

**STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
COUNCIL MEETING
MARCH 17, 2026**

DRAFT MINUTES

General Jumper called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. in Room 300 in the Student Center of Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia.

Council members present: Walter Curt, William Harvey, Delceno Miles, Charlie King, Jason El Koubi, Lindsay Fryer, John Jumper, Cheryl Oldham, Douglas Straley and Steven Taylor.

Council members participating virtually: Lindsay Fryer and John Olsen.

Council members absent: William Harvey.

Staff members present: Lee Andes, Melissa Benavidez, Taylor Clark, Sarahbeth Dreis, Grace Covello Khattar, Alan Edwards, Scott Fleming, Alexis Gravely, Anne Lowe, Jennifer Mayton, Tod Massa, Todd McDonald, Jessica Minnis-McCann, Laura Osberger, Monica Osei, Kirstin Pantazis, Paula Robinson, Emily Salmon, Juanita Sherman, Barry Simmons, Paul Smith, Bob Spieldenner, Kristin Whelan and Yan Zheng.

Student Advisory Committee members present: Charlotte Bronaugh, JMU; Daryl Davis, The Apprentice School; Jonathan Dubois; GMU; Sydney Fleming, UVA Wise; Ashley Glover, RU; Zayd Hamid (co-Chair), GMU; Isabella Malave Norman, NSU; Adam McAninley, UMW; Emily McKenna, CNU; Abdul Nazary, PVCC; Tobi Ojo(co-Chair), VCU; Ana Gabriela Otalora Reyes, GVCC; Christopher Sheler, GVCC; Shaana Thomas, The Apprentice School.

Notable Guests: Jeffery Smith, Secretary of Education; Connor Andrews, Deputy Secretary of Education; and Ambria Wood from the Office of the Attorney General.

ACTION ON REMOTE PARTICIPATION OF COUNCIL MEMBER

General Jumper read a resolution allowing remote participation by Council members Lindsay Fryer and John Olsen. The motion passed unanimously.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

General Jumper asked for approval of the minutes. Ms. Miles noted a few edits to the minutes.

On a motion by Mr. El Koubi, seconded by Ms. Miles, the amended minutes from the January 13, 2026, Council meeting were approved unanimously.

REMARKS FROM PRESIDENT OF NORFOLK STATE UNIVERSITY, JAVAUNE ADAMS-GASTON

Dr. Adams-Gaston thanked the SCHEV Council and staff for their work and support of Norfolk State University (NSU).

Dr. Adams-Gaston spoke about the transformational possibilities of higher education. She noted that NSU is not experiencing the enrollment cliff and is celebrating increases in enrollment and student participation.

Dr. Adams- Gaston shared the history of NSU. The school was founded during the Great Depression on September 18, 1935. She stated that at that time, the opening was an expression of optimism and a way for students to express their hopes and dreams. She spoke about the supportive academic environment at NSU that encourages students to do their best. She noted that 73% of NSU students are Pell-eligible. She thanked SCHEV for the impact grants and the innovative internship grants, among others. She noted the growth in NSU's endowment.

Dr. Adams-Gaston shared the success of NSU students and how NSU has removed barriers to success. She stated that NSU requires students to live on campus for the first two years and to have a job on campus that provides learning outcomes to increase students' exposure to the work world. She discussed the creation of a living and learning experience, including a cafeteria, to help students learn about their health and distinguish between natural and processed foods. The institute also teaches students about the history of food in Black farming communities.

Dr. Adams-Gaston also spoke about the importance of institutions like NSU remaining in Division I of the NCAA. General Jumper noted that while NCAA issues are not typically part of the scope of SCHEV's work, the tuition and fee increases at institutions mean that SCHEV has an interest in some of these issues. He offered support for Dr. Adams-Gaston's efforts to support students through athletics. General Jumper thanked her for her comments and for the hospitality of the NSU team.

REMARKS FROM VIRGINIA SECRETARY OF EDUCATION, JEFFERY SMITH

General Jumper welcomed Secretary Smith and shared some of his background.

Dr. Smith shared his past experiences as a member of the SCHEV Council and chair of the Academic Affairs committee. He thanked the current members of Council for their time and expertise and for respecting the staff for their experience and time.

He spoke about the new Governor, her historic accomplishment as the first woman elected Governor of the Commonwealth, and her interest in education. He noted the Virginia Strengthening Schools plan and the Secretariat's implementation plans.

Dr. Smith noted that access and affordability for early childcare and higher education are a priority for the administration. The administration is seeking new partnerships to address these priorities.

Dr. Smith also noted the administration's goal to improve K-12 achievement in reading and mathematics through building a curriculum framework and necessary resources at the schools.

Dr. Smith discussed career pathways in K-12. From creating career awareness at the elementary level to exploration in the middle grade and experience in high school, the goal is to create upward mobility. Improving dual enrollment will be a big factor in working towards these goals by leveraging it as an affordability tool to increase access for students. The administration will concentrate on upward mobility and a return on investment, creating support through a feedback loop for students entering the workforce.

