a community college are transferable to a particular senior institution. They are also used to satisfy an array of other transfer needs — from proscribing curriculum requirements that must be satisfied prior to entrance into a major or a professional program to guaranteeing admission if certain academic qualifications are met. These agreements can benefit students by eliminating much of the costly guesswork associated with transferring, such as loss of credit and the need to take additional general education requirements beyond the associate degree. Viable agreements therefore have the potential to improve resource efficiency (fewer repeated courses) and better insure access to higher education (improved transferability from the community colleges to the senior institutions).

Given the potential benefits of establishing clear articulation agreements, the General Assembly has repeatedly asked SCHEV to report on the progress of its coordinative efforts. While reports have been made, legislative concerns have not been fully resolved. For example, HJR 17 (1976) specifically directed SCHEV to develop Commonwealth articulation agreements. In response, SCHEV issued its *Report on Articulation Agreements: A Progress Report to the Governor and the General Assembly of Virginia* (1977). This report provided information on the status of articulation and suggested mechanisms for improvement. Yet in 1990, when JLARC reviewed the VCCS, it found that progress in securing systemwide articulation agreements was largely absent and the number of specific institutional articulation agreements between community colleges and senior institutions was unknown. From 1975 to 1990, the number of

system-wide agreements between a senior institution and the VCCS increased from one to three (James Madison University, Longwood College, and Virginia State University).

Currently, the absence of well-defined, specific institutional articulation agreements remains problematic, but less so than in previous years. This is because the development and implementation of the State Policy on Transfer has partially provided uniform responses to many of the questions that institution-specific articulation agreements were originally designed to answer. For example, the State Policy on Transfer now provides students with a negotiated list of course offerings that should be easily transferable to any public senior institution in Virginia (this is the transfer module, and all of the 15 senior institutions have agreed recently to comply with this concept). The State Policy on Transfer does not, however, guarantee students' admission into certain colleges or specify individual professional program requirements. For this reason, the State Policy specifically states that if the transfer module is not congruent with professional school requirements:

the professional school may negotiate a separate articulation agreement with the VCCS indicating how a more appropriate lower-division general education program may be followed by prospective transfer students.

Therefore, institution-specific articulation agreements are still needed and legislative concern regarding the development of institutional articulation agreements is still justified, despite the adoption of the State Policy on Transfer.

The Transferability of VCCS Courses Remains a Concern. Legislative concerns with the status of articulation agreements are accompanied by persistent concerns with credit transfer. While articulation agreements are needed to describe transfer conditions for students who earn an associate degree, additional standards are needed for students who transfer prior to completing their degree. To meet the separate needs of these students, it seems desirable to maintain a system of credit transfer which indicates on a course by course basis which courses will transfer to which senior institutions at full credit.

A past JLARC review of the VCCS indicated that this desirable system of credit transfer did not exist. This situation is improved, but requires consistent monitoring. At the time of the first review of the Community College System, more than half of all VCCS courses did not transfer to any of the senior institutions. Both then and now, institutions were relying on their individual "transfer guides" to inform students about credit allowances. The main problem with this system is that it places a great burden on the potential transfer student. For example, a student considering transfer to the University of Virginia, the College of William and Mary, or James Madison University has to request all three transfer guides and become familiar with all their requirements prior to taking any transferable courses at a community college. While this may be possible for the student that has a good idea of where he would like to transfer, it is almost impossible for the student who is still uncertain as to his educational aspirations.

These problems can be compounded by the fact that often transfer guides are either out-of-date or difficult to obtain. While the 1994 transfer guides have been approved by the SCT, and are therefore up-to-date, consistent monitoring of their accuracy is appropriate given past problems. Historically, the use of transfer guides has not given students reasonable security regarding future credit transfer. Skepticism about students' ability to transfer their completed coursework therefore persists and should be addressed.

Dissatisfaction Continues with the State's Inability to Track the Academic Performance of Student Transfers. Legislators continue to express dissatisfaction with the State's inability to track the academic performance of transfer students, particularly minority students. Recent legislative attempts to examine the ease of credit transfer for minority students (SJR 182 and HJR 199) have been stymied by poor or inadequate data. Similarly, data limitations have restricted the VCCS' ability to comply with item VII of the State Policy on Transfer, which states that:

community colleges should determine whether minority students are being counseled into or otherwise enrolled disproportionately in programs that are not designed to transfer.

