

Diversity, Opportunity, and Inclusion

2024-25 Annual Report



The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia strives to do excellent work and to be an excellent place to work.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) believes that excellence can be achieved through diversity, opportunity and inclusion (DOI). As the coordinating body for postsecondary education in the Commonwealth of Virginia, we are a small state government department with a large mission.

Our Mission:

To advocate and promote the development of an educationally and economically sound, vigorous, progressive and coordinated system of higher education in Virginia.

Our Values:

SCHEV values honesty, quality, diversity, inclusion, growth-orientation, personal well-being, equity, transparency and accountability.

In all our works, SCHEV is guided by our mission and our moral and professional values to create greater educational opportunities for all, including our own staff team. We are motivated by the ingenuity, quality and thoughtfulness of our thriving agency workforce and know that only greater will come of continued diversity, opportunity and inclusion efforts. See the following bulleted 2024-2025 accomplishments below each Commonwealth of Virginia (COV) DOI Plan Goal.

COV Plan Goal 1 - Access and Success

Recruit and retain a diverse workforce by increasing access to diverse populations for recruiting.

Objective 1: Continue to improve hiring processes and increase access to potential applicants from diverse populations.

- Developed New Hire Process & Checklist for Hiring Managers for consistency and fairness across all searches.
- Encouraged diversity in search panel through personal demographics and professional point of view.
- Encouraged staff to post position announcements beyond VA Jobs, including internally, career networks, minority professional associations and publications.

Objective 2: Continue to retain and promote a diverse workforce.

- Continued to maintain a high employee retention rate with only 3 (1 for retirement) staff separating from the agency, resulting in a 96% retention rate for 2024-25.
- Established a cross-agency work group to assess and improve the SCHEV employee experience. The group is made up of willing staff who represent the diversity of the staff, including age, gender, role, section, years of service, remote and hybrid, managerial responsibilities, etc. As a result, projects and recommendations are thoughtful and creative and promote the effectiveness of a diverse workforce, resulting in high staff retention.

COV Plan Goal 2 - Welcoming and Respectful Culture

Create and sustain a culture that welcomes and embraces diverse opinions, independent thinking and respectful interactions to deliver optimal results for the organization and its customers.

Objective 1: Persist in creating and maintaining a climate that is supportive and respectful and that values and integrates differing perspectives and experiences.

- Established a cross-agency work group to assess and improve the SCHEV employee experience. The group is made up of willing staff who represent the diversity of the staff, including age, gender, role, section, years of service, remote and hybrid, managerial responsibilities, etc. The workgroup gives a representative voice to staff that are not always in positions to be heard.
- Hosted four Bookish Club (staff led) activities to provide an opportunity that encourages an exchange of different perspectives on a common learning experience.
- Added a monthly pulse survey to assess the direction of the agency. Most recent survey (one month before year-end) indicated that

Objective 2: Continue to provide an environment where conflicts, concerns, and complaints are aired and addressed expeditiously.

- Ensured that all classified staff have access to the COV employee grievance procedure and professional support through the DHRM share services client manager
- A staff HR liaison position is established to help serve as an intermediary for sensitive situations, allowing staff the option of speaking with an internal, more familiar colleague or an external DHRM client manager. Roles provide staff with options that support their level of comfort.
- Employed an open-door policy allowing staff to visit and share with leadership as they see fit.
- Provided monthly pulse surveys allowing staff an opportunity to share concerns anonymously.

COV Plan Goal 3 - **State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training**

Maintain a plan and infrastructure that continues to provide individualized skills training and career development for state employees. Agencies report annually on DOI goals and accomplishments.

Objective 1: Continue to amplify opportunities to advance the goals outlined in this framework.

- Tasked the agency HR liaison with tracking and reporting on DOI goals and accomplishments annually.
- Aligned agency values with the goals of the framework to shape the agency culture and guide practices and policy.

Objective 2: Continue to create structures and processes of accountability to increase organizational effectiveness with the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM).

- Partnered with DHRM through a shared services contract and regularly met and communicated with DHRM staff to gain firsthand understanding of expectations and new initiatives/processes.
- Reviewed the terms of and satisfaction with the DHRM Shared Services contract/relationship annually.

Objective 3: Continue to provide training and educational workshops available to all employees.

- Openly encouraged staff to take advantage of available professional development
- Establishing a dashboard to track and recognize staff presentations and participation in regional, state and national associations/conferences
- Nominated staff (annually) to participate in leadership development programs (i.e. Commonwealth Management Institute)
- Four staff are taking advantage of educational assistance through SCHEV to further their education

- Created an agency mentor program, utilizing executive team leaders as mentors to support the development of self-identified staff, not under their supervision
- Hosted executive and managerial retreats to identify staff development needs and discuss paths and training for growth



SCHEV's DOI Plan goals align with Commonwealth's plan and extend the identified values of the agency. 2025-26 goals are owned by staff and addressed through intentional and measured/assessed activities, policies and practices.

COVA Goal 1: Access & Success

- SCHEV Objective: Recruit, hire, support and advance a diverse spectrum of individuals.

COVA Goal 2: Welcoming & Respectful Culture

- SCHEV Objective: Create a welcoming and inclusive environment where we celebrate the value and contributions of each person.

COVA Goal 3: State Agency DOI Infrastructure & Training

- SCHEV Objective: Foster a culture that encourages growth through professional development, career pathways and collaboration.

Through these values and commitments, we create a welcoming work environment that represents the best of who we are as an agency and as individuals.