



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

STATE COUNCIL OF HIGHER EDUCATION FOR VIRGINIA

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To: Whom it May Concern

From: State Council Of Higher Education for Virginia

Date: July 1, 2026

Re: Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion Annual Report

Please find attached the **State Council of Higher Education for Virginia's 2025-2026 Diversity Opportunity & Inclusion Annual Report and 2026-2027 Plan**, in accordance with the [Code of Virginia § 2.2-602 \(B\)](#), as amended, and the [Governor's Executive Order 10 \(2022\)](#).

Feel free to contact Paula Robinson (paularobinson@schev.edu / 804-225-2600) if you have any questions.

Thank you for your interest and support.

Sincerely,



Diversity, Opportunity & Inclusion 2025-2026 Annual Report and 2026-2027 Plan

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 agency 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 2025-2026 accomplishments listed 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 and posted hiring forms to SCHEV's updated intranet platform. Updated the Human Resources tile with information for Hiring Managers.
- Encouraged diversity (personal demographics and professional points of view) on search panels.
- Continued to encourage staff to post position announcements beyond VA Jobs, including internally, career networks, minority professional associations and publications.
- Participated in the Virginia Management Fellows program as a host site to introduce SCHEV to a wider audience and provide a glimpse into the agency, its works and culture, for interested Fellows.

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

- Created at the end of the last fiscal year, the now established across-agency work group designed to assess and improve the SCHEV employee experience is in full and routine operation. The SCHEV Employee Experience Team (SEET) meets biweekly with diverse representation. 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 reflect the diversity of staff interests and perspectives.

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 – SCHEV Employee Experience Team (SEET). The group is made up of willing employees who represent the diversity of the staff, across age, gender, role, units, years of service, remote and hybrid work services, managerial responsibilities, etc. The workgroup gives a representative voice to staff that are not always in positions to be heard. They bring forth ideas, share concerns and provide their opinions on agency operations. They are specifically charged with addressing onboarding, engagement, developing policies and keeping a pulse check on the overall staff culture and climate. New agency activities, engaging different members of the agency staff, serve as an outgrowth from this group's work:
 - Hosted Bookish Club (staff led) activities to provide an opportunity that encourages an exchange of different perspectives on a common learning experience. A separate virtual component was added this year to these now monthly gatherings. Participants also went on their first field trip to a local bookstore. The conversations that are being had and cross-agency relationships that are being built provide a familial environment for staff that is evident to others who have not even participated in the voluntary staff activity.
 - Coordinated (staff led) service projects for staff to participate in, including a college shower for a local high school student (identified through a partnership with a nonprofit student leadership program), park clean up (also on the Governor's list for supporting Virginia state parks), flower vase donations for those in hospice care, canned food drive, coat and clothes drives and an upcoming mobile food service opportunity.
 - Created (staff led) a new affinity group for staff that are actively or interested in continuing their education – Academics Anonymous. The

group hosts “study halls” to share ideas on balancing work and school, provide resources and support for one another and share opportunities for ongoing professional development.

- Started (staff led) “The SCHEVies,” a new staff trivia team. At will, staff participate in identified Trivia Night events throughout the Richmond area. The team is made up of staff with varying personal interests and backgrounds from across the agency. Their diverse thoughts and experiences have led them to be undefeated, thus far.

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

- Continued an anonymous pulse survey to routinely check-in on staff and identify concerns. Results are shared with staff and reviewed by the staff employee experience team and managers. Where feasible, action was taken and shared with staff. Examples of changes resulting directly from staff input include changing the format of staff meetings, revisiting the travel procedures, providing monthly updates highlighting staff unit activities, responsibilities and projects.
- Invited DHRM shared services staff to agency all-staff meetings to help build rapport and relationship with staff. DHRM staff support employee grievances. Bringing DHRM staff on-site closes the distance between staff and the support role DHRM plays. Putting faces to names promotes trust and furthers understanding of the agency culture and roles.
- An agency 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. The newly identified HR liaison brings years of experience working in HR and specifically within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Staff are already benefiting from her knowledge of available resources, opportunities and access to a network of Commonwealth professionals that help to expedite response times and partnership with DHRM shared services.
- Continued an open-door policy allowing staff to visit and share with leadership as they see fit.
- Established a new monthly meeting group for all agency managers. This meeting provides another channel to identify and share concerns as well as a means to

- foster greater consistency across management. It also presents and unified and team approach to agency leadership.
- The executive leadership team continues to meet weekly. Mid-level managers meet every three weeks. And all-staff meetings occur monthly. All of these gatherings provide multiple opportunities to share information, respond to concerns, recognize staff and build a trusted community.
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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 the inclusive excellence 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. The agency values statement, was developed by staff and is included on agency materials and communications.
- The statement, as noted below, identities inclusion, diversity, equity and a growth mindset as ideals that are germane to the SCHEV organizational culture.
SCHEV values honesty, quality, diversity, inclusion, growth-orientation, personal well-being, equity, transparency and accountability.

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

- Continued to partner 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.
- Invited DHRM shared services staff to agency all-staff meetings to help build report and relationship with staff.
- Reviewed the terms of and satisfaction with the DHRM Shared Services contract/relationship (annual).

- Supported an HR Liaison position at SCHEV to serve as a dedicated agency point of contact for DHRM and on-site resource for SCHEV staff. DHRM and the HR liaison are in regular contact.

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

- Established an agency strategy for growth and promotion that encourages staff to participate in professional organizations and to provide presentations and training. SCHEV staff exceeded expectations with over 100 presentations at public events and more than 8 staff holding offices/roles with professional organizations.
- Nominated staff (annually) to participate in leadership development programs (i.e. Commonwealth Management Institute, ACE Women in Higher Education, Minorities in Politics and Leadership Institute) and share professional development opportunities widely
- Offered educational assistance to promote continued learning. Five staff are taking advantage of this benefit and pursuing post-graduate degrees.
- Hosted executive and managerial staff retreats to identify staff development needs and discuss paths and training for growth.

SCHEV's DOI Plan goals and objectives operationalize the agency's values and the interest of the Commonwealth of Virginia. 2025-26 accomplishments are owned by staff and addressed through intentional and measured/assessed activities, policies and practices.

2026-2027 Diversity, Opportunity & Inclusion Plan

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