Given these data limitations, decision-makers are unable to evaluate whether or not existing programs are effectively meeting their goals. As a result, concerns about the State's ability to track the academic performance of transfer students persist.

It should be noted that SCHEV did attempt to address this concern in 1986, when it conducted a study entitled *The Measurement of Student Achievement and the Assurance of Quality in Virginia Higher Education*. This report recommended that State-supported colleges and universities submit annual progress reports on student achievement to SCHEV, including information about the achievement of transfer students from the VCCS. This recommendation was then adopted by the General Assembly in SJR 83 (1986), which established SCHEV's student achievement reporting responsibilities. Unfortunately, this action did not solve the problem. The 1990 JLARC report on the community colleges found that given the limitations of the data provided by the senior institutions, "community college administrators cannot track the overall performance and experience of former VCCS students at senior institutions." This situation has not been fully resolved and the availability of usable data remains a problem.

Further Improvements to Access Are Needed

Although SCHEV has made substantial progress in resolving legislative concerns about student transfer, further improvements are needed to address remaining concerns and better ensure student access to higher education through the transfer mechanism. First, SCHEV and the VCCS need to continue work to ensure that the State Policy on Transfer is fully implemented. Second, SCHEV and the VCCS need to address limitations with transfer data and information systems. Both of these activities will

require additional compromise and negotiation by all transfer authorities. SCHEV, as the lead authority in student transfer, must provide consistent, effective policy leadership in order for these needs to be met. Further, the cooperation of the VCCS is essential in resolving these problems.

Additional Work Is Needed to Resolve Implementation Problems With the State Policy on Transfer. While the State Policy on Transfer and the accompanying transfer module represent significant breakthroughs in transfer policy development, considerable work still needs to be done to ensure effective implementation. JLARC staff interviews with transfer authorities (chief transfer officers, academic vice presidents, and SCT representatives) indicated that many questions of policy interpretation and implementation still exist. Issues such as how to best serve the special transfer needs of associate in applied science degree holders, how to award credit for Advanced Placement and dual enrollment courses taken by high school students, and how to define the purpose and scope of future articulation agreements need to be addressed. While each of these items is on the SCT workplan for 1994-1995, SCHEV, as the system's coordinating entity, should continue to be responsible for working with the SCT and the VCCS to see that these problems are resolved in a timely manner.

Similarly, in terms of the transfer module, SCHEV needs to oversee compliance. If credit transfer is to be assured in accordance with module recommendations, then senior institutions need to uniformly accept specified module courses as partial or complete fulfillment of their general education requirements and publish transfer module course equivalencies in their transfer guides. Likewise, the VCCS must certify on a student's transcript successful completion of the module if all transfer module courses are completed with a final grade of "C" or higher. If this requirement is not adhered to, students will have to continue to wait and risk losing credits while senior institutions evaluate each completed transfer course on a case by case basis. Moreover, the SCT must continue its review of institutional policy compliance to assure that all senior institutions continue to work to ease student transfer. As the coordinative agency for higher education, SCHEV should continue to provide oversight to all three of these activities and ensure involvement of the VCCS and senior institutions in resolving problems.

Recommendation (10). **The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should continue to work with the Standing Committee on Transfer, the Virginia Community College System, and the senior institutions to ensure that the State Policy on Transfer and the accompanying transfer module are fully implemented and questions of policy interpretation are effectively resolved. Special priority should be given to: (1) ensuring that the Virginia Community College System certifies successful completion of the transfer module on a student's transcript, (2) requiring that senior institutions uniformly accept transfer module courses as partial or complete fulfillment of their general education requirements, and (3) resolving questions about the continued use of institution-specific articulation agreements.**

Resolution of Ongoing Data and Information Systems Limitations Need to Be Made a Priority. Both the State's ability to track transfer student performance and students' ability to receive information on transfer requirements are restricted by current limitations with SCHEV's data and information systems. Although SCHEV's new student-specific database has the potential to remedy existing transfer data limitations, the new system is currently limited in the type of information it can provide because: (1) the dataset lacks enough historical data to track a student through the entire college experience (only two years of data are currently available), and (2) the dataset has not yet been fully verified for accuracy. Once these limitations are addressed, SCHEV will need to make analysis of transfer data a priority if it is to resolve outstanding problems in this area. Moreover, SCHEV will need to provide system leadership in promoting the need for implementation of complementary data systems which can expedite institutional data exchanges to facilitate the exchange of student transfer information. Again, there is potential for this situation to improve, if it remains a system priority.

