VIRGINIA ACTS OF ASSEMBLY — CHAPTER

An Act to amend and reenact §§ 23.1-203, 23.1-905.1, 23.1-907, 23.1-908, 23.1-2904, 23.1-3136, and 23.1-3137 of the Code of Virginia, relating to the Virginia Community College System.

[S 631]

Approved

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That §§ 23.1-203, 23.1-905.1, 23.1-907, 23.1-908, 23.1-2904, 23.1-3136, and 23.1-3137 of the Code of Virginia are amended as follows:

§ 23.1-203. Duties of Council.

The Council shall:

1. Develop a statewide strategic plan that (i) reflects the goals set forth in subsection A of § 23.1-1002 or (ii) once adopted, reflects the goals and objectives developed pursuant to subdivision B 5 of § 23.1-309 for higher education in the Commonwealth, identifies a coordinated approach to such state and regional goals, and emphasizes the future needs for higher education in the Commonwealth at both the undergraduate and the graduate levels and the mission, programs, facilities, and location of each of the existing institutions of higher education, each public institution's six-year plan, and such other matters as the Council deems appropriate. The Council shall revise such plan at least once every six years and shall submit such recommendations as are necessary for the implementation of the plan to the Governor and the General Assembly.

2. Review and approve or disapprove any proposed change in the statement of mission of any public institution of higher education and define the mission of all newly created public institutions of higher education. The Council shall report such approvals, disapprovals, and definitions to the Governor and the General Assembly at least once every six years. 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 in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the Council to modify any mission statement adopted by the General Assembly or empower the Council to affect, either directly or indirectly, the selection of faculty or the standards and criteria for admission of any public institution of higher education, whether relating to academic standards, residence, or other criteria. Faculty selection and student admission policies shall remain a function of the individual public institutions of higher education.

3. Study any proposed escalation of any public institution of higher education to a degree-granting level higher than that level to which it is presently restricted and 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. Review and approve or disapprove all enrollment projections proposed by each public institution of higher education. The Council's projections shall be organized numerically by level of enrollment and shall be used solely for budgetary, fiscal, and strategic planning purposes. The Council shall develop estimates of the number of degrees to be awarded by each public institution of higher education and include those estimates in its reports of enrollment projections. The student admissions policies for such institutions and their specific programs shall remain the sole responsibility of the individual governing boards but all baccalaureate public institutions of higher education shall adopt dual admissions policies with comprehensive community colleges as required by § 23.1-907.

5. Review and approve or disapprove all new undergraduate or graduate academic programs that any public institution of higher education proposes.

6. 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 unnecessarily duplicative of academic programs offered at other public institutions of higher education. 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 discontinuance shall become effective until 30 days after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

7. Review and approve or disapprove the establishment of any department, school, college, branch,

division, or extension of any public institution of higher education that such institution proposes to establish, whether located on or off the main campus of such institution. If any organizational change is determined by the Council to be proposed solely for the purpose of internal management and the institution's curricular offerings remain constant, the Council shall approve the proposed change. Nothing in this subdivision shall be construed to authorize the Council to disapprove the establishment of any such department, school, college, branch, division, or extension established by the General Assembly.

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

9. Develop a uniform, comprehensive data information system designed to gather all information necessary to the performance of the Council's duties. The system shall include information on admissions, enrollment, self-identified students with documented disabilities, personnel, programs, financing, space inventory, facilities, and such other areas as the Council deems appropriate. When consistent with the Government Data Collection and Dissemination Practices Act (§ 2.2-3800 et seq.), the Virginia Unemployment Compensation Act (§ 60.2-100 et seq.), and applicable federal law, the Council, acting solely or in partnership with the Virginia Department of Education or the Virginia Employment Commission, may contract with private entities to create de-identified student records in which all personally identifiable information has been removed for the purpose of assessing the performance of institutions and specific programs relative to the workforce needs of the Commonwealth.

10. In cooperation with public institutions of higher education, develop guidelines for the assessment of student achievement. Each such institution shall use an approved program that complies with the guidelines of the Council and is consistent with the institution's mission and educational objectives in the development of such assessment. The Council shall report each institution's assessment of student achievement in the revisions to the Commonwealth's statewide strategic plan for higher education.

11. In cooperation with the appropriate state financial and accounting officials, develop and establish uniform standards and systems of accounting, recordkeeping, and statistical reporting for public institutions of higher education.

