

Recommendations and Policy Options: Higher Education Institutional Viability

JLARC staff typically make recommendations to address findings during reviews. Staff also sometimes propose policy options rather than recommendations. The three most common reasons staff propose policy options rather than recommendations are: (1) the action proposed is a policy judgment best made by the General Assembly or other elected officials, (2) the evidence indicates that addressing a report finding is not necessarily required, but doing so could be beneficial, or (3) there are multiple ways in which a report finding could be addressed and there is insufficient evidence of a single best way to address the finding.

Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION 1

As part of the six-year planning process, OpSix should monitor the viability risk of: Christopher Newport University, Longwood University, Norfolk State University, Radford University, Virginia State University, University of Mary Washington, and the University of Virginia's College at Wise using the eight risk factors related to students, institutional appeal, and financing discussed in this report, with technical support provided by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. (Chapter 2)

RECOMMENDATION 2

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should revise its academic program review policy to include: (i) evaluative criteria for each required element, where possible; and (ii) a method of documenting how subjective assessments were made for elements where it is not possible to set evaluative criteria. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 3

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should revise its academic program review process to eliminate the requirement to submit job advertisements and, instead, rely on appropriate data provided by the Virginia Office of Educational Economics to assess economic and workforce demand for a proposed new academic program. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 4

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should evaluate its policy for reviewing new academic programs to determine whether any of the elements included in its review unnecessarily duplicate elements reviewed by the higher education institutional accrediting agency, and the council should eliminate any unnecessary duplication from its policy. (Chapter 3)

RECOMMENDATION 5

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia should direct staff to revise the academic program approval process to focus on the most essential information needed, discontinue editorial reviews of proposals, and include the following: (i) a fillable form for institutions to submit; (ii) a checklist of required proposal elements; and (iii) documentation of proposal evaluations and decisions. (Chapter 3)

Policy Options to Consider

POLICY OPTION 1

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) could consider creating a secondary review appeal process whereby an institution may seek an additional, independent review of a council staff decision by a committee of provosts from Virginia higher education institutions. This provost committee could make a second recommendation to approve or disapprove the proposal to the SCHEV Academic Affairs Committee, which would make the final decision. (Chapter 3)