As mentioned earlier, JLARC staff reviewed the first year of data collected by SCHEV for its student-specific database. This system provided very good data on student transfer characteristics for the year that the data had been entered and verified (the 1992 academic year). Nevertheless, the current combination of data limitations and poor quality historical data makes it impracticable to evaluate many aspects of past student transfer patterns in Virginia. Questions concerning transfer student admissions, academic performance, and credit acceptance remain unanswered due to missing or inadequate data, which make it impossible to determine transfer patterns over a period of several years. For example:

Comparable transfer data from 1989 to 1993 was limited to one measure — the number of students transferring to each of the public senior institutions from each of the VCCS institutions and Richard Bland College. JLARC research indicates, however, that during this time period, the majority of students (52 percent) transferring to a public senior institution came from other Virginia four-year institutions, both public and private, and from out-of-state. The decision to limit tracking efforts to the VCCS and Richard Bland College therefore eliminates one-half of all important transfer information.

* * *

Current SCHEV reporting requirements allow senior institutions to use their own definitions of what constitutes a transfer student when reporting information. Although both the federal government and SCHEV use a standard definition, eight out of the 15 senior institutions used a different definition when reporting transfer data to SCHEV. In the words of an official at VCU, efforts to study the transfer phenomena more closely "have been hampered by the continued lack of a definition of a 'transfer student' that provides any commonalty within a highly

diverse group of students.” Consequently, transfer data that is received from institutions may not be comparable.

* * *

Institutional assessment reports, which SCHEV staff cite as a source of transfer information, are too diverse in focus to comprise an acceptable source of statewide data. A review of each senior institution’s 1993 assessment report revealed that only nine of the 15 institutions followed SCHEV instructions and evaluated transfer student performance. No data similarities were found in the nine reports, making it impossible to draw any State-level conclusions. Furthermore, none of the 15 senior institutions reported on the State Policy on Transfer requirement that they “track the subsequent progress to the baccalaureate of transfer students by race.”

If access to higher education is to be improved, SCHEV, higher education institutions, and policy-makers need accurate, valid, and reliable data to use in analyzing remaining student transfer patterns and performance. Once these data are collected, their analysis needs to be made a priority.

A final concern related to student transfer involves the delayed implementation of information systems designed to assist prospective students and college officials in making transfer decisions. The Transfer Assistance Profile (TAP) system, developed in 1991 by staff at J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College, was designed to allow a student or counselor to match a student transcript with the requirements of a degree program at a senior institution and produce a list of remaining courses required for program completion.

Similarly, the Standardization of Post-secondary Education Electronic Data Exchange/Exchange of Permanent Records Electronically for Students and Schools system (SPEEDE/ExPRESS), developed in 1988 and approved by the American National Standards Institute in February of 1992, permits student transcripts to be sent electronically from one institution to another. This would benefit students by considerably shortening the time and cost involved in obtaining transcripts. According to SCHEV, “both electronic-based systems promise to provide substantially improved services to students, while reducing the costs of preparing and transmitting student transcripts and preparing and publishing annual comprehensive transfer guides.”

Yet, despite the potential benefits of these systems, neither have been implemented statewide. For three consecutive years the SCT has made the implementation of these programs a workplan agenda item, but no final recommendations have been made. At the July 1994 meeting of the SCT, the committee again resolved to study the issue and make a recommendation as soon as possible. Collectively, SCHEV, the VCCS, and the SCT need to make a decision about the future of these programs. If the information systems are as valuable as reported, then SCHEV should recommend making their funding a budget priority.

Recommendation (11). The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should ensure that institutions use common definitions for tracking student transfers; data are accurate, valid, and reliable; and analysis of student transfer data is made a priority. SCHEV should begin regularly using its new student-specific database to generate information pertaining to transfer student admissions, academic performance, and credit acceptance. This information should then be regularly presented to the General Assembly, the Standing Committee on Transfer, the Virginia Community College System, and the senior institutions.

