

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 attracts 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 19-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. George Mason University, James Madison University, Old Dominion University, and the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) through the OVN initiative, are leaders in this effort. George Mason University, James Madison and Old Dominion University provide students with 59 online bachelor's degree program options and the Virginia Community College System adds online courses and 55 associate degrees for transition to four-year programs. Individuals who want to complete online classes toward their degree may search the inventory from 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 textbooks.
3. Use tuition revenue to support the initiative.
 - a. The 2016 General Assembly provided \$2 million in funding to establish OVN and initial planning and implementation with George Mason University and Old Dominion University. The 2018 General Assembly increased allocations by \$1 million to include the VCCS as an OVN partner. The 2019 General Assembly increased allocations by \$1 million to include the

James Madison University as an OVN partner. The initial partner institutions have each contributed \$1.5 million per year to the program.

4. Potential options to partner with additional institutions
 - a. Expansion represents partners in many regions throughout Virginia including George Mason University, James Madison University, Old Dominion University and 7 VCCS institutions: Blue Ridge Community College, Central Virginia Community College, Northern Virginia Community College, Reynolds Community College, John Tyler Community College (Brightpoint Community College), Tidewater Community College, and Thomas Nelson Community College
 - b. Partner participation criteria have been established.
 - i. Offer online courses, outreach services and financial aid support, seamless articulation, and a comprehensive communication strategy
 - ii. Develop flexible 8-week courses
 - iii. Organizational and technical capability
 - iv. Assure seamless articulation of programs for degree completion
 - v. Commitment to serving diverse populations, including non-traditional students such as transfer, adult, and military affiliated
 - 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. The addition of \$10 million from American Rescue Plan funds allocated in August 2021 for spending in FY22 and FY23 will accelerate expansion of scope and services of OVN. Plans for the next three years of development (fiscal years 2021 – 2024) 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 innovative ways to identify and reach 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 enrollment services and support
- Expand staffing and technology to achieve seamless services
- Connect degree-completer web-based platforms
- Establish administrative organizational team to include budget and resource management