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SENATE BILL NO. 1262

Offered January 18, 2005

A BILL to amend and reenact § 23-9.6:1 of the Code of Virginia, and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding in Title 23 a chapter numbered 1.1:1, consisting of sections numbered 23-9.14:3 through 23-9.14:6, relating to the Office of Learning Technology within the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

Patron—Potts

Referred to Committee on Education and Health

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 23-9.6:1 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted, and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding in adding Title 23 a chapter numbered 1.1:1, consisting of sections numbered 23-9.14:3 through 23-9.14:6 as follows:

§ 23-9.6:1. Duties of Council generally.

In addition to such other duties as may be prescribed elsewhere, the State Council of Higher Education shall have the duty, responsibility and authority:

1. To prepare plans under which the several state-supported institutions of higher education of Virginia shall constitute a coordinating system. In developing such plans, the Council shall consider the future needs for higher education in Virginia at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels, as well as the mission, programs, facilities and location of each of the existing institutions of higher education, and such other matters as the Council deems appropriate. Such plans shall integrate the strategic plan for technology-enriched initiatives prepared pursuant to § 23-9.14:4. The Council shall revise such plans at least once every four years and shall submit such recommendations as are necessary for the implementation of the plan to the Governor and the General Assembly.

2. To review and approve or disapprove any proposed change in the statement of mission of any presently existing public institution of higher education and to define the mission of all public institutions of higher education created after the effective date of this provision. The Council shall, within the time prescribed in subdivision 1, make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with respect to its actions hereunder. No such actions shall become effective until 30 days after adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such a report. Nothing contained in this provision shall be construed to authorize the Council to modify any mission statement adopted by the General Assembly, nor to empower the Council to affect, either directly or indirectly, the selection of faculty or the standards and criteria for admission of any public institution, whether related to academic standards, residence or other criteria; it being the intention of this section that faculty selection and student admission policies shall remain a function of the individual institutions.

3. To study any proposed escalation of any public institution to a degree-granting level higher than that level to which it is presently restricted and to submit a report and recommendation to the Governor and the General Assembly relating to the proposal. The study shall include the need for and benefits or detriments to be derived from the escalation. No such institution shall implement any such proposed escalation until the Council's report and recommendation have been submitted to the General Assembly and the General Assembly approves the institution's proposal.

4. To review and approve or disapprove all enrollment projections proposed by each public institution of higher education. The Council's projections shall be in numerical terms by level of enrollment and shall be used for budgetary and fiscal planning purposes only. The Council shall develop estimates of the number of degrees to be awarded by each institution and include those estimates in its reports of enrollment projections. The student admissions policies for the institutions and their specific programs shall remain the sole responsibility of the individual boards of visitors.

5. To review and approve or disapprove all new academic programs which any public institution of higher education proposes. As used herein, "academic programs" include both undergraduate and graduate programs.

6. To review and require the discontinuance of any undergraduate or graduate academic program that is presently offered by any public institution of higher education when the Council determines that such academic program is (i) nonproductive in terms of the number of degrees granted, the number of students served by the program, the program's effectiveness, and budgetary considerations, or (ii) supported by state funds and is unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth. The Council shall make a report to the Governor and the General Assembly with respect to the discontinuance of any such academic program. No such

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59 discontinuance shall become effective until 30 days after the adjournment of the session of the General  
60 Assembly next following the filing of such report.

61 7. To review and approve or disapprove the creation and establishment of any department, school,  
62 college, branch, division or extension of any public institution of higher education that such institution  
63 proposes to create and establish. This duty and responsibility shall be applicable to the proposed creation  
64 and establishment of departments, schools, colleges, branches, divisions and extensions, whether located  
65 on or off the main campus of the institution in question. If any organizational change is determined by  
66 the Council to be proposed solely for the purpose of internal management and the institution's curricular  
67 offerings remain constant, the Council shall approve the proposed change. Nothing in this provision shall  
68 be construed to authorize the Council to disapprove the creation and establishment of any department,  
69 school, college, branch, division or extension of any institution that has been created and established by  
70 the General Assembly.

71 8. To review the proposed closure of any academic program in a high demand or critical shortage  
72 area, as defined by the Council, by any public institution of higher education and assist in the  
73 development of an orderly closure plan, when needed.

74 9. To develop a uniform, comprehensive data information system designed to gather all information  
75 necessary to the performance of the Council's duties. The system shall include information on  
76 admissions, enrollments, self-identified students with documented disabilities, personnel, programs,  
77 financing, space inventory, facilities and such other areas as the Council deems appropriate.

78 10. To develop in cooperation with institutions of higher education guidelines for the assessment of  
79 student achievement. An institution shall use an approved program that complies with the guidelines of  
80 the Council and is consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives in the development  
81 of such assessment. The Council shall report the institutions' assessments of student achievement in the  
82 biennial revisions to the state's master plan for higher education.

83 11. To develop in cooperation with the appropriate state financial and accounting officials and to  
84 establish uniform standards and systems of accounting, record keeping and statistical reporting for the  
85 public institutions of higher education.

86 12. To review biennially and approve or disapprove all changes in the inventory of educational and  
87 general space that any public institution of higher education may propose, and to make a report to the  
88 Governor and the General Assembly with respect thereto. No such change shall be made until 30 days  
89 after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

90 13. To visit and study the operations of each of the public institutions of higher education at such  
91 times as the Council shall deem appropriate and to conduct such other studies in the field of higher  
92 education as the Council deems appropriate or as may be requested by the Governor or the General  
93 Assembly.

