Established in 1956, SCHEV is the coordinating board for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Virginia’s system of public higher education includes 15 public four-year colleges and universities, a public two-year junior college, and 23 community colleges of the Virginia Community College System. In addition, there are more than 350 private postsecondary institutions operating in Virginia, including non-profit, proprietary, degree-granting, and career-technical schools.

Virginia has the 11th largest system of higher education in the nation. Higher education in Virginia serves more than 600,000 traditional and non-traditional students. Public institutions enroll more than 410,000 students and private institutions of all types serve approximately 200,000.

SCHEV’s Mission

To advocate and promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education in Virginia.

SCHEV fulfills its mission by performing the following functions, according to duties and responsibilities described in the Code of Virginia:

Data Collection and Dissemination. The Council maintains a comprehensive data system designed at the student level to meet the Council’s need for information to inform policy decisions and budget recommendations. This data system comprises the core of the postsecondary component of the Virginia Longitudinal Data System and provides 20 years of data on Virginia college students. These data provide the raw material behind the extensive public reporting of student data on the SCHEV website.

Academic Policy and Approval Authority. The Council approves public institutions’ new degree programs, instructional sites, degree escalations, and mission statements. It also coordinates state policy on transfer, student learning assessment, military-related students, and other topics. The Academic Affairs staff communicates and works with institutions on
academic policy through the Instructional Program Advisory Committee, which consists of chief academic officers of public institutions and one private institution representative.

**Finance Policy Analysis and Recommendations.** The Council makes recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for state support for public higher education operations and capital needs. In addition, data analysis and policy recommendations are provided on an ongoing basis, especially to the Appropriations and Finance committee staffs of the General Assembly. The Finance Policy staff communicates and works with institutions through the Finance Advisory Committee, which consists of chief finance officers of public institutions.

**Oversight of Financial Aid Programs.** The Finance Policy section also administers most of the Commonwealth’s programs for need-based financial aid and other state-funded student assistance. In this capacity, over $70 million passes through SCHEV to public institutions for need-based aid, to qualified Virginia residents attending in-state private non-profit institutions, and to qualified students in non-need-based assistance programs. The guidelines and regulations governing nearly all state-funded and state-authorized student assistance are issued by SCHEV, which also makes aid/assistance funding recommendations.

**Institutional Performance Review.** The Council is responsible for monitoring institutional performance in meeting the goals and objectives of the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005 and the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011. SCHEV determines whether institutions are eligible to receive financial benefits specified in the Acts based on institutional performance based on measures developed by SCHEV and approved by the General Assembly. SCHEV also coordinates activities, such as the review of institutional Six-Year Plans, mandated in the Acts.

**Authorization of New and Out-of-State Institutions.** The Council authorizes certain private and out-of-state postsecondary institutions to operate in Virginia through SCHEV’s office of Private and Out-of-state Postsecondary Education (POPE). POPE staff examines applications from institutions seeking certification, holds mandatory orientation sessions for prospective owners, conducts institutional audits to ensure compliance with Virginia regulations, and investigates and responds to student complaints. POPE administers the Student Tuition Guaranty Fund (STGF), which provides refunds to students—subject to certain conditions—when certified institutions close. POPE staff communicates and works with institutions through the Career College Advisory Board.

**Grant and External Program Administration.**

*Grant Administration:* SCHEV administers two U.S. Department of Education grants, the College Access Challenge Grant (CACG) and the Improving Teacher Quality/No Child Left Behind Grant (ITQ/NCLB). These grants support statewide educational goals and initiatives for college access, adult degree completions, student achievement, college and career readiness, teacher preparation, and STEM-H. Both programs foster partnerships among federal, state and local governments, and with the K-12, higher education, and the non-profit communities in the Commonwealth.
**External program administration:** The Academic Common Market (ACM) provides access and affordability to students seeking specialized degree programs not available at any of Virginia’s four-year public institutions. Eligible students who meet residency requirements are granted discounted tuition by participating public institutions in other southern region states.

**Scholarship administration:** In 2012, over $15 million was available through Virginia’s Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP) to fund scholarships and grants. While federal funding for additional program cohorts was not renewed, SCHEV continues to administer scholarships and grants to approximately 1,000 recipients.

**Boards of Visitors training.** SCHEV is charged with providing educational programs for newly appointed board members at the public institutions of higher education within the first two years of their service. The topics to be covered by SCHEV are contained in the *Code of Virginia* and range from best practices in governance to future and national trends. The orientation has traditionally been held during autumn in Richmond. This location and timing allows for the participation of key policy makers and government officials in a central location. Council is required to submit an annual summary of its BOV training activities to the General Assembly and Governor.

**Government Relations.** SCHEV creates and advocates for legislation that supports the agency’s mission. Staff members respond to requests from the Governor and Secretary of Education for analysis of individual bills in the form of Legislative Action Summaries and Enrolled Bill Reports. Various staff members are also called upon to testify before General Assembly committees as their areas of expertise dictate. Government Relations personnel respond to individual legislators’ requests for information and coordinate reports mandated by legislation.

**Communications.** SCHEV provides information regarding Virginia higher education and its mission to external stakeholders via the agency website, newsletter, and in response to individual inquiries via email and telephone. The Communications staff also provides information to internal stakeholders, including Council members and staff, via the agency intranet and a weekly news summary.

**About the Council**

The Council is a coordinating board consisting of 12 members appointed by the Governor for a four-year term. Additionally, the President of the Virginia Economic Development Partnership (VEDP) serves ex-officio. The Council appoints the agency Director, and the Director leads a staff that comprises the following sections:

- **Academic Affairs and Planning**
- **Agency Budget and Finance**
Communications/Government Relations
Executive and Board Affairs
Finance Policy
Policy Research and Data Warehousing
Policy Studies
Innovation

The Council meets six times per year and all meetings are open to the public. Three meetings are held in Richmond at the SCHEV offices; two are held on a public college campus on a rotating basis; and one is held at a private institution. In addition, the Council typically holds a joint meeting once a year with the public college presidents.

The Council operates under a committee structure, determined by the Council Chair. The current standing committees are the Executive Committee, the Academic Affairs Committee, and the TJ21 Committee.

In addition, the Chair may appoint members to serve on task forces to address specific areas of interest for a limited time. Recent task force topics have included budget recommendations, economic opportunity metrics, research, and strategic planning.

For more information about SCHEV and Virginia higher education, go to www.schev.edu.