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HOUSE BILL NO. 545

Offered January 14, 2004

Prefiled January 13, 2004

A BILL to require the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to conduct a feasibility study on building an academic research and advanced education enterprise in northern Virginia to provide a vehicle for multiuniversity collaboration and closer ties to industry.

 Patron—May

Referred to Committee on Rules

Whereas, according to a study by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) in 2002, approximately 90 percent of research and development (R&D) expenditures in Virginia are attributable to private sector activities, federal agencies, and federal labs; and

Whereas, more than half of R&D expenditures in Virginia are attributable to the private sector, with a significant portion of that activity occurring in northern Virginia; and

Whereas, only one of the seven public research universities is located in northern Virginia while six of the 12 federal labs, agencies and centers identified in the SCHEV report are located there; and

Whereas, Virginia's research universities must be located near its technology businesses if the Commonwealth is going to be on the world stage with an intertwined and vibrant academic research environment and entrepreneurship culture; and

Whereas, across the Commonwealth, several universities have gained eminence in critical fields of science and technology and attracted top students from the Commonwealth, the nation, and internationally; and

Whereas, most of the graduates of these leading-edge programs are unable to find jobs in their fields near where they studied causing many of them to move; and

Whereas, these graduates are as likely to move out of Virginia as they are to relocate within Virginia; and

Whereas, this situation stymies collaboration between Virginia's research universities, the private sector and the federal customers that drive much of Virginia's technology-based business activity; and

Whereas, co-location of research space and equipment for shared use and partnership between universities, federal labs and the private sector can produce enhanced access to cutting-edge equipment, decreased expense associated with capital costs and equipment, and more professional collaboration and shared objectives between Virginia's various research actors; and

Whereas, enhancing the capabilities of Virginia's universities to conduct sustained and significant research programs in close proximity to leading-edge companies and institutions would contribute enormously to improving leverage of existing private sector assets and expenditures while the private sector would gain better access to faculty and graduate student expertise; and

Whereas, such an institution would enable a student to pursue a degree in nanotechnology from one institution, while taking courses from another institution at the same campus, and working on cutting-edge research projects in the private sector; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. § 1. *The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) shall conduct a feasibility study on building an academic research and advanced education enterprise in northern Virginia to provide a vehicle for multiuniversity collaboration and closer ties to industry. The feasibility study shall include costs and benefits of and strategies for creating an institution with a graduate school component that features participation from all of the Commonwealth's research universities. The study shall also review other options for enhancing the research capabilities of the Commonwealth's public institutions and leveraging the Commonwealth's proximity to the research activities of the private sector and federal government. SCHEV shall report its findings to the Governor and the General Assembly by November 30, 2004.*

INTRODUCED

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