SCHEV Elects New Chair, Vice Chair

On September 10, members of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) elected the individuals who will lead the Council as it carries out higher education initiatives, including the goals of SCHEV’s 2007-13 strategic plan for higher education. Please join us in welcoming new Council Chair Whittington W. Clement and new Vice Chair Eva S. Hardy.

Both Mr. Clement and Ms. Hardy were appointed to the Council for 4-year terms in July 2005. During their tenure as Council members, both have demonstrated remarkable leadership and commitment to higher education issues. Mr. Clement recently chaired the Strategic Planning Steering Subcommittee, guiding a diverse group of 36 representatives in crafting a comprehensive systemwide plan for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth. Ms. Hardy served as a member of the Council’s Outreach Committee and was instrumental in securing support for SCHEV’s Outstanding Faculty Awards program, the Commonwealth’s highest honor for faculty at Virginia’s public and private colleges and universities.

Whittington W. Clement is a partner at the law firm of Hunton & Williams. He also served in Governor Mark Warner’s Cabinet as Secretary of Transportation for more than three years. Prior to joining the Warner Administration, Mr. Clement served in the Virginia House of Delegates for 14 years representing the City of Danville and part of Pittsylvania County. In the legislature, Mr. Clement served on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation and the Commission on the Future of Higher Education. In addition to serving as President of the Virginia Bar Association in 1993, Mr. Clement has served on numerous boards including the Board of Managers for the University of Virginia’s Alumni Association, and the Library of Virginia Foundation’s Board of Directors. Mr. Clement is a graduate of the University of Virginia undergraduate and law schools.

Eva S. Hardy is Senior Vice President of External Affairs & Corporate Communications at Dominion. Prior to entering the private sector, Ms. Hardy spent 17 years in local and state government, beginning as an urban planner with the City of Portsmouth, Virginia, and culminating as Secretary of Health and Human Resources in the administration of Governor Gerald Baliles. Ms. Hardy serves on the boards of the Medical Society of Virginia Foundation and the University of Virginia Foundation’s Board of Directors. Mr. Clement is a graduate of the University of Virginia undergraduate and law schools.

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“Good schools, like good societies and good families, celebrate and cherish diversity.”

- Deborah Meier
In an effort to increase access to higher education for all Virginians, SCHEV has created a Spanish section on its website to serve as an online resource for Spanish-speaking students, parents, and the high school and postsecondary personnel who work with Virginia’s growing Hispanic population. Written in both English and Spanish, the “En Español” section of the SCHEV web site is available to all interested users at http://www.schev.edu/students/Espanol/Espanol.asp.

The site provides background information on Virginia’s system of higher education, as well as useful tips on how to prepare and pay for college. Topics include the benefits of postsecondary education, suggestions about how to choose the right institution, and information on applying for admission. There are also sections for parents and for adult learners who are considering private career institutions for specific occupational or technical training.

Governor Timothy M. Kaine supports SCHEV’s efforts, saying, “SCHEV has long had an interest in promoting access and affordability for all students who wish to pursue higher education. We want all our students to be successful and have the same opportunities to access this information.”

“High school counselors, instructors, and others who work with Hispanic populations can encounter language and cultural barriers when working with students and parents who are not native English speakers,” says Maricel Quintana-Baker, SCHEV’s Associate Director for Academic Affairs. “We hope the site will help this under-served population by demystifying the college application process, which can be overwhelming for families who aren’t familiar with it.”

Visit the new online version of “Preparing for College” at www.schev.edu/students/Espanol/Espanol.asp

New Higher Education Web Resource
For Spanish-Speaking Students and Families

Alan Edwards is Policy Studies Director for SCHEV.

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quality of states’ systems. For example, Virginia compares very well to other states on the relationship between residents’ college-education attainment and income, health, and high-tech employment. Only Massachusetts and Colorado rank above Virginia on all three measures.

In Massachusetts, a large proportion of the degree-holders were produced in the private sector. Arguably, a great private system of higher education does not in-and-of itself a great state system make. And in Colorado, a significantly large proportion of the degree-holders were educated elsewhere. Given 21st-century expectations, a system’s production of insufficient in-state graduates to meet workforce needs is not an indicator of true greatness either.

What, then, of Virginia? The system of higher education in the Commonwealth is a healthy, diverse mix of public and private two- and four-year institutions. In other words, no sector or institutional type dominates Virginia’s higher education landscape. Ours is a state that attracts more new residents through its strengths and assets than through its weaknesses and deficits.

Virginia is, according to projections by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), one of only 18 states considered likely to be able to produce enough college graduates by 2025 to reach and/or maintain international competitiveness. No Virginia-bordering state – in fact, no other southern state – is among these 18.

If NCHEMS is correct, then those who have been so quick to highlight other states (e.g., Maryland, North Carolina, and Georgia) as exemplary targets for Virginia to emulate ought to begin pointing to our system as the standard-bearer.

Apparently, we (and Dorothy) were right all along.

Alan Edwards is Policy Studies Director for SCHEV.
On Campus: Richard Bland College

Housing at two-year institution becomes a reality

When first driving onto the campus of Richard Bland College in Petersburg, the charming, almost rural atmosphere is striking and immediately calming. Gorgeous groves of pecan trees frame a quiet pond. The noise of I-95 is replaced by the bird calls and the sounds of students greeting each other in the parking lot outside their classrooms.

This quiet, serene environment stands in stark contrast to a busy construction site just down an unfinished road and within walking distance of the main campus. Richard Bland College is poised to significantly alter its image by offering its students the opportunity to live in on-campus housing.

Drawn to Amenities

A two-year public institution governed by the Board of Visitors of The College of William and Mary, Richard Bland College enrolls nearly 1,400 full- and part-time students, most of whom intend to transfer to four-year colleges and universities. Enrollment data indicate that most current students live within a 50-mile radius of campus, but as assistant facilities manager Jim Saady points out, “A two-hour round trip to school can start to wear you out.”

After conducting extensive research and exploring best practices in student housing, the institution’s administration and Board of Visitors made the case for the construction of a student housing complex adjacent to the existing main campus.

Scheduled for completion in time for the 2008 fall semester, construction on the as-yet-unnamed residence halls is in full swing. Each of the two buildings in Phase I will be four stories tall with a mix of 1-, 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom apartments intended to house 256 students.

Recognizing that students are drawn to amenities, the plans call for a living space, full kitchen, bathroom, and even a washer and dryer in each apartment. Two common areas are planned for each floor, one for recreation and one for quiet study. The entire building will have wireless internet access. The final touch? Two hundred and fifty-six parking spaces, one for each potential resident.

Attention to detail also extends to the buildings’ exterior, where plans call for a footpath and bridge to the main campus, a man-made pond stocked with fish, and a recreation area for students with softball, tennis, and basketball facilities. Eventually Phase II will bring three additional buildings, including one with ground floor restaurants and other services for students.

A Challenging Path

Architects and the construction crews had to work around acres of protected wetlands and groves of trees that the school wanted to leave standing. “This campus has a special feel to it,” says Mr. Saady. “We wanted to do everything we could to leave that intact.”

The school will protect the wetlands by running electric and data cables through a once-swampy area originally built up by the Union Army. Mr. Saady jokingly adds, “When the Yankees ran the Weldon Railroad through the area and built up that path, they were really doing us a favor. All the machinery and cables can come through here now without disturbing the protected sites.”

Despite such difficulties, Mr. Saady reports that construction is running ahead of schedule and the buildings should be ready for a ceremonial opening in July 2008. Yet, the college’s administration isn’t letting this good news lull them into a sense of complacency. “We recognize that we have a long way to go in adding additional staff,” says Mr. Saady, “but [College President] Dr. McNeer is working hard to make sure housekeeping, maintenance, and admissions are ready for the challenge.”

And that’s just the tip of the iceberg. The college’s cafeteria, which has never served an evening meal, will have to alter

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its hours to accommodate residential students. There is even talk of creating meal plan options for students. Additionally, coordinated emergency response protocols involving the new residence halls had to be created, a process made even more difficult because the campus straddles Dinwiddie and Prince George counties, as well as the City of Petersburg.

However, Richard Bland College President James McNeer seems to welcome the challenge. Dr. McNeer confides, “We’re excited about the possibility of attracting students who wouldn’t normally think of coming here. Students coming from across the Commonwealth will enrich all of us.”

“We Are All Family Here”

In addition to the logistical and staffing challenges of adding a residential component to an institution where none existed before, Dr. McNeer wants to make sure that positive outcomes continue for students who don’t plan on moving onto the campus.

The college is also renovating the library, for example, completely remodeling two floors of an existing building to increase ease of use for students and faculty. The 75,000 volumes in the library’s existing collection will be moved to compact shelving on the second floor, where a room for archives and rare books is also being created. The entire building will be wireless and a new family-friendly bathroom is being built for non-traditional students with children.

With all this change, Dr. McNeer wants to assure students and their families that Richard Bland will still provide the small classes and personal attention that has become its hallmark.