Dr. Smith offered his and his deputy's support for the agency's efforts. He reiterated the administration's desire to create a better future for all.

CONVERSATION WITH STUDENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE: CRITICAL ISSUES IMPACTING STUDENTS

Ms. Robinson introduced the Council to the Student Advisory Committee (SAC) and to her new unit, Student Success Opportunities and Engagement. She discussed how her unit works with all departments and connects with all activities at SCHEV.

Ms. Lowe introduced the 2026 SAC and shared the group's focus. The SAC is composed of three subcommittees focused on finance, workforce readiness, and student engagement.

Mr. Zayid addressed the Council and stated that it is an honor to follow Dr. Adams-Gaston and Secretary Smith. He touched on the inspirations he drew from his remarks. Mr. Zayid promised the Council that a full report would be available shortly.

The SAC summarized the recommendations developed by each subcommittee.

Finance Committee Recommendations

- Establish statewide standards and targeted funding for on-campus pantries, food diversion frameworks and meal plan subsidies to ensure flexible, barrier-free food access as essential educational infrastructure.
- Encourage targeted state investment and foster institutional coordination to expand transit access, increase shuttle frequency and reduce commuter-related time costs that limit academic participation.
- Support statewide expansion of flexible academic and administrative service models that recognize employment, caregiving and geographic constraints as structural components of student time.

Workforce Readiness Recommendations

- Establish and ensure maintenance of a statewide classroom guest speakers portal connecting employers, thought leaders and experienced professionals to professors for guest speaking in classes.
- Adopt or incorporate NACE's Career + Self Development competency within SCHEV's Student Learning Assessment policy as a mandatory, assessable component for institutions of higher education.
- Advocate for increased appropriations to the Commonwealth Innovative Internship Fund and Program and expand the Student Support and Access Grant and the Transforming Federal Work-Study Grant.

Student Engagement Recommendations

- Modify eligibility requirements for Pell-in-Virginia awards to require grant-seeking institutions to assess space-related barriers in their institutional self-studies and to offer third space-related remedial proposals.
- Facilitate institutions of higher education in fostering self-advocacy, self-determination and independent living skills for students, including dedicated initiatives for students with disabilities.
- Convene a working group, including students and other qualified higher education professionals, to evaluate which classified/professional staff and student staff roles at institutions of higher education should receive credentialed mental health training and how that should be implemented.
- Provide guidance and grants to institutions of higher education to support student-athlete mental health and reach appropriate staffing levels to sports psychologists relative to student-athletes.

Mr. El Koubi asked for clarification on the workforce readiness recommendations. He also commended the students on their comprehensive proposals and asked for their priorities.

DISCUSSION OF POTENTIAL PRIORITY INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF THE STATEWIDE STRATEGIC PLAN

Ms. Salmon briefly described the work and timeline undertaken to pass the Statewide Plan for Higher Education, which the Council approved in December of 2025. She stated that the discussion today is to explore implementation plans for the Council.

Ms. Salmon presented proposed priority initiatives for the three goals of the statewide strategic plan. Council members provided feedback and suggestions.

Ms. Salmon will present an update incorporating the Council members' suggestions for further discussion, refinement, and possible endorsement at the May Council meeting.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Dr. Taylor read the three resolutions from the previous day's committee of the whole for Council to consider.

BE IT RESOLVED that the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia grants approval to Old Dominion University to initiate a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree program in Cybersecurity (CIP code: 11.1003), effective fall 2026.

Dr. Taylor noted that W&M's M.S. in Data Science was deferred to a later date.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Program is conditionally approved pending the university collecting and providing to SCHEV staff three years of graduate data for both post-bachelor's and post-master's graduates on (i) whether graduates' jobs require a Ph.D. in Cybersecurity; (ii) the amount of time between graduation and employment; and (iii) for those graduates employed in faculty positions, whether the positions are with Research 1 (R1) universities.

On a motion by Ms. Miles and seconded by Mr. Straley, the resolution passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED that the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia grants conditional approval to the College of William and Mary in Virginia to initiate a Master of Science degree program in Computational Operations Research (CIP code 27.0304), effective fall 2026. This approval is conditional upon the institution working with SCHEV staff to resolve the issues of the appropriate degree program name, CIP code, purpose of the degree program and labor market/employment demand.

On a motion by Ms. Oldham and seconded by Ms. Miles, the resolution passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED that the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia grants approval to Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University to initiate a Master of Science degree program in Water Resources (CIP code: 40.0605), effective fall 2026.

On a motion by Ms. Miles and seconded by Ms. Oldham, the resolution was passed unanimously.

UPDATE FROM THE COUNCIL WORK GROUP ON IPS AND FULL COST

Ms. Miles provided an update on the work she and Mr. King have been doing to update the institutional performance standards and the full cost requirement. She shared that in January and February, staff began drafting updated performance measures and amendments to the full cost requirement. The House has proposed language that will alter the full cost calculation. This language is pending Senate approval.

The full options will be presented in May after input from OpSix and the FAC. Mr. King added that the House legislation will help seven schools meet the requirement that the institutions charge out-of-state tuition at 100%.

