

## Virginia

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia  
Daniel J. LaVista  
Executive Director  
101 North Fourteenth Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Email: [DanielLaVista@schev.edu](mailto:DanielLaVista@schev.edu)

- 1) Does the state have an identifiable “P-16” effort visible? Who is in charge of this effort?  
**Yes, the state has a P-16 Council. The Governor's Office and the Secretary of Education lead the Council. Please see web site at:**

<http://www.education.virginia.gov/Initiatives/P-16Council/index.cfm>

- a) Does the agency include a utility or function on its website designed explicitly to help potential students locate an appropriate college or university to attend?  
**Yes. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) website <http://www.schev.edu> offers a wealth of information to both parents and students. There is a brief explanation of the benefits of attending college, a description of the different kinds of colleges, tips for finding a good match, a list of all the colleges and universities in Virginia along with their websites, and a link describing the different kinds of financial aid available to students.**

- 2) Is a mandated or recommended college preparatory curriculum in place in the state’s public high schools?

**No. However Virginia’s Secretary of Education, Dr. Tom Morris, is strongly endorsing the Diploma Project. The new Strategic Plan for Higher Education in Virginia also calls for better college preparation.**

**“Establish high expectations and align curricula between secondary and postsecondary education to ensure that Virginia students complete high school ready to succeed in and graduate from college. Areas of improvement include higher academic standards and curriculum expectations, and testing and assessment.**

**Promote collaboration between higher education and the P-12 system to identify effective accelerated college-preparatory experiences and make them more widely available. Such opportunities may include dual enrollment, tech prep, middle- and early-college high schools, Advanced Placement courses and International Baccalaureate programs.”**

The full text of the strategic plan can be found on our website at: <http://www.schev.edu>.

- 3) Has the state articulated a set of explicit competencies or skills that define what it means to be “college ready?”

No. However, the Secretary of Education and a sub-committee of the P-16 Council are working on the matter.

In addition the SCHEV website offers guidelines at the link below:

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/Superintendent/Sols/home.shtml>

- 4) Are systematic programs in place in the state that encourage students to accelerate progress by taking college-level courses while still enrolled in high school?

Yes. The Early College Scholars Program and the Commonwealth College Course Collaborative are two such programs. Please see web sites:

[http://www.virginiamentor.org/planning/early\\_college\\_scholars.asp](http://www.virginiamentor.org/planning/early_college_scholars.asp)

<http://www.virginiamentor.org/planning/cccc.asp>

- 5) Is there a statewide policy present that governs placement into college-level courses or remedial courses? Is a standard set of placement tests recommended or required? If yes, are common cut scores for placement decisions in place or do institutions get to set their own?

SCHEV does not have a policy as the four-year publics do not offer remedial courses.

- 6) Is there a visible statewide transfer and articulation policy? Does this cover all institutions or only public institutions? What are the specifics of this policy?

Yes. SCHEV’s policy paper, State Policy on College Transfer, was published on October 1, 2004. It covers admissions, acceptance and application of credits, communication and information, administrative responsibility for transfer, services for transfer students, transfer student responsibilities, minority students and transfer, and tracking transfer students. This information applies to public institutions. For more information on transfer and articulation in Virginia please visit the links below:

<http://www.schev.edu/students/StatePolicyOnTransfer.pdf>

<http://www.schev.edu/students/SCHEVTransferGuidelines.pdf>

<http://www.schev.edu/students/xfr.asp>

- a) Is the transfer/articulation policy accompanied by a statewide transferable general education requirement? Does this name actual courses and/or credits? Are specific competencies identified that the student should meet through this coursework? Is testing used to guarantee student competency for progress or transfer?

Courses that are part of the general education core of courses for the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) are identified for students on the SCHEV “transfer tool” at

<http://www.schev.edu/Students/xfr.asp>

This tool will indicate if and how courses in the community college core transfer for credit to the various public and private four-year institutions in Virginia.

Public four-year institutions in Virginia do not have a uniform core of courses for general education. As such, general education will vary from campus to campus.

Some public and private institutions have specific articulation agreements.

- b) More specifically, does an AA or AS degree from a community college in the state meet general education requirements at public four-year institutions? What mechanisms are in place to make sure this actually happens?

The state policy on college transfer states the following: "Students who have earned an associate degree based upon a baccalaureate-oriented sequence of courses should be considered to have met lower-division general education requirements of senior institutions. These students will be considered to have attained junior standing.

Moreover, Community Colleges can identify associate-level general studies degrees as "transfer degrees" (Once approved by the State Council of Higher Education). Students possessing such degrees are also considered to have met lower-division general education requirements of senior institutions

- c) Does credit from transfer courses meet specific course requirements at the transfer institution (e.g. American History counts for American History) or do just the credits transfer to count against the total needed for graduation?

It depends of the institution. Please refer to the SCHEV "transfer tool" for more specific information. Please see web site for more information:

<http://www.schev.edu/Students/xfr.asp>

- 7) Are there statewide test-out or competency-based provisions that will allow a student to accelerate progress toward a degree?

