



# Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System



## In Brief

Senate Joint Resolution 32 (2010) directed JLARC to examine the role of the Secretary of Education in improving coordination between the Commonwealth's public elementary and secondary schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education.

Aspects of the education system that need to be coordinated include college readiness of high school graduates, student transfer between education levels, teacher preparation, career readiness and alignment with workforce needs, and research and evaluation of longitudinal data from preschool through college. This review found that Virginia's education entities have cooperated to address each of the issues, but challenges remain. Additional coordination needs exist within each of the identified areas, and no single entity is responsible for the education system as a whole.

Structural changes could provide a mechanism to promote long-term coordination and accountability. Recommendations to increase coordination and accountability include establishment of a coordinating council consisting of leaders from all education levels and the business community, legislation to institute a biennial reporting responsibility for the Secretary, and designation of education agency staff as liaisons to each other's governing boards.

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# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

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September 14, 2011

The Honorable Charles J. Colgan  
Chair  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
General Assembly Building  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Senator Colgan:

Senate Joint Resolution 32 of the 2010 General Assembly directed JLARC staff to study the role of the Secretary of Education in improving coordination between the Commonwealth's public K-12 schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education. This final report was briefed to the Commission and authorized for printing on July 11, 2011.

I would like to thank the staff of the Secretary of Education and several former secretaries, the Virginia Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, and the Virginia Community College System for their assistance during this study.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Glen S. Tittermary".

Glen S. Tittermary  
Director

GST/mle



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# JLARC Report Summary:

## Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System

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### Key Findings

- The Secretary of Education has no authority to require cooperation among education entities or direct staff at these entities. However, the Secretary may influence education policy with the backing of the Governor. (Chapter 1)
- Many aspects of Virginia's education system are well coordinated. The education entities have been cooperating to address college readiness, student transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions, teacher preparation, career training and guidance, and longitudinal data needs. (Chapter 2)
- Despite these efforts, some challenges remain. Additional coordination needs exist within several aspects of the education system. Furthermore, no single entity is accountable for the education system as a whole, and the extent to which coordination will continue into the future is uncertain unless structural changes are enacted. (Chapters 2 and 3)
- The P-16 Council, Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act, and Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 have provided an impetus for addressing system-wide issues in a cooperative manner. (Chapter 3)
- Recommendations to increase coordination and accountability in the education system include establishing a coordinating council chaired by the Secretary of Education and consisting of leaders from all education levels and the business community, requiring the Secretary to report biennially on the status of key system coordination issues, and designating agency staff as liaisons to each other's governing boards. (Chapter 3)

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Senate Joint Resolution 32 (2010) directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to examine the role of the Secretary of Education (Secretary) in improving coordination between the Commonwealth's public elementary and secondary schools (K-12), community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education. The resolution also directs JLARC to emphasize the need to better anticipate the workforce needs of the Commonwealth. The study results from concerns about the extent to which high school graduates are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace. Improved coordination between the education entities, it is thought, may improve the prospects for and the future performance of Virginia youth in further education or employment.



In order to make recommendations for improving coordination among the education entities, it is necessary to examine (1) how greater coordination might be beneficial, (2) the extent to which coordination is currently taking place among the various entities, and (3) whether the Secretary or some other entity should have a more extensive and formal role in seeking coordination as seems appropriate across activities within Virginia's education system.

### **DESPITE ADVANCES, CONCERNS ABOUT EDUCATION SYSTEM PERSIST**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the proportions of students who graduated from high school and continued their education in college steadily increased. Just as the education level of the populace has increased, so has the demand increased for skilled and educated workers to meet the workforce needs of the Commonwealth and the nation. Thus, expectations for a higher level of education attainment have risen, and it is generally accepted that some form of postsecondary education or training is needed to obtain most well-paying jobs. However, a significant gap (about one-half) remains between the number of students who attend college and the number of students who complete a college degree program. Better coordination between the K-12 and higher education systems is one factor that could help to reduce this gap.

Elementary and secondary schools (K-12) and postsecondary institutions have traditionally operated independently of each other. Most states (including Virginia) have separate state agencies for oversight of each level of education. In Virginia, the Department of Education (DOE) oversees the 132 local K-12 school divisions, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) oversees the 23 community colleges that offer two-year degrees as well as certificates, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) oversees the 15 public four-year institutions, one public junior college, and the VCCS. Each of these agencies has its own governing board. The Secretary of Education is empowered to provide overall policy direction and to resolve conflicts between the agencies, but has no authority to require cooperation or direct staff at these agencies.

Because different education levels have different governing bodies, coordination is required to achieve certain goals such as access to college and career training opportunities and alignment of education curricula with workforce needs. Recent enactment of the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 ("Top Jobs" Act) is an example of how coordination may be needed to fulfill the Governor's initiative to help meet the Commonwealth's workforce needs. The act calls for 100,000 more college graduates over the next 15 years, as well as an increase in enrollment in science,



technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. The colleges cannot accomplish these initiatives alone, and must coordinate with the K-12 system to begin preparing students for these fields of study.

### **MANY AREAS ARE WELL COORDINATED, BUT SOME NEEDS REMAIN**

To create a more seamless education system that effectively produces an educated citizenry and supports the economic needs of the Commonwealth, certain aspects of the education system must be coordinated. Areas identified as needing coordination include

- promoting college readiness of high school graduates to reduce the need for remedial instruction and improve college graduation rates;
- facilitating transitions through dual enrollment programs, student transfer, and guaranteed admissions programs;
- improving teacher preparation and professional development of teachers and school administrators;
- promoting career readiness and aligning education curricula with workforce needs; and
- sharing academic data through development of a longitudinal data system.

Despite the existence of separate oversight agencies for different levels of education and the limited authority of the Secretary, there is some coordination occurring between the agencies to address each of the system-wide concerns. The table on the next page shows efforts undertaken by DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV to address each of these issues, as well as the remaining challenges or concerns that still need to be addressed. In particular, it is recommended that VCCS and DOE conduct a review of the Career and Technical Education (CTE) program (which trains high school and community college students in a wide range of careers) to assess the funding allocation split between secondary and postsecondary education and determine if CTE programs are coordinated to ensure the efficient allocation of resources.

Coordination among the education entities appears to have increased in recent years, and much of this increase is due to recent legislative and executive actions. A P-16 Council was created by executive order in 2005 to better coordinate the State's education reform efforts, improve transitions among levels of education, and promote student success. Also in 2005, the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act (Restructuring Act) provided incentives for colleges and universities to

meet goals related to access, student retention and graduation, production of graduates in high-need fields of study, cooperation with local school divisions and regional employers, and transfer from community colleges to four-year institutions. The 2011 “Top Jobs” Act, as previously noted, increased emphasis on aligning education with workforce needs and created the Higher Education Advisory Commission to examine ways to achieve this goal. Despite these recent initiatives, however, additional statutory changes may still be needed to promote system-wide accountability and ensure continued coordination to identify and address system-wide concerns.

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### Many Coordination Issues Are Already Being Addressed, but Concerns or Challenges Remain

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Coordination Issue	Efforts Underway	Remaining Concerns or Challenges
College Readiness	College and Career Readiness Initiative; redesign of remedial assessment and instruction; dual enrollment	Remedial placement assessments and instruction not offered by all high schools; high performance on end-of-course SOL assessments not recognized by Virginia colleges for remedial needs assessment
Student Transfer	System-wide articulation agreements and guaranteed admission program between VCCS and four-year institutions; Goal 6 of Restructuring Act	Continued review of articulation agreements; concerns about credit earned through dual enrollment
Teacher Preparation	Student teacher training and mentoring by local school divisions; Goal 9 of Restructuring Act	Continued review of quality of teacher preparation programs (for example, teacher training for reading proficiency)
Career Readiness/Alignment With Workforce Needs	Career and Technical Education (CTE) program; Education Wizard; Career Coaches; Tech Prep; “Top Jobs” Act; Goals 3 and 7 of Restructuring Act	Coordination and allocation of funding for CTE program among high schools and community colleges
Longitudinal Data System	Multi-agency longitudinal data system design team	Maintenance of data system; system-wide research assignments; funding

Source: JLARC staff analysis of interview responses and document reviews.

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### STRUCTURAL CHANGES COULD PROMOTE LONG-TERM COORDINATION AMONG EDUCATION ENTITIES

To ensure long-term coordination among Virginia’s education entities and promote a seamless education system, certain statutory changes could be made to provide a mechanism that promotes coordination. These changes would increase communication between the entities and add to the statutory responsibilities of the Secretary of Education, but would not alter the authority or preroga-

tives of existing State agencies, institutions of higher education, or local school divisions.

One recommended structural change would be to establish by statute a coordinating council to be chaired by the Secretary of Education. The council could include leaders from all levels of education and representation from the business community. The council could be charged with identifying system-wide issues and developing plans to address such issues. Coordinating councils in other states, as well as the P-16 Council in Virginia, have been shown to enhance communication, highlight issues that require the cooperation of more than one entity, foster the development of common agendas, and raise public expectations for action.

Another recommended statutory change that would promote system-wide accountability is to require the Secretary of Education to develop a biennial report on initiatives to address system-wide education concerns in the Commonwealth. The report could include information on the progress made toward measurable objectives, qualitative indicators of results, efforts underway, and emerging or unaddressed concerns. DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV could provide the necessary information to the Secretary for developing the report.

A final recommendation for increasing communication and cooperation among the education entities would be to designate agency staff as liaisons to the other education boards. The executive director of SCHEV and the Chancellor of VCCS could each designate staff liaisons to the Board of Education. Conversely, the Superintendent of Public Instruction could designate a liaison to the State Council of Higher Education and the State Board for Community Colleges. This action could encourage a mixing of ideas and perspectives that might help to identify cross-cutting issues and improve efforts to address system-wide concerns such as college and career readiness.



# Greater Coordination Could Lead to Better Outcomes in Education

## In Summary

The *Constitution of Virginia* expresses an intent for the State to have an effective education system. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, one of the successes in public education was that, overall, education attainment levels of Virginians increased. However, concerns persist about whether the education system is fully preparing K-12 students for further education and/or successful employment. One factor that may have some impact on these concerns is the level of coordination between the major education entities: the K-12 system, community colleges, and four-year institutions. These three levels of education are overseen by three separate State agencies that have generally been independent. The Secretary of Education is empowered to resolve conflict among the agencies and provide policy direction, but the position has no authority to require coordination or direct staff at the agencies. In addition, it is generally accepted that for many jobs in today's economy, some form of higher education or training is needed. Thus, it appears to be important for education entities to coordinate to improve access to college and career training opportunities and to ease the transition between high school and college.

Senate Joint Resolution 32 (2010) directs the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) to examine the role of the Secretary of Education (Secretary) in improving coordination between the Commonwealth's public elementary and secondary schools (K-12), community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education (Appendix A). The study results from concerns about the extent to which Virginia's high school graduates are prepared to succeed in postsecondary education and the workplace. Improved coordination between the education entities, it is thought, may improve the prospects for and the future performance of Virginia youth in further education and employment.

To address these concerns, the resolution directs JLARC staff to examine the statutory authority and duties of the Secretary in overseeing Virginia's educational system and to recommend ways of expanding such authority and duties in order to improve coordination among the State's education entities. In addition, JLARC staff are directed to assess State efforts at informing students about the education and training necessary for current and future job openings, and to determine the extent to which the education system is fulfilling the employment needs of the Commonwealth. In order to adequately assess the options for improving coordination among the education entities, JLARC staff examined (1) how greater coordination might be beneficial, (2) the extent to which coordination is currently taking place among the various entities,

and (3) whether the Secretary or some other entity should have a more extensive and formalized role in seeking coordination as seems appropriate across activities within Virginia's education system.

In conducting this study, JLARC staff interviewed State education agencies and officials, former secretaries of education, school divisions, higher education institutions, other individuals and organizations with education expertise, and education officials in other states. JLARC staff also conducted a review of education documents and literature. Appendix B details the research methods used during the course of this review.

### **DESPITE ADVANCES, CONCERNS ABOUT THE EDUCATION SYSTEM PERSIST**

Article I, Section 15 of the *Constitution of Virginia* calls for an effective system of education to promote freedom and progress and to develop the varying talents of the population. It states that

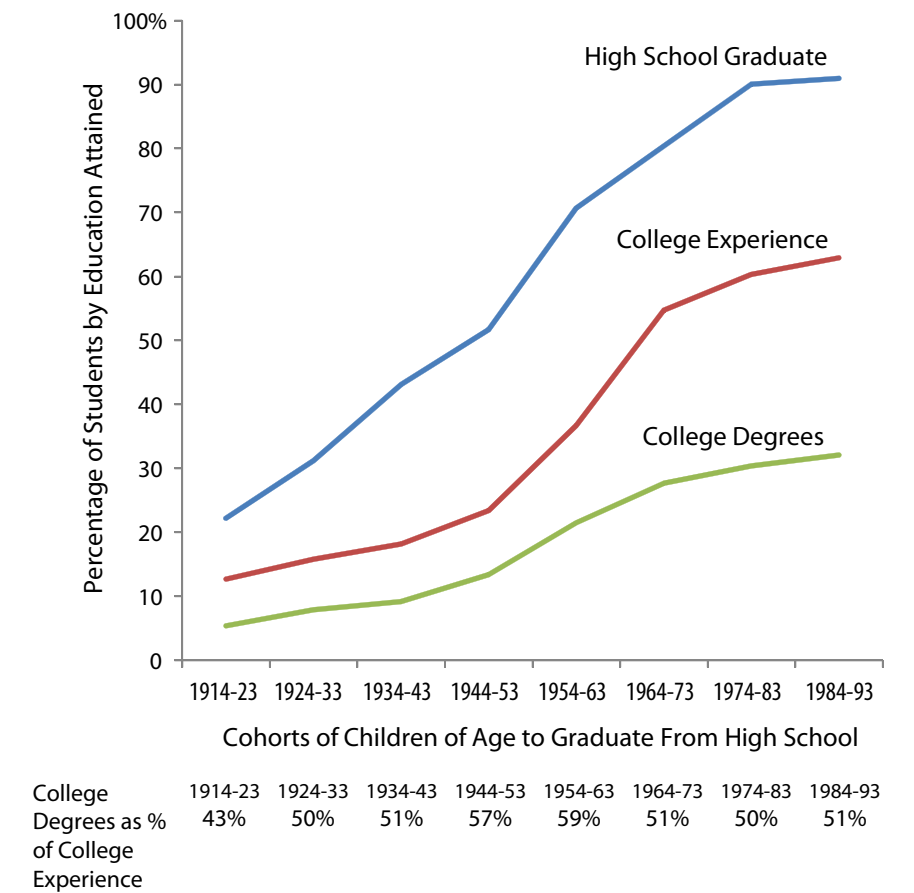
free government rests, as does all progress, upon the broadest possible diffusion of knowledge, and [the] Commonwealth should avail itself of those talents which nature has sown so liberally among its people by assuring the opportunity for their fullest development by an effective system of education throughout the Commonwealth.