Recommendation (12). The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, in cooperation with the Virginia Community College System and the Standing Committee on Transfer, should make a final decision regarding the implementation of the TAP and SPEEDE/ExPRESS systems. If they decide that these information systems are as beneficial as initially reported, then SCHEV should recommend making their funding a budget priority.

ADMINISTRATION OF EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY PROGRAMS

SCHEV plays an important role in improving access to higher education through its coordination and administration of a number of equal educational opportunity (EEO) programs. Since the 1960s, when the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) within the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (now the U.S. Department of Education) found Virginia to be operating a racially segregated system of higher education, Virginia Governors and Secretaries of Education have delegated responsibility to SCHEV for: (1) coordinating institutional efforts to comply with federal requirements for desegregating Virginia's higher education system and (2) administering certain statewide programs to achieve this goal.

JLARC review found SCHEV's performance in coordinating institutional compliance efforts and administering statewide EEO programs to be mixed. At the direction of past Secretaries of Education, SCHEV has successfully implemented a number of programs designed to increase minority access to higher education. Through its administration of statewide equal educational opportunity programs and the Funds for Excellence grant program, SCHEV has encouraged institutions to develop innovative approaches for recruiting and retaining minorities in higher education.

In spite of these efforts, the attainment of full access to higher education by minority populations remains elusive. Lingering problems still exist in this area, indicating a need for continuing statewide efforts to ensure equal educational opportunity to all Virginians citizens in its higher education system. College entrance rates of first-time freshmen and transfer students remain disparate between African-American and white students, and retention and graduation rates of minority students continue to be lower than those of their white counterparts. Additional disparities affect the

enrollment of minority graduate and first-professional students (for example, law, business, and medical students), the attainment of doctoral degrees by minorities, and the employment of minority faculty and administrators.

Three essential elements are still needed to better assure that Virginia provides equal educational opportunity to all citizens. First, Virginia needs an updated statewide plan for addressing equal educational opportunity issues. This plan should include the role and responsibility of the elementary and secondary education system in assuring the academic preparation of students and integrate institutional affirmative action plans into a statewide framework. Without a meaningful updated plan, any coordinative efforts undertaken by SCHEV are restricted.

Second, clear articulation of SCHEV's responsibilities in coordinating and planning for equal educational opportunity is needed. Lack of clear delineation of SCHEV's responsibilities results in confusion about authority, responsibility, and accountability for the performance of statewide and institutional EEO programs. If SCHEV is to be effective and accountable for its efforts in this area, its responsibilities for these programs and activities need to be explicitly articulated.

Third, statewide EEO program performance measures are needed to assess the effectiveness of these programs. Lack of evaluative measures makes it difficult to consistently collect, analyze, and monitor data needed to assess the impact of these programs. While SCHEV staff are sensitive to the need for program performance measures, currently, several of the EEO programs administered by SCHEV cannot be meaningfully assessed because these measures do not exist and attendant data are lacking to measure program effectiveness over time.

Minority Participation Rates Indicate Need for Continued Statewide EEO Efforts

JLARC staff reviewed minority participation rates in higher education to assess whether disparities continue to affect minority student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. In addition, data on the employment of minority faculty and administrators were examined to determine if a need exists for continued statewide EEO efforts in this area. The following trends were observed:

- Although the percentage of African-American students going on to higher education in terms of fall headcount has increased over the past ten years, the proportion of these students in the overall student population is less than it was ten years ago (approximately 12 percent in the fall of 1993 compared to 13 percent in 1984, Appendix H, Table 1).
- The number of African-American first-time college entrants has increased since 1978. However, the disparity in the entrance rates of African-American and white students as reflected as a percentage of high school graduation rates has also increased since that time (Appendix H, Table 2).

- Retention of African-American and other minority undergraduate students, as measured by graduation rates, are considerably lower than that of their white counterparts (The data show that for first-time freshmen entering college in 1985, 11 percent of African-American students graduated in four years or less compared to 30 percent of other race minority students and 40 percent of white students, Appendix H, Table 3).
- The proportion of students enrolled in 1993 as graduate or first-professional students who are African-American has increased only marginally over the past few years and is not reflective of their representation in the overall population. (Appendix H, Table 4).
- Although the number of minority students awarded doctoral degrees has increased over the past several years, the racial composition of doctoral degree recipients has not changed significantly during this time (Appendix H, Table 5).
- The percentage of minority instructional and administrative faculty employed by Virginia higher education institutions has remained largely unchanged since 1990. In addition, the percentage of tenured minority faculty has remained unchanged since 1990 (Appendix H, Table 6).

