

REPORT OF THE STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION

ON

THE SENIOR CITIZENS HIGHER EDUCATION ACT

TO

THE GOVERNOR

AND

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA



HOUSE DOCUMENT NO. 14

**COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
RICHMOND
1983**

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 142: SENIOR CITIZEN
HIGHER EDUCATION ACT STUDY

The Senior Citizen Higher Education Act was passed by the General Assembly in 1974 to permit persons over sixty years of age to attend state-supported institutions of higher education with no tuition charge. This privilege was available to anyone whose taxable income the year before they enrolled in an institution of higher education was \$5,000 or less.

The Act states that senior citizens who claim this tuition waiver must meet the regular admissions criteria of the institution and must pay any course or laboratory fee. The Act also requires that persons who want to enroll in courses and use this tuition waiver may do so only after the institution has accommodated all students who pay the regular tuition. Finally, the Act provides that none of the persons who enroll under this Act can be counted by an institution in its full-time equivalent enrollment.

In 1982 the General Assembly amended the Act and raised the income threshold to \$7,500. The General Assembly also requested that the State Council of Higher Education study the fiscal impact of the Senior Citizen Higher Education Act on the colleges and universities.

The staff of the Council of Higher Education thanks the institutions for providing the information necessary to conduct this study. The staff also thanks Dr. Jean Romaniuk of the Virginia Center on Aging at Virginia Commonwealth University for her assistance in the preparation of this study.

The Council has collected data from the institutions on enrollments of senior citizens under this Act for the Fall terms of 1978, 1979 and 1981. The total financial impact of Fall 1978 enrollments cannot be determined because the Virginia Community College System was unable to identify the hours of credit instruction taken by senior citizens for that year.

If enrollments under the Senior Citizen Higher Education Act were counted in an institutions' full-time equivalent enrollment, the Fall, 1979 enrollment would have required slightly over \$200,000 in General Fund support (See Table 1). The Fall, 1981 enrollments under this Act would have required approximately \$238,000 in General Fund Support (See Table 2).

About one in three senior citizens who enroll in Virginia's publicly supported institutions of higher education does so under the provisions of the Senior Citizen Higher Education Act. At the University of Virginia, the ratio of enrollments under this Act to senior citizens enrolled was the lowest of the institutions and varied between five percent and 12% for the period surveyed. The corresponding ratio at Old Dominion University was one of the highest, varying between 62% and 68%. Virginia Commonwealth University also enrolled a significant proportion of its students over 60 under this Act.

At all public institutions the number of senior citizens enrolling has increased slightly between 1978 and 1981, but the number of senior citizens enrolling under the Act has declined for the same period. The number of senior citizens enrolled at the four-year institutions and at Richard Bland College increased eight percent in Fall, 1981, over the previous year, but the number enrolling under the Act declined slightly. In the Virginia Community College System, both the number enrolling and those doing so under this Act was lower in Fall, 1981, than in Fall, 1978 (See Figure 3).

The only substantial increase in enrollments under this Act between 1978 and 1981 occurred at Old Dominion University. Although the number of senior citizens enrolled at ODU under this Act declined slightly between 1979 and 1981, the number of credit hours those persons took increased significantly. If these hours are calculated as full-time equivalent enrollments, the FTE under this Act in Fall, 1981 at ODU was 42.93. This represents an increase of 218% over the Fall, 1979, figure of 19.87 FTE (See Table 4).

This dramatic increase at Old Dominion University may be linked to enrollment by senior citizens in topics courses. These courses carry from one to four credit hours each.

In Fall, 1981, only two institutions had significant enrollment under the provisions of the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act. If these enrollments had been included in the institutions' FTE enrollment, Old Dominion University would have received additional General Fund support of \$93,722 and Virginia Commonwealth University would have received \$53,299. Although these amounts are not trivial, they represent relatively minor fiscal impacts on the two institutions. If persons enrolled under this Act were included in all institutions' enrollment for budgetary purposes, the overall financial impact would be less than a quarter of a million dollars.

The Council of Higher Education has previously recommended that persons enrolled under this Act be counted as part of an institutions' enrollment for funding purposes. Bills submitted in recent years to amend the Act, however, have not been approved by the General Assembly.

The Council thinks that the cost of space as available in courses under the terms of the Act is not an undue burden upon any institution. At the same time, the mechanics of separating enrollments under the Act from other enrollments add to the complexity of record keeping and reporting. This is, however, a relatively minor issue among those with which higher education is dealing as a result of budget and staffing reductions.

RECOMMENDATION:

The Council of Higher Education reiterates its support for counting persons enrolled under the Senior Citizens Higher Education Act in the full-time equivalent enrollment of the publicly supported institutions of higher education.