One of the major advances that occurred in Virginia (and nationally) during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the increasing extent to which young people graduated from high school and attended or completed college (Figure 1). In the early part of the century a substantial majority of youth did not graduate from high school, less than one-fifth of the population had college experience, and less than ten percent gained a college degree. Toward the end of the century, most students were graduating from high school, more than half had college experience, and about one-third had earned a college degree. Of those who start college, the college completion rates have remained fairly constant at around 50 percent.

Despite this expansion of education levels, there are still concerns about the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system. One of these concerns relates to a point illustrated in the figure: the percentage of youth with college experience tends to be about twice the percentage of youth who graduate and receive college degrees. In part given the fact that so many students who attend college do not graduate, there is a concern that students in the system have not been adequately prepared for further education or for the workforce. Although not a panacea for addressing education con-

cerns, greater coordination between the K-12 and higher education systems appears to be one means to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of the education system.

**Figure 1: Education Levels in Virginia Have Increased Substantially**



Source: JLARC staff analysis of data from Stuhlsatz, Daniel M. and Paul Puryear, "Leading the Way in Education, Equality," Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service, *The Virginia News Letter*, Oct. 2004, and from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Many education experts and organizations—including the Education Commission for the States (ECS), State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and the National Governors’ Association (NGA)—agree that coordination among state education entities is necessary. Many of these organizations call for states to create “seamless education systems” in which students can transition easily from one level of the education system to the next. They maintain that the preschool system needs to be coordinated with the elementary education system so that all students enter kindergarten ready to learn, and the K-12



system needs to be coordinated with the higher education system so that students are prepared for the rigors of higher education and can easily transition from high school to college. A report by ECS states that an ideal system would be one in which

every child enters school ready to learn, where all third graders read at or above grade level, where all students have taken algebra by the end of the 8th grade, where high school exit exams test students at the 12th-grade level and are aligned with college admissions requirements, where all young people graduate from high school prepared for college or work, and where every student who enters college finishes college.

### **Most High-Paying Jobs Today Require Some Form of Postsecondary Education**

#### **Some Believe Postsecondary Education Not Worth the Cost**

Although many experts believe that some form of postsecondary education is necessary to obtain a good job, others question whether obtaining a four-year degree is consistently worth the cost. A 2006 analysis by REEF (a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting new and innovative programs of investment in education) assessed a college education purely as a monetary investment, and found that, while college graduates do have higher earnings than non-graduates, paying for a four-year college education is not a net economic benefit for more than half of American young people today. Still, lack of a degree can limit the ability to obtain jobs that require some postsecondary training, which are projected to represent most future jobs available.

Some form of postsecondary education or training – whether a technical certificate from a community college, an apprenticeship, or a college degree from a four-year institution – is necessary for obtaining and successfully performing many good jobs in today’s economy. This makes it important for the K-12 and higher education systems to operate in a coordinated manner to facilitate the student transition from high school to a higher education institution. The mandate for this study, for example, states that “in order to ensure meaningful, dependable employment in our increasingly complicated society, some level of higher education or technical training beyond high school is mandatory.” Most education experts and organizations also agree that some form of postsecondary education or training is increasingly necessary for those who do not go to college. For example, the 2006 report of the federal Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education (the Spellings Commission), which was comprised of prominent government, business, and education officials, states:

We acknowledge that not everyone needs to go to college. But everyone needs a postsecondary education. Indeed, we have seen ample evidence that some form of postsecondary instruction is increasingly vital to an individual’s economic security.

Labor market projections demonstrate that many jobs of the future will require postsecondary education or training. While there is job growth in the low-skilled service sectors, many of the newest and most lucrative jobs are in fields that require some form of postsecondary education. The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that of projected openings in 2014, “24 of the 30 fastest growing occupations are among those for which the most significant source of postsecondary education and training is a vocational award or an

academic degree.” Other data predict that among projected job openings between 2008 and 2018, the fastest growth is projected for occupations requiring an associate’s degree.

The Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) estimates that by 2018, 64 percent of all jobs in the state will require some postsecondary education or training. This is one percent greater than the national average. VEC also predicts that from 2008 to 2018, Virginia will have 1.5 million job vacancies, of which 63 percent will require some postsecondary credential, while only about ten percent will be available for those with less than a high school diploma.

Other Virginia-specific data also point to the need for postsecondary education or training. The National Skills Coalition (using data from the Virginia Department of Labor and Industry) projects that “middle-skill” jobs will account for 44 percent of the State’s jobs in 2018 (a slight decrease from 47 percent in 2008). Middle skill jobs, such as dental hygienist, electrician, and aircraft mechanic, require education beyond a high school diploma but less than a four-year degree. High-skill jobs, which require a four-year degree or higher, are projected to account for 36 percent of Virginia jobs in 2018, a slight increase from 33 percent in 2008. These jobs include occupations in the professional/technical and managerial categories.

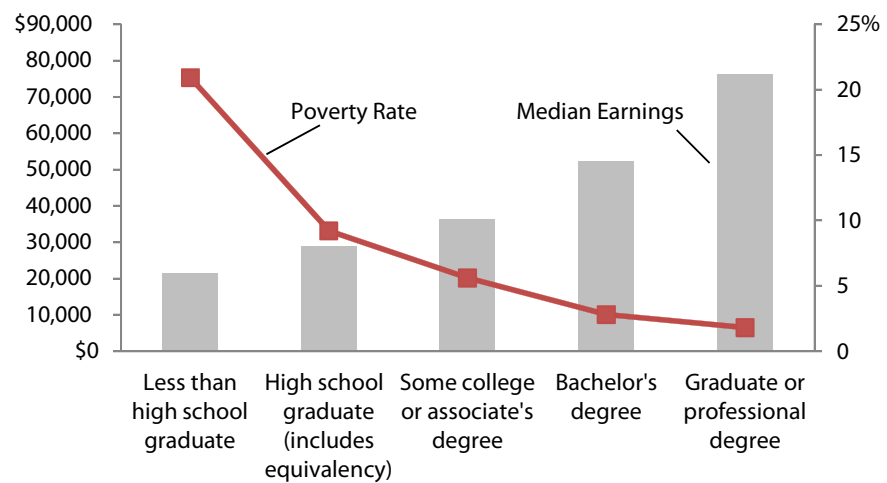
Individuals with college degrees also tend to earn higher wages. A June 2010 Brookings Institution report indicates that earnings of college graduates relative to high school graduates have risen steadily for almost three decades. This connection is also illustrated by the Census Bureau data for Virginia shown in Figure 2. The figure shows that as educational attainment increases, median earnings also increase while poverty levels fall. For example, while median earnings for Virginians aged 25 years and older with a high school diploma were estimated to be about \$29,000 (during the previous 12 months), earnings for individuals with at least a bachelor’s degree were estimated to be more than \$52,000. Furthermore, median earnings for workers with graduate or professional degrees were more than double those with only a high school diploma. Conversely, it is estimated that one in five Virginians with less than a high school diploma lives in poverty.

### **Coordination Can Help Achieve Governor’s Education Goals**

Greater coordination can also help achieve current policy goals and initiatives, such as an increase in the number of students awarded postsecondary degrees and increased access to science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. During the 2011 Session, the General Assembly passed the “Top Jobs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”

legislation, which was based on recommendations of the Governor's Commission on Higher Education Reform, Innovation and Investment. The legislation calls for 100,000 additional undergraduate (associate and/or bachelor's) degrees for Virginians over the next 15 years and aims to achieve this goal by increasing college enrollment of Virginia students, improving graduation and retention rates, and assisting students with some college credit to complete degrees at public higher education institutions in Virginia. Although the legislation did not mention coordination as a means to achieve the education goals, increased coordination would likely help by facilitating the transition from high school to college.

**Figure 2: Higher Levels of Education Attainment Associated With Higher Median Earnings and Lower Levels of Poverty in Virginia**



Note: Data is for population 25 years and older.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2006-2008 data.

The legislation also forms a public-private partnership to connect the business and professional community with the K-12 and higher education systems. One of the goals of this partnership is to support additional STEM enrollment/capacity at postsecondary institutions. Coordination will be needed to achieve this goal, because middle and high school students need to begin taking classes that will prepare them for obtaining postsecondary certificates or degrees in these fields.

### Education Agencies Have Traditionally Operated Independently

In the United States, K-12 and postsecondary education have largely been independent of each other. Most states (including Virginia) have separate state agencies for each level, and the budget-

ary functions are often separate as well. For example, in Virginia the Department of Planning and Budget, House Appropriations Committee, and Senate Finance Committee each has separate staff assigned to K-12 and higher education for budget purposes.

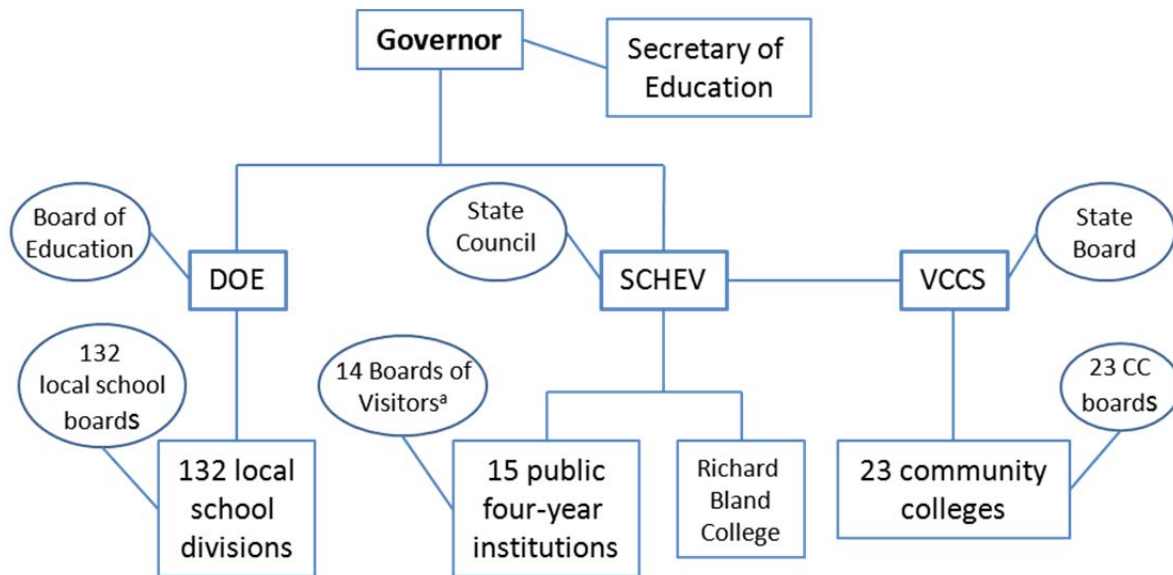
In the past, the need for coordination between the K-12 and higher education systems may have seemed less essential because many well-paying jobs required only a high school diploma—a typical student was not expected to progress through the entire education system and complete a college degree program. Between 1950 and 1970, for example, less than 12 percent of American adults had obtained a four-year college degree. Today, however, the extent to which youth pursue and receive some form of postsecondary education or training, along with an increasingly technical society, makes it even more critical for the K-12 and higher education systems to work together as a more seamless system of education.

### **DIFFERENT AGENCIES ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR DIFFERENT LEVELS OF EDUCATION**

Three State agencies have oversight responsibilities for different levels of education: the Department of Education (DOE), which oversees the K-12 system, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS), which oversees the 23 community colleges, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), which oversees the 15 four-year public institutions, one public junior college, and VCCS. While there is some coordination inherent in the educational structure (particularly between SCHEV and VCCS), the K-12 and postsecondary education systems primarily operate independently of each other. The Secretary of Education, however, is empowered to provide overall policy direction and resolve conflicts between the agencies. Figure 3 shows how Virginia's education system is currently organized and how the entities are related.

Students in Virginia's public schools and higher education institutions represent a significant proportion of Virginia's population, and funding for the education system represents a significant proportion of the State general fund budget. Nearly 1.7 million students were enrolled in the public education system during the 2010-2011 academic year. Approximately 75 percent of the students were enrolled in the K-12 system. General funds appropriated to the public K-12 schools, colleges and universities, and education agencies totaled approximately \$6.3 billion in FY 2011. Approximately 42 percent of the total general fund budget went to the education system. The majority of these funds (75 percent) were distributed to local school divisions. Table 1 shows the funding distribution to the various education entities as well as student enrollment at K-12 schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions.

**Figure 3: Organization of Virginia's Education Entities**



<sup>a</sup> University of Virginia's College at Wise is governed by the University of Virginia Board of Visitors.

Source: JLARC staff analysis of the *Code of Virginia*.

**Table 1: Virginia Spent \$6.3 Billion to Educate Nearly 1.7 Million Students (FY 2011)**

Level	Number of Students	General Fund Appropriation
Office of the Secretary of Education	n.a.	\$4,738,220 <sup>a</sup>
<b>K-12 System</b>		
Local School Divisions	1,253,238	4,739,288,334
DOE Central Office	n.a.	50,158,139 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Higher Education System</b>		
Community Colleges <sup>c</sup>	197,004	375,675,462
Four-Year Institutions	212,273	1,097,984,970
SCHEV (State Office)		71,785,974 <sup>d</sup>
<b>State Total</b>	<b>1,662,515</b>	<b>\$6,300,509,653</b>

<sup>a</sup> Includes \$4.1 million in financial assistance for public broadcasting.

<sup>b</sup> Includes \$28.1 million for Standards of Learning administration contracts.

<sup>c</sup> Includes Richard Bland College.

<sup>d</sup> Includes \$60.1 million for student financial assistance, of which \$53.5 is appropriated to the Tuition Assistant Grant program for students at private colleges and universities.

Source: State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, Fall 2010 headcount; Department of Education, 2010 fall membership; 2010 Appropriation Act (Chapter 874).

## Department of Education Oversees K-12 System

DOE is responsible for Virginia's K-12 public education system (including pre-kindergarten programs offered by local school divisions). DOE assists the 132 local public school divisions by providing training and technical assistance, and monitoring their compliance with laws and regulations. DOE helps teachers and other staff by assisting school divisions, colleges, and universities in developing educational programs, and by providing certain licensing and certification to school personnel. DOE also serves as the pass-through agency for State and federal funds, and calculates the amount of State funding each local school division receives.

The agency is headed by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, whose position is prescribed in the *Constitution of Virginia*, and is appointed by the Governor subject to confirmation from the General Assembly. Including the Superintendent, DOE has 310 staff positions in 2011.

