

## **Recommendations: Operations and Performance of the Virginia Community College System**

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### **RECOMMENDATION 1**

The Virginia Community College System should develop criteria and guidelines that colleges can use to identify students who are at risk for non-completion and could benefit from more regular, comprehensive support services. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 2**

The Virginia Community College System and the Virginia Department of Education should develop a proposal for administering the Virginia Placement Test or comparable assessment to high school students. The proposal should include (i) how the test could be administered, in which grades and to which students, (ii) an estimate of the cost of administering the test, and (iii) actions to be taken to improve the college readiness of students who exhibit the need for remediation. The proposal should be submitted to the House Education and Appropriations Committees and Senate Education and Health, and Finance Committees no later than September 1, 2018. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 3**

The Virginia Community College System should develop a system-wide policy to ensure that at-risk community college students receive proactive, individualized advising services at the most appropriate times. This policy should specify (i) the characteristics of students who should be required to meet with an academic adviser, (ii) the events or circumstances that trigger mandatory adviser meetings, and (iii) the adviser's role in subsequently monitoring student performance and intervening when appropriate. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 4**

The Virginia Community College System should develop a proposal for improving the capacity of community colleges to provide proactive, individualized, mandatory advising services to students who are at risk for not completing a degree or credential and could benefit from more regular, comprehensive advising services. The proposal should be submitted to the House Education and Appropriations Committees and Senate Education and Health, and Finance Committees no later than September 1, 2018. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 5**

The Virginia Community College System should establish a policy requiring students to (i) attend orientation before enrolling in courses and (ii) complete the student development course during their first semester at a community college. This requirement should apply to students enrolled in for-credit degree or credential programs who are at risk for non-completion and could benefit from more regular, comprehensive support services. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 6**

The Virginia Community College System should develop a system-wide strategic plan that focuses exclusively on how the system will support student success. The plan should describe (i) how colleges will identify the factors associated with poor student outcomes and identify students who exhibit those factors, (ii) actionable strategies for mitigating the effects of those factors on student outcomes, (iii) an implementation plan for undertaking specific strategies, and (iv) how the impact of the strategies will be evaluated. The plan should be developed collaboratively with community college staff, including presidents, vice presidents for academic services, faculty members, and non-faculty professional advisers. (Chapter 2)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 7**

The General Assembly may wish to include language in the Appropriation Act to require the state's public four-year institutions of education to report, for dual enrollment students, (i) the total number of dual enrollment credits on students' transcripts, (ii) the total number of those credits that were accepted for credit by the institutions, and (iii) whether the credits were applied to elective requirements, program requirements, or other requirements. This information should be reported to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) at the end of the 2017-18 academic year and in subsequent years as necessary to help improve the quality of dual enrollment courses and the state's dual enrollment policies. VCCS and SCHEV should use this information to identify dual enrollment courses that are not routinely accepted for credit. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 8**

The Virginia Community College System, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Education, should modify the Governing Principles for Dual Enrollment to require the use of nationally recommended practices for dual enrollment programs. Required practices should include (i) periodic review of course materials, to ensure that content and rigor are aligned with the on-campus equivalent course; (ii) recurring, formal evaluation of instructors; and (iii) periodic classroom observation. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 9**

The Virginia Community College System, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Education, should modify the Governing Principles for Dual Enrollment to require community colleges and school divisions to clearly disclose to students taking these courses, for each dual enrollment course, the equivalent non-dual enrollment course, which academic and career and technical programs will accept the course's credits, and which community colleges offer those programs. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 10**

The Virginia Community College System should develop a database for maintaining information on all dual enrollment courses offered in the state. The database should include a course description, the location where it is taught, the sponsoring community college, the specific academic or career and technical programs that will accept the course's credits, and which community colleges offer those programs. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 11**

The General Assembly may wish to consider creating a financial assistance grant program to help high school teachers obtain the necessary credentials to teach dual enrollment courses. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 12**