RECEIPT OF REPORT FROM AGENCY DIRECTOR

The full report is available on page 127 of the agenda book.

Mr. Fleming introduced the new Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, Jennifer Mayton. General Jumper welcomed Ms. Mayton.

Mr. Fleming thanked NSU for a successful visit and acknowledged NSU's important and unique contributions to higher education.

Mr. Fleming noted that SCHEV is using their outdoor voices and widely impacting the field.

RECEIPT OF ITEMS DELEGATED TO STAFF

Included at the end of this document.

OLD BUSINESS

No old business.

NEW BUSINESS

Dr. Taylor suggested that staff create a policy for Council approval, empowering the Executive Director to provide conditional approval to allow the institution to advertise and accept applications for a program that is in the approval process but not yet fully approved. The program would need to be advertised as conditionally approved.

Mr. Curt expressed disagreement. Ms. Fryer stated that she needs more information on how this would be fairly implemented. Council members further discussed the process. Dr. Taylor asked staff to further study and make recommendations in May.

Mr. Curt suggested that colleges should be required to eliminate programs as they add new ones. SCHEV would only need to determine whether the discarded program is similar to the one open for approval. Colleges would, in effect, clean up their own programs. Dr. Taylor promised to confer with Mr. Fleming and Dr. Osei.

RECEIPT OF PUBLIC COMMENT

No comment reported.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 12:13 p.m.

John Jumper
Council Chair

Kristin Whelan
SCHEV Staff

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, § 23.1-203 and Council's "*Policies and Procedures for Program Approval and Changes*," the following items approved/not approved as delegated to staff:

Academic Program Actions

Institution	Degree/Program/CIP	Effective Date
Mountain Empire Community College	Program Name Change Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the name of the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Police Science (43.0103) to Criminal Justice (43.0103) 	Spring 2026
Norfolk State University	Graduate Certificate Programs Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cybersecurity (11.1003) • Game Design and Development (11.0204) 	Summer 2026
Paul D. Camp Community College	Program Name Change Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the name of the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree in Administration of Justice (43.0103) to Criminal Justice (43.0103) 	Spring 2026
University of Mary Washington	Degree Designation Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add the degree designation Bachelor of Fine Arts (BFA) to the existing Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program in Performing Arts to create a Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts (BA/BFA) degree program in Performing Arts (50.0101) 	Fall 2026
Virginia Commonwealth University	Graduate Certificate Program Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marketing (52.1401) 	Fall 2026

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, § 23.1-203 and Council's "*Policies and Procedures for Program Approval and Changes*," the following items approved and reported:

Programs Discontinued

Institution	Degree/Program/CIP	Effective Date
George Mason University	Program Discontinuance Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Master of Science (MS) degree program in Taxation (52.1601) [Council Approval Date: April 3, 1991] 	Spring 2026
James Madison University	Program Discontinuances Approved: <u>Undergraduate</u>	Summer 2026

Institution	Degree/Program/CIP	Effective Date
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Science (BS) degree program in Athletic Training (51.0913) [Council Approval Date: December 23, 2003] <u>Graduate:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master of Science in Education (MSEd) degree program in Health Education (13.1307) [Council Approval Date: June 9, 1977] 	
University of Virginia	Graduate Certificate Program Discontinuance Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applied Behavioral Analysis (42.2814) 	Summer 2026
Virginia Commonwealth University	Program Discontinuances Approved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree program in Religious Studies (38.0201) [Council Approval Date: May 2, 1978] Bachelor of Science (BS) degree program in Financial Technology (52.0899) [Council Approval Date: November 15, 2022] 	Fall 2026

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, Section § 23.1-211 and Council's "*Commonwealth of Virginia Policy on the Reciprocal Authorization of Distance Education and Related Activities*," the following items approved as delegated to staff:

National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) Approvals

Institution	Effective Date
Virginia University of Science & Technology	January 7, 2026

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia, § 23.1-203 and Council's "*Policies and Procedures for Internal and Off-Campus Organizational Changes*," the following item approved as delegated to staff:

Internal and Off-Campus Organizational Changes

Institution	Change/Site	Effective Date
Norfolk State University	Close the off-campus instructional site located at: Naval Station Norfolk , 9079 Hampton Boulevard, Norfolk, VA 23511	February 1, 2026

Pursuant to the Code of Virginia § 23.1-213 to 230 and 8VAC-40-31-90 of the Virginia Administrative Code, the following items were approved as delegated to staff:

**Postsecondary, Non-Degree Institutions Certified to Operate in
the Commonwealth of Virginia**

Institution	Location	Effective Date
Back to Life Massage School	Virginia Beach, VA	February 6, 2026
Renovelle Institute of Esthetics	Winchester, VA	February 11, 2026
Roanoke Dental Assistant School	Roanoke, VA	February 11, 2026
TechCenture Academy	Fairfax, VA	January 15, 2026

COIA-Exception Policy Approvals

Institution	Policy	Effective Date
Virginia Commonwealth University	Research and Development Exception for the <i>Conflict of Interests Act</i>	November 3, 2025