

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 65

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to develop a strategic plan for increased decentralization and accountability for various operations of the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education.

Agreed to by the Senate, February 28, 1996
 Agreed to by the House of Delegates, February 26, 1996

WHEREAS, pursuant to Senate Joint Resolution No. 139 (1994), the General Assembly established the 17-member Commission on the Future of Higher Education (the "Commission") "to review the structure of, and to recommend a course and direction for, higher education in the Commonwealth"; and

WHEREAS, in conducting its comprehensive two-year study, the Commission examined a plethora of issues, including system-wide and institutional policies; duplication of academic programs; incentive mechanisms to promote greater efficiency, effectiveness, and academic productivity; accountability for student learning; institutional personnel practices related to faculty productivity, evaluation, and rewards; general state policies and regulations that may inhibit institutional missions; the relationship between state-supported colleges and universities and their affiliated foundations; and the roles of public, independent, nonprofit, and for-profit institutions in providing postsecondary education to the citizens of Virginia; and

WHEREAS, comprised of members of the General Assembly, Cabinet officials, and representatives of the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the business community, and the general public, the Commission worked collectively to seek the input and expertise necessary to meet its study directives and to develop recommendations that will promote accountability, ongoing improvement, and efficiency in the Commonwealth's institutions of higher education; and

WHEREAS, the Commission's study confirmed that the Commonwealth's system of higher education is characterized not only by its commitment to high quality, institutional autonomy, and diversity, but also by state-level coordination by SCHEV; and

WHEREAS, while recent restructuring efforts among the individual institutions are expected to promote access to higher education; excellence in teaching, research, and service; and accountability for resources provided and the results achieved with them, a strategic plan for increasing the responsibility of the institutions themselves for daily operations could further enhance the long-term development of the Commonwealth's system of higher education; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the Senate, the House of Delegates concurring, That the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia be requested to develop a strategic plan for increased decentralization and accountability for various operations of the Commonwealth's public institutions of higher education. The strategic plan should be developed in close consultation with the leadership of Virginia's colleges and universities and relevant state agencies and shall include (i) provisions whereby the Commonwealth might assign to selected institutions or programs responsibility for their daily operations; (ii) accountability procedures to help ensure compliance with institutional missions as well as responsiveness to the needs of Virginia's taxpayers, students, businesses, and communities; and (iii) a mechanism for the evaluation of the strategic plan by the appropriate committees of the General Assembly.

The Council shall complete its work in time to submit its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the 1997 Session of the General Assembly as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents.