

**State Council of Higher Education
Director's report
May 22, 2012**

GEAR UP (Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs).

At its last meeting, Council heard a report on the federal GEAR UP grant, which provides scholarships and wrap-around services for secondary schools students to help them enroll in higher education. We learned recently that the Virginia grant will not be renewed. We are in the process of working with the GEAR UP staff to find other opportunities and to seek ways to incorporate elements of the GEAR UP program into ongoing staff activities.

Military Education Advisory Committee. The newly formed MEAC held its initial meeting May 17. The members reviewed two pieces of legislation that passed the 2012 General Assembly and established a work plan for the upcoming year.

Student Advisory Committee. The Council's Student Advisory Committee (SAC) met April 25 and fielded questions regarding how drugs and alcohol impact the safety of their campus communities. Council member Jim Dyke joined the meeting. We received positive news coverage about the meeting. To give Council members more exposure to SAC, we intend to invite one or two SAC members to Council meetings and other Council events. We welcome your suggestions on how Council would like to hear the observations and advice of these campus leaders.

Orientation for members of boards of visitors. We have begun the planning for the 2012 orientation session. It is scheduled for October 23 at a location to be determined in Richmond. Council member Joann DiGennero is the Council liaison to staff and the Governor's office for planning the conference.

Marketing Virginia partnership. In cooperation with the Virginia Economic Development Partnership, we have completed an agreement with college and university presidents designed to increase the number of businesses that consider Virginia for expansion and growth. The next steps are to flesh out an action plan that is realistic and against which we can benchmark.

Out and about. Council member Johanna Chase and I visited Virginia State University and met with President Keith Miller. Beverly Covington and I met with the new provost at the University of Virginia, John Simon, and toured the university's "4-VA" distance learning facilities. I toured two campuses of Northern Virginia Community College with President Bob Templin. May 14 and 15, I attended an invitation only meeting in Atlanta to talk about efforts to improve student degree completion. The meeting was hosted by the Southern Regional Education Board and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Space requirements for electronically mediated off-campus instruction. While staff has made good progress in data collection and site visits, we are at a crucial point in the development of revised space planning guidelines. Although it's tempting to cobble

together a set of guidelines from existing work, pursuing this course would jeopardize our credibility. Ultimately, the work will involve the dedication of staff with expertise in higher education capital outlay budgeting. We estimate that the project will require 300 hours of work to revisit existing reports and analysis, observe first-hand the variety of distance learning practices currently in use, and prepare final recommendations for Council's consideration. We are reviewing options on how best to accomplish this project.

Staff events. We held an agency-wide staff meeting, including ice cream, to celebrate the end of the General Assembly session and to share the agency's emergency operations plan. We also co-hosted, with the Department of Treasury, an event celebrating Virginia Public Service Week.