The Board of Education (BOE) is the governing body for Virginia's public school system as prescribed by both the *Constitution* and the *Code of Virginia*. BOE's nine members are appointed by the Governor, subject to confirmation by the General Assembly. The board's powers and duties granted by the *Constitution* include

- dividing the Commonwealth into school divisions,
- determining and prescribing standards of quality for the school divisions subject to revision only by the General Assembly,
- making annual reports to the Governor and the General Assembly concerning the condition and needs of public education in the Commonwealth,
- certifying lists of qualified candidates for school division superintendent positions, and
- approving textbooks and instructional aids and materials for use in the public schools.

The board's other duties include

- setting statewide curriculum standards,
- establishing high school graduation requirements,
- determining qualifications for classroom teachers, principals, and other education personnel,
- establishing state testing and assessment programs, and



- establishing standards for accreditation of local school divisions and preparation programs for teachers and administrators.

Each of the local school divisions is supervised by a local school board. Local board members are either appointed by a school board selection committee or the local governing body, or elected by the citizens of the locality. The school boards are ultimately responsible for the operation and maintenance of the public schools within their divisions. They adopt bylaws and regulations consistent with State law and BOE regulations to address board management and the supervision of schools, and they manage and control school funds (including State and local appropriations). Each school division is headed by a division superintendent who is selected by the board from a list of candidates certified by BOE.

### **VCCS Oversees 23 Community Colleges**

Of all the education entities, VCCS focuses most on preparing students for the workplace. VCCS was established in 1966 because of concerns about Virginia's ability to develop a skilled and knowledgeable workforce to expand the State's economy.

VCCS is composed of a central system office and 23 colleges with 40 campuses throughout the State. Each community college serves a specific region of the State, and several of the colleges have multiple campuses. Students at community colleges can earn an associate's degree in applied science, which is a terminal degree intended to provide technical training in various disciplines, or in liberal arts and sciences, which is intended for transfer to a four-year college or university. Community college students also can take individual courses for credits that may be transferred to a four-year institution, or enroll in workforce programs that provide technical preparation, career readiness certificates, and on-the-job training through apprenticeships. Virginia's community colleges have an "open admission" policy – that is, any student with a high school diploma or graduate equivalency degree (GED) may enroll.

VCCS is headed by a chancellor, who is appointed by the State Board for Community Colleges. Including the chancellor, in 2011 the system office has 190 staff positions. The State Board, which is composed of 15 members appointed by the Governor, sets policy for the community college system. The chancellor acts as the secretary to the board and is authorized to formulate rules and regulations for the system. The State Board's duties include

- conferring diplomas, certificates, and associate's degrees,
- establishing policies for creating and operating a community college board for each community college, and



- communicating with the Governor, General Assembly, Secretary of Education, and other agencies and organizations about issues that affect the community colleges.

Each community college is headed by a president and overseen by a local community college board. The presidents are appointed by, and report to, the VCCS chancellor. The local community college boards are generally responsible for ensuring that the community college is responsive to the needs existing within its service region. Programs and courses offered by individual colleges are designed to serve the unique demands of the region, as determined by the local board and president with input from local businesses.

### SCHEV Is Coordinating Agency for Higher Education

Virginia's public higher education system consists of 15 four-year colleges and universities, one junior college (Richard Bland College), and VCCS. SCHEV oversees these institutions of higher education; however, SCHEV has limited authority over public institutions, which operate with considerable autonomy through their individual boards of visitors. Virginia has one of the most decentralized higher education systems in the country.

#### Board of Visitors

Each institution is governed by a board of visitors, with board members appointed by the Governor. Exceptions include Richard Bland College, which is governed by the board for the College of William and Mary; the University of Virginia's College at Wise, which is governed by the board for the University of Virginia; and VCCS, which is governed by the State Board for Community Colleges.

SCHEV's duties include

- developing a statewide strategic plan that identifies a coordinated approach to State goals for higher education;
- reviewing and approving (or disapproving) any changes to the mission of an institution, such as adding or eliminating academic programs;
- regulating private and out-of-state institutions operating in Virginia to provide quality assurance and student protections;
- developing a uniform, comprehensive data information system for higher education, and analyzing such financial and student data that it collects;
- administering State financial aid programs; and
- requiring the development and submission of articulation, transfer, and dual enrollment and admissions agreements between two- and four-year public institutions of higher education in Virginia.

While many of SCHEV's responsibilities relate to the coordination of higher education, its authority is limited primarily to approval of degree programs at public institutions, authorization for private and out-of-state institutions operating in Virginia to confer degrees, and collection of certain institutional and student data.

SCHEV has no authority over faculty selection, student admissions policies, or course content at the institutions. The *Constitution* and *Code of Virginia* give such authority to the Board of Visitors of each institution.

The council is composed of 11 members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the General Assembly. The council appoints the executive director for SCHEV staff, which is responsible for system-wide strategic planning, higher education budget recommendations, and policy development and implementation related to finance, academic affairs, and institutional research. Including the interim staff director, in 2011 SCHEV has a staff of 54, of which 31 are funded through State general funds.

### **Secretary of Education Provides Overall Policy Direction for Education System**

Section 2.2-208 of the *Code of Virginia* establishes the position of Secretary of Education (Secretary). According to the *Code*, the position is responsible for DOE, SCHEV, and other various boards and agencies. (Agencies organized within the Secretariat of Education are listed in Appendix C.) The Secretary is empowered to resolve administrative, jurisdictional, or policy conflicts among these entities. In addition, the Secretary may provide policy direction for programs involving more than one agency. The position is also authorized to “direct the preparation of alternative policies, plans, and budgets for education for the Governor.”

Although the Secretary may provide an important link between the Governor and the education entities, and be a valuable asset to the Governor in communicating initiatives to the entities, the position lacks the authority to direct management, personnel or budgets of the agencies. Furthermore, the Board of Education and Superintendent of Public Instruction have authority over the K-12 system vested in the *Constitution of Virginia*, and the boards of visitors of the colleges and universities are independent, which further limits the authority of the Secretary.

Because of this limited authority, an important factor in the effectiveness of the Secretary appears to be the extent to which the Secretary is considered to be an extension of the Governor that he or she serves. In addition, the ability of the individual serving in the capacity to gain the respect and confidence of the leaders of each of the respective entities is important. As one former Secretary stated, “I did not have statutory authority over the agencies, so I had to be charming.” Another former Secretary provided a similar assessment and also raised the issue of discontinuity due to different focuses of different administrations. The former Secretary stated,

**One former Secretary of Education stated, "Much of the coordinative role of the Secretary depends on the personality, politics, and agenda of the administration."**

Much of the coordinative role of the Secretary depends on the personality, politics, and agenda of the administration. Each seemingly has its own focus, whether it is higher education, K-12, early childhood education, or some other area.

Despite weak statutory authority, the Secretary can be effective in coordinating agencies within the educational system. However, this effectiveness is dependent upon the leadership and support of the Governor. On matters for which the Secretary is clearly speaking for the Governor, the ideas and suggestions proposed to educational entities are likely to be received and considered. Statements made by former Secretaries illustrate this point.

The governor's voice does give the Secretary more authority, even if the authority is not specified in the *Code* – but this depends on the leadership of each particular governor.

The *Code* does not give the Secretary much authority, but if the Governor gives the Secretary authority and stands behind the Secretary, then the Secretary should have the authority to get things done.



## Many Areas Are Coordinated, but Long-Term Needs Remain

### In Summary

To create a more seamless education system that promotes access to higher education and training as well as effective preparation to complete education and training programs, several key aspects must be coordinated. These key aspects include college readiness of high school graduates; ease of transition between high schools, community colleges, and four-year institutions; effective teacher preparation programs; career readiness and alignment with workforce needs; and a longitudinal data system to evaluate student outcomes from preschool through college. Virginia's education entities have undertaken some positive coordinated efforts to address each of these cross-cutting issues, but some long-term needs remain, such as improved coordination between high school and community college career and technical education programs. None of the identified issues or concerns is unique to Virginia, and other states provide examples of how the issues can be addressed.

Ideally, an education system provides access to all students who wish to continue their education or training, and prepares them to succeed in their educational and career pursuits. For students to have full access to educational opportunities, education must be affordable, available, and attainable. Affordability is achieved through keeping costs down and providing students with grants and loans so that cost is not a barrier. Availability is achieved through ensuring that a broad range of academic and career training programs are offered throughout the State and that there are enough spaces in these programs to meet the demand. Attainability is achieved through ensuring that students are prepared for academic and career programs, and that transitions between levels of education are as seamless as possible.

Coordination between the K-12 system, higher education, and employers could improve access by furthering the goals of availability and attainability. Particular aspects of the education system that require coordination include

- college readiness,
- transfer of students from community colleges to four-year institutions,
- teacher preparation,
- career readiness and alignment of workforce needs, and

- a longitudinal data system to evaluate the education system from preschool through college.

Virginia educational entities are working together to address these issues, but several needs remain to be addressed to produce a more seamless education system.

## **COLLEGE READINESS GAP INDICATES MORE COORDINATION MAY BE NEEDED**

### **What Does “College-Ready” Mean?**

The College Board (a nonprofit organization that counts approximately 5,900 colleges, universities, secondary schools and districts, higher education systems and other non-profit organizations as members) states that students are “college ready” when they have the knowledge, skills, and behaviors to complete a college course of study successfully, without remediation.

The “college readiness gap” (that is, the gap between the skills and knowledge taught in high school and the skills and knowledge expected of high school graduates entering college) is a national issue. In Virginia, more than half of the entering community college students who completed high school the previous year are placed in a remedial English or math course, and about 25 percent of all first-time college students are placed in a remedial English or math course. Nearly all remedial courses are provided by community colleges. These remediation rates are similar nationwide. According to the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB), “The huge readiness gap is costly to students, families, institutions, and taxpayers, and it is a tremendous obstacle to increasing the nation’s college degree-attainment levels.”

The percentage of Virginia high school graduates being assessed by colleges as needing remedial instruction is a concern. These students have completed their required high school course work and passed their exit exams in the form of the Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Although the SOL tests were not intended to be indicators of college readiness, they are indicators of basic competency and arguably should indicate that a student is at least capable of enrolling in the next higher level of instruction for that particular area. The high percentage of students needing remediation suggests that either the high school preparation is insufficient, college remedial placement tests do not accurately measure readiness, or high school curricula are misaligned with college expectations. Greater coordination between colleges and high schools could help to lessen the college readiness gap, which could reduce remediation costs and increase college completion rates.

## **Coordination Can Help Improve College Readiness**

As discussed in Chapter 1, for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the majority of adults who graduated from high school did not go on to college. It was not assumed that the achievement level of a high school diploma signaled full readiness for the academic demands of higher education. As an increasing number of students are attending college, however, the K-12 system has been criticized for not adequately preparing graduating students to meet the academic expectations of the higher education system. Part of the problem of

unprepared students is that the K-12 and postsecondary education systems have traditionally operated separately, and as more high school graduates enter college, greater coordination between the systems is needed.

Criticism of the K-12 system stems from the fact that many high school graduates are being required to take remedial courses, particularly in English and math, when they get to college. During the 2005-2006 academic year, almost 19 percent of first-time, first-year college students who graduated from a Virginia high school within the previous 12 months enrolled in at least one remedial course. By the 2009-2010 academic year, the figure stood at 24 percent. Approximately 56 percent of first-year students at Virginia's community colleges are required to take remedial courses. The vast majority (99.7 percent) of remedial instruction, whether for students attending four-year colleges or community colleges, is provided by community colleges.

***Approximately 56 percent of first-year students at Virginia's community colleges are required to take remedial courses.***

A 2006 national report by the Spellings Commission asserted that remediation is a consequence of both poor alignment between high schools and colleges and substandard preparation. A 2007 report by VCCS also cites coordination as an issue, stating:

The continued growth of high school graduates who need remediation at the postsecondary level illustrates a need for better communication and coordination between high schools and colleges to address the issues of college readiness for recent Virginia public high school graduates.

Coordination can help improve the academic readiness of high school students for higher education by clarifying the expectations of the postsecondary system to the K-12 system. This may help ensure that high school students are better prepared to handle college-level coursework and reduce the amount of remedial coursework required. Coordination can also help identify students who may need remediation before they get to college, so that they may receive additional developmental instruction before they graduate high school.

Reduced remediation may lead to improved college completion rates and reduced costs. Studies have shown that the majority of students who begin college by taking remedial courses never earn a degree, so reducing the number of students taking remedial courses may increase college graduation rates. Furthermore, reduced remediation rates can save money for both students and the State. A 2007 study found that the cost of providing remedial education in Virginia's community colleges was about \$11.2 million in fiscal year (FY) 2006, with an estimated cost of about \$11.7 million in FY 2007.

***A 2007 study found that the cost of providing remedial education in Virginia's community colleges was about \$11.2 million.***



Examples of areas that should be coordinated between the K-12 and higher education systems to improve college readiness include the following:

- Developing and adopting K-12 college readiness standards in reading, writing, and math. College readiness standards define the core knowledge and skills expected of students in college entry-level English and mathematics courses. According to SREB, these standards should be developed “jointly by public pre-K-12 and higher education sectors” to help ensure that the college readiness expectations of the two systems are aligned. The higher education system needs to share its expectations of what students should know with the K-12 system, and the K-12 system should incorporate, as much as feasible, these expectations into their learning standards. SREB also states that these standards should be key components of the high school assessments. In addition, the K-12 system should adjust or develop curriculum and instruction to address the specific readiness standards.
- Providing professional development for teachers. The higher education system, through its teacher preparation programs, can assist K-12 teachers in understanding the specific college readiness standards and how to teach them effectively.
- Aligning high school exit and college entrance exams. In many states, there are major differences between the content and format of assessments used at the K-12 exit level and those used at the college-entrance level. This is another indicator of the misalignment of expectations regarding what students need to know and be able to do to graduate from high school and enter college. College entrance exams may have little connection to the high school curriculum or to high school assessments. Ideally, according to SREB, states should have college readiness standards in reading, writing, and math (as discussed above), and these standards should be key components of the higher education system’s placement/readiness assessments.
- Preparing high school students for college placement exams. Many incoming community college students are unclear about testing and placement policies and practices, are not well prepared to take the placement tests, and are surprised to find out afterward that the test indicates they are not “college ready.” Because of this, many community colleges are working with high schools to offer the placement tests to students while they are still in high school to help students better prepare for college. The goal of this early assessment is to provide information on skills deficiencies before students begin college so that students who do not do well on the test

can take steps to improve their preparedness, pass the test, and avoid placement into remedial courses.

- Ensuring that the K-12 system and students who wish to go to college are aware of the courses that are deemed useful for success in college. Numerous studies have shown that the courses students take in high school can be very important to their success in college. Because students have differing talents and interests, a “one-size-fits-all” high school curriculum is not desirable. State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) states that many colleges have been lax in making clear to high schools and prospective students that the high school curriculum is crucial to college preparation and success. SHEEO goes on to say that, in many settings, there is little consensus between the K-12 and higher education systems about the nature and rigor of learning experiences students should have to prepare for college.

