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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 19

Offered January 11, 2012

Prefiled January 9, 2012

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to study the feasibility for community colleges in the Commonwealth to offer selected baccalaureate degrees in high-demand fields. Report.

Patron—Favola

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, Governor Robert F. McDonnell has stated that his goal is to place Virginia among the most highly educated states and countries by conferring approximately 100,000 cumulative additional undergraduate degrees on Virginians between 2011 and 2025; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 recognized that college degree attainment would fuel strong economic growth in the Commonwealth and prepare our citizens for top job opportunities in the knowledge-driven economy of the 21st century; and

WHEREAS, the Virginia Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 highlighted the need for additional college graduates in high-demand, high-income fields such as science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health care; and

WHEREAS, the demand for baccalaureate degrees in high-demand fields and in certain geographic areas has increased dramatically; and

WHEREAS, the number of community colleges independently offering baccalaureate degree programs in other states has steadily risen; and

WHEREAS, certain geographic areas of the Commonwealth do not have a regional or statewide public university and have comparatively low educational attainment levels; and

WHEREAS, if community colleges were able to grant baccalaureate degrees, it would improve the access to education, reducing travel and costs, for adult workers, first-generation college students, and other underserved groups; and

WHEREAS, a program whereby community colleges granted baccalaureate degrees would reduce taxpayer costs and provide an increased ability to meet local workforce demands; 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 study the feasibility for community colleges in the Commonwealth to offer selected baccalaureate degrees in high-demand fields. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall analyze the implications of such a policy and examine limiting the option to certain geographic locations underserved by other public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth.

In conducting its study, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall consider: (i) geographic needs; (ii) accreditation standards and obstacles; (iii) potential upgrades to community college faculty, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities; (iv) short-term and long-term operating costs associated with developing new community college baccalaureate degree programs; (v) the funding formula for Virginia's institutions of higher education; (vi) affect on tuition; (vii) the traditional open-door mission of community colleges; and (viii) faculty and program quality.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia by the public institutions of higher education in Virginia. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia for this study, upon request.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2012, and shall submit to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of its findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than December 1, 2012, and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.

INTRODUCED

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