The Virginia Community College System, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Education, should collect data from each community college and each school division on the expenditures that are directly attributable to the dual enrollment program. This expenditure data should be used to develop a single, statewide dual enrollment funding formula and a tuition and fee structure that is consistent across all courses and colleges and that reflects the costs of operating a high-quality dual enrollment program. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 13**

The General Assembly may wish to amend the Code of Virginia to require the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to develop guidelines for the state's public two- and four-year higher education institutions to follow in developing program maps for transfer pathways. These guidelines should specify (i) the most commonly used transfer pathways for which program maps should be developed and (ii) standard content to be included in each program map. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 14**

The General Assembly may wish to amend the Code of Virginia to require that each public four-year institution in Virginia develop, in collaboration with the Virginia Community College System, program maps for transfer pathways. The program maps should be consistent with the recommended guidelines to be developed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 15**

The General Assembly may wish to amend § 23.1-908 of the Code of Virginia as follows: (i) to require that the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) develop and maintain an online single repository for all agreements, course equivalency tools, and other informational resources related to transferring from a community college to a public four-year institution; (ii) to require the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to send to VCCS all the transfer resources that it has collected; and (iii) to require all public four-year institutions to keep their transfer agreements updated and annually send to VCCS all new and revised transfer agreements and other transfer-related resources. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 16**

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to require that the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) annually identify the transfer pathways in which transfer students have poorer outcomes, as measured by lower completion rates, longer time to degree, more credits accumulated, and lower course grades. This information should be reported at the end of every academic year, beginning with the 2017-18 academic year, be shared with individual community colleges and four-year institutions, and be used to identify community college courses that are not routinely accepted for credit by the state's public four-year higher education institutions. (Chapter 3)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 17**

The Virginia Community College System should specify in its policy manual the information staff must present to the State Board for Community Colleges when the board is evaluating proposed tuition and fees increases. At a minimum, this information should include specific college-level metrics such as tuition and fees and net price relative to income in each college's service area. It should also include information about whether federal, state, and institutional financial aid have kept pace with increases in tuition and fees. (Chapter 4)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 18**

The system office of the Virginia Community College System should assess the adequacy of staffing in those divisions that most directly affect colleges' operations, including the divisions of academic services and research and administrative services. The review should also determine whether duties could be more efficiently distributed between supervisors and their direct reports, including whether some supervisory positions could be reclassified as non-supervisory to potentially distribute workload more efficiently. (Chapter 5)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 19**

The State Board for Community Colleges should adopt a formal policy to periodically assess the need to close or consolidate community colleges or campuses. The formal policy should specify the roles of the board, the system office, college presidents, college boards, and local governments in decisions to close or consolidate colleges or campuses. Three college-level factors should prompt an assessment: (i) high operating costs per student FTE, with increasing costs as a trend; (ii) low enrollment, with decreasing enrollment as a trend; and (iii) inability to offer core academic programs. As part of the assessment, the board should use four criteria to determine when a college or campus should be closed or consolidated: (a) access to community college programs; (b) colleges' ability to offer quality, in-demand programs; (c) the potential for net savings; and (d) the impact of closure and consolidation on the local economy. (Chapter 5)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 20**

The Virginia General Assembly may wish to amend the Code of Virginia to (i) clarify that Workforce Credentials Grant (WCG) funds be prioritized for, though not limited to, credentials for which there is a documented unmet employer demand and (ii) permit colleges to use a portion of their WCG funds to address the infrastructure or personnel challenges associated with program development or expansion if these challenges cannot be financed through other resources. (Chapter 6)

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### **RECOMMENDATION 21**

The Virginia Board for Workforce Development, in collaboration with the Virginia Community College System and the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, should develop a methodology that can be used by community colleges to identify regional employer demands for occupations and distinguish between demand that is sufficiently met by the existing workforce and demand that is not. The Board should incorporate in the methodology both labor market data and qualitative feedback from employers. (Chapter 6)

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