

VHEAD
VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION
ADVOCACY DAY
2021

Invest in
Higher Education

REPRESENTING VIRGINIA COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY

Virginia's Excellent Higher Education Needs Continued Budget Support

The General Assembly approved \$390 million in additional general fund support for higher education in Virginia in the 2020-2022 biennium, representing an important improvement in state support. In response to the economic fallout from the pandemic, the governor "unallotted" (refused to expend) most new spending until a special session of the General Assembly could approve a new budget based on revised revenue forecasts. The special session concluded most of its work on October 16. The General Assembly approved support for public colleges and universities responding to the pandemic, and bonuses for faculty, including adjuncts, in the 2021 budget, for which we thank the members. The special session also approved funds to improve rural broadband access. Further investment in technology for both institutions and students remains an important goal.

SCHEV reports that \$136 million of higher education funding, mostly for FY 2022, remains unallotted. Governor Northam's budget proposal (**HB1800** and **SB1100**) for the 2021 session restores over \$30 million in previously unallotted investments in tuition assistance at Virginia's public institutions of higher education, an additional \$8.4 million for investments at Norfolk State University and \$6.1 million at Virginia State University, as well as \$5 million for George Mason University and \$5 million for Old Dominion University. We support these measures.

We also call on the General Assembly to provide further support for affordable access and institutional support, support for the G3-free community college initiative, Tuition Assistance Grants for Virginia residents attending private non-profit institutions in the Commonwealth, and for progress in achieving competitive salaries for Virginia's faculty. In 2019 SCHEV reported that Virginia's faculty salaries were in the 34th percentile compared to peer institutions, and important progress on faculty salaries promised in the biennial budget has been understandably delayed but should be restored as soon as possible to improve our ability to attract the best educators and researchers.

Adjunct and Contingent Faculty

The inclusion of funding of bonuses for adjunct faculty was a welcome recognition of the importance of these faculty members to higher education in Virginia. We call on the General Assembly to explore ways to further support adjunct faculty, such as inclusion in state health insurance and VRS pension plans.

Pandemic Response

Virginia's faculty were alarmed by the failure of some of our institutions use principles of shared governance in the response to the pandemic. The principle of shared governance is that each component of the institution – faculty, administration, and Board – has a role in institutional decision-making determined by reference to the responsibility of each component for the particular matter at hand. According to the 1966 Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities, agreed to by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), the American Council on Education (ACE), and the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (AGB) and adopted by most all universities and colleges, faculty should have primary responsibility over fundamental areas where faculty expertise is greatest, such as the curriculum, methods of instruction, and research. We are concerned about failures to use appropriately engage faculty senates in policies regarding modes of delivery of courses, testing protocols and other aspects of managing the dangers of COVID-19, and addressing the potentials for financial exigency resulting from the pandemic's impact on the state budget and tuition revenue. The General Assembly should consider strengthening the role of faculty representatives on the Boards of Visitors described in § 23.1-1300 of the Code of Virginia.

The Future of Higher Education

Virginia's faculty, staff, and students have responded admirably to the challenges of teaching and learning in an extraordinary period of public health crisis, heightened concern for racial equity and justice, and political tension.

Undoubtedly, many faculty members have learned that some aspects of remote learning and hybrid classrooms may become permanent features of the higher education experience and will want to incorporate these technologies in new ways. We caution against any tendency to view remote learning as a panacea to the funding challenges facing higher education and call for policymakers to let faculty bodies set policies for their institutions regarding the mode of delivery of education.

We also call on policymakers to provide serious support for long-standing but often underfunded (or even unfunded) efforts to increase diversity and inclusion, especially among faculty. In 2020 our students have called our institutions' bluff, and for faculty to lead a serious effort to recruit and retain faculty members of color we will need financial and institutional support. We also call on policymakers to provide better support for faculty, staff, and students with disabilities. We support [HB 1848](#) (Delegate Sickles), which would make discrimination on the basis of disability an unlawful employment practice under the Virginia Human Rights Act.