

**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
BOARDS OF VISITORS ORIENTATION
OCTOBER 25, 2017
MINUTES**

Mr. Heywood Fralin, Chair, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, welcomed the group and mentioned SCHEV's strategic plan established during Mr. Minor's tenure as Council chair. He introduced Mr. Peter Blake, Director of SCHEV. Mr. Blake provided a brief overview of the agenda and introduced the panel.

Getting to "Best": Opportunities and Challenges in Achieving Virginia's Higher Education Goals

Ms. Chris Chmura, CEO and Chief Economist, Chmura Economics and Analytics, gave a presentation on the demographic and economic landscape.

Ms. Chmura expressed the fact that there needs to be a greater alignment between institutions and in-demand jobs. Students must leave institutions with some sort of credential and the assortment of programs offered by the institutions must meet the job market demand.

Dr. Bill Murray, SCHEV Council member, presented a brief review on higher education. He stressed the importance of civic culture in higher education.

Higher education advantages:

Classroom

Research

Economic Development

Civic Culture

Mr. Blake gave an overview of the Virginia Plan for Higher Education. The objective of the Plan is to be the best educated state by 2030. Virginia is currently in 6th place with 47% of the population holding a bachelor degree and 4% a sub-associate workforce credential of value. (If the objective is achieved 70% of the population will have a degree.)

SCHEV's role is to work together with the institutions to meet the state's needs and to look for gaps in the system. SCHEV will then inform policy makers of the gaps that exist and work with the institutions to fill those gaps.

The panel answered questions from attendees.

Doing the Right Things: Best Practices of High-performing Public-institution Boards (and Intersecting with the Guardians Initiative)

Mr. Blake introduced Mr. Richard Legon, President of the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB).

Mr. Legon reminded attendees to review the AGB materials and items on the SCHEV website. He reminded the attendees that as board members, they have a fiduciary duty, and they need to be advocates and stewards of higher education. Board members have an opportunity and responsibility to change the perception and volatility of higher education. Mr. Legon stated the U.S. is an international leader in higher education and higher education is about quality and opportunity.

Mr. Legon answered questions from attendees.

Doing Things Right: Boards' Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

Mr. Henry Light, Secretary, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, introduced the panel.

Mr. Alan Gernhardt, Senior Attorney, FOIA Advisory Council, provided a brief overview of the Freedom of Information Act.

Mr. Al Wilson, Senior Assistant Attorney General, talked about the Virginia Conflicts of Interest Act. He discussed the Office of the Attorney General's role in representing the public institutions, and provided historical context. Mr. Wilson advised members to communicate with counsel on legal matters.

Mr. Gernhardt and Mr. Wilson answered questions from attendees.

Boards' Fiduciary Obligations: Building Budgets While Balancing Priorities, Needs and Realities

Council member Dr. Rosa Atkins introduced the panel.

Mr. Justin Brown, Senior Associate Director of the Joint Legislative Audit Review Committee (JLARC) provided an overview of JLARC reports on higher education produced in response to the legislature's concern about increased costs.

Mr. Michael Maul, Associate Director of the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, discussed development of operating budgets for the institutions. He talked about state revenues and how state operating funds are allocated to address state priorities. Education, Medicaid and Corrections are priorities that demand a large percentage of the budget. Higher education is a discretionary expense, by contrast.

Mr. William M. "Bill" Ginther, Chair of the Committee on Finance, Budget and Investment of the VCU Board of Visitors, spoke about the fiduciary role of a board member. He reviewed a list of information that board members should know, including the student makeup, financial aid, university budget, history of budget cuts, peer review, and the timeline for budget and tuition planning.

Effective Institutional Governance: Board Leadership and Executive Administration for 21st-Century Challenges

Mr. Blake introduced the moderator of the panel, Dr. Deborah DiCroce. Dr. DiCroce said the central question of the session is who is responsible for what. She has heard the role of the board described as "noses in; fingers out."

What is the secret sauce for effective board/executive relations?

Dr. Glenn DuBois, Chancellor, Virginia Community College System, said that the goal for board meetings is for each member to go home feeling as if it was important that they attended. He also cautioned members to be careful with emails.

Dr. Teresa Sullivan, President of the University of Virginia, said that each board member brings his or her own talents and strengths to the board. A member should make those things known and they should share their knowledge and not assume the administration is aware of it. A member should also be forthright if they came in with an agenda – it is better for the president to know it.

Dr. Brian Hemphill, President of Radford University, said clear, concise, transparent communication is important. He has a regular call with the rector to talk about issues several times per month. He tells members they never have to wonder what is going on because he is transparent about it.

Ms. Marianne Radcliff, Rector of the Board of Visitors for Longwood University, said good relations depend on each party feeling as if it has the whole story and is not missing something. Trust and openness are important and if you lose it, the institution suffers.

Talk about board decisions about tuition increases in the current environment and in addressing affordability

Chancellor DuBois said it is often a struggle to keep the institution's mission focused on access. He said he usually will devote three meetings on tuition decisions. He said he is not proud of having recommended tuition increases and does not take such decisions lightly.

President Sullivan said boards probably do not have any meetings in which tuition setting issues are not considered. She encouraged board members to make the tuition decision early enough so that students who are undecided will have the information before they accept offers.

President Hemphill said that a large percentage of students are first-generation and/or on financial aid, so the board should consider carefully how policy decisions will affect them.

Regarding what a board members expects from the president and administration in regard to tuition setting, Ms. Radcliff agreed that the issue is a constant part of the conversation – it is part of recruiting, retention, enrollment management, etc.

Advice to new board members

Chancellor DuBois encouraged new members to ask questions and to contact senior staff to provide additional information. He tries to inform new members during meetings if he feels that a topic may be confusing.

President Sullivan encouraged the members to acquaint themselves with the culture and feel of the institution. She said that they should go to different events and get a flavor of what it is like on a daily basis.

President Hemphill – rather than encourage board members to call vice presidents, all requests for information should go to the board liaison to keep things from getting out of control. He suggested that board members should not get in arguments about details of the institutional plans, and should not ask for daily spending reports. Board members should always keep the role of the board in mind.

Ms. Radcliff encouraged members to have fun. She said it is pleasant to feel like you have done something good for higher education. It should be enjoyable.

The panel answered questions.

Adjournment

Mr. Blake and Mr. Fralin provided a summary of the session and thanked members for their attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 3:41 p.m., at which time the Secretary of the Commonwealth distributed certificates of completion and Governor's pins to new appointees.

Beverly Covington
SCHEV Staff

Henry Light
Council Chair