Report on the Response of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to the Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population

November 15, 2007

State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
Addressing the Impact of the Aging of Virginia's Population
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Pursuant to legislation enacted by the Virginia General Assembly of Virginia, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia submits this report of its progress in addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.

Signature: Date: November 15, 2007

Daniel J. LaVista
Executive Director
State Council of Higher Education for Virginia

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Executive Summary

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is addressing the impact of the aging of Virginia's population by directly serving today's senior citizens and by identifying the future workforce needs of the Commonwealth.

SCHEV works directly with Virginia's senior citizens by answering questions regarding the Senior Citizens' Education Act and providing information about postsecondary education across the Commonwealth.

Although we do not ask the age of our constituents when they contact us for information, there is a belief among SCHEV staff that correspondence from senior citizens has increased over the past few years due to greater familial participation in college students' lives and a larger pool of older parents. Senior citizens also want to know how higher education policies will affect their taxes, their neighborhoods, and their alma maters.

The SCHEV Communications section prides itself on timely and accurate information delivered in a professional manner. Senior citizens seem especially appreciative of SCHEV's superior customer service.

In 2007, SCHEV helped to address a deficiency in dental care for a large group of senior citizens in Southwest Virginia. SCHEV conducted a study to examine the financial and programmatic feasibility of establishing a satellite campus of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry on the campus of the University of Virginia at Wise. Wise County faces a double challenge. They have elderly citizens who do not receive adequate dental care and many of their dentists are nearing retirement. The dental study revealed a need for a satellite campus which could serve hundreds of elderly patients and encourage dental students to establish practices in Wise County upon graduation.

SCHEV is addressing the needs of its own aging population by establishing policies that will help retain valued staff and encourage these professionals to train new employees.

Finally, SCHEV's Policy Research and Data Warehousing section maintains a wealth of information regarding degree attainment. This information can be used to forecast workforce needs and predict potential shortfalls as Virginia's population ages.

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Agency Description

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) is the Commonwealth's coordinating body for higher education. SCHEV was established by the Governor and General Assembly in 1956. Then as now, our mission, which is outlined in the Code of Virginia, is "to promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive, and coordinated system of higher education" in Virginia.

To fulfill our mission, SCHEV makes higher education public policy recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly in such areas as capital and operating budget planning, enrollment projections, institutional technology needs, and student financial aid. SCHEV administers a variety of educational programs that benefit students, faculty, parents, and taxpayers. SCHEV serves as a catalyst to promote greater access, quality, affordability, and accountability throughout the system. SCHEV also helps policymakers, college administrators, and other concerned leaders work cooperatively and constructively to advance educational excellence.

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Reporting Requirements

1. **To the extent such data is available, the number of persons who received services from the agency in the past fiscal year who fell into each of the following age ranges: 65-74; 75-84; and 85 and older. If the agency can provide data that compares such numbers to numbers of senior citizens served in the past, please do so. If the agency lacks specific information about the numbers of senior citizens it serves, but has other evidence indicating that it is serving more or fewer senior citizens than it has in the past, please describe the basis for that estimation.**

SCHEV serves Virginia's senior citizens directly by providing information in two basic areas: general constituent inquiries and guidance regarding the Senior Citizens' Education Act.

SCHEV's Communications and Government Relations section keeps a log of all constituent inquiries; however staff members do not ask the ages of those who contact us for information. SCHEV estimates that the agency receives approximately 15 inquiries a year regarding the Senior Citizens' Education Act. This has remained fairly constant over the past few years.

Attendance at state institutions; conditions. Act 23-38.56.

A senior citizen shall be permitted, under regulations as may be prescribed by the State Council of Higher Education:

(i) To register for and enroll in courses as a full-time or part-time student for academic credit if such senior citizen had a taxable individual income not exceeding $15,000 for Virginia income tax purposes for the year preceding the year in which enrollment is sought;

(ii) To register for and audit courses offered for academic credit; and

(iii) To register for and enroll in courses not offered for academic credit in any state institution of higher education in this Commonwealth.

Such senior citizen shall pay no tuition or fees except fees established for the purpose of paying for course materials, such as laboratory fees, but shall be subject to the admission requirements of the institution and a determination by the institution of its ability to offer the course or courses for which the senior citizen registers. The State Council of Higher Education shall establish procedures to ensure that tuition-paying students are accommodated in courses before senior citizens participating in this program are enrolled. However, the state institutions of higher education may make individual exceptions to these procedures when the senior citizen has completed seventy-five percent of the requirements for a degree.

SCHEV also receives approximately 100 inquiries per year from constituents who identify themselves as senior citizens. Many of these constituents are the parents or grandparents of college students who are seeking information about various higher education issues such as campus safety and financial aid.

2. **Identify the agency services that are utilized by senior citizens 65 and older in significant numbers. Indicate whether the agency has the capacity at present to serve all interested seniors or whether the demand for certain services exceeds the agency's capacity. If so, does the agency maintain waiting lists for services?**

   As stated above, the main service SCHEV supplies to Virginia's senior citizens is the delivery of information in a timely and accurate manner. At this time SCHEV has the capacity to accommodate those requests.