12. Review biennially and approve or disapprove all changes in the inventory of educational and general space that any public institution of higher education proposes and report such approvals and disapprovals to the Governor and the General Assembly. No such change shall become effective until 30 days after the adjournment of the session of the General Assembly next following the filing of such report.

13. Visit and study the operations of each public institution of higher education at such times as the Council deems appropriate and conduct such other studies in the field of higher education as the Council deems appropriate or as may be requested by the Governor or the General Assembly.

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

15. Adopt such policies and regulations as the Council deems necessary to implement its duties established by state law. Each public institution of higher education shall comply with such policies and regulations.

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

17. Require each institution of higher education formed, chartered, or established in the Commonwealth after July 1, 1980, to ensure the preservation of student transcripts in the event of institutional closure or revocation of approval to operate in the Commonwealth. An institution may ensure the preservation of student transcripts by binding agreement with another institution of higher education with which it is not corporately connected or in such other way as the Council may authorize by regulation. In the event that an institution closes or has its approval to operate in the Commonwealth revoked, the Council, through its director, may take such action as is necessary to secure and preserve the student transcripts until such time as an appropriate institution accepts all or some of the transcripts. Nothing in this subdivision shall be deemed to interfere with the right of a student to his own transcripts or authorize disclosure of student records except as may otherwise be authorized by law.

18. Require the development and submission of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements between associate-degree-granting and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education.

19. Provide periodic updates of base adequacy funding guidelines adopted by the Joint Subcommittee

Studying Higher Education Funding Policies for each public institution of higher education.

20. ~~In consultation with each public institution of higher education, develop~~ *Develop, pursuant to the provisions of § 23.1-907, guidelines for articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements, including guidelines related to* a one-year ~~uniform certificate of general studies program~~ *Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and a one-semester Passport Program* to be offered at each comprehensive community college~~. Such program shall ensure that a comprehensive community college student who completes the one-year certificate program is eligible to transfer all credits earned in academic subject coursework to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education upon acceptance to such baccalaureate institution~~. *The guidelines developed pursuant to this subdivision shall be developed in consultation with all public institutions of higher education in the Commonwealth, the Department of Education, and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents and shall ensure standardization, quality, and transparency in the implementation of the programs and agreements. At the discretion of the Council, private institutions of higher education eligible for tuition assistance grants may also be consulted.*

21. Cooperate with the Board of Education in matters of interest to both public elementary and secondary schools and public institutions of higher education, particularly in connection with coordination of the college admission requirements, coordination of teacher training programs with the public school programs, and the Board of Education's Six-Year Educational Technology Plan for Virginia. The Council shall encourage public institutions of higher education to design programs that include the skills necessary for the successful implementation of such Plan.

22. Advise and provide technical assistance to the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Committee in the implementation and administration of the Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship Program pursuant to Chapter 34.1 (§ 30-231.01 et seq.) of Title 30.

23. Insofar as possible, seek the cooperation and utilize the facilities of existing state departments, institutions, and agencies in carrying out its duties.

24. Serve as the coordinating council for public institutions of higher education.

25. Serve as the planning and coordinating agency for all postsecondary educational programs for all health professions and occupations and make recommendations, including those relating to financing, for providing adequate and coordinated educational programs to produce an appropriate supply of properly trained personnel. The Council may conduct such studies as it deems appropriate in furtherance of the requirements of this subdivision. All state departments and agencies shall cooperate with the Council in the execution of its responsibilities under this subdivision.

26. Carry out such duties as the Governor may assign to it in response to agency designations requested by the federal government.

27. Insofar as practicable, preserve the individuality, traditions, and sense of responsibility of each public institution of higher education in carrying out its duties.

28. Insofar as practicable, seek the assistance and advice of each public institution of higher education in fulfilling its duties and responsibilities.

29. Develop the Commonwealth Research and Technology Strategic Roadmap pursuant to the provisions of § 23.1-3134 to be submitted to the Virginia Research Investment Committee for approval, and otherwise assist the Virginia Research Investment Committee with the administration of the Virginia Research Investment Fund consistent with the provisions of Article 8 (§ 23.1-3130 et seq.) of Chapter 31.

30. Administer the Virginia Longitudinal Data System as a multiagency partnership for the purposes of developing educational, health, social service, and employment outcome data; improving the efficacy of state services; and aiding decision making.

§ 23.1-905.1. General education course credit; dual enrollment courses.

