

## **Status Report per Item 253 of the Special Session I, 2018 Appropriation Act Online Virginia Network**

Old Dominion University and George Mason University have partnered on an online degree completion initiative called Online Virginia Network (OVN). The initiative will attract many of the estimated 1.1 million Virginians who have earned credit at a Virginia institution but who have not yet earned a four-year degree. The Commonwealth is also home to the second-largest population of active-duty military in the United States and, while 92% of enlisted personnel have earned a high school diploma or some college credit, only 6% have earned an undergraduate degree. Completing their degrees through online course offerings is a viable and attractive solution for these non-traditional and military affiliated students seeking flexible schedules as they balance school, work, and family responsibilities.

As public institutions, it is our obligation to fuel Virginia's economy by preparing a highly skilled, highly qualified workforce in a growing economy. Higher education institutions in Virginia have focused primarily on enhancing enrollment, retention, and graduation rates in the pursuit of this goal. The same emphasis needs to be directed toward identifying those individuals with some college credit, but who have not attained a degree, and providing easier pathways for those who are place bound or working to complete their degree.

In February 2017 the initial version of the OVN website/portal was launched and the first students were enrolled in August of 2017. The OVN Authority, a 17-member board, was established in March 2017. The following statements address requirement of 253 of the Special Session I, 2018 Appropriation Act.

1. Serve adult learners, non-traditional students, and other students seeking access to an online degree program.
  - a. OVN is an innovative approach to increasing the number of undergraduate degrees awarded in Virginia by concentrating on degree completers and providing them a seamless pathway toward their degree and on their schedule. Old Dominion University, George Mason University, and the Virginia Community College System through the OVN initiative, are leaders in this effort. Old Dominion University and George Mason University provide students with 47 online bachelor's degree program options. The recent addition of the Virginia Community College System adds online courses and associate degrees for transition to four-year programs. Individuals who want to complete online classes toward their degree may search an inventory from the partner institutions on the OVN website.
2. Provide degrees that are more cost effective than traditional degree programs and reduce unit costs.
  - a. Additional inventory of online classes through VCCS institutions and capacity to provide prior learning assessment is being developed and select programs offer open access resources for text books.
3. Use tuition revenue to support the initiative.
  - a. The 2016 General Assembly provided \$3 million in funding to establish OVN and initial implementation plans began. The 2018 General Assembly increased allocations by \$1 million to include the VCCS as an OVN partner. The initial partner institutions have contributed \$4.3 million to the program.

4. Potential options to partner with additional institutions
  - a. Partner participation criteria have been established.
    - i. Commitment to serving diverse populations, including non-traditional students such as transfer, adult, and military affiliated
    - ii. Offer flexible online course offerings, outreach services and financial aid support, seamless articulation, and a comprehensive communication strategy
    - iii. Develop 8-week courses
    - iv. Organizational and technical capability
    - v. Assure seamless articulation of programs for degree completion
    - vi. Enter a consortium agreement for financial aid
    - vii. Develop course transfer equivalency matrix with partner institutions
    - viii. Create a standardized approval process for transfer credit
  
5. Existing financial aid programs are being used.

Development to date and plans going forward have established the OVN as poised to ensure that high demand degrees are offered to meet the ever changing needs of Virginia's workforce. Plans for the next three years of development (fiscal years 2019 – 2022) include:

- Enhance the OVN services/portal/website to engage potential students
- Scale high demand programs that contribute to the workforce and economy
- Increase outreach and find innovative ways to identify and reach out to this population
- Provide career tools to link the value of bachelor's degrees, internships and job placement
- Establish and/or grow capacity of call centers, tools and services
- Expand staffing and technology to achieve seamless services
- Incorporate initial VCCS institutions into OVN course and program offerings