According to SCHEV staff, minority participation rates in Virginia are similar to regional and national trends in minority participation in higher education.

Appendix H provides statewide data on minority student enrollment, retention, and graduation rates. It also contains data on minority faculty employment in the higher education system. These data indicate that there is a continuing need for statewide efforts to ensure equal educational opportunities for all Virginians.

The Development of a Current Statewide Plan for EEO Efforts Is Needed

A current statewide plan for achieving equal educational opportunity in Virginia higher education is lacking. In the 1980's, The Virginia Plan for Equal Opportunity in State-supported Institutions of Higher Education (referred to as the "Virginia Plan") provided the framework for statewide and institutional efforts to achieve a desegregated system of higher education. The Virginia Plan was amended in 1983 to respond to federal government concerns about the Commonwealth's efforts to desegregate its higher education system. It was developed by the Governor and the Secretary of Education with the assistance of SCHEV, the Department of Education, and the public higher education institutions. Virginia is no longer required to submit this plan to the federal government for ongoing monitoring by OCR, and consequently, has not updated its plan since 1987 to reflect the current status and future of EEO programs and activities. The development of an updated statewide plan for equal educational opportunity would provide an agreed upon framework for the continued administration of EEO programs, as well as continued

coordination and monitoring of these efforts to ensure the most effective and efficient use of State resources.

There are several reasons why an updated statewide plan for higher education EEO efforts is needed. First, the federal government is continuing to scrutinize states that were formerly monitored as a result of the court ruling in *Adams v. Richardson* (480 F.2d at 1165 n.10). The Office for Civil Rights has discussed its intention to conduct a site visit in the near future to Virginia as well as other states to assess continued compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Second, higher education statistics continue to illustrate problems in the parity between minority and white student enrollment, retention and graduation rates, and faculty employment (Appendix H). Third, in the absence of an updated statewide plan, it is difficult to determine how current EEO programming, both statewide and institutional-specific, can best address current problems and continue to improve equal educational opportunities for all Virginians. An agreed upon statewide framework would help to ensure that current programming reflects the most effective and efficient use of State resources.

To address these concerns, the Governor, through the Secretary of Education's office, should update the statewide plan for achieving equal educational opportunity in higher education. The plan should integrate State efforts at the elementary and secondary school level as well as institutional affirmative action efforts. The Secretary of Education should obtain the assistance of SCHEV, the Department of Education, and the State's public higher education institutions in developing this plan. The continued involvement of SCHEV in assisting the Secretary of Education in developing this plan is particularly important because:

- SCHEV has statutory responsibility for coordinating planning for the system of higher education.
- SCHEV has historically been delegated responsibility for administering statewide EEO programs.
- SCHEV has been actively involved in working with the Secretary of Education's office and the Secretary's monitoring and advisory committee on EEO issues since this committee was created in the early 1980s.
- SCHEV has been delegated responsibility for reviewing institutional affirmative action plans to promote the attainment of equal educational opportunity in Virginia and has historically provided institutions direction on developing these plans.
- SCHEV has designated staff with expertise on EEO issues and programs.

The assistance of the Virginia Department of Education and the higher education institutions in the development of a workable plan is also important. Minority participation in higher education is critically linked to ongoing efforts to enhance minority success in elementary and secondary education. Moreover, a number of

statewide and institutional EEO programs are geared to enhancing linkages between elementary and secondary education and the higher education system. Further, involvement of institutional affirmative action/EEO officers and other institutional EEO program officials would help ensure the development of a plan which builds on past successes and avoids potential pitfalls in its approach to promoting equal educational opportunity. Finally, Virginia's public colleges and universities have developed institutional affirmative action plans which provide detailed, thoughtful planning for individual institutional EEO efforts. These plans could provide the building blocks to a well-developed statewide plan.