A. The Council, in consultation with each public institution of higher education, shall establish a policy for granting undergraduate general education course credit to any entering student who has successfully completed a dual enrollment course. The policy shall:

1. Outline the conditions necessary for each public institution of higher education to grant general education course credit for the successful completion of a dual enrollment course;

2. Identify ~~the~~ *whether each dual enrollment course offered in the Commonwealth is transferrable to a public institution of higher education as (i) a Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program course credit, (ii) a* general ~~education~~ *elective* course credit, or *(iii) a course credit meeting* other academic requirements of ~~each~~ *a* public institution of higher education ~~that the student satisfies by successfully completing a dual enrollment course~~, *or if such course is not likely to transfer for course credit. The policy shall also require that each school division and comprehensive community college offering a dual enrollment course clearly specify such transfer information on any website, literature, or other materials describing or advertising the course*; ~~and~~

3. *Require each public institution of higher education offering a dual enrollment course to identify*

the equivalent non-dual enrollment course;

4. Ensure~~, to the extent possible,~~ that the grant of general education course credit is consistent across each public institution of higher education and each such dual enrollment course*; and*

5. Require that the following information be made available on the online portal maintained by the System pursuant to subsection C of § 23.1-908: (i) a description of each dual enrollment course offered in the Commonwealth; (ii) the specific academic, career, or technical programs in the System that will accept the course credit and which specific comprehensive community colleges offer such programs; and (iii) if available, the pathway maps in which the dual enrollment course is included.

B. The Council and each public institution of higher education shall make the policy available to the public on their websites. *The Council shall also forward the policy to the System for inclusion in the online portal maintained by the System pursuant to § 23.1-908.*

C. The Council shall annually report to the House Committee on Education and the Senate Committee on Education and Health on the implementation of the course credit policy by each public institution of higher education.

§ 23.1-907. Articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements; admission of certain comprehensive community college graduates.

A. The board of visitors of each baccalaureate public institution of higher education shall develop, consistent with Council guidelines and the institution's six-year plan as set forth in § 23.1-306, articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements with each associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education.

B. The ~~Council and each public institution of higher education~~ *System, in cooperation with the Council and each public institution of higher education, and consistent with the guidelines developed pursuant to subdivision 20 of § 23.1-203,* shall ~~develop~~ *establish* a ~~passport credit program, including any necessary guidelines for such program. In developing the program, the Council and each public institution of higher education shall establish competencies and standards for each passport credit course. Any course that does not meet or exceed the standards developed under the program shall not be deemed a passport credit course. Such passport credit program shall require that it is the responsibility of the course provider to ensure that a passport credit course meets the standards of the program~~ *one-semester Passport Program and a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program. The Passport Program shall consist of 15 course credit hours and shall be a component of the 30-credit-hour Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program*. Each ~~passport credit~~ *Uniform Certificate and Passport Program* course *shall be transferrable and* shall satisfy a lower division general education requirement at any public institution of higher education. *The Uniform Certificate and Passport Program shall be available at each comprehensive community college and through the Online Virginia Network.*

C. ~~The Council and each public institution of higher education shall develop a one-year uniform certificate of general studies program as set forth in subdivision 20 of § 23.1-203. All credits earned in academic subject coursework by students attending an associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education who complete the one-year uniform certificate of general studies program are transferrable to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education in accordance with Council guidelines.~~ *The Council shall establish procedures under which a baccalaureate public institution of higher education may seek a waiver from the Council from accepting the transfer of a Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program course to satisfy the requirements for the completion of a specific pathway or degree. A waiver shall not be granted allowing a baccalaureate public institution to (i) generally reject the transfer of all coursework that is a part of the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program or (ii) generally reject the transfer of a course from the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program or Passport Program for all pathway maps and degrees. An application for a waiver shall identify with particularity the course for which the institution is seeking a waiver and the particular pathway or degree to which the waiver would apply. The application shall provide justification for the waiver and shall designate alternative courses offered through the System that may be completed by a student in order to complete a transferrable, 30-credit-hour Uniform Certificate or 15- credit-hour Passport. The Council shall adopt guidelines regarding the criteria to be used to review and issue decisions regarding waiver requests. Such waiver requests shall only be granted if the baccalaureate public institution of higher education provides evidence that the specified pathway or degree requires a specialized, lower division course not available through the System. Once approved, notice of a waiver granted by the Council shall be included in the online portal established pursuant to § 23.1-908.*

D. 1. The Council shall develop guidelines for associate-degree-granting and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education to use in mapping pathways for the completion of credits in particular programs of study, including the courses recommended to be taken in a dual enrollment, community college, and four-year public institution setting in order to pursue a specific degree or career. Such guidelines shall define the elements of a pathway map and identify the pathway maps to be developed.