### **DOE, SCHEV, and VCCS Are Working Together to Improve College Readiness**

There are two major initiatives currently underway to address many of the college readiness issues discussed above: (1) DOE and the higher education system are working on a career and college readiness initiative and (2) VCCS is reengineering the way it identifies students for remedial education and delivers the remedial courses, with assistance from DOE. In addition, most of the State’s school divisions are working with local community colleges to offer dual enrollment courses for high school students, which help to improve the college readiness of students and increase access to higher education.

***DOE Is Working With the Higher Education System to Improve College and Career Readiness.*** In 2007, DOE initiated its College and Career Readiness Initiative (CCRI) to improve the readiness of Virginia high school students for college and careers. One of DOE’s main activities is the revision of the mathematics and English Standards of Learning (SOLs) to make them college readiness standards. DOE is also developing courses for high school seniors who need additional help to become college ready, based on the standards.

CCRI is a DOE initiative, but involves substantial coordination with the higher education system. For example, the revision process for the math and English SOLs involved faculty from Virginia’s colleges and universities, members of the business community, and high school educators. Higher education faculty provided feedback about the importance of each of the draft college and career ready performance expectations via an online survey. English and

math consensus/review teams, composed of experts at both the secondary and higher education levels, then analyzed the data and made recommendations to DOE on which performance expectations reached the level of “important” or “critical” for college and career readiness.

In February 2011, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, VCCS Chancellor, and SCHEV Interim Director signed a Joint Agreement on Virginia’s College and Career Ready Mathematics and English Performance Expectations. This agreement

shall serve as the Commonwealth’s college and career ready performance expectations for mathematics and reading, writing, and communicating, and that by this agreement, these performance expectations are recognized by the Commonwealth’s education agencies, the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, for this purpose.

The higher education system is also assisting DOE with the CCRI by hosting pilot professional development centers at certain State universities to provide course work and ongoing teacher support for the content on the new performance expectations. In addition, SCHEV has agreed to support teacher professional development on the performance expectations through its next cycle of federal IIA grant awards to four-year institutions.

***VCCS Is Redesigning the Identification and Delivery of Remediation.*** VCCS is embarking on a major redesign of remedial education and has formed a task force to guide the effort. The task force has three goals: (1) reduce the need for developmental education, (2) reduce the time needed to get through remediation, and (3) increase the number of successful outcomes (that is, the number of students who successfully complete remediation and the number of students who graduate). VCCS is coordinating with DOE staff on the redesign effort. For example, the task force includes a K-12 representative from a local school division, and DOE’s Assistant Superintendent for Public Instruction is also providing input into the redesign initiative.

VCCS is changing both the way students are identified for remedial courses and the way in which remedial courses are delivered. Currently, all students who need remediation in mathematics, for example, are required to take a full, five-credit remedial course before they can enroll in most courses that would award credit toward a degree. Under the redesigned system, VCCS will use a new placement test to better identify the specific topic areas in which students need help. VCCS is also developing nine shorter modules

***Under the redesigned system, VCCS will use a new placement test to better identify the specific topic areas in which students need help.***

that cover specific topics and, instead of taking the full five-credit course, students will only need to take the modules for which they are found to be deficient based on the placement test. This will allow most students to complete their remedial courses more quickly so they can begin taking credit-earning courses.

#### **DOE and VCCS Have Entered Into Dual Enrollment Agreement**

Virginia's Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Chancellor of VCCS have entered into a dual enrollment plan, which provides a statewide framework for dual enrollment arrangements between public schools and community colleges. The purpose of the agreement is to "provide a wider range of course options for high school students in academic, career/ occupational-technical subject areas where appropriate."

#### ***Dual Enrollment Offers High School Students the Opportunity to Take College Courses While in High School.***

Dual enrollment is a coordinated program between high schools and higher education institutions (typically community colleges) that allows high school students to take college classes and earn college credit. Dual enrollment courses are typically taught by high school teachers who are also qualified to teach at the community college level. Courses follow a community college course outline, include the same content as campus-based courses, and use standard college textbooks. According to the Community College Research Center at Columbia University, dual enrollment can help to strengthen student preparation for college. There are also many other benefits to dual enrollment, including encouraging college enrollment, reducing the cost of higher education for students, shortening the time required to earn a college degree, and assisting students in acclimating to college coursework.

#### **Several States Have Attempted to Improve the College Readiness of High School Graduates**

The college readiness issue is not unique to Virginia. Many other states have various efforts underway to address the issue of college readiness and remediation. These efforts range from the adoption of common core standards to offering college readiness testing and remedial instruction at the high school level. North Carolina and Florida, for example, have focused on offering early assessment testing to determine if students are on track to be prepared for postsecondary education upon graduating from high school.

#### **Common Core State Standards**

The Common Core State Standards were developed by the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers in collaboration with teachers, administrators, and curriculum experts to provide students with clear and consistent standards in English/language arts and mathematics. Currently, 42 states have adopted the standards.

The North Carolina legislature has voted to remove various end-of-course standardized tests from the public school curriculum in favor of adopting a series of assessments to gauge college readiness. North Carolina's House Education Committee agreed to initiate legislation requiring eleventh grade students to take the ACT college entrance exam in addition to two ACT pre-tests: the ACT EXPLORE exam in eighth grade and the ACT PLAN in tenth grade. These tests aim to identify which students are on track to be prepared for postsecondary education and which students may require supplemental courses before high school graduation. Florida has taken this effort a step further. The state passed Senate Bill 1908 in 2008 which *required* public high schools to offer testing to eleventh grade students who intend to pursue postsecondary education. Based on a student's scores, he or she has the option of taking

remedial classes during twelfth grade. According to the Florida Department of Education, the goal of this legislation is to (1) increase the number of college-ready high school seniors; (2) effectively communicate to students and parents the requirements and expectations of college-bound students; and (3) offer students the opportunity to remediate deficiencies, if necessary, prior to graduation.

### **More Coordination May Be Needed to Improve College Readiness**

Although Virginia's education entities are working together to address the college readiness issue, there appear to be some areas in which coordination could be improved. For example, all incoming community college students (and incoming students at some four-year institutions) are required to take a placement test to determine their readiness for college-level math and English courses, regardless of their scores on their high school SOL tests. At the community colleges, approximately 56 percent of incoming students are not deemed college ready according to the test and are required to take remedial courses before they can take credit-earning courses, despite earning scores of proficient or advanced proficient on their high school SOL tests.

When asked about the reasons for this disparity between the high school and community college assessments, officials at DOE and VCCS stated that the two tests measure different things. The SOLs test proficiency in certain subject areas (and were not originally designed to measure college readiness), while the VCCS placement test assesses a student's ability to apply knowledge.

The extent to which high school assessments and college placement tests should align is an education policy judgment. Although the proportion of high school graduates who attend college has risen greatly over the decades, college is still not the intended destination of all high school graduates. Nonetheless, it seems desirable that high school assessments at least indicate the extent to which students are prepared for introductory college course work. There also are education organizations, such as SREB, which expressly recommend that high school assessments should align with the college placement tests given to incoming college students.

In Virginia, the content of these tests do not appear to be aligned, and it is unclear how the new English and mathematics SOL assessments that are being designed as part of the CCRI will align with the college placement tests. This is one area where additional coordination between the K-12 and higher education systems may be necessary. Better alignment between the two tests could result in fewer students being placed in remedial courses, which would

likely improve college graduation rates and reduce costs to both students and the State.

Early assessment of developmental needs is another area where increased coordination could be beneficial. One of the potential reasons many incoming college students do not do well on placement tests is that they are unclear about testing and placement policies and practices, and are not well prepared to take the tests. One way to address this issue is through early assessment, which is the increasingly popular practice of offering college placement tests to students while they are still in high school (normally in their junior year). Early assessment provides information on skills deficiencies well before students begin college. Presumably, high school students who do not do well on the tests can then take steps to improve their preparedness, ultimately pass the test, and avoid placement into remedial courses. However, funding is required to purchase and administer the standardized placement tests, and agreements on who pays for these assessments will need to be determined.

### **COORDINATION FACILITATES THE TRANSFER OF STUDENTS BETWEEN EDUCATION LEVELS**

The ability of students to transition easily between the levels of the education system is an important aspect of increasing access to higher education opportunities. Coordinated programs and partnerships can help facilitate (1) the transition from high school to college and (2) student transfer from a two-year to a four-year institution. These programs and partnerships increase access to, and reduce the cost of, higher education. For example, the dual enrollment program, described above, allows high school students to earn college credits in high school, and these credits are then accepted by public colleges and universities in Virginia. This program facilitates the transition from high school to college by helping to better prepare high school students for college coursework. It also reduces the cost of higher education by reducing the number of classes a student must take at a two- or four-year institution.

Articulation agreements and guaranteed admission agreements are used to facilitate student transfer from a community college to a four-year institution. Articulation agreements between community colleges and four-year institutions assist students by ensuring that certain credits earned in community college will be accepted by a four-year institution as progress toward a bachelor's degree. Without such agreements, students may not know which courses will count toward a degree and which courses will need to be repeated after transferring to the four-year institution. Thus, articulation agreements can reduce the time and cost of obtaining a



bachelor's degree. Guaranteed admission agreements also facilitate transfer by ensuring acceptance by a four-year institution as a junior if certain conditions are met (such as minimum grade point average).

### **Virginia's Education System Has Worked to Improve Student Transfer**

***Guaranteed admission agreements allow students who graduate from one of Virginia's community colleges with an associate's degree and a specified GPA to obtain guaranteed admission to most public four-year institutions, as well as several private institutions, as juniors.***

Virginia's community colleges and four-year institutions have worked together to develop both articulation and guaranteed admission agreements. The guaranteed admission agreements are between the State's four-year institutions (including some private institutions) and the community colleges, and allow students who graduate from one of Virginia's community colleges with an associate's degree and a minimum grade point average (set by the university) to obtain guaranteed admission to most public four-year institutions, as well as several private institutions, as juniors. These agreements increase access to the four-year institutions by providing students with an alternate method of obtaining admission to a four-year institution. They also provide prospective students with a specific plan of action to ensure they satisfy a four-year institution's admissions requirements. Currently, 12 of the 15 public institutions have guaranteed admission agreements. Exceptions include the Virginia Military Institute, George Mason University, and James Madison University.

VCCS and individual four-year institutions have also developed uniform articulation agreements to ensure that certain credits earned at any community college will transfer to particular degree programs at the four-year institutions. Unlike the guaranteed admission agreements, articulation agreements are made with specific departments within an institution. These agreements let a student know which course credits from the community college will be accepted by the department as credit towards a particular degree from that institution. The agreements may also help make a four-year degree affordable for more students, as the course credits can be obtained at a lesser cost at the community college.

One driving factor behind improvements in the transfer process is the 2005 Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act (Restructuring Act). The Restructuring Act lists 12 goals that all institutions are asked to meet, and SCHEV has developed performance measures and targets with the institutions to demonstrate that the institutions are actually furthering the goals in the Restructuring Act. Goal 6 of the act asks institutions to (consistent with their institutional mission):

develop articulation agreements that have uniform application to all Virginia community colleges and meet appropri-



ate general education and program requirements at the four-year institution, provide additional opportunities for associate degree graduates to be admitted and enrolled, and offer dual enrollment programs in cooperation with high schools.

The institutions (with the exception of the Virginia Military Institute, which is exempt from this goal) have all been certified by SCHEV as having achieved their performance benchmarks pertaining to this goal. In addition, the College of William and Mary, the University of Virginia, and Virginia Tech were asked to significantly increase the number of transfer students enrolled collectively at the three universities, and they have accomplished this.

### **Increased Access to Postsecondary Education and Coordination of Student Transfer Are Concerns of Most States**

***North Carolina's Learn and Earn Early College High Schools allow students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and either two years of transferable higher education credit or an associate's degree.***

Other states are also working to facilitate student transfer and increase access to higher education opportunities. North Carolina's Learn and Earn Early College High Schools, for example, allow students to simultaneously earn a high school diploma and either two years of transferable higher education credit or an associate's degree. Early Colleges are on the campuses of both two- and four-year institutions, and students usually attend for approximately five years. The high schools are managed by partnerships between the local school district and the area higher education institutions. They are supported by the state's Department of Public Instruction and the North Carolina New Schools Project, a nonprofit organization whose mission is to "spark and support systemic, sustainable, innovation in secondary schools across the state so that all students graduate prepared for college, work and life." They are particularly geared towards recruiting and serving students of under-represented populations, including but not limited to, first-generation college students, students from low-income families, and minorities. Early College provides these students relief from the financial burden associated with four years at a higher education institution. Students are able to enter a four-year university in the junior year, thus only incurring the cost of two years of tuition. According to the North Carolina Learn and Earn website, there are currently 71 Early College High Schools across the state.

### **Virginia Has Improved the Transfer Process, but Continued Coordination Is Needed**

The guaranteed admission and uniform articulation agreements appear to be working well. Institutions are increasing the percentage of student transfers in accordance with goal 6 of the Restructuring Act. Concerns were raised, however, about dual enrollment credits. High schools were concerned that the credits do not always transfer to a higher education institution, and higher education in-

stitutions expressed concern about the quality of dual enrollment courses in some schools. Because of these concerns, more coordination between DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV may be required to ensure the college-level rigor of dual enrollment courses and the acceptance by four-year institutions of credits earned through dual enrollment.

## **COORDINATION IMPROVES TEACHER PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

There is a mutual dependency between the K-12 system and higher education institutions that offer teacher preparation and training programs. The K-12 system relies on the higher education system to produce qualified teacher candidates, and the higher education system relies on the K-12 system to provide practice teaching sites for student teachers.

National reform efforts focusing on teacher preparation programs have pointed to the need for coordination and collaboration between the K-12 and higher education systems. For example, the National Network for Education Renewal, an organization dedicated to the renewal of schools and the institutions that prepare teachers, states:

A primary strategy for educational renewal is school/university partnerships where currently enrolled P-12 students and future teachers receive quality educational experiences. Collaborative policies and practices between school districts and institutions of higher education are necessary to advance this work that we view as ongoing and never complete.

Another education expert stated that collaboration between the K-12 system and teacher preparation programs “should be across all aspects of teacher preparation, including its design, evaluation, and governance.”

To produce effective teachers that meet their needs, it is important that K-12 systems have substantial input into the teacher training programs at the four-year institutions. K-12 schools can improve the education of teacher candidates by providing input into the teacher training curricula and/or by allowing K-12 teachers to be involved in teacher training instruction by serving as guest lecturers or instructors. In addition, the teacher training programs should have a feedback loop that allows the K-12 system to provide input regarding the quality of the programs’ graduates. One of the national organizations that accredits teacher colleges recommends that teacher training programs have

...an assessment system that collects and analyzes data on applicant qualifications, candidate and graduate performance, and unit operations to evaluate and improve the performance of candidates, the unit, and its programs.

The higher education and K-12 systems also need to work together to ensure that teacher education programs are adequately addressing new and emerging issues in the K-12 system, such as familiarizing new teachers with the new college readiness standards and preparing them to teach the standards.