***Recommendation (13).* The Secretary of Education should update, on a regular basis, the statewide plan for the attainment of equal educational opportunity in Virginia. The Secretary of Education should involve the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, the Department of Education, and Virginia's public higher education institutions in the development of the plan. The plan should include current and future efforts to achieve equal educational opportunity in Virginia through the early years of the 21st century. Upon its completion, the Governor should transmit a copy of the plan to the General Assembly.**

Clear Articulation of SCHEV's Responsibility for Administration of Statewide EEO Programs Is Needed

SCHEV currently administers a number of statewide EEO programs. In addition, SCHEV provides institutions guidance in preparing their affirmative action plans, and collects and reviews the plans. Historically, these responsibilities have been delegated to SCHEV by the Governor and the Secretary of Education. There is no explicit statutory responsibility which guides SCHEV's efforts in this area, however. The lack of clear articulation of SCHEV's responsibilities for statewide EEO programs and institution-specific programs makes it difficult to determine who is accountable for program performance. It is not clear what SCHEV's responsibilities are for the overall performance or oversight of EEO programs, particularly the institutional programs for which SCHEV allocates funding.

In addition to the lack of clear responsibility for statewide EEO programs, SCHEV's responsibilities for providing direction, reviewing, and assessing institutional affirmative action plans are unclear. According to the director, at the present time SCHEV has no responsibility for institutional affirmative action plans beyond record-keeping. Previously, SCHEV required institutions to follow detailed instructions in preparing affirmative action plans. It is not clear how the new plans submitted by institutions in 1994 will be used on a systemwide basis for planning or assessing the attainment of equal educational opportunity in higher education. Further, performance measures have not been established to determine institutional success in implementing statewide programs that are components of these plans.

Lack of clear articulation of SCHEV's responsibilities for statewide EEO programs and for coordinating institutional affirmative action plans has resulted in questions about EEO program accountability. In 1993, the General Assembly became concerned about the progress of the State in its achievement of equal educational opportunity in higher education. House Joint Resolution 638 (1993) established a joint subcommittee to study the status of and need for academic preparation, financial aid, and incentive programs to encourage minorities to pursue postsecondary education and training. Several of the subcommittee's recommendations to the General Assembly reflected its ongoing concern about the monitoring, evaluation, and oversight of higher education equal educational opportunity (affirmative action) programs.

In trying to determine the answers to some basic questions about the State's continuing responsibilities for these programs and ongoing reporting responsibilities to the federal government, the joint subcommittee became concerned that no single entity could provide full information on the administration of statewide and institutional EEO programs. If SCHEV were given clear statutory responsibility for the administration of statewide EEO programs, it would provide a mechanism for strengthening accountability for these programs. Moreover, clear articulation of SCHEV's responsibilities for providing direction and coordinating institutional affirmative action plans could better assure that State resources are efficiently used in planning institutional efforts to attain equal educational opportunity.

***Recommendation (14).* The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the *Code of Virginia* to formally designate the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia as the entity responsible for administering certain statewide EEO programs for the higher education system. Further, the General Assembly may wish to amend the *Code of Virginia* to provide statutory guidance on SCHEV's responsibilities for coordinating institutional affirmative action plans.**

SCHEV Lacks Performance Measures to Assess the Success of Statewide EEO Programs

SCHEV currently administers EEO programs for five statewide efforts: (1) the provision of pre-collegiate information, (2) undergraduate student recruitment and retention, (3) graduate student recruitment and retention, (4) faculty recruitment and retention, and (5) the improvement of campus climate and human relations (Table 7). The assessment of SCHEV's performance in administering specific EEO programs within some of these areas is problematic because SCHEV lacks evaluative measures with which to assess the performance of some of its statewide programs. Lack of these performance measures means that valid, measurable program data have not been routinely maintained on a number of these programs. Consequently, it is difficult to assess the outcome of these programs in terms of their efficiency and effectiveness in promoting the attainment of equal educational opportunity. Moreover, the lack of meaningful performance data makes it difficult to determine whether State funding for these programs is being used in the most efficient and effective manner possible.