Initial guidelines adopted for mapping such pathways shall establish a multiyear schedule for the development and implementation of pathway maps for all fields of study.

2. Each baccalaureate public institution of higher education, in cooperation and consultation with the System, shall develop pathway maps consistent with the guidelines established pursuant to subdivision 1. Such pathways maps shall clearly set forth the classes that a student at a comprehensive community college is encouraged to complete prior to transferring to the baccalaureate institution. The goal of the career education pathway maps shall be to assist students in achieving optimal efficiencies in the time and cost of completing a degree program. Such program map shall also clearly state which, if any, courses the baccalaureate institution has received a waiver from transfer in completing a specific pathway or degree.

E. The Council shall prepare ~~an~~ *a comprehensive* annual report on the ~~pertinent aspects of the pipeline~~*effectiveness* of ~~students~~ transferring from comprehensive community colleges to baccalaureate public institutions of higher education, *including a review of the effectiveness of the use of pathway maps in achieving efficiencies and cost savings in the completion of a degree program. The report shall include the following elements: completion rates, average time to degree, credit accumulation, post-transfer student academic performance, and comparative efficiency. The Council shall adopt guidelines for data submission from public institutions of higher education necessary for such report, and all institutions shall report such data in accordance with the guidelines. The report shall be made publicly available on the Council website and on the online portal maintained pursuant to § 23.1-908.*

~~E. The Council, consistent with its responsibility to facilitate the development of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements set forth in §§ 23.1-203 and 23.1-908, shall develop guidelines for such agreements.~~

F. Each comprehensive community college shall develop agreements for postsecondary ~~degree~~ attainment with the public high schools in the school divisions that such comprehensive community college serves specifying the options for students to complete an associate degree ~~or a one-year Uniform Certificate of General Studies~~, *the Passport Program, or the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program* concurrent with a high school diploma. Such agreements shall specify the credit available for dual enrollment courses and Advanced Placement courses with qualifying exam scores of three or higher.

G. The provisions of this section shall not apply any public institution of higher education established pursuant to Chapter 25 (§ 23.1-500 et seq.).

§ 23.1-908. State Transfer Tool.

A. The Council shall develop, in cooperation with *the System and* each public institution of higher education, a State Transfer Tool that designates each general education course, *in addition to the courses that comprise the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and the Passport Program,* that is offered in an associate degree program at an associate-degree-granting public institution of higher education and transferable for course credit to a baccalaureate public institution of higher education. In developing the State Transfer Tool, the Council shall also seek the participation of private institutions of higher education.

B. The Council shall develop guidelines to govern the development and implementation of articulation, dual admissions, and guaranteed admissions agreements between associate-degree-granting public institutions of higher education and baccalaureate public institutions of higher education. Dual admissions agreements shall set forth (i) the obligations of each student accepted to such a program, including grade point average requirements, acceptable associate degree majors, and completion timetables, and (ii) the extent to which each student accepted to such a program may access the privileges of enrollment at both institutions while he is enrolled at either institution. Such agreements are subject to the admissions requirements of the baccalaureate public institutions of higher education.

C. ~~The Council shall develop and make available to the public information identifying all passport credit courses and other general education courses offered at associate-degree-granting public institutions of higher education and designating those that are transferable for course credit at baccalaureate public institutions of higher education and baccalaureate private institutions of higher education.~~ *Each baccalaureate public institution of higher education shall update its transfer agreements immediately following any program modifications and shall send a copy of its updated agreement and any other transfer-related documents and resources to the System. The Council shall also send to the System a copy of any transfer-related guidelines and resources that it possesses. The System shall maintain an online portal that allows access to all such agreements, documents, and resources. The online portal shall also include (i) documents and resources related to course equivalency, (ii) pathway maps established pursuant to subsection D of § 23.1-907, (iii) the transfer tool established pursuant to subsection A, (iv) information regarding dual enrollment courses as described in § 23.1-905.1, and (v) any other information required to be included by law or deemed relevant by the System. The online portal shall be available to the public on the websites of the Council, the System, each public institution*

of higher education, and each school division offering a dual enrollment course.