The higher education system also has a role in providing professional development for practicing teachers, especially for those who are teaching courses based on college-readiness standards. Higher education institutions should be involved in developing and/or providing professional development courses for these teachers to ensure that they are adequately preparing students for postsecondary education or the workplace. Higher education institutions can also be involved in developing senior-year developmental courses in mathematics and English to provide additional help to students who are identified as unprepared for college. For example, SREB recommends that teachers of senior-year developmental courses should interact with professors of remedial courses in the community college system to learn different styles of teaching these courses.

### **Teacher Preparation and Professional Development Are Generally Well Coordinated in Virginia**

During interviews for this study, staff from both the school divisions and higher education institutions indicated that there is generally good coordination with respect to the teacher training process. The school divisions work well with the higher education institutions in placing and training student teachers, and the higher education institutions stated that they try to involve the K-12 system in their teacher training programs by soliciting input on the teacher training curriculum and other areas. There are also many partnerships between Virginia's higher education institutions and local school divisions to upgrade the knowledge and skills of teachers, as required by the restructuring act. For example:

- The College of William and Mary works with local school divisions to provide middle school teachers with math content and pedagogy necessary for them to become “highly qualified” to teach courses in algebra and geometry.
- George Mason University was recently selected to receive a \$28.5 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education for the Virginia Initiative for Science Teaching and Achieve-

ment (VISTA). The project is a partnership that includes 47 Virginia school divisions, six Virginia universities, SRI International, and DOE. The goal of VISTA is to improve science teaching and student learning throughout Virginia, especially in schools with high-poverty levels and a high percentage of minority students.

- Longwood University regularly solicits information about the quality of the teachers who graduate from its program. The university annually surveys school divisions that employ its graduates for feedback on the teachers' quality and readiness. The university's Professional Education Council, which includes faculty, superintendents, and others in the education community, sets the expectations for Longwood's teacher preparation program. In addition, the Dean of the College of Education and Human Services has a Superintendents' Network, which is composed of the superintendents from several partnering school divisions. This network of superintendents meets regularly with members of the university to discuss the university's teacher preparation program.

#### **BOE Regulations Require Partnerships**

BOE's *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* require colleges and universities with teacher education programs to submit collaborations and partnerships with local school divisions to the BOE biennially.

There are also numerous partnerships and collaborations between school divisions and higher education institutions related to BOE's requirements for approval of teacher education programs. In the most recent report (2010) to BOE, the 37 higher education institutions (both public and private) with approved teacher preparation programs identified over 1,000 such partnerships.

*Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia*, which are developed by BOE, also require the teacher education programs to interact with the school divisions that hire their graduates. These regulations require the programs to provide evidence of employer job satisfaction with candidates completing the program (on a biennial basis). The regulations further state that the program must have two years of evidence regarding candidate performance based on employer surveys. Virginia's teacher education programs address this requirement in different ways. For example, as discussed earlier in this section, Longwood obtains information from school divisions on the quality of teachers who train there. The School of Education at William and Mary stated that they survey superintendents and principals every three years about their graduates.

The 2005 Restructuring Act has also strengthened coordination between the higher education and K-12 systems by requiring institutions to demonstrate that they are working actively with K-12 schools. Goal 9 of the act requires institutions to:

Work actively and cooperatively with elementary and secondary school administrators, teachers, and students in public schools and school divisions to improve student achievement, upgrade the knowledge and skills of teachers, and strengthen leadership skills of school administrators.

### **Teacher Preparation and Development Is a Continuing Goal in Many States**

Other states are looking at ways to attract, graduate, and retain quality teachers, especially in hard-to-staff schools and high-need content areas. In 2001, Florida enacted legislation that granted community colleges the opportunity to offer accessible and affordable baccalaureate teaching degrees in critical areas such as technology, mathematics, and science, pending approval by the Florida State Board of Education. Currently, there are 13 community colleges offering bachelor's degree programs in teaching. There is no minimum GPA or SAT/ACT score to be admitted to these programs, but students must have at least a standard high school diploma, a general education degree (GED), or demonstrate college coursework competency. According to the Florida Department of Education, "the expansion of the community college mission to include a baccalaureate degree option" makes it possible for "specific populations served by these institutions to access further education" in a cost-effective way.

### **Increased Coordination and Communication Could Improve Teacher Preparedness**

Although there is generally good coordination with respect to the teacher training process in Virginia, there appear to be some areas in which more coordination could improve the preparedness of new teachers. For example, during interviews conducted for JLARC's study of third grade reading performance (which is due to be completed in September 2011), several principals and other staff stated that new teachers from some of Virginia's teacher education programs have not received the proper training to teach reading to elementary school students. While principals should have the opportunity to provide this type of feedback to the teacher education programs when the programs collect evidence from school divisions about their satisfaction with graduates, the extent to which principals are providing this feedback is unclear. Some principals stated that they were unaware of an established feedback loop for teacher education programs, and they have not been given the opportunity to provide feedback to the programs. In some cases, this could be because teacher education programs may seek feedback from the school division central office, and the central office may or may not solicit or receive feedback from school principals who are most familiar with the quality of the graduates. In addition, central office staff at some school divisions stated that the feedback process for

some teacher education programs was somewhat informal. Increased coordination between teacher education programs and the K-12 system could strengthen the feedback process and help ensure that the teacher education programs are receiving candid and accurate feedback on the quality of their graduates.

Another issue is the ability of higher education institutions to provide input into the *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* that are developed by BOE. Changes in these regulations (for example, adding new requirements) can have a major effect on the programs. DOE staff indicated there are many opportunities for the higher education system to provide feedback on the regulations. For example, for major revisions, DOE convenes committees of higher education representatives to obtain their input and feedback. Higher education representatives can also comment on changes to regulations during the public hearings that are required as part of the Administrative Process Act. DOE staff members also attend and participate in Virginia Association of Colleges of Teacher Education (VACTE) meetings twice a year. In addition, there are two higher education faculty representatives from approved teacher education programs on the Advisory Board on Teacher Education and Licensure (ABTEL), which advises BOE and submits recommendations on policies and applicable standards for the approval of preparation programs. One role of the ABTEL members is to inform and gather information from the institutions they represent. Liaisons from VCCS and SCHEV also participate in the ABTEL meetings.

Despite these opportunities for input, some higher education institutions stated that they felt they had limited input into the regulations that govern their teacher training programs, and that when they have been asked to provide input, it is too late in the process. One institution stated that they did not have input into a new requirement to provide classroom management training, and that certain aspects of the regulations, such as alternate routes to teacher certification, may need to be examined. Increased coordination and communication in this area could help ensure that the teacher education programs are fully aware of the opportunities to provide input into the regulations that affect their programs.

## **CAREER READINESS AND ALIGNMENT WITH WORKFORCE NEEDS REQUIRE COORDINATION**

In addition to producing an educated citizenry, education systems are also relied upon to prepare individuals for work in the various career fields and to produce workers with the skills needed to support vital regional economic interests. Different careers require different levels of educational attainment, and it is important that the education system informs students of career opportunities and

the educational path required to obtain those jobs. Furthermore, it is important that training opportunities are provided to those students who do not intend to pursue a bachelor's degree.

Aligning the education system with workforce needs requires coordination between the K-12 system, community colleges, four-year institutions, and employers to ensure that information on employer needs is disseminated and curricula are designed to address those needs. When the K-12 and higher education systems work together to identify employer needs, middle and high school students can begin taking classes that will prepare them for obtaining postsecondary certificates or degrees in those fields.

#### **Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

Today's CTE programs go beyond traditional vocational ("vo-tech") programs. CTE programs require high academic standards, significant professional development for teachers, required internships, mentorships, and extensive interactions with professionals in related fields, including industry partnerships. CTE programs offered in Virginia include traditional trade and industrial courses such as auto repair and carpentry, but also finance/ business-related courses, such as economics and marketing, and technology courses, such as imaging technology and engineering drawing and design.

Career and technical education (CTE) is one way that education systems address specific workforce needs. CTE programs, provided at both high schools and community colleges, train students in a wide range of careers such as information technology, healthcare, law enforcement, auto technology, engineering, and marketing. These programs teach not only the academic and technical content but also incorporate vital workforce skills, including problem-solving, critical thinking, and effective communication. These programs need coordination to ensure smooth transitions for high school CTE students who want to continue their training in a community college and to ensure efficient use of State resources by limiting unnecessary duplication.

The federal government also requires CTE coordination. The intent of the latest revision to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act, the main federal funding source for state CTE programs, is to

ensure continuous improvement of career and technical education programs offered at both secondary and postsecondary levels through the development, assessment, and continuous improvement of secondary to postsecondary career pathways or programs of study comprised of academic and career and technical education instruction.

The Perkins Act also sets aside federal funds for Tech Prep programs, which aim to improve the student transition from secondary to postsecondary institutions by linking the last two years of high school with the first two years of college through technical programs that include rigorous academic content. These programs must incorporate secondary and postsecondary education elements and include academic and career and technical content in a coordinated, non-duplicative progression of courses.

Coordination is also needed to ensure that high school (and even middle school) students are made aware of CTE opportunities at



the community colleges. This type of coordination can include showcasing CTE programs and employment opportunities to seventh through twelfth graders, providing career exploration and development activities, career fairs, and other outreach efforts. Because community colleges tend to have good working relationships with local business and industry, they are generally aware of their regional employment needs. Sharing this information with high school students can help students make better decisions about future careers. These types of partnerships are beneficial to the student, the State, and employers. Finally, coordination is needed between secondary and postsecondary CTE programs to ensure efficient use of State resources. These programs often require expensive supplies and equipment. Because similar programs may be offered at both the secondary and postsecondary level, coordination between the two levels will help to ensure that resources are shared wherever possible.

### **Virginia's Education Entities Have Several Coordinated Programs and Initiatives Related to Career Readiness**

Virginia has several coordinated programs and initiatives to prepare students for careers and help meet the State's workforce needs. Several of these programs involve coordination between community colleges and local school divisions, such as the career coaches program, the Tech Prep program, and the Virginia Education Wizard. In addition, the four-year institutions have increased efforts to meet the State's workforce needs through recent legislation such as the 2005 Restructuring Act and the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 ("Top Jobs" Act).

***Career coaches, employed by VCCS, serve more than 150 high schools across Virginia.***

Career coaches, employed by VCCS, serve more than 150 high schools across Virginia. The career coaches are placed in high schools to help students define their career aspirations and identify community college and other postsecondary programs, including apprenticeships and workforce training, that can help students achieve their educational and financial goals.

#### **What Does the Wizard Do?**

The Virginia Education Wizard begins by administering an online career assessment program and then leads students through college selection, course planning, registration, and possible transfer to a four-year institution.

In addition, all of the community colleges administer the Tech Prep program on behalf of local consortia comprised of secondary and postsecondary education partners, local employers, and regional economic and workforce development entities. Tech Prep programs are designed to prepare the emerging workforce for higher education and entry into high-wage, high-demand, or high-skills career fields.

The Virginia Education Wizard is another example of coordination between VCCS, SCHEV and DOE that focuses on career readiness and workforce preparedness. The Wizard is an online resource that brings together information about careers, curriculum, and finan-

**Academic and Career Plans**

Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, all seventh grade students will be required to develop an Academic and Career Plan. The Academic and Career Plan is a personal learning plan that aligns academic and career goals with the student's course of study.

cial assistance. It allows students to assess their job-related skills and interests, investigate careers, and determine what type of education is needed to achieve their career goals.

The Wizard was initially conceived and developed by VCCS. At the same time VCCS was implementing the first version of the Wizard, DOE was trying to develop its own career assessment tool for K-12 students, in part to assist students in developing their individualized academic and career plans. SCHEV was also working to find a replacement for the unfunded and privately held Virginia Mentor website. Rather than develop three separate systems, DOE, VCCS and SCHEV decided to develop a single system that met all stakeholders' needs. They entered into an agreement to modify the Wizard to include the K-12 system and the four-year colleges and universities. The latest version of the Wizard, launched on November 11, 2010, will be used by middle school students to develop their academic and career plans. The tool appears to be useful overall and to reasonably identify areas of student career interest, although the software needs to be reevaluated frequently to ensure that career options reflect the wide range of occupations that may match students' interests.

The 2005 Restructuring Act has also promoted better alignment with the Commonwealth's workforce needs by requiring public colleges and universities to demonstrate they are producing sufficient graduates in certain high-need fields and to help stimulate economic development in the geographic region in which they are located. As previously mentioned, all public colleges and universities have agreed to further certain State goals listed in the act, and two of the goals (goals 3 and 7) pertain to alignment with workforce needs. Goal 3 states that institutions shall

offer a broad range of undergraduate and, where appropriate, graduate programs consistent with its mission and assess regularly the extent to which the institution's curricula and degree programs address the Commonwealth's need for sufficient graduates in particular shortage areas, including specific academic disciplines, professions, and geographic regions.

Goal 7 states that institutions shall

actively contribute to efforts to stimulate the economic development of the Commonwealth and the area in which the institution is located, and for those institutions subject to a management agreement ..., in areas that lag the Commonwealth in terms of income, employment, and other factors.

SCHEV has developed performance measures for each of these goals, and the institutions must achieve individualized performance targets to ensure that they are furthering the goals.

Finally, the 2011 “Top Jobs” Act created the Higher Education Advisory Committee to examine ways of achieving goals specified in the act, such as producing 100,000 more college graduates and increasing enrollment in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Findings of the commission are due to be released in 2013.

### **Several States Are Coordinating Career Readiness Efforts and Aligning Workforce Needs**

A review of selected other states found that these states have career readiness programs similar to Virginia’s. Two states that appear to have effective CTE programs are Tennessee and Florida. Tennessee’s Technology Centers (TTCs) offer numerous one- and two-year technical and occupational programs organized around four basic elements: straightforward program structures; competency-based training; student services; and technology foundations. This model enables students to focus on their program of study while simultaneously training in a workplace style environment, thereby developing relevant and current workforce skills. Tennessee’s 27 Technical Centers are located across the state and annually graduate an average of 71 percent of first-time, full-time students. This graduation rate far exceeds that of the national average, which is 21 percent.

***The Florida Department of Education assembles work groups of business and industry leaders, CTE faculty and staff, and workforce board members to examine the regional needs and viability of all CTE programs.***

Florida’s Career and Technical Education system provides secondary and postsecondary students with a variety of education and training opportunities, including dual enrollment courses, certificates, and associate’s degrees. These programs are administered in public high schools, community colleges, and area technical centers. The state assembles work groups of business and industry leaders, CTE faculty and staff, and workforce board members to examine the regional needs and viability of all CTE programs. To ensure program relevance and continuity, the state’s Division of Workforce Education consistently revises the state’s CTE content standards based on these work group recommendations. Florida legislation requires the standards to be reviewed every three years to certify that the programs are applicable in an ever-changing economy. According to an official in Florida, the partnership between public education agencies and businesses helps ensure that the state offers the most modern and innovative curricula possible.