94 14. To provide advisory services to private, accredited and nonprofit institutions of higher education,  
95 whose primary purpose is to provide collegiate or graduate education and not to provide religious  
96 training or theological education, on academic, administrative, financial and space utilization matters.  
97 The Council may also review and advise on joint activities, including contracts for services between  
98 such public and private institutions of higher education or between such private institutions and any  
99 agency of the Commonwealth or political subdivision thereof.

100 15. To adopt such rules and regulations as the Council believes necessary to implement all of the  
101 Council's duties and responsibilities as set forth in this Code. The various public institutions of higher  
102 education shall comply with such rules and regulations.

103 16. To issue guidelines consistent with the provisions of the federal Family Education Rights and  
104 Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g requiring public institutions of higher education to release a  
105 student's academic and disciplinary record to a student's parent.

106 17. To develop and revise, as it deems necessary, in consultation with the Coordinator of Emergency  
107 Management, a model institutional crisis and emergency management plan for the purpose of assisting  
108 public and private two-year and four-year institutions of higher education in establishing, operating, and  
109 maintaining emergency services and disaster preparedness activities.

110 18. To require that each institution of higher education formed, chartered, or established in the  
111 Commonwealth after July 1, 1980, shall ensure the preservation of student transcripts in the event of  
112 institutional closure or revocation of approval to operate in the Commonwealth of Virginia. An  
113 institution may provide for the preservation of student transcripts by binding agreement with another  
114 institution of higher education with which it is not corporately connected or in such other way as the  
115 Council may authorize by regulation. In the event an institution closes, or has its approval to operate in  
116 the Commonwealth revoked, the Council, through its Director, may take such action as is necessary to  
117 secure and preserve the student transcripts until such time as an appropriate institution accepts all or  
118 some of the transcripts. Nothing in this section shall be deemed to interfere with the right of a student  
119 to his own transcripts; nor shall this section authorize disclosure of student records except as may  
120 otherwise be authorized by law.

121 19. To develop, in cooperation with the institutions of higher education, the Board of Nursing, and  
 122 the Advisory Council on the Future of Nursing in Virginia, a strategic statewide plan to ensure an  
 123 adequate supply of nurses. The Council shall recommend to the Governor and the General Assembly  
 124 such changes in public policy as may be necessary to meet the state's current and future need for  
 125 essential nursing services.

126 20. To facilitate the development of dual admissions and articulation agreements between two- and  
 127 four-year public and private institutions of higher education in Virginia. Such agreements shall be  
 128 subject to the admissions requirements of the four-year institutions.

129 In carrying out its duties and responsibilities, the Council, insofar as practicable, shall preserve the  
 130 individuality, traditions and sense of responsibility of the respective institutions. The Council, insofar as  
 131 practicable, shall seek the assistance and advice of the respective institutions in fulfilling all of its duties  
 132 and responsibilities.

133 *CHAPTER 1.1:1.*  
 134 *OFFICE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY.*

135 *§ 23-9.14:3. Office of Learning Technology created; purpose; director.*

136 *A. The Office of Learning Technology is hereby established within the State Council of Higher*  
 137 *Education.*

138 *B. The Office shall (i) facilitate the development of innovative, cost-effective, technology-enriched*  
 139 *teaching and learning initiatives, including distance and distributed learning initiatives, to address*  
 140 *currently served populations and underserved constituencies in the Commonwealth; (ii) seek to improve*  
 141 *cooperation among and between the institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth; (iii) improve*  
 142 *efficiency and expand the availability of technologically-enriched courses; and (iv) facilitate the sharing*  
 143 *of research and experience to improve student learning.*

144 *C. The director of the State Council of Higher Education shall appoint a director for the Office, who*  
 145 *may employ the personnel required to assist the Office in the exercise and performance of its powers*  
 146 *and duties. The Director shall supervise and manage such personnel and shall prepare, approve, and*  
 147 *submit all requests for appropriations, and be responsible for all expenditures pursuant to*  
 148 *appropriations.*

149 *§ 23-9.14:4. Additional powers and duties.*

150 *A. The Office shall facilitate and coordinate the voluntary participation of public and private*  
 151 *institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth that are accredited by the Southern Association of*  
 152 *Colleges and Schools in technology-enriched learning initiatives.*

153 *B. The Office shall have the authority to (i) establish and administer agreements with public and*  
 154 *private institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth and other entities to conduct studies*  
 155 *examining the need for technology-enriched learning initiatives including distance and distributed*  
 156 *learning initiatives, for currently served populations and underserved constituencies; (ii) enhance student*  
 157 *access to technology-enriched educational programs and opportunities; (iii) reduce unnecessary*  
 158 *duplication in technology-enriched learning initiatives; (iv) assist in the development of standards for*  
 159 *improving access to, training for, and efficiency in such learning initiatives; and (v) enter into contracts*  
 160 *for related program development.*

161 *C. The Office shall identify funding sources for the development of educational opportunities through*  
 162 *technology-enriched learning and for other purposes authorized by this chapter.*

163 *D. The Office shall submit to the State Council (i) a strategic plan addressing technology-enriched*  
 164 *learning for integration by the State Council into the plans for a coordinated system of higher education*  
 165 *required by § 23-9.6:1 and (ii) an annual report of technology-enriched learning opportunities currently*  
 166 *available through the Consortium, the anticipated availability of those opportunities under development,*  
 167 *and information regarding student participation and success.*

168 *§ 23-9.14:5. Application for and acceptance of gifts and grants.*

169 *The Office is authorized to apply for, accept, and expend gifts, grants, or donations from public or*  
 170 *private sources to enable it to carry out its objectives.*

171 *§ 23-9.14:6. Cooperation of other agencies.*

172 *All agencies of the Commonwealth shall cooperate with the Office, and, upon request, assist in the*  
 173 *performance of its duties and responsibilities.*