§ 23.1-2904. State Board; duties.

In addition to the duties of governing boards of public institutions of higher education set forth in Chapter 13 (§ 23.1-1300 et seq.), the State Board shall:

1. Be the state agency with primary responsibility for coordinating workforce training at the postsecondary through the associate degree level, exclusive of the career and technical education programs provided through and administered by the public school system. This responsibility shall not preclude other agencies from also providing such services as appropriate, but these activities shall be coordinated with the comprehensive community colleges;

2. Report on actions that comprehensive community colleges have taken to meet the requirements of § 23.1-2906 in its annual report to the General Assembly on workforce development activities required by the general appropriation act;

3. Prepare and administer a plan providing standards and policies for the establishment, development, and administration of comprehensive community colleges under its authority. It shall determine the need for comprehensive community colleges and develop a statewide plan for their location and a time schedule for their establishment. In the development of such plan, a principal objective is to provide and maintain a system of comprehensive community colleges, as that term is defined in § 23.1-100 to make appropriate educational opportunities and programs available throughout the Commonwealth. In providing these offerings, the State Board shall recognize the need for excellence in all curricula and shall ~~endeavor to~~ establish and maintain standards appropriate to the various purposes the respective programs are designed to serve;

4. Establish policies providing for the creation of a local community college board for each comprehensive community college established under this chapter and the procedures and regulations under which such local boards shall operate. These boards shall assist in ascertaining educational needs and enlisting community involvement and support and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the State Board;

5. Adhere to the policies of the Council for the coordination of higher education as required by law; and

6. Develop a mental health referral policy directing comprehensive community colleges to designate at least one individual at each college to serve as a point of contact with an emergency services system clinician at a local community services board, or another qualified mental health services provider, for the purposes of facilitating screening and referral of students who may have emergency or urgent mental health needs and of assisting the college in carrying out the duties specified by §§ 23.1-802 and 23.1-805. Each comprehensive community college may establish relationships with community services boards or other mental health providers for referral and treatment of persons with less serious mental health needs.

7. Develop and implement, in coordination with the Virginia Department of Education and the Virginia Association of School Superintendents, a plan to maintain the same standards regarding quality and consistency for dual enrollment courses offered at local school divisions pursuant to § 23.1-2906.1 as are required for all courses taught in the System. Such standards shall also subject dual enrollment courses to the same level of evaluation and review as all other courses.

8. Prepare and administer a plan to standardize the courses offered, and the quality and content of such courses, offered across all comprehensive community colleges, as well as to standardize the application and registration process at all comprehensive community colleges. Such plan shall allow for a comprehensive community college to provide additional courses, beyond the standard class content offered across the System, that meet specific regional interests and needs. Regional courses shall be subject to the standards of quality applied to all courses offered in the System.

9. Develop and implement accountability measures to periodically, but in no case less than every three years, review the performance of each comprehensive community college to ensure that all standards established by the Board are being met, with a goal of ensuring a consistent quality of education and opportunity across the System. If it is found that such standards are not being met at a particular institution, the Board shall develop a plan for corrective action specific to the issues presented at that institution.

§ 23.1-3136. Board of Trustees.

A. The Authority shall be governed by a Board of Trustees (the Board) that has a total membership of ~~15~~ *17* members that shall consist of four members of the House of Delegates to be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Delegates in accordance with the principles of proportional representation contained in the Rules of the House of Delegates; three members of the Senate to be appointed by the Senate Committee on Rules; three nonlegislative citizen members to be appointed by the Governor; one nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the board of visitors of George Mason University; one nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the board of visitors of Old Dominion University; *one*

nonlegislative citizen member to be appointed by the State Board; and ~~three~~ *four* members who shall serve ex officio with voting privileges, consisting of the President of George Mason University or his designee, the President of Old Dominion University or his designee, *the Chancellor of the Virginia Community College System or his designee,* and the Director of the Council. Nonlegislative citizen members of the Authority shall be citizens of the Commonwealth.

B. Legislative and ex officio members of the Board shall serve terms coincident with their terms of office.

C. Appointments to fill vacancies, other than by expiration of a term, shall be for the unexpired terms. Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as the original appointments. All members may be reappointed.

