



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Glenn Youngkin
Governor

May 10, 2022

Dear Presidents, Chancellors and Superintendent:

Thank you for your time and effort in meeting with me. I greatly appreciate and value our conversations and enjoy the learning that occurs when we are together.

Thank you for your leadership during one of the most trying and disruptive eras in our education system. These past two years have had a serious negative impact on mental health, academic achievement, social and emotional development, and sense of community. Your leadership is critical as we turn from crisis management to recovery and rejuvenation.

As we adjust to post-pandemic life, this is not a time to simply go back to normal. Yes, we must foster community and relationships, *and* we must grab this opportunity to reset and think about how we meet the challenges of today in new ways. As you identified, we have many shared challenges that we can address together.

In that spirit, I would like to reiterate the themes and follow up which I shared at our meeting, and I look forward to engaging with you on a quarterly basis to ensure that Virginia is the best state in the nation for postsecondary education.

Vibrant Campus Life

- **Ensure students continue to learn in-person and are part of safe and vibrant campuses**
 - *I ask you to prioritize in-person learning to allow our students to foster and grow relationships with as few restrictions as possible.*
- **Value and promote a culture that embraces free inquiry and a commitment to free speech**

Thank you for the rich conversation – we could have spent all day on this topic alone. I am heartened to hear that each one of you agrees that this is an issue and a priority. There is so much we can do together.

I ask the Council of Presidents to:

- *Develop a collective shared statement that supports freedom of speech and inquiry in concert with the ideals and principles of the University of Chicago statement of free expression.*
- *Create a framework to guide each of your campuses in their efforts to nurture a culture that prioritizes civil discourse and debate, **both inside and outside the classroom**. This framework and accompanying toolkit of emerging best practices, policies and protocols should address annual faculty, staff, and student training, approaches to prioritize the hiring of staff and faculty with diverse political perspectives, support of events and forums to model the exchange of ideas from different perspectives in a civil and productive manner, the set of non-negotiables around behaviors that will not be tolerated on our campuses, and other steps to further these fundamental freedoms on your campuses.*
- **Prioritize the mental health and well-being of your students, faculty and staff**

We must all prioritize mental health and well-being. I appreciate that the Council of Presidents has been leading an effort focused on this priority.

I ask the Council to:

- *Continue to coordinate with the Secretariats of Education, Health and Human Resources and Public Safety to develop policy recommendations to support the mental wellbeing of our K-12 and higher education students.*
- *Share your needs, your ideas and suggestions for how we can improve the mental wellbeing of our students, teachers, professors and staff across the Commonwealth. Critical parts of this effort are a listening tour over the next four months and a Fall Summit; throughout this process we will explore together ways to create a set of policy proposals that we can propose to the General Assembly.*
- **Keep your campuses safe**

I ask the Council to:

- *Partner with my Violent Crime Task Force as we grapple with some of our biggest challenges in our Commonwealth. We need to continue supporting our police and first responders.*
- *Utilize the Department of Criminal Justice Service's Emergency Crisis Management resources and tools that were presented in the recent webinar for higher education:
<https://www.dcjv.virginia.gov/resources-emergency-crisis-management-colleges-and-universities-webinar>. Please let my Administration know how we can better help you prepare and respond.*

Affordability and Reducing the Cost of Higher Education

- **Reduce costs and keep tuition low**

It is important to focus on ensuring higher education is affordable for all. As we discussed, we are facing conflicting objectives. We want to provide the finest infrastructure and services, but we are facing a demographic reality of fewer students in the education pipeline. This reality requires rethinking business as usual.

I ask each of you to:

- *Keep your tuition flat for the 2022-2023 academic year. I would like for us to work to lower the net cost of higher education for Virginia's students. Keeping tuition as low as possible must be part of the answer.*
- *Be creative and strategic problem-solvers to keep tuition increases low for the long-term. These solutions can come from leveraging technology, more efficient delivery methods, partnerships with community colleges, and innovating and finding new or expanded sources of revenue. I also encourage you to undertake a tough review of staffing, overhead, review of all majors and course offerings, and increase attention on spending and procurement oversight.*
- **Prioritize operating cost transparency**

My Administration will work with your Council of State Senior Business Officers over the next year to reimagine the six-year plan process to reinforce the strategic aspect of this annual financial data collection process.

I ask you and your budget officers to:

- *Work with the Secretariats of Finance and Education to develop and implement a process that is efficient and promotes transparency and strategic planning around cost containment, financial health and outcomes.*

Prepare students for the increasing demands of the knowledge economy

Our shared overriding goal must be to have every student graduate career ready—our Administration's definition for success for jobs (preferably in Virginia). I am pleased that the Council of Presidents has led the charge for every graduate of our four year higher education institutions to have an opportunity for a paid workplace internship, reflecting our shared objective to prepare every college student to graduate in a timely manner and launch a meaningful career.

- **Redefine success as job attainment**

Our Administration is committed to leveraging the power of labor market information to better connect Virginia students with Virginia jobs. We will prioritize the collection, use and reporting of data that tracks postsecondary outcomes by employment and wage in addition to graduation rates.

To further support this goal of ensuring all our students are prepared for success in the workplace, I ask you to:

- *Work with our Administration to report the data as we redefine postsecondary success to be not just graduating, but being hired into a good job within six months of graduation.*
- *Take steps to align curriculum, programs and requirements to our state's most in-demand workforce needs.*
- *Continue to prioritize a meaningful internship as part of the college experience.*
- **Prioritize efforts to support efficient attainment of credentials & degrees in the most in-demand skill areas**

I am excited to learn about the transfer study presented at your Council meeting this past week. Aligned with this effort, Secretary Guidera has asked SCHEV to explore a multi-year Workgroup to ensure our higher education system is focused on preparing our graduates for the jobs of the knowledge economy. This involves learning from emerging best practices both in the Commonwealth and across the nation, expanding pathways such as dual enrollment and transfers across community colleges and four year institutions, and exploring “outside the box” ways to prioritize affordability and credential attainment.

I ask the Council to:

- *Actively participate in this Workgroup to ensure we create a system that is built to last and meet the needs of students of all ages and prepares all learners for success in the knowledge economy in a cost-effective way.*

Build the college and career ready pipeline in partnership with K-12 school divisions and other key stakeholders through lab schools or innovation schools

Thank you for your willingness to partner with my Administration to create lab schools in Virginia. Your leadership is critical in helping to expand the K-12 to college delivery pipeline to offer multiple pathways to successful preparation for in-demand jobs, and particularly to identify and support those students traditionally not seen as “college material.”

I ask each of your institutions to:

- *Consider opening a lab school. The Secretariat of Education looks forward to reviewing your preliminary proposals in the coming month, and we are all eager to learn more about the different partnerships you are considering launching to serve K-12 students and educators.*

- *Create or strengthen “Pathway Programs” which provide pipelines and specific programs for underserved students in your communities. Perhaps this could even be one of the Council’s next priorities to build on your success after the VTOP success! I look forward to learning more about your current innovative pathway programs at our next meeting.*

For our Commonwealth to thrive, our colleges and universities must be hubs of innovation. We know that Fortune 100 companies come to Virginia because they seek the best talent in the world; we can’t take that for granted. This requires constant focus on being best in class. I look forward to working with you to ensure that Virginia is the best place to live, work, and raise a family.

Without your success in ensuring Virginia is the best place to be educated, none of that is possible.

With appreciation of our partnership,



Glenn Youngkin

cc: Jeff Goettman, Chief of Staff

cc: Aimee Rogstad Guidera, Secretary of Education