Table 7 (continued)
"Virginia Plan" Components Administered by SCHEV, FY 1994

"Virginia Plan" Programs	Program Descriptions	FY 1995 Appropriation
<i>Graduate Programs (continued)</i> Summer Programs:		\$ 100,000
Summer Program for Undergraduate Virginians at NSU and VSU	Assists Norfolk State University (NSU) and Virginia State University (VSU) in attracting white and minority undergraduate students to their graduate programs. Promising juniors attend and enroll in graduate courses at NSU or VSU for a summer term to learn more about graduate school education at these institutions.	
Summer Program for Undergraduate Virginians at traditionally white institutions	Assists Virginia's traditionally white institutions in attracting white and minority undergraduate students to their graduate programs. Promising juniors attend and enroll in graduate courses at the hosting institutions for a summer term to learn more about graduate school education at these institutions.	
Southern Regional Education Board (SREB) Doctoral Scholars Program	Encourages minority students to pursue doctoral degrees and become college-level teachers. Program is administered by SREB and is supported by 15 member states. Awards are made to students on a competitive basis.	\$ 92,500
Faculty Recruitment and Retention	Developed to assist institutions in attracting, employing, and retaining other-race faculty.	\$ 91,000
Eminent Scholar's Program Match	Provides funds to the traditionally black institutions in lieu of endowment funds to supplement the salaries of eminent scholars.	
Improving Campus Human Relations and Climate	Assists state-supported colleges and universities in their efforts to create a more comfortable campus climate for students, especially for minority groups.	
Student Organization Cooperative Grants	Provides funds to student organizations working together on projects that show promise of increasing the levels of satisfaction and quality of campus life for all students.	\$ 20,000
Recruitment and Retention Conference	This conference assists institutional personnel in analyzing current strategies to recruit and retain undergraduate minority students.	\$ 20,000
Total:		\$ 3,798,715

Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, "Affirmative Action Programs Progress Report," prepared for the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, August 1994.

SCHEV staff recognize the need to better measure the performance of these programs. SCHEV staff reported that they have recently developed indicators to measure the performance of the Summer Transition Program. This data collection effort has just begun and the program cannot be assessed until adequate data are compiled.

However, for certain other programs, SCHEV staff believe that development of precise measures presents problems and may not be cost effective. Rather than waiting to develop the “best” measures possible, SCHEV could begin using less discrete measures to assess these programs and begin requiring institutions which receive funding to report certain data for SCHEV’s analysis. This is important because it appears that there is executive and legislative branch interest in determining the best use of resources for these programs.

The issue of program accountability was raised in 1993 by the Secretary of Education’s Advisory Council on Equal Educational Opportunity. In assessing the current programming for EEO initiatives and funding priorities for the 1994-1996 biennium, the Secretary’s Council reported, “There must be a strong accountability component with minority programming and funding. Too, there must be an ownership and clear determination of responsibility for minority goals and objectives.” In defining the problem with accountability, the Advisory Council asked questions about:

- who was accountable to whom and who were the stake holders in the programs
- what are the overall goals of minority programming and activities and are these goals the “right” ones
- what are the measures of success for minority programming and activities.

Data maintained by SCHEV on a number of the EEO programs it currently administers are inadequate to draw conclusions about the current performance of these programs. For example:

SCHEV administers the better information project (BIP) which was designed to motivate minority students to prepare for college. BIP is a cooperative effort between SCHEV and the Department of Education, to introduce middle and high school students and their parents to college, explain admissions policies and requirements, inform them about financial aid, and encourage these students to enroll in college preparatory classes in middle and high school.

BIP targets specific information to elementary and secondary school children, parents, and counselors to improve college-going rates of minorities. It also includes a summer component targeted at seventh through tenth graders. The summer program allows these students to live and learn on a college campus. According to SCHEV information, “the purpose of the program is to encourage the student participants to enroll in college preparatory courses in high school by helping them

plan their activities, including preparation for the SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test], and to understand that college is within their reach.”

SCHEV does not consistently maintain comparable data on BIP program participants. Nor is consistent, measurable data available on how participants judged the quality of the workshops, seminars, or information received. Further, no information is available on whether summer program participants actually enrolled in college preparatory courses following their summer program experience.

The consistent collection of valid, reliable program data would help SCHEV to determine whether statewide and institutional programs are having the intended outcome. Once information about the success and/or failure of programs in relation to established performance measures is obtained, program information could be disseminated and adjustments in programming and funding could allow for the more effective use of State funding.

***Recommendation (15).* The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should ensure that evaluative measures are established to measure the performance of each statewide EEO program it currently administers. In addition, the State Council of Higher Education should begin to consistently collect appropriate program data to measure the performance of its statewide equal educational opportunity programs. Information collected on program performance should be disseminated to the Governor, the General Assembly, the Secretary of Education, and the public higher education institutions.**

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