## **Review of Coordination Between High School and Community College CTE Programs Could Result in Efficiencies and Improvements**

The extent to which Virginia's high schools and community colleges are effectively coordinating their CTE programs is unclear. Because CTE programs are offered at both high schools and community colleges, the potential for duplication exists. Increased communication between the K-12 and community college system could help identify opportunities for coordination of these programs, including whether equipment and/or instructors could be shared.

Concerns were raised by VCCS regarding Virginia's CTE program. One concern is the allocation of federal Perkins funds to secondary and postsecondary education systems. Currently, DOE receives 85 percent of the federal Perkins funding for CTE programs and VCCS receives 15 percent. The proportion allocated to postsecondary programs in other states appears to be higher. Nationwide, for program year 2007-2008, the states allocated an average of 63 percent of their funds to secondary education programs and 36 percent to postsecondary education programs. Concerns were also raised about the lack of a community college representative on the federally required State CTE board, which is the Board of Education. A review of the State's CTE program could assess the appropriateness of the funding split and determine if VCCS has adequate input into governing the State CTE program.

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**Recommendation (1).** The Department of Education and the Virginia Community College System should work together to review the level of coordination between the career and technical education (CTE) programs offered at the high schools and community colleges. This review should include an assessment of the appropriateness of the Perkins Act secondary/postsecondary funding allocation and whether there are opportunities to better coordinate CTE programs and resources between the high schools and community colleges.

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## **COORDINATION IS REQUIRED TO EVALUATE STUDENT LEARNING FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH COLLEGE**

Tracking student progress over time—from early childhood through postsecondary education—is crucial for improving teaching and learning and ensuring accountability. Traditionally, the K-12 and higher education systems have maintained separate student data systems and have had difficulties sharing data with each other (due to privacy and other concerns), which has made any type of longitudinal data analysis difficult. Recently, however, state education agencies have begun working together to share da-

ta and develop state data systems that can follow student progress over time.

Longitudinal data systems provide timely and relevant data to policymakers and educators. According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), longitudinal data are needed to foster strategies for school improvement, better allocate resources, identify and share best practices, and hold schools and school divisions accountable for student learning. For example, policymakers can use student assessment data to gauge the progress in student learning, which in turn can help improve teaching and curricula.

Virginia recently received a \$17.5 million federal grant to develop a longitudinal data system. Several agencies—including DOE, SCHEV, VCCS, the Virginia Employment Commission, and the Governor's Workforce Office—worked together to develop the grant proposal. Grant funds are being used to create a longitudinal data linking and reporting system, which will link data among State agency data sources, including the K-12, higher education, and workforce systems. Development of the data system, expected to be completed by June 30, 2013, will also be a collaborative effort.

The system is being developed to

- create an integrated K-12 system-teacher information system that matches individual teachers to students to enable analyses such as the impact of teachers on student performance;
- develop a Web-based portal to provide one-stop access to education and workforce data by policymakers, educators, the public, program directors, researchers, and others;
- design a data management and control system that enables the State to maximize data quality, ensure accessibility with appropriate security, and enhance the usefulness of the data in both existing and proposed systems; and
- develop a mechanism for postsecondary institutions to receive transcript data.

#### **Data Quality Campaign**

The Data Quality Campaign (DQC) is a nationwide collaborative effort to create and duplicate efficient longitudinal data systems in every state. The DQC promotes the use of effective data to educate stakeholders about student progress in an effort to bolster student achievement and completion.

Longitudinal data systems are also being developed in other states. For example, according to the Data Quality Campaign (DQC), Florida's Education Data Warehouse, created in 2003, gathers data from 25 state agency systems. It was the first state to be recognized by the DQC for having the essential elements necessary for a robust data system. The Data Warehouse is highly regarded for its capacity to incorporate both student and faculty data from pre-K through employment. The system collects student data on demographics, attendance, assessment scores, enrollment, and awards. It also collects demographic, payroll, and course instruction data on teachers and staff. According to Florida officials, the

***Florida's Education Data Warehouse provides the state with a single system repository of pre-K-20 student and faculty data.***

**Example of Research Enabled by Longitudinal Data**

One example of research that should be conducted jointly when the longitudinal data system is operational is a validation of DOE's new English and math college readiness standards. The Southern Regional Education Board recommends that states validate these standards by comparing student performance on the standards to actual performance in introductory college courses.

Education Data Warehouse provides the information necessary to fulfill legislative, state, and federal reporting requirements. Florida has received a federal grant to support and improve the efficiency of the PK20 Data Warehouse by updating the system's methodologies, creating unique student identifiers, developing a user friendly reporting tool, and implementing a data mining tool to identify and track patterns and anomalies more quickly. Florida's Education Data Warehouse provides the state with a single system repository of pre-K-20 student and faculty data. This enables key stakeholders—including students, administrators, faculty, staff, parents, policymakers, and employers—the opportunity to track both students and teachers across time and institution, view trends and patterns, and examine the linkages between students, teachers, and courses.

In Virginia, increased coordination could improve education research and results. Education-related research is conducted by staff at DOE, SCHEV, VCCS, and the four-year institutions. While some research topics are specific to one level of education, many issues affect the entire system, such as college readiness. Increased coordination among education research staff on system-wide issues could result in better and more efficient data analysis and results. Once the longitudinal data system is developed, it will be helpful to have research staff from the State's education agencies and universities working together to analyze the data in a coordinated manner. In addition, after the current grant funds for the data system are depleted, the education entities will need to continue to work together to determine how the system will be maintained and how staff from the various agencies are allocated to the system.





## Structural Changes Could Promote Long-Term Coordination Among Education Entities

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### In Summary

Although Virginia's education entities have already taken steps to address many system-wide education needs, some needs remain, and the extent to which coordination will continue into the future and address emerging issues is uncertain. To promote greater coordination and increase system-wide accountability, statutory changes could be made to provide an ongoing mechanism for coordination and accountability. Specific recommendations for statutory changes include establishment of a coordinating education council chaired by the Secretary of Education and composed of education and business leaders, a requirement for the Secretary to develop a biennial status report, and the designation of agency liaisons to other education governing boards. These recommendations are not intended to alter the constitutional or statutory authority of the education agencies and boards.

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As discussed in Chapter 2, Virginia's K-12 and higher education entities have taken steps to address many of the State's system-wide education needs. Several of these efforts have been initiated in response to recent legislative and executive actions. However, additional coordination needs remain, and no single entity (other than the Governor) is accountable for ensuring that the education system as a whole is achieving system-wide goals such as producing an educated citizenry and meeting the workforce needs of the Commonwealth. Thus, under the current structure, continued coordination to identify and address system-wide issues is uncertain. Table 2 summarizes the efforts underway to address the system-wide issues as discussed in Chapter 2, as well as the remaining challenges or concerns associated with the issues.

In order to ensure long-term coordination among Virginia's education entities and promote a seamless system, certain statutory changes could be made to provide a mechanism that promotes coordination. These changes would increase communication between the entities and add to the statutory responsibilities of the Secretary of Education, but would not alter the authority or the prerogatives of existing State agencies, institutions of higher education, or local school divisions.

A few states have attempted to improve their education systems by consolidating K-12 and higher education governing bodies. However, consolidation of Virginia's education agencies would not be appropriate due to (1) complications arising from different levels of

authority over the local school divisions, community colleges, and public four-year institutions; (2) possible adverse effects on State leadership of the higher education system; and (3) the ability to address system-wide issues without a major reorganization, such as through the statutory creation of a coordinating council and increased accountability in the office of the Secretary of Education.

**Table 2: Many Coordination Issues Are Already Being Addressed, but Concerns or Challenges Remain**

Coordination Issue	Efforts Underway	Remaining Concerns or Challenges
College Readiness	College and Career Readiness Initiative; redesign of remedial assessment and instruction; dual enrollment	Remedial placement assessments and instruction not offered by all high schools; high performance on end-of-course SOL assessments not recognized by Virginia colleges for remedial needs assessment
Student Transfer	System-wide articulation agreements and guaranteed admission program between VCCS and four-year institutions; Goal 6 of Restructuring Act	Continued review of articulation agreements; concerns about credit earned through dual enrollment
Teacher Preparation	Student teacher training and mentoring by local school divisions; Goal 9 of Restructuring Act	Continued review of quality of teacher preparation programs (for example, teacher training for reading proficiency)
Career Readiness/Alignment with Workforce Needs	Career and Technical Education (CTE) program; Education Wizard; Career Coaches; Tech Prep; "Top Jobs" Act; Goals 3 and 7 of Restructuring Act	Coordination and allocation of funding for CTE program among high schools and community colleges
Longitudinal Data System	Multi-agency longitudinal data system design team	Maintenance of data system; system-wide research assignments; funding

Source: JLARC staff analysis of interview responses and document reviews.

## COORDINATION HAS INCREASED DUE TO RECENT LEGISLATIVE AND EXECUTIVE ACTIONS

Coordination among the K-12 and higher education entities appears to have increased in recent years. Several factors account for the increased focus on system-wide education issues. First, the P-16 Council, created by executive order in 2005, included representatives from all of the major education entities and attempted to identify and address several issues affecting the education system as a whole. The goals of the council were to better coordinate the State's education reform efforts, improve transitions among levels of education, and promote student success. The council released an interim report in 2006 that included recommendations pertaining to college and career readiness and the development of a compre-

hensive longitudinal data system to track students from preschool through college. The P-16 Council has been cited as an impetus behind the College and Career Readiness Initiative as well as the grant to develop the data system. The council is no longer active as of July 1, 2011.

Two major legislative actions pertaining to higher education have also strengthened incentives for greater coordination and an increased focus on the Commonwealth's workforce needs. The 2005 Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act (Restructuring Act) set goals for the colleges and universities related to student access, degree completion, production of graduates in high-need fields of study, teacher preparation, student transfer, and economic development, among other goals. The colleges and universities are encouraged to achieve these goals because they are tied to financial incentives and greater autonomy in their operations.

The other major legislative action was the 2011 "Top Jobs" Act, which set goals for increasing the number of college graduates, and in particular, the number of graduates in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. Sufficient numbers of graduates in these STEM fields have been identified as critical to the Commonwealth's economic competitiveness. The "Top Jobs" Act also created the Higher Education Advisory Committee to develop recommendations for achieving these goals. Recommendations from the advisory commission are expected by 2013.

These recent actions have improved current levels of coordination and provided incentives for increasing access to higher education as well as college and career readiness. However, additional statutory changes may still be needed to promote system-wide accountability and ensure continued coordination to identify and address system-wide concerns. As the P-16 Council is no longer active, there is currently no formal mechanism for assembling State education leaders from all levels to address system-wide issues. Also, the Restructuring Act increases the accountability of individual colleges and universities, but does not promote accountability for the education system as a whole. Finally, the "Top Jobs" Act is limited in focus to the higher education system, and the Higher Education Advisory Committee does not include K-12 representation.

### **COORDINATING COUNCIL COULD PROMOTE COMMUNICATION AND COOPERATION**

An advisory council consisting of education leaders from the pre-K through 12<sup>th</sup> grade system, community colleges, four-year institutions, and other education, business, and government leaders could be an important vehicle for promoting coordination and creating a

more seamless education system. Such a council could help to address all of the remaining concerns noted in Chapter 2 and summarized in Table 2. The council could also assist the Secretary of Education in identifying new issues that require coordination of multiple agencies and in developing a biennial report (as discussed in the following section). Several education leaders in Virginia maintain that the P-16 Council had a positive impact on increasing coordination in the State, and instituting an advisory council similar to the previous P-16 Council could help ensure that the various education entities continue to coordinate to address cross-cutting issues.

If created, the coordinating council should be chaired by the Secretary, and members could include agency heads from the Department of Education (DOE), Virginia Community College System (VCCS), and State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV). Other State entities could also be represented on the council, such as the Virginia Employment Commission, the Virginia Workforce Council, and the Virginia Economic Development Partnership. In addition, the council could include representatives from education and business associations (such as the Virginia Education Association and the Chamber of Commerce), and members of the public.

The mission of the council would be to create a seamless education system by promoting more effective transitions between grade levels and improving the career readiness of high school and college graduates. To fulfill this mission, the council should be charged with assisting the Secretary in identifying system-wide goals, developing a strategic plan, and producing biennial status reports. In addition, the council could be directed by the Governor to address new initiatives of the administration.

To better ensure continuity of the council, the General Assembly may want to consider creating the council in statute. Codifying the council should help give its recommendations more credence with policymakers and education leaders. Also, interest in the council would be less likely to wane during transitions between administrations. In addition, the council could provide institutional memory for new administrations so that efforts to promote certain goals could be maintained, and development of biennial reports would be less onerous for new secretaries.

In interviews, several education leaders, including staff from the education agencies and former secretaries of education, expressed positive opinions on the effectiveness of the previously active P-16 Council:

The P-16 Council was a very good step in the right direction. The concept is ‘dead on.’ Ideally the council should include pre-K through Adult Education.

\* \* \*

The council worked on a lot of initiatives, including college readiness, the longitudinal data system, and pre-K. The council brought a lot of people together.

\* \* \*

If there is a disconnect between what colleges think students should know and what high schools think they should know, then this needs to be discussed. The P-16 Council brought a light to this issue.

Other leaders stated that the concept of an advisory council is good, but certain aspects must be in place. For example:

The P-16 Council could work if you gave it staff and responsibilities that everyone bought into. The last P-16 Council was created by executive order and did not have staff.

\* \* \*

The P-16 Council was a good first step in coordination. However, the workforce piece was missing. It is not enough to talk about the [education] pipeline – you also need to consider the workforce part.