D. After the initial staggering of terms, nonlegislative citizen members shall be appointed for a term of four years.

E. No House member shall serve more than four consecutive two-year terms, no Senate member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms, and no nonlegislative citizen member shall serve more than two consecutive four-year terms. The remainder of any term to which a member is appointed to fill a vacancy shall not constitute a term in determining the member's eligibility for reappointment.

F. The Board shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its membership. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. The meetings of the Board shall be held at the call of the chairman or whenever the majority of the members so request.

G. Legislative members of the Board shall receive such compensation as provided in § 30-19.12, and nonlegislative citizen members shall receive such compensation for the performance of their duties as provided in § 2.2-2813. All members shall be reimbursed for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties as provided in §§ 2.2-2813 and 2.2-2825. Funding for the costs of compensation and expenses of the members shall be provided by the Authority.

H. George Mason University ~~and~~, Old Dominion University*, and the System* shall provide staff support to the Authority and the Board. All agencies of the Commonwealth shall provide assistance to the Board, upon request.

§ 23.1-3137. Duties of the Authority.

The Authority shall:

1. Expand access to affordable higher education in the Commonwealth by establishing the Online Virginia Network (the Network) for the purpose of coordinating the online delivery of courses that facilitate the completion of degrees at George Mason University ~~and~~, Old Dominion University*, and comprehensive community colleges*;

2. Encourage each public institution of higher education and each consortium of public institutions of higher education that offers online courses, online degree programs, or online credential programs to offer any such course, degree program, or credential program through the Network;

3. Oversee a process of approval for public institutions of higher education and consortia of such institutions to participate in the Network, with such funds as are appropriated for such purpose and made available to it;

4. Serve as a resource for residents of the Commonwealth and disseminate information regarding the opportunities for online learning offered by institutions and consortia that participate in the Network;

5. Coordinate the maintenance of an online portal through which potential students may examine and enroll seamlessly in Network offerings;

6. Collaborate with institutions and consortia that participate in the Network to ensure that the needs of enrolled students are met before, during, and after enrollment through online student support systems;

7. To the extent practicable, ensure that courses and degree programs offered through the Network (i) are accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education or authorized by the Council, as applicable; (ii) expand access to underserved populations based on income, race, geography, and age; (iii) are responsive to the employment demands of the Commonwealth; (iv) employ learning and delivery technologies, which may include competency-based and experiential learning, in an efficient and cost-effective manner to promote flexibility for each student to pursue online courses and programs at his own pace and in his own location throughout the year; (v) minimize student expenses and reduce time-to-degree or time-to-credential; and (vi) are offered in collaboration with existing public and private providers of online courses;

8. Promote the refinement and implementation of articulation agreements to ensure that credits earned through the Network are transferable to each other public institution of higher education and contribute to on-time degree completion at each such institution;

9. Assist in developing processes to help institutions and consortia that participate in the Network to expand their online offerings;

10. *Ensure that the Passport Program and the Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program, established pursuant to § 23.1-907, be made available through the Network;*

11. Develop specific goals for meeting the demand in the Commonwealth for affordable and accessible higher education through online learning;

~~11.~~ *12*. Review and report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the cost structure of funds allocated to the establishment, maintenance, and expansion of the Network. In addition, the Authority shall examine ways to reduce the cost of online education and develop a budget that incorporates estimated expected tuition revenue from online students and its use in supporting the Network and assumes that any financial aid will come from existing financial aid programs; and

~~12.~~ *13*. Accept, administer, and account for any state, federal, or private moneys that it may receive. Any moneys, including interest thereon, that have not been expended by the Authority by the end of each fiscal year shall not revert to the general fund but shall remain in the accounts of the Authority.

2. That the State Board for Community Colleges shall develop an initial plan for the standardization of courses offered at all comprehensive community colleges, including a timeline for completion of the standardization and the identification of any resources or funding needed to implement the standardization, to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and the Chairmen of the House Committee on Education, the House Committee on Appropriations, the Senate Committee on Education and Health, and the Senate Committee on Finance no later than September 1, 2018.

3. That Richard Bland College shall offer a Uniform Certificate of General Studies Program and Passport Program in accordance with the guidelines developed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia pursuant to subdivision 20 of § 23.1-203 of the Code of Virginia as amended by this act. Baccalaureate public institutions of higher education shall be required to accept the transfer of such credits offered by Richard Bland College in the same manner as if such courses were offered at a comprehensive community college, as required by this act.