

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
December 19, 2014
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Report on the Response of the
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV)
to the Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population

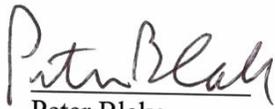
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Pursuant to Code of Virginia §§ 2.2-5510 and 51.5-136, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Blake". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Peter Blake

Director

December 19, 2014

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Executive Summary

As a component of the inner workings of state government and policymaking, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) has limited interaction with the general public and thus is not experiencing current, or anticipating future, impacts from the aging of the Virginia population. The agency's interactions with citizens known or presumed to be older are few each year and do not appear to be increasing in recent years. For these reasons, no new or additional programs or services, or changes to existing programs and services, are contemplated. The aging population's primary impacts on SCHEV will likely involve internal staffing and retirement matters rather than external services or programs.

Agency Description

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia is the coordinating board for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth. The governor-appointed 13-member Council is supported by the state agency known as SCHEV, which is headed by a director and employs a staff of 43.

SCHEV staff prepares and the Council approves and submits to the Governor and General Assembly higher-education policy and budget recommendations on topics such as college and university capital and operating-budget planning, enrollment projections, institutional technology needs, and student financial aid.

The Council prepares the statewide strategic plan for Virginia higher education at least every six years and, together with its staff, strives at all times to serve as a catalyst in the promotion of greater access, quality, affordability, and accountability throughout the Commonwealth's system of postsecondary education. SCHEV facilitates cooperation and collaboration between and among state policymakers, campus administrators, and business and community leaders to advance educational excellence, economic development and Virginia's future.

As a component of the inner workings of state government and policymaking, SCHEV has limited interaction with the general public; the agency's "customers" are primarily the executive and legislative branches of government and other state agencies, particularly the public colleges and universities. The agency receives occasional inquiries or complaints from private individuals, but possesses no means to ascertain these contacts' age or other demographic info.

The Senior Citizens Higher Education Act (§ 23-38.54 – 60) permits certain qualifying older Virginians to take courses at public institutions of higher education without paying tuition. SCHEV is charged statutorily with setting procedures to guide institutions' determinations of senior citizens' eligibility for this benefit and receives a few (less than five) inquiries or complaints each year from citizens interested in the benefit or dissatisfied with an institution's response to their request to receive the benefit.

Information Requested

1. The primary activities of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) are the coordination of the Commonwealth's system of higher education and the submission of policy and budget recommendations to the executive and legislative branches. As a result, and absent significant contact with the general public, SCHEV has not perceived a need to undertake specific actions to respond to the aging of the Virginia population. No assistance from the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) is necessary at this time.
2. As a part of the inner workings of state government, SCHEV has limited interaction with the general public. The agency services used most by citizens, including older Virginians, are its information-sharing services and its inquiry-/complaint-response services. SCHEV makes available considerable information about Virginia higher education via its website and print materials, but cannot ascertain readily users' demographic characteristics. Similarly, when citizens submit questions/complaints or seek dispute-resolution assistance, SCHEV has no means to know their age, unless volunteered. Info sharing and constituent responsiveness are normal components of agency operations, and as such are not funded separately.
3. SCHEV does not offer programs designed specifically to serve older Virginians. The Senior Citizens Higher Education Act (§ 23-38.54 – 60) permits certain qualifying older citizens to take courses at public institutions of higher education without paying tuition. SCHEV is charged statutorily with setting procedures to guide institutions' determinations of senior citizens' eligibility for this benefit and receives a few (less than five) inquiries or complaints each year from citizens interested in the benefit or dissatisfied with an institution's response to their request to receive the benefit.
4. SCHEV is able to meet all service demands of older Virginians for information, address of grievances, assistance with the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act, and all other matters. No waiting lists are maintained for any SCHEV services or programs.
5. Beyond an average of four to five contacts annually about the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act, SCHEV lacks specific information about the numbers of older Virginians seeking agency services. The number of contacts and service requests by citizens presumed to be older Virginians has remained about the same over time.
6. SCHEV maintains an office in downtown Richmond and communicates with the public from this single location and through its website and publications. Therefore, the accessibility and availability of its services are consistent across the Commonwealth.
7. Over the next five to 10 years, SCHEV anticipates few and minimal impacts from an aging population on the agency's services, funding streams, or policies. The largest impacts faced by SCHEV will likely be in personnel, as more staff become eligible for retirement.

8. Because SCHEV is not a customer- or transaction-based agency, it is not in position to comment on the primary steps that federal, state and/or local governments might take to best meet the future demands of older Virginians.
9. All SCHEV publications and websites are designed to meet the needs of its constituents and to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Agency resources are not designed with a specific intent to be “senior-friendly”, as no need for such has been perceived.
10. At this time, SCHEV has no plans to implement additional services or programs to address the impact of the aging of Virginia’s population.
11. SCHEV is not experiencing an increase in employees deferring retirement. The agency will work with the Department of Human Resource Management to address matters related to staff retirement, succession planning and accommodation of older workers’ individual and collective needs.