While there may be such competency-based provisions at individual institutions, this practice is not regulated through SCHEV.

- 8) Does the state have an easily-accessible state-supported alternative institution that allows students to complete their degrees more quickly or conveniently than through attendance at a traditional public institution?

Virginia does not have a separate state-supported alternative institution. The approach here is decentralized and institution- and program-specific. For more information please go the web site at: <http://www.schev.edu/students/distanceLearning.asp>

- a) Does the state have an accessible central bank or catalog of on-line courses contributed by many institutions that enable students to do "one-stop shopping" for electronic courses?

There are two state resources that answer to this description. The Electronic Campus of Virginia <http://www.vacec.bev.net/> is a centralized listing of electronically offered coursework at multiple (but not all) public and private institutions, including some but not all community colleges. VCCS Online is the Virginia Community College System's coordinated database of online offerings at all Virginia community colleges. Please see web site at: <http://www.vccs.edu/Default.aspx?tabid=108>

- 9) Does the state provide incentives to institutions for improvements in degree production or graduation rates? For minimizing the number of students graduating with excessive numbers of credits (e.g. more than 120 SCH)?

The Code of Virginia provides incentives for institutions that meet a set of education, finance, and administrative goals. Each goal has one or more measures to determine institutional performance. Institutions that successfully meet all of their targets receive financial benefits. Goals and measures that pertain to improvements in degree production or graduation rates:

Goal 1. Consistent with its institutional mission, provide access to higher education for all citizens throughout the Commonwealth, including underrepresented populations, and with anticipated demand analysis, meet enrollment projections and degree estimates as agreed upon with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Each such institution shall bear a measure of responsibility for ensuring that the statewide demand for enrollment is met;

Measure: Institution annually meets at least 95 percent of its State Council-approved estimates of degrees awarded. Definition: Direct comparison of actual degree awards to the projections in the most recent set of SCHEV approved enrollment projections.

Goal 3. Offer a broad range of undergraduate and, where appropriate, graduate programs consistent with its mission and assess regularly the extent to which the institution's curricula and degree programs address the Commonwealth's need for sufficient graduates in particular shortage areas, including specific academic disciplines, professions, and geographic regions;

Measure: Institution maintains acceptable progress towards an agreed upon target for the total number and percentage of graduates in high-need areas, as identified by the State Council of Higher Education.

Goal 5. Improve student retention such that students progress from initial enrollment to a timely graduation, and that the number of degrees conferred increases as enrollment increases;

Measure: Institution maintains or increases the ratio of degrees conferred per full-time equivalent instructional faculty member, within the prescribed range of permitted variance.

Measure: Institution maintains or improves the average annual retention and progression rates of degree-seeking undergraduate students.

Measure: Within the prescribed range of permitted variance, the institution increases the ratio of total undergraduate degree awards to the number of annual full-time equivalent, degree-seeking undergraduate students except in those years when the institution is pursuing planned enrollment growth as demonstrated by their SCHEV-approved enrollment projections.

Virginia does not provide incentives to institutions for minimizing the number of credit hours to graduate.

10) Does the state provide incentives for students who successfully complete their degrees (e.g. tuition rebates or cash bonuses)? For students who complete their programs without amassing additional credits (e.g. within 120 SCH)? Are there financial disincentives for students to take more than the number of credits needed to graduate (e.g. full or out-of-state tuition)?

The state currently does not offer a reward for students completing their degrees in a timely manner; however, there is a penalty for those students who exceed 125% of degree requirements. Students who exceed this limit are subject to an additional surcharge that brings their total charges – tuition/fees/surcharge - up to the full cost of education.

The state code that addresses this issue can be found at:

<http://leg1.state.va.us/cgi-bin/legp504.exe?000+cod+23-7.4>

The state code reads: “After August 1, 2006, for students who enroll at a public, baccalaureate degree-granting, institution of higher education in Virginia and who have established Virginia domicile and eligibility for in-state tuition in compliance with this section, the entitlement to in-state tuition shall be modified to require the assessment of a surcharge, as defined herein, for each semester that the student continues to be enrolled after such student has completed 125% of the credit hours needed to satisfy the degree requirements for a specified undergraduate program, hereinafter referred to as the "credit hour threshold."

In calculating the 125% credit hour threshold, the following courses and credit hours shall be excluded: (i) remedial courses; (ii) transfer credits from another college or university that do not meet degree requirements for general education courses or the student's chosen program of study; (iii) advanced placement or international baccalaureate credits that were obtained while in high school or another secondary school program; and (iv) dual enrollment, college-level credits obtained by the student prior to receiving a high school diploma.

The relevant public institution of higher education may waive the surcharge assessment for students who exceed the 125% credit hour threshold in accordance with the guidelines and criteria established by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia. Waiver criteria may include, but shall not be limited to, illness or disability and active service in the armed forces of the United States.

For the purpose of this subsection, "surcharge" shall mean an amount calculated to equal 100% of the average cost of the student's education at the relevant institution less tuition and mandatory educational and general fee charges assessed to a student meeting Virginia domiciliary status who has not exceeded the 125% credit hour threshold."