



# COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Dietra Y. Trent, Ph.D.  
Secretary of Education

November 14, 2017

Virginia General Assembly  
1000 Bank Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Members of the General Assembly:

In 2015, the General Assembly amended § 2.2-208 of the Code of Virginia and requested that the Secretary of Education (the Secretary) biennially report to the General Assembly on the coordination efforts among such agencies for which he is responsible. The following is a summary of the coordination efforts I have undertaken.

Throughout my time as Secretary, I have sought to actively coordinate efforts among those agencies for which I am responsible. Through my regular meetings with the leadership of key agencies—the Department of Education, the State Council of Higher Education, and the Virginia Community College System—I work to ensure that individuals and assets are leveraged across the K-12 and higher education agencies to align policies, solve problems, and drive efficiencies.

Additionally, to facilitate collaboration I assigned all the higher education related agencies, centers, and extensions to one deputy and the Department of Education and all the museums and cultural institutions to another deputy. This organization has helped streamline requests and questions from the agencies, but also fostered collaboration and coordination among similar and related agencies from a single point of contact in my office.

The coordination of higher education efforts and initiatives is performed by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, which was created expressly for this purpose. Under my direction, SCHEV fulfills its role through a multitude of activities aimed at facilitating communication and collaboration not only among all institutions of higher education, but also between the PreK-12 and higher education systems. Several standing committees exist that bring together leaders from all higher education institutions, including presidents and chief academic officers, to discuss the implementation and impact of state policy as well as common issues. A representative from my office routinely attends these meetings to ensure all relevant issues and information are conveyed to the Secretary. Additionally, SCHEV convenes stakeholders around specific issues. For example, over the last year they facilitated a workgroup comprised of representatives from school districts, community colleges, four-year institutions, and the Deputy

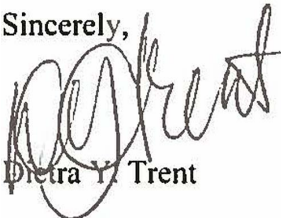
Secretary of Education to identify ways to increase the transfer of dual-enrollment and community college credits.

A high priority of the secretariat is to ensure students have smooth and efficient pathways through and between public education schools, colleges, and universities. This requires coordination among agencies and between specific member institutions. For example, over the last few years my office has helped elevate and enhance the cyber security workforce pipeline, from K-12 to the university level. This has included an effort to articulate the cybersecurity curriculum of two community colleges into four-year degrees at George Mason and Old Dominion universities.

Specific areas of concern have also brought together multiple agencies within the secretariat around a common issue, such as the teacher shortage crisis. VDOE, SCHEV, VCCS, as well as their boards, local school divisions, and individual universities, and colleges each play unique roles in contributing to solutions to this foundational challenge to the Commonwealth's long-term economic viability. Through the creation of the Advisory Council on Teacher Shortages, the Governor and I have sought to create a collaborative environment through which each agency's unique assets are leveraged towards meaningful solutions.

Finally, it should be noted that effective leadership in this role also requires collaboration across secretariats. In particular, the services and support students need to succeed in the classroom necessarily require attention to their physical and mental health, the well-being of their families, and the safety of their communities. Therefore, I have also played an active role co-chairing the Governor's Children's Cabinet, which has sought to align policies and programs serving children across agencies and secretariats.

As you can see, I have taken numerous steps to ensure coordination among education agencies and with other secretariats. Because of the limited authority over the operation and decisions of public schools and higher education institutions, this type of coordination is necessary to continue providing students, at every age and in every setting, a truly high quality public education experience.

Sincerely,  
  
Dietra Y. Trent