3. **Identify current agency programs, specifically designed to serve seniors 65 and older, that fall into any of the following six categories: Health Care/Wellness; Education; Public Safety; Recreation; Financial Security (including Housing); and Transportation.**

   The 2006 Appropriations Act, Item 145J, charged the State Council of Higher Education as follows:

   The State Council of Higher Education (SCHEV) shall examine the financial and programmatic feasibility of establishing a satellite campus of the Virginia Commonwealth University School of Dentistry on the campus of the University of Virginia at Wise County. SCHEV shall provide a report of its findings to the Chairman of House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by October 1, 2007.

   Dental health is vitally important to a person's overall health, well-being, and

productivity. This is especially true for senior citizens who often face chronic dental disease leading to pain, a reduced quality of life, and loss of productivity.

The Wise County region is significantly underserved and is designated a dental health professional shortage area (Dental HPSA), with a dentist to population ratio under 1:4,000, compared to a Virginia average of over 1:2,000. Area residents' dental needs have also been made dramatically clear by the impact of the Virginia Dental Association's annual Mission of Mercy, which serves over 1,400 people each summer on a single July weekend. Approximately 40 percent of those served are senior citizens. It is projected that the proposed clinic would provide discounted dental services for approximately 600 senior citizens a year.

In April 2007, Executive Director Dan LaVista and staff from SCHEV commenced a series of meetings with the dean of the VCU Dental School, Ron Hunt, and his staff. Four of those meetings were held in Richmond and focused on developing a detailed plan for the satellite clinic. In July and September staff from the VCU Dental School and SCHEV traveled to Wise County to meet with community leaders. Several dentists from Wise County attended these meetings. They expressed their concern regarding the current lack of dentists in Wise County, as well as a future shortage that will exist when many in their ranks retire.

In September of 2007, SCHEV completed the *Report on the Financial and Programmatic Feasibility of Establishing a Satellite Clinic of the VCU School of Dentistry in Wise County.* In that report SCHEV strongly supports the clinic and the services it will bring to the senior citizens of that underserved area. SCHEV has pledged to support a funding model in which $900,000 a year will be provided in state funds for operating costs.

4. **Identify the extent to which your agency provides "consumer-oriented" publications and websites online that are designed to be "senior-friendly." If the information you currently provide is not readily accessible to seniors, identify any steps your agency is taking to improve accessibility.**

   The SCHEV website conforms to all state accessibility standards. SCHEV also supplies a number of print publications upon request.

5. **Describe the effect that the aging of the agency's own workforce will have on its ability to deliver services. Consider the number of retirements expected in the next two years, the effect these retirements might have (*e.g.,* loss of leadership or institutional knowledge in certain programs), how losses might be replaced (*e.g*., promotions or transfers, recruitment, use of wage staff, including retirees, re-engineering,**

outsourcing), and the costs or savings from the replacements (*e.g.*, staff development cost, salary savings). This item might be addressed by summarizing relevant portions of the agency's workforce plan.

SCHEV's current workforce is comprised of 44 full-time employees and 12 wage employees. Within the next one-to-five years, 15% of SCHEV's full-time workforce will be eligible for retirement.

SCHEV is a small agency and the loss of any employee can adversely impact its delivery of services. The loss of institutional knowledge in key leadership areas is almost certain. The majority of SCHEV's employees are subject matter experts in their respective fields. Therefore, developing and retaining talent is essential.

Although recruiting and hiring new talent is important, SCHEV has instituted programs to develop and retain talent within the agency by providing talented employees with competitive salary and benefits, bonuses, and work-life balance. SCHEV also provides training and development to current employees. SCHEV's succession plan will mainly target executive staff and mid-management areas while our retention plans will apply to all employees.

In developing SCHEV's succession plan, a key metric is to encourage retired persons to return to SCHEV as wage employees to mentor and coach identified employees in key areas ensuring that institutional knowledge, reputation, and brand are maintained. By promoting from within and utilizing wage employees, SCHEV will be able to reduce the cost of recruiting, hiring, and training new employees. The estimated recruitment cost of hiring a new employee is $3,500. Utilizing retired employees to coach and mentor current employees who aspire to positions of leadership is cost effective.

6. **Describe any other services or programs that the agency has implemented or plans to implement in the future to address the impact of the aging of Virginia's population.**

In July of 2007, SCHEV Introduced *"Advancing Virginia," The 2007-13 Strategic Plan for Higher Education.* Goal 7 calls for the implementation of programs that will foster increased attraction and retention of "non-traditional" student populations in postsecondary education. One example of such a program that has been utilized by many senior citizens is fast track teacher certification for retirees who wish to teach K-12 as a second career.

SCHEV's Policy Research and Data Warehousing section keeps a number of statistics that track trends in Higher Education. This information provides insight into the future workforce needs of the Commonwealth. For instance, SCHEV keeps track of the majors, minors, and degrees offered by each public institution of higher education. SCHEV also collects data on the

number of students who graduate and the degrees they receive. This information can be used to forecast workforce needs and potential deficiencies as they relate to demographic changes in Virginia's population.