

**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
AD HOC COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH MEETING
MARCH 8, 2017
MINUTES**

Dr. Murray called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. in the SCHEV Main Conference Room, 9th Floor, James Monroe Building, Richmond, Virginia.

Committee members present: Ken Ampy, William Murray

Committee members absent: H. Eugene Lockhart, Minnis E. Ridenour

Council member attending by phone: Henry Light

Staff present: Peter Blake, Alan Edwards, Lynn Seuffert. Al Wilson, SCHEV counsel from the Office of the Attorney General, also was in attendance.

DISCUSSION OF PRIOR MEETING

At the request of Dr. Murray, Mr. Blake summarized the goals of the meeting and the structure of the agenda. Mr. Blake introduced the draft minutes of the prior meeting. Dr. Murray asked Mr. Light to begin the debriefing by offering his comments and “takeaways” from the February 23 meeting with public institutions’ research officers.

Mr. Light stated that the meeting was excellent and the draft minutes reflected well the events. He was struck by the institutions’ willingness to work together. He highlighted the cooperative and collaborative aspects of VRIF’s purpose and said he liked what he heard from the institutions on these matters. He also heard institutions’ interest in adding additional research topics to the list that VRIF may fund, some of which went beyond research that is connected to economic development. He would like to see a broadening of the types of research topics that could be funded.

Mr. Ampy said he was pleased to see representation from all institutions at the prior meeting. He agreed that collaboration is key to VRIF.

Dr. Murray asked for staff’s reflections on the Feb. 23 meeting.

Ms. Seuffert revisited a suggestion made at the meeting that proposals be accepted to use VRIF funds to match federal funding for the creation of national centers. She explained the logistics and timeframe involved in the federal competitions for such centers and offered that these timelines do not align with the proposed timeline for Round 1.

Dr. Edwards reflected on the potential broadening of the research foci. He noted the overlap between VRIC members and the GO Virginia board, as well as the statutory expectations for commercialization, economic development, and job creation from VRIF projects, and suggested that research areas beyond those with clear potential for economic development might fare poorly in VRIC’s selection process.

Mr. Light acknowledged the focus on commercialization and reiterated his interest in finding ways to broaden the focus areas. He mentioned conversations John “Dubby” Wynne, a VRIC member and GO Virginia board chair, in which they discussed the economic impact that any expenditures on academic research can create.

REVIEW OF (REVISED) ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES FOR ROUND 1 OF AWARDS FROM THE VIRGINIA RESEARCH INVESTMENT FUND

Dr. Murray stated that the principles seemed to fall into three categories: statutory mandates, general grant administration principles, and substantive items that merited further discussion. He requested that staff review each organizing principle.

Ms. Seuffert walked through the principles, briefly describing the rationale behind each one.

Members asked clarifying questions. Discussion focused on Items 8, 10, 11, and 13.

Regarding Item 8, Dr. Murray stated his belief in the value of providing applicants with guidance in terms of the order of magnitude for grant awards. After general discussion, members reached an informal consensus that Item 8 should include the recommendation that awards generally range from \$1 million to \$5 million.

Regarding Item 10, members requested that language be added indicating that institutions could receive additional funding as collaborating partners.

Regarding Item 13, members discussed the attractiveness of endowed positions to the researchers who are targets for recruitment or retention, both in terms of prestige and the availability of the proceeds of the endowment to be used at their discretion. Members also discussed the VRIF’s economic development purposes and the importance of moving the funding into the economy by spending it during the grant period. Mr. Blake offered the idea that matching funds could be endowed while general funds and bond funds could be spent. The members reached informal consensus that the wording in Item 13 would remain substantially the same, with the recommendation that VRIC consider approving endowments on a case-by-case basis.

ADVICE TO THE VIRGINIA RESEARCH INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Dr. Murray stated that some advice from the ad hoc committee to VRIC had already been discussed in the context of the organizing principles. He asked for additional comments from staff. Mr. Blake asked Dr. Edwards to step through the Strategic Opportunities document.

Dr. Edwards highlighted the document’s three main points. Members were appreciative of the insights articulated there. They agreed with the first two shorter-term opportunities that were described (a focus on larger-scale, longer-term, latter-stage R&D; and the research areas to target) and expressed interest in the third, longer-term opportunity for state-level coordination to address gaps in infrastructure and commercialization expertise to support the academic research enterprise.

Mr. Light mentioned the enrolled bills that amend the VRIF statutes to move the R&T Roadmap under the purview of both VRIC and SCHEV. He asked whether the roles of VRIC and SCHEV in the Roadmap are the same because, he said the interests of the two entities are different. VRIC to some extent is tied to the GO Virginia initiative, which has a narrower research focus. SCHEV's research focus is more broad, as stated in *The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*. He seeks to ensure that VRIC members are aware that universities want funding for research areas that go beyond the current Roadmap.

Mr. Blake mentioned that staff is considering convening a "Roadmap Summit" to begin discussions on the new statutory responsibilities for SCHEV and VRIC. The enrolled bills posit that the Roadmap will be developed by SCHEV and approved by VRIC.

Following additional discussion about the general areas of research to be funded in Round 1, members reached informal consensus that the areas listed in the statute were acceptable, with the understanding that future rounds would be influenced by progress on the next Roadmap.

Mr. Blake brought members' attention to the draft timeline. He asked for their advice to VRIC regarding awarding funds by the end of the calendar year. Members expressed agreement with that timeframe.

Dr. Edwards outlined the process for the next two weeks. Staff will bring the organizing principles and timeline to VRIC at its March 14 meeting and report back to the ad hoc committee at its March 20 meeting. Staff intends to offer the organizing principles for approval at that time.

ADJOURNMENT

Dr. Murray adjourned the meeting at 8:50 a.m.

William Murray
Chair, Ad Hoc Committee on Research

Lynn Seuffert
Associate for Research Investment