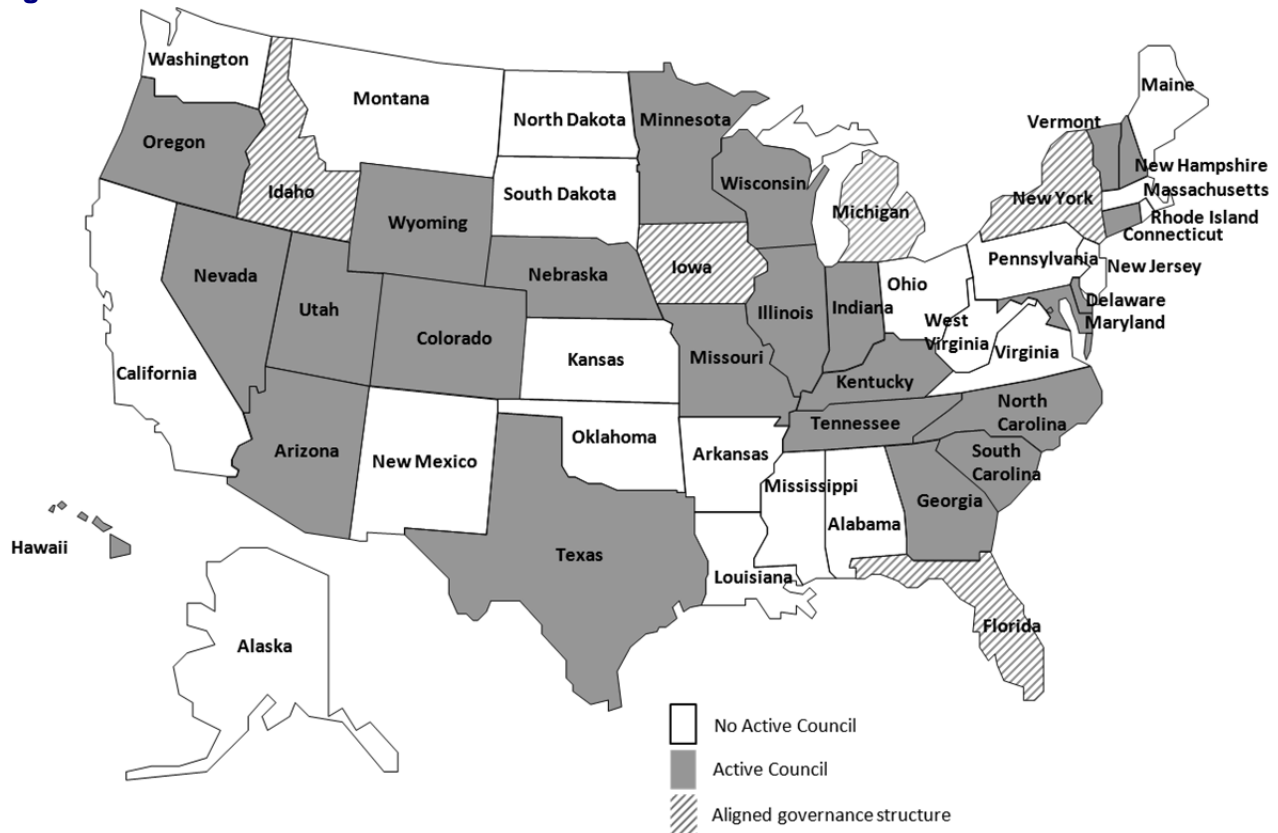
System-wide coordinating councils (in the form of P-16 or P-20 councils) exist in about half of the states. Currently, 24 states have an active coordinating council (Figure 4). Reviews of these councils in several states have shown that they enhance communication, highlight issues that require the cooperation of more than one entity, foster the development of common agendas, and raise public expectations for action. Barriers to the success of education advisory councils noted by other states include insufficient resources, lack of a clear mission, lack of effective leadership and participation, an inability to direct policy, and sustainability across gubernatorial administrations. Because the membership composition, staffing resources, and missions of the councils vary across the states, some benefits and barriers to success do not apply to all councils. Appendix D shows the composition and authority levels for the councils in the 11 other states reviewed for this study.

For Virginia’s coordinating council to be effective, staffing and coordination issues would need to be addressed. Staffing for the council would likely need to be obtained from participating agencies. The Secretary’s office could staff the council, but due to turnover in the office every four years, there would be no continuity.

However, this would require coordination between the council and agency leadership to establish lines of communication and authority. Communication with other relevant councils, such as the Council on Virginia's Future, the Virginia Workforce Council, and the Higher Education Advisory Committee would need to occur to avoid duplication of effort.

**Recommendation (2).** The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 of the *Code of Virginia* to establish a coordinating council for education to be chaired by the Secretary of Education. The council should include leaders from all levels of education and representation from the business community. The council should be charged with identifying system-wide issues and developing plans to address such issues.

**Figure 4: P-16/P-20 Councils Exist in About Half of the States**



<sup>a</sup>According to the Education Commission of the States, those states identified as having an aligned governance structure have consolidated most or all governance of public education into one or two agencies or boards who essentially perform the functions of a P-16/P-20 council.

Source: Education Commission of the States, 2011.

## **SECRETARY OF EDUCATION COULD PROMOTE SYSTEM-WIDE ACCOUNTABILITY**

Another way to promote system-wide accountability for a more seamless education system would be to require the Secretary of Education to develop a biennial report on initiatives to address system-wide education concerns in the Commonwealth. DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV could be required to assist the Secretary in developing the report by providing requested data and information. Implementation of this requirement would increase accountability for the education system as a whole and may help ensure that efforts to address gaps in the system are continued across administrations. Although the Secretary would still have no authority to direct the agencies to initiate certain efforts, the report could lead to legislative action if the General Assembly and Governor believed action was needed to address a particular concern.

The biennial report to be developed by the Secretary could identify system-wide goals and evaluate coordinated efforts by the various educational entities to address the goals. The report could indicate whether the educational system is effectively and efficiently producing an educated citizenry and meeting the needs of employers in the Commonwealth to promote economic competitiveness. Examples of goals that could be addressed in the report include

- sufficient access to college and career training opportunities;
- college readiness of high school graduates;
- career readiness of college graduates as well as high school graduates who do not intend to receive a college degree;
- quality teacher preparation programs; and
- sufficient numbers of graduates and individuals trained in high-need STEM fields.

The biennial report could essentially be a “report card” on the extent to which system-wide goals are being addressed. The report could also be used to identify new issues as they arise and develop plans for addressing such issues. The effort of producing the report would not be duplicative with other reporting requirements of the institutions and agencies, but rather would synthesize information from existing annual reports and strategic plans to present an overall picture of the State education system. The Secretary could be responsible for producing the report (with assistance from DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV) and presenting it to the Governor and General Assembly.



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**Recommendation (3).** The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 of the *Code of Virginia* to require the Secretary of Education to issue a report once every two years on the status of coordination efforts among the State’s education entities. The report should include information on the progress made toward measurable objectives, qualitative indicators of results, efforts underway, and emerging or un-addressed concerns.

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**Recommendation (4).** The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 of the *Code of Virginia* to create a reporting relationship between the Secretary of Education and the education agencies for development of the coordination status report.

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### **STAFF LIAISONS TO EDUCATION GOVERNING BOARDS COULD PROMOTE COORDINATION**

DOE, VCCS, and SCHEV could also increase coordination and improve communication by establishing agency liaisons to each of the other education governing boards. To implement this recommendation, the executive director of SCHEV and the chancellor of VCCS would each designate a staff person to serve as a liaison to the Board of Education. Conversely, the Superintendent of Public Instruction would designate a staff person to serve as liaison to SCHEV and the State Board for Community Colleges. The VCCS already has a reporting relationship with SCHEV, so it would not be necessary for these agencies to designate liaisons to each other’s governing boards.

Designating liaisons to the three education boards could have several advantages. First, it could encourage an exchange of ideas and perspectives that might help to identify issues and improve efforts to address concerns such as college and career readiness. Also, implementation of this potential method of coordination would not require major structural changes or increase the level of bureaucracy in the system. Furthermore, the cost of implementing this change would be minimal.

Other states have also sought to improve coordination by establishing lines of communication between the education governing bodies. For example, in West Virginia, the chancellor of the higher education system and the head of the two-year college system both sit on the Board of Education. According to staff with the West Virginia Department of Education, this arrangement has worked well to improve coordination between the K-12 and higher education systems. However, expanding Virginia’s Board of Education to include higher education representatives would require a change to the *Constitution of Virginia*, so designating staff liaisons to the

governing boards could accomplish the same exchange of ideas without the need for a constitutional amendment.

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**Recommendation (5).** The General Assembly may wish to amend §22.1-23 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the Superintendent of Public Instruction designate staff to serve as an agency liaison to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the State Board for Community Colleges.

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**Recommendation (6).** The General Assembly may wish to amend Chapter 1.1 of Title 23 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education.

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**Recommendation (7).** The General Assembly may wish to amend §23-224 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education.

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# JLARC Recommendations:

## Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System

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1. The Department of Education and the Virginia Community College System should work together to review the level of coordination between the career and technical education (CTE) programs offered at the high schools and community colleges. This review should include an assessment of the appropriateness of the Perkins Act secondary/postsecondary funding allocation and whether there are opportunities to better coordinate CTE programs and resources between the high schools and community colleges. (p. 35)
2. The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 of the *Code of Virginia* to establish a coordinating council for education to be chaired by the Secretary of Education. The council should include leaders from all levels of education and representation from the business community. The council should be charged with identifying system-wide issues and developing plans to address such issues. (p. 44)
3. The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 of the *Code of Virginia* to require the Secretary of Education to issue a report once every two years on the status of coordination efforts among the State's education entities. The report should include information on the progress made toward measurable objectives, qualitative indicators of results, efforts underway, and emerging or unaddressed concerns. (p. 46)
4. The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 of the *Code of Virginia* to create a reporting relationship between the Secretary of Education and the education agencies for development of the coordination status report. (p. 46)
5. The General Assembly may wish to amend §22.1-23 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the Superintendent of Public Instruction designate staff to serve as an agency liaison to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the State Board for Community Colleges. (p. 47)
6. The General Assembly may wish to amend Chapter 1.1 of Title 23 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education. (p. 47)

7. The General Assembly may wish to amend §23-224 of the *Code of Virginia* to direct that the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education. (p. 47)

## Study Mandate

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### SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 32

Agreed to by the Senate, February 16, 2010

Agreed to by the House of Delegates, March 9, 2010

*Directing the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to study the role of the Secretary of Education in improving coordination between K-12, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education. Report.*

WHEREAS, the Secretary of Education is charged with overseeing the Department of Education and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, which oversees the Virginia Community College System; and

WHEREAS, in order to ensure meaningful, dependable employment in our increasingly complicated society, some level of higher education or technical training beyond high school is mandatory; and

WHEREAS, in spite of the recent economic downturn, private companies around the state cite an inability to find qualified, trained staff to meet their employment needs; and

WHEREAS, there is a clear need for greater coordination among the various educational entities in the Commonwealth in order to provide the necessary workforce; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC) be directed to study the role of the Secretary of Education in improving coordination between K-12, community colleges, and four-year institutions of higher education. In conducting its study, JLARC shall (i) examine the statutory authority and duties of the Secretary of Education in overseeing education in the Commonwealth from K-12 through higher education, (ii) consider possible ways of expanding such authority or duties in order to better coordinate education at all levels throughout the Commonwealth, (iii) emphasize the need to better anticipate the workforce needs of the Commonwealth, and ways to direct students toward education and training that will fulfill those needs, and (iv) make recommendations as to how to accomplish these objectives legislatively or otherwise.

Technical assistance shall be provided to JLARC by the Secretary of Education, the Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to JLARC for this study, upon request.

JLARC shall complete its meetings for the first year by November 30, 2010, and for the second year by November 30, 2011, and the Director shall submit to the Division of Legislative Automated Systems an executive summary of its findings and recommendations no later than the first day of the next Regular Session of the General Assembly for each year. Each executive summary shall state whether JLARC intends to submit to the General Assembly and the Governor a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summaries and reports shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.





# Research Activities and Methods

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Key research activities and methods for this study included

- structured interviews,
- document and literature reviews, and
- attendance of meetings.

## STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

During the review, JLARC staff conducted interviews with State education agencies and officials, school divisions, higher education institutions, and other individuals and organizations with education expertise. These interviews provided background information on the education system, the types of coordination occurring among education entities, and other issues relevant to the review.

### Virginia State Agencies and Officials

JLARC staff conducted interviews with the following agencies and organizations:

- Secretary of Education,
- Virginia Department of Education and the Chair of the Board of Education,
- State Council of Higher Education for Virginia,
- Virginia Community College System,
- Virginia Employment Commission,
- Virginia Economic Development Partnership,
- Council on Virginia's Future, and
- Weldon Cooper Center.

In addition, JLARC staff interviewed several former secretaries of education to understand the extent to which they were involved in coordinating the education agencies when they were in office and obtain their perspective on past coordination efforts.

## **School Divisions and Higher Education Institutions**

JLARC staff interviewed officials in several local school divisions and higher education institutions to help determine the level of coordination among education entities at the local level and to learn about efforts to prepare students for the workplace. The school divisions were selected based on geographic diversity, graduation rates, and college attendance rates. JLARC staff selected a range of school divisions with both higher-than-average and lower-than-average graduation and college attendance rates. The school divisions interviewed were located in

- Albemarle County,
- Brunswick County,
- Fairfax County,
- Hampton City, and
- Henrico County.

JLARC also interviewed officials at four higher education institutions based on their geographic diversity and different educational missions. The team selected a large urban university, a rural university, a highly selective university, and a community college. The institutions were:

- Virginia Commonwealth University,
- Longwood University,
- The College of William and Mary, and
- Thomas Nelson Community College.

## **Other States**

To better understand how other states are using coordination to improve student success, the study team interviewed education staff in ten other states. These states were identified based on their geographic proximity to Virginia and/or the existence of a P-16/P-20 Council or similar coordinating body. Interviewees were selected based on availability and their relative knowledge of their state's education system as a whole. The states chosen for interviews were

- Arizona,
- Delaware,
- Florida,
- Kentucky,

- Maryland,
- North Carolina,
- Pennsylvania,
- Tennessee,
- Washington, and
- West Virginia.

## DOCUMENT AND LITERATURE REVIEWS

As part of the research for this study, JLARC staff conducted a review of education documents and literature focusing on education coordination, student transitions, and preparing students for the workforce. Several of the reports and documents reviewed by the team were prepared by Virginia State agencies and Virginia's P-16 Council. In addition, much information was obtained from the websites of organizations specializing in education issues, such as

- Education Commission for the States (ECS),
- Southern Regional Education Board (SREB),
- State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO),
- Achieve,
- National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS),
- Community College Research Center (CCRC),
- National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), and
- National Governors Association (NGA).

Specific documents and literature reviewed include the following:

- *Code of Virginia*;
- *What Is P-16 Education? A Primer for Legislators* (ECS);
- *Beyond the Rhetoric: Improving College Readiness Through Coherent State Policy* (SREB);
- *Student Success: Statewide P-16 Systems* (SHEEO);
- *Virginia P-16 Education Council: Report to the Governor and General Assembly*, October 2006 and 2007;
- *Closing the Expectations Gap: Fifth Annual 50-State Progress Report on the Alignment of High School Policies with the Demands of College and Careers* (Achieve);

- *The Essentials: What Really Counts in Improving Education* (SREB);
- 2008-209 Institutional Reports on Performance Measures (prepared by Virginia higher education institutions for SCHEV);
- Virginia's College and Career Readiness Initiative (November 2010 report to the Board of Education);
- *The Turning Point, Developmental Education in Virginia's Community Colleges* (report of the Developmental Education Task Force);
- *Report on the Accountability Measurement of Partnerships and Collaborations for Approved Teacher Education Programs* (Virginia Department of Education);
- *College Readiness Report: How Virginia's Community Colleges Are Addressing the Academic Weaknesses of Recent High School Graduates* (VCCS);
- Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act; and
- *Regulations Governing the Review and Approval of Education Programs in Virginia* (Virginia Department of Education).