Table 1

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA
Senior Citizens Higher Education Act -- Fiscal Impact Study

	Fall 1979 Credit Hours	Fall 1979 Credit FTE	1981-82 Estimated General Fund
Doctoral-Granting Institutions			
George Mason University	7	0.52	1,061
Old Dominion University	281	19.87	39,661
University of Virginia	36	2.65	8,599
Virginia Commonwealth University	148	9.97	38,255
Virginia Polytechnic Institute	0	0	0
William and Mary	0	0	0
Total -- Doctoral	472	33.01	87,576
Comprehensive Institutions			
Christopher Newport College	128	8.53	13,998
Clinch Valley College	0	0	0
James Madison University	9	0.60	1,165
Longwood College	1	0.07	133
Mary Washington College	0	0	0
Norfolk State University	23	1.53	2,881
Radford University	24	1.27	2,322
Virginia Military Institute	1	0.07	210
Virginia State University	9	0.60	1,216
Total -- Comprehensive	195	13.05	21,925
Total -- Four-Year	667	46.06	109,501
Community Colleges			
Blue Ridge	9	0.60	1,114
Central Virginia	24	1.60	2,698
Dabney S. Lancaster	4	0.27	612
Danville	12	0.80	1,401
Eastern Shore	3	0.20	817
Germanna	0	0	0
J. Sargeant Reynolds	86	5.73	9,300
John Tyler	22	1.47	2,493
Lord Fairfax	16	1.07	2,299
Mountain Empire	13	0.87	1,731
New River	27	1.80	3,481
Northern Virginia	298	19.87	31,613
Patrick Henry	6	0.40	846
Paul D. Camp	4	0.27	480
Piedmont Virginia	32	2.13	3,570
Rappahannock	10	0.67	1,575
Southside Virginia	32	2.13	4,279
Southwest Virginia	3	0.20	391
Thomas Nelson	24	1.60	2,518
Tidewater	122	8.13	10,919
Virginia Highlands	5	0.33	687
Virginia Western	67	4.47	7,586
Wytheville	8	0.53	942
Total -- Community Colleges	827	55.14	92,525
Richard Bland College	9	0.60	1,193
Total -- Two-Year	836	55.74	93,718
 Total-- All Institutions	 1,503	 101.80	 \$203,219

Table 2

State Council of Higher Education
Fiscal Impact Study
Senior Citizens Higher Education Act

Institution	Fall 1981 Credit Hours	Fall 1981 Credit FTE	1983-84 Estimated General Funds
DOCTORAL GRANTING INSTITUTIONS			
George Mason University	0	0	0
Old Dominion University	596	42.93	93,722
University of Virginia	6	.50	1,958
Virginia Commonwealth University	182	12.23	53,299
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University	0	0	0
The College of William and Mary	0	0	0
TOTAL -- DOCTORAL	784	55.66	148,979
COMPREHENSIVE INSTITUTIONS			
Christopher Newport College	59	3.93	7,638
Clinch Valley College	21	1.40	3,762
James Madison University	39	2.78	5,910
Longwood College	1	.07	150
Mary Washington College	0	0	0
Norfolk State University	17	1.13	2,357
Radford University	0	0	0
Virginia Military Institute	0	0	0
Virginia State University	11	.73	1,730
TOTAL -- COMPREHENSIVE	148	10.04	21,547
TOTAL -- ALL FOUR-YEAR	932	65.70	170,526
COMMUNITY COLLEGES			
Blue Ridge	3	.20	375
Central Virginia	18	1.20	2,251
Dabney S. Lancaster	14	.93	1,750
Danville	6	.40	750
Eastern Shore	0	0	0
Germanna	6	.40	750
J. Sargeant Reynolds	64	4.27	8,005
John Tyler	34	2.27	4,253
Lord Fairfax	12	.80	1,501
Mountain Empire	0	0	0
New River	11	.73	1,375
Northern Virginia	130	8.67	16,259
Patrick Henry	1	.07	126
Paul D. Camp	0	0	0
Piedmont Virginia	26	1.73	3,251
Rappahannock	25	1.67	3,127
Southside Virginia	11	.73	1,375
Southwest Virginia	0	0	0
Thomas Nelson	0	0	0
Tidewater	63	4.20	7,879
Virginia Highlands	8	.53	1,000
Virginia Western	109	7.27	13,633
Wytheville	0	0	0
TOTAL -- COMMUNITY COLLEGES	541	36.07	67,660
Richard Bland College	0	0	0
TOTAL -- ALL TWO-YEAR	541	36.07	67,660
TOTAL -- ALL INSTITUTIONS	1,473	101.77	\$238,186

Table 3
Senior Citizens Higher Education
Surveys

	Fall, 1978 Registrants		Fall, 1979 Registrants		Fall, 1981 Registrants	
	over 60	under SCHEA	over 60	under SCHEA	over 60	under SCHEA
CNC	52	27	53	33	33	28
CVC	--	--	--	--	--	--
GMU	40	14	62	9	57	17
JMU	39	3	37	5	29	16
LC	2	--	3	2	1	1
MWC	5	2	10	2	5	2
ODU	80	54	93	58	85	56
NSU	23	15	51	13	271	7
RU	13	6	9	5	9	1
RBC	14	8	14	11	5	5
U VA	278	22	394	19	163	20
VCU	118	63	112	98	212	83
VMI	3	1	5	1	2	0
VSU	1	1	2	2	16	3
VPI	12	1	12	0	26	0
WMC	6	1	7	0	17	13
Total-4 yr & RBC	686	218	864	258	937	253
VCCS	1412	542	1244	509	1287	404
TOTAL	2098	760	2108	767	2224	657

Table 4

	Fall, 1978			Fall, 1979			Fall, 1981		
	HC total	Under SCHEA	FTE	HC total	Under SCHEA	FTE	HC total	Under SCHEA	FTE
ODU	80	54	13.50	93	58	19.87	85	56	42.93
VCU	118	63	6.31	112	98	9.97	212	83	12.23
Other 4-Yr.	474	93	13.80	645	91	16.22	635	109	10.54
RBC	14	8	0	14	11	0.60	5	5	0
VCCS	1412	542	N/A	1244	509	55.14	1287	404	36.07
TOTAL	2098	760	N/A	2108	767	101.80	2224	657	101.77