“We won’t move away from the individual instruction and dual enrollment services that we provide to our students and the local community;” he says. “If anything, we make it easier and certainly economically advantageous for students to come here before transferring elsewhere in Virginia or nationally to get their four-year degree. Articulation agreements with the four-year colleges and universities make that transition possible.”

If there is any lingering doubt about the President’s ability to maintain a sense of personal connection and community as the institution grows, it is instantly dispelled when he proudly points to a photo on the wall near his office. The black and white photo shows 30 smiling students above the caption “Class of 1965.”

“This is my dentist,” Dr. McNeer says, pointing to a student in the photo. “And this is my granddaughter’s orthodontist. I could go on and on,” he says, “because we are all family here.”

Learning By Design

SCHEV and The National Center for Academic Transformation (NCAT) are hosting an upcoming conference on course redesign for higher education faculty and administrators in Virginia. Entitled Learning by Design, the conference will help attendees increase efficiency, reduce the cost of instruction, and improve learning through the use of technology.

Carol Twigg, President and CEO of NCAT, will keynote the event and provide an overview of course redesign. Participants will engage the concepts of redesign through discipline-specific breakout sessions. In these sessions, participants will learn more about planning course redesign efforts at their home institutions. To fund the expansion of course redesign principles, The Electronic Campus of Virginia (ECVA) is providing $10,000 in grant funds. Specific information regarding the grant process will be provided at the conference and is available on the web.

Successful course redesign requires a concerted effort across an institution, thus teams of administrators, faculty, and technology staff are encouraged to attend as a group. However, individuals are also welcome. The cost for the Learning by Design conference is $150 per person.

For more information about the Learning By Design conference, including the full agenda and registration information, please visit the SCHEV website at www.schev.edu/lbd/. For more information on course redesign, visit The National Center for Academic Transformation web site at www.center.rpi.edu/.
Governor Tim Kaine recently appointed Gilbert T. Bland, Chairman of Tymark Enterprises, Inc. and Tabansi Pizza, as the newest member of the 11-person Council. Mr. Bland succeeds former Council member Jean Cunningham, whose unexpired term ends June 30, 2008.

A respected business leader, Gilbert Bland has purchased or constructed over 65 restaurants in Virginia and elsewhere. In addition to being a charter member of the Burger King Diversity Action Council, Mr. Bland has served on the Board of Directors for the Burger King National Franchise Association and the Southeast Pizza Hut franchise. In acknowledgement of his exemplary service, Burger King has endowed a $50,000 scholarship for African-American students in Mr. Bland’s name at James Madison University, his alma mater.

Mr. Bland is actively involved in community service and has served on the Board of Directors at Sentara Hospital, the South Hampton Roads YMCA, and The Greater Norfolk Corporation, among other organizations. Over the years, he has served on the Board of Visitors at Old Dominion University, as well as the Board of Trustees for the James Madison University Foundation and the Virginia Small Business Financing Authority. Mr. Bland presently serves as Chairman of the NCP Community Development Federal Credit Union.

Governor Kaine (left) discusses higher education issues with Council members Whittington Clement (middle) and Alan Wurtzel (right) at the September 11, 2007 meeting.

Staff Spotlight

Dr. Carmen Johansen

SCHEV is pleased to welcome its newest Associate for Academic Affairs and Planning, Carmen Johansen. Dr. Johansen will work primarily on transfer and articulation efforts to enhance the ability of Virginia students to transfer seamlessly from one college to another.

“It is an exciting opportunity to work with SCHEV and members of the Virginia higher education community to help students fulfill their educational goals,” she says. “Virginia has a rich history of providing quality education, and I am pleased to be able to work within this system. Specifically, I look forward to meeting higher education personnel involved in the transfer and articulation processes.”

One of Dr. Johansen’s first projects will be updating and streamlining SCHEV’s online Transfer Tool, which helps users determine how community college course credits will transfer to private and public four-year institutions in Virginia.

“The Transfer Tool is an important online resource because it provides valuable information to students regarding course transferability in an efficient and timely manner,” says Dr. Johansen. “It helps students and advisors to determine how community college academic credits will transfer at different four-year institutions across the state, allowing users to compare their options.”

Prior to her arrival at SCHEV, Dr. Johansen worked at a four-year institution in Colorado, directing student services and establishing transfer and articulation agreements with community colleges. She also has a number of years of experience teaching and working on advising initiatives at the community college level.

More information for transfer students can be found on the SCHEV website. Simply go to www.schev.edu and click on the Students & Parents link.
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.