The team also reviewed documents and information developed by other states as part of the review of coordination in other states.

## MEETING ATTENDANCE

JLARC staff attended several board and committee meetings, including

- Governor's Education Summit: Innovate to Educate;
- Governor's Commission on Higher Education Reform, Innovation and Investment;
- Governor's Commission on Economic Development and Jobs Creation (Workforce Development subgroup);
- State Board of Education; and
- Career and Technical Education (CTE) Advisory Committee.

# C

## Agencies in the Secretariat of Education

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The *Code of Virginia* (§ 2.2-208) states that the Secretary of Education shall be responsible for the following agencies:

- Department of Education
- State Council of Higher Education
- Virginia Museum of Fine Arts
- The Science Museum of Virginia
- Frontier Culture Museum of Virginia
- The Library of Virginia
- Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation
- Board of Regents of Gunston Hall
- Commission for the Arts
- Board of Visitors of the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind



## D

# Coordinating Councils in Other States Reviewed for This Study

State	Name of Council	Year Established	Council Active	Coordinating Body	Council Membership Representatives						Level of Authority
					Early Childhood	K-12	Post-secondary	Government	Business	Public	
Arizona	Governor's P-20 Council	2005	Yes	Governor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Advisory only
Delaware	P-20 Council	2003	Yes	Department of Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Advisory only
Florida	Articulation Coordinating Committee	2003	Yes	Department of Education		✓	✓				Limited authority
Kentucky	P-16 Council	1999	Yes	Board of Education and Council on Postsecondary Education	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Advisory only
Maryland	P-20 Leadership Council	2007	Yes	Leadership team	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Advisory only
North Carolina	Education Cabinet	1992	Yes	Governor		✓	✓			✓	Advisory only
Pennsylvania <sup>a</sup>	PASSHE	2000	Yes	Higher Education System		✓	✓		✓		Advisory only
Pennsylvania	STEM	2007	Yes	Governor	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		Advisory only
Tennessee	P-16 Council	2005	No	Higher Education Commission		✓	✓	✓	✓		Limited authority
Washington	Governor's P-20 Council	2007	No	Governor		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Advisory only
West Virginia	21 <sup>st</sup> Century Jobs Cabinet	2006	No	None <sup>b</sup>		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Advisory only

<sup>a</sup> Pennsylvania maintains two areas of P-16 work: (1) an extensive network of regional councils supported by the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education (PASSHE); and (2) the STEM PK-20 Leadership Team, Design Team and Regional Networks. Both are included in this table.

<sup>b</sup> All members of the council are viewed as equal partners.

Source: Education Commission of the States, 2008.





## **Agency Responses**

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As a part of an extensive validation process, State agencies and other entities involved in a JLARC assessment are given the opportunity to comment on an exposure draft of the report. JLARC staff provided an exposure draft of this report to the Secretary of Education, the Department of Education, the Virginia Community College System, and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Appropriate technical corrections resulting from comments provided by these offices and agencies have been made in this version of the report. This appendix includes written response letters from these offices and agencies.





# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Gerard Robinson  
Secretary of Education

July 8, 2011

Mr. Glen S. Tittermary  
Director, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
Suite 1100, General Assembly Building, Capitol Square  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Director Tittermary:

Thank you and the JLARC team for preparing this exposure draft of the report: *Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System*. The Office of the Secretary of Education has reviewed this report. After reviewing the draft, we submit the following comments from the six recommendations offered in the report.

## List of Recommendations:

- Recommendation one: Agreement with the overall recommendation.
- Recommendation two: Disagreement with the overall recommendation. Creating another council to bring stakeholders together to discuss system-wide issues just adds additional meetings for participants. We believe there is a need for additional discussion but do not believe codifying a P-16(coordination) council will solve the coordination challenges.
- Recommendation three: Agreement with the overall recommendation.
- Recommendation four: Agreement that a report calls attention to coordination but given current operating environments, the value of the report might outweigh the usefulness of creating it.
- Recommendation five: Agreement with the overall recommendation. I also suggest the chair (or his or her designee) of the Virginia Workforce Development Council and Virginia Business Higher Education Council serve as non-voting members. This will broaden the scope of K12, higher education and workforce planning and budgeting, and provide an opportunity for more organic conversations about colleges, careers and life-long learning.

July 8, 2011

Page 2

- Recommendation six: Agreement with the overall recommendation. I also suggest the chair (or his or her designee) of the Virginia Workforce Council and Virginia Business Higher Education Council serve as non-voting members. This will broaden the scope of K12, higher education and workforce planning and budgeting, and provide an opportunity for more organic conversations about colleges, careers and life-long learning.

Overall, these recommendations are sound. We would continue to advocate efforts that strengthen college and career readiness to support the workforce development needs of the future. If you have any questions about our recommendations, please contact me, or Laura Fornash, Deputy Secretary of Education at 786-1151. Again, thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gerard Robinson".

Gerard Robinson

GR/evw



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Patricia I. Wright, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
P.O. BOX 2120  
Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

Office: (804) 225-2023  
Fax: (804) 371-2099

July 5, 2011

Mr. Glen S. Tittermary, Director  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
General Assembly Building, Suite 1100  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Mr. Tittermary:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to review and comment on the exposure draft of the *Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System*. My comments address each of the seven recommendations found in this report.

***Recommendation 1:*** DOE and VCCS should work together to review the level of coordination between the career and technical education (CTE) programs offered at the high schools and community colleges. This review should include an assessment of the appropriateness of the Perkins secondary/postsecondary funding allocation and whether there are opportunities to better coordinate CTE programs and resources between the high schools and community colleges.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) are and will continue to work together and review opportunities to coordinate CTE programs and resources. However, if the allocation to VCCS were increased, the allocation to local school divisions would be decreased accordingly, resulting in budget reductions to local school divisions at a time when local school divisions have dealt with several years of budget constraints.

***Recommendation 2:*** The General Assembly may wish to consider amending Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia to establish a coordinating council for education to be chaired by the Secretary of Education. The council should include leaders from all levels of education and representation from the business community. The council should be charged with identifying system-wide issues and developing plans to address such issues.

The report suggests that the proposed coordinating council would be similar to the P-16 Council that was established by executive order by the previous administration. The P-16 Council was established as a condition of eligibility for a National Governors Association (NGA) Honor States Grant for high school reform. When the grant expired, the requirements of the NGA grant were satisfied and there was no requirement for the P-16 Council to continue. The General Assembly has considered whether or not to codify the P-16 Council and has chosen not to go forward with it. Four recent bills to codify the P-16 Council failed. These were HB 2333 (2009), SB 1016 (2009), HB 1112 (2010), and SB 469 (2010). Furthermore, as the report notes, if the coordinating council were to be effective, additional resources would be required. In this time of budget constraints, it is not likely that there would be an additional appropriation for this purpose.

***Recommendation 3:** The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 of the Code of Virginia to require the Secretary of Education to issue a report once every two years on the status of coordination efforts among the State's education entities. The report should include information on the progress made toward measurable objectives, qualitative indicators of results, efforts underway, and emerging or unaddressed concerns.*

*Virginia Performs*, which includes agency plans and performance measures, and the Council on Virginia's Future already provide extensive information on the goals, measurable objectives, and performance indicators for education and other areas of state government. In addition, the Board of Education, pursuant to §22.1-18 of the *Code of Virginia*, makes a report to the General Assembly each year on the condition and needs of public education in Virginia, and publishes a School Report Card with information on every school and school division in Virginia. VDOE also provides members of the General Assembly with a short two- or three-page summary of recent issues, initiatives, and achievements in public education in Virginia at the beginning of each session.

Requiring an additional report is duplicative of the work already in place. It would create an unnecessary reporting requirement on education agencies at a time when state agencies have lost staff and financial resources because of budget constraints.

***Recommendation 4:** The General Assembly may wish to amend §2.2-208 to create a reporting relationship between the Secretary of Education and the education agencies for development of the coordination status report.*

The report does not make a compelling case for why a statutory change is necessary. It provides no indication that VDOE, VCCS, and SCHEV have not responded to any initiatives that current and former Secretaries have proposed. Furthermore, many of the suggestions for improvements in Virginia's education system, such as college and career readiness and the longitudinal data system, are already being addressed by VDOE, VCCS, and SCHEV, working collaboratively, without the necessity of an additional statutory provision.



Mr. Glen S. Tittermary  
July 5, 2011  
Page 3

***Recommendation 5:*** *The General Assembly may wish to amend §22.1-23 of the Code of Virginia to direct that the Superintendent of Public Instruction designate staff to serve as an agency liaison to the Council of Higher Education and the State Board for Community Colleges.*

***Recommendation 6:*** *The General Assembly may wish to amend Chapter 1.1 of Title 23 of the Code of Virginia to direct that the director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education.*

***Recommendation 7:*** *The General Assembly may wish to amend §23-224 of the Code of Virginia to direct that the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System designate a staff member to serve as agency liaison to the Board of Education.*

I would support the recommendations that I designate staff to serve as agency liaisons to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the State Board for Community Colleges, and that the director of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System designate staff to serve as agency liaisons to the Board of Education.

Again, thank you for giving me the opportunity to review the exposure draft of this report. Should you have any questions or need any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Anne Wescott, assistant superintendent for policy and communications, at (804) 225-2403 or [Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:Anne.Wescott@doe.virginia.gov).

Sincerely,



Patricia I. Wright, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Public Instruction

PIW/adw





July 7, 2011

Mr. Glen Tittermary, Director  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
Suite 1100, General Assembly Building, Capitol Square  
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Director Tittermary:

Thank you for sharing the exposure draft of the report: *Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System*. We have reviewed the report and commend the thoroughness of your staff in its response to the legislation. Thank you as well for the opportunity to provide this response to particular findings and recommendations. Since a revised report has now been prepared which contains some modifications from the initial exposure draft, I would appreciate your also sharing this letter with the Commission members, which includes comments offered in my July 5 letter as well as additional comments.

Recommendation 1 states that a review should be undertaken to include "an assessment of the appropriateness of the Perkins secondary/postsecondary funding allocation and whether there are opportunities to better coordinate CTE programs and resources between the high schools and community colleges." To this end, I offer that Virginia is one of just four states in which the minimum amount of funding from Perkins is dedicated to postsecondary education. As noted in the exposure draft, the national average percentage dedicated to postsecondary education, 36%, is more than twice that afforded to postsecondary education in Virginia. Including a community college representative on the State CTE Board would ensure that Perkins funding is considered for postsecondary educational use and that Virginia's use of these federal funds for postsecondary purposes is comparable to the national average.

Recommendation 2 states that the "General Assembly may wish to consider amending Chapter 26 of Title 2.2 of the Code of Virginia to establish a coordinating council for education to be chaired by the Secretary of Education." In my experience, such structures seem to be more effective if chaired by the state's Chief Executive. With such a revision, we extend our support of this recommendation. It is also worth noting a strong partnership that currently exists among VCCS, DOE, and SCHEV through the Virginia Career Pathways System initiative. Through this partnership, the group has developed a strategic plan to address coordination across secondary, postsecondary, and adult education.

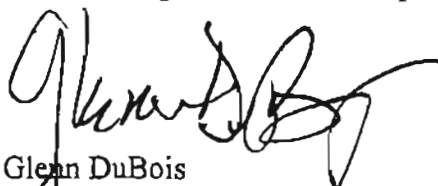
On page 32, the report references the Career Coach program and notes that coaches serve more than 150 high schools across Virginia. This program is an example of a strong and successful collaboration between secondary and postsecondary education that shows great promise in facilitating career planning and postsecondary participation among young Virginians. Some 38,000 students were served by career coaches in 2009-2010. The program enjoys an 87% satisfaction rate among students receiving coaching and a 93% satisfaction rate among principals of high schools containing career coaches. In addition to serving as an example of a successful

collaboration, the program affords an opportunity to scale-up the promising model to facilitate career planning and postsecondary participation at the remainder of Virginia's high schools.

On page 47, the report recommends that coordination and improved communications could be implemented by establishing agency liaisons to each of the other education governing boards. We support recommendations 5, 6, and 7 which would enact amendments to the *Code of Virginia* so that these staff liaison designations are codified.

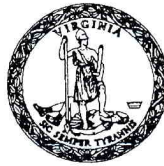
On page 10, the report references the Chancellor, State Board, and number of staff positions in the system office. We note that significant efficiencies are brought to the system through centralized services in support of colleges made possible by the system office. As a result of our centralized service structure, we save our colleges more than \$10 million each year in terms of staffing, reduced costs, and leveraged purchasing. Other college procurement and service delivery costs are reduced by leveraging the size and organization of the system, particularly in Information Technology. Efficiencies in maintenance and support are gained through single student information and learning management systems used at all 23 colleges. Additionally, colleges benefit from sizable annual energy savings from performance contracting initiated by the system office. Significant federal grant funding in support of the colleges has been secured through the system office, including \$2.5 million that has funded development of our Virginia Wizard. The system office for Virginia's Community Colleges administers the state's \$42 million Workforce Incentive Act (WIA) program. There are savings to the state as well when we serve as a single point of contact to state agencies and legislative staff, rather than having them contact 23 institutions.

We look forward to the upcoming JLARC meeting to address this report.



Glenn DuBois  
Chancellor

c: Dr. Patricia Wright, Superintendent of Public Instruction  
Peter Blake, Interim Executive Director, SCHEV  
The Honorable Laura Fornash, Deputy Secretary of Education



Peter Blake  
Interim Director

*COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA*  
*STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA*  
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July 5, 2011

Glen Tittermary, Director  
Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission  
General Assembly Building, Suite 1100  
Richmond, VA 23219

Dear Mr. Tittermary:

On behalf of SCHEV, thank you for the opportunity to comment on the exposure draft of JLARC's SJR32 (2010) study, "Review of Coordination Needs Within Virginia's Education System." Your staff has done a commendable job in analyzing many complex relationships that exist in Virginia. We concur with the report's findings and support the intent of the recommendations.

The report correctly notes the increase of coordinated efforts over the past several years. Much of this has been project based and resulted from a shared commitment to common goals. The career pathways system initiative, led by the VCCS, is one good example of ways in which different agencies can work together to address unmet needs.

Recommendation 2 – establishing a coordinating council in the *Code of Virginia* – could be a useful and productive strategy to enhance collaboration, communication, and coordination among Virginia's secondary and postsecondary education entities. However, given the importance of the connections among education, workforce development, and economic development, involving leadership that represents the breadth of the Commonwealth's assets will prove more fruitful than simply codifying the body. Thus, we suggest that any new P-16 entity, whether codified or not, have strong statewide leadership, preferably the Governor. Further, we think it is important to engage "other relevant councils" rather than just communicate with them, as referenced on page 43.

Thanks again for the opportunity to offer our comments. I look forward to attending the July 11 meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Peter Blake".

Peter Blake



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