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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 254

Offered January 11, 2017

Prefiled January 3, 2017

Requesting the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia to study the feasibility and benefits of comprehensive community colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees. Report.

Patron—Stanley

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, the economic development of the Commonwealth hinges upon a qualified and highly educated workforce; and

WHEREAS, employers in the Commonwealth have determined that the viability and sustainability of their workforce is critical; and

WHEREAS, today's workforce is often required to obtain education beyond high school, whether through technical training or college; and

WHEREAS, an applied baccalaureate degree is often an important prerequisite for a better job and a better lifestyle; and

WHEREAS, employers in the Danville Community College and Patrick Henry Community College regions have communicated that current workers who are in the process of earning or who have been awarded credentials or applied science degrees from comprehensive community colleges will have many additional opportunities for advancement upon obtaining applied baccalaureate degrees; and

WHEREAS, every Virginian should have an opportunity to pursue an applied baccalaureate degree at a place that is convenient, accessible, and affordable; and

WHEREAS, there is no baccalaureate public institution of higher education located in the region served by Danville Community College and Patrick Henry Community College; and

WHEREAS, obtaining an applied baccalaureate degree from a community college would be an efficient and affordable means of building credit hours and minimizing the time to complete such a degree; and

WHEREAS, the fields of applied engineering and information technology have been highlighted by employers in the Danville Community College and Patrick Henry Community College regions as having tremendous potential for career advancement if employees hold relevant applied baccalaureate degrees; and

WHEREAS, the community college pathway to (i) applied engineering is currently obtained through workforce credentials and applied science degrees in mechatronics, machining, or industrial technologies and (ii) information technology is currently obtained through credentials and applied science degrees in network engineering and security; 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 and benefits of comprehensive community colleges offering applied baccalaureate degrees.

In conducting its study, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (the State Council) shall analyze and make recommendations on (i) the affordability of obtaining an applied baccalaureate degree at a comprehensive community college as compared to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education, including the extent to which obtaining an applied baccalaureate degree at a comprehensive community college would reduce educational debt; (ii) the feasibility and benefits of higher education centers on comprehensive community college campuses; (iii) the feasibility and benefits of joint degree programs between comprehensive community colleges and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education that are offered on community college campuses; (iv) the feasibility and benefits of offering applied baccalaureate degrees in engineering and information technology at Danville Community College and Patrick Henry Community College; (v) applied baccalaureate degrees that could be offered at Danville Community College, Patrick Henry Community College, or other comprehensive community colleges in addition to applied baccalaureate degrees in engineering and information technology; and (vi) options for residents in rural parts of the Commonwealth to earn applied baccalaureate degrees.

Technical assistance shall be provided to the State Council by Danville Community College, Patrick Henry Community College, and the Virginia Community College System. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the State Council for this study, upon request.

The State Council shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2017, 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

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59 shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for
60 the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2018 Regular
61 Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.