2020 VIRGINIA EDUCATION SUMMIT
Key Takeaways

Equity in Education: A Conversation on Educator Diversity

Introductory Remarks

- **Senator Mamie Locke**, District 2, Senate of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Dr. Javaune Adams-Gaston**, President, Norfolk State University
- **Dr. Anthony Graham**, Provost, Winston-Salem State University
- **Dr. Andrew Daire**, Dean, School of Education, Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

Key Takeaways

- The value of diversifying Virginia's educator workforce is clear, especially for students of color. Black students who have just one Black teacher by the third grade are 13 percent more likely to attend college, and Black students who have more than one Black teacher by the third grade are 32 percent more likely to attend college.
- For decades, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been a driving force in increasing postsecondary access for students of color and preparing diverse educators. Norfolk State University, the largest historically Black college in Virginia, continues to play a critical role in recent years in diversifying the Commonwealth's educator pipeline, graduating more than 1,100 teachers of color in the past decade.
- Teacher candidates of color obtain licenses at lower rates in Virginia than in peer states. According to the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline, this can be attributed to the Commonwealth's underutuilization of the provisional licensing route.
- One of the most frequently cited barriers for aspiring educators of color are Educator Licensure Exams. Nationally, both Black and Hispanic candidates for certification lag behind their white counterparts in pass rates, effectively barring many of them from a career in teaching. Due to a lack of exposure to test-taking strategies, cultural biases that are embedded in the assessments, as well as the cost of the test itself, educators of color are at a disadvantage when taking educator licensing exams.
- As the Commonwealth's student population becomes increasingly diverse, there is an increasing demand for teachers who are able to deliver culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum and pedagogy. The VCU School of Education is working to accomplish this goal by committing to decolonize curricula, increase the number of teachers of color in high-poverty schools, and generate new pathways to teaching.
- Peer states are taking significant steps in diversifying educator workforces.
  - In North Carolina, Governor Roy Cooper established the Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education (DRIVE) Task Force, comprised of education and community stakeholders from across the state. By January 1, 2021, the Task Force will submit a report to the Office of the Governor analyzing the state's progress on diversifying the educator workforce and providing recommendations and strategies that can be pursued to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of North Carolina's teacher population.
- Changing the narrative around the teaching profession will be critical in attracting and retaining talent. Exposing more students, and earlier, to the teaching profession, increasing teacher compensation, expanding teachers' curricular autonomy, and including more teacher voices in school and district decision-making could have a positive impact on recruiting and retaining more teachers of color.

Policy Considerations

- Develop legislation requiring the introduction of the teaching profession before grade six.
  - States have been pushing for students to be exposed to a variety of career fields, particularly STEM-related fields, as early as elementary school. The Virginia legislature, in concert with school districts, should develop strategies to expose the teaching profession to students in elementary school.
- If developing legislation to create incentives to recruit more teachers of color, think about all factors that would play critical roles in those incentive packages.

- o Factors such as salary, retirement, professional development, and school leadership can weigh heavily into one's decision to teach, particularly in a high-poverty school.
  - o This means the development of incentives must come with efforts to ensure that salaries are adequate, accumulating unfunded liabilities in the Commonwealth's retirement system are addressed, and prospective teachers can easily access quality professional development, before and while in the profession.
- Restructure the licensing process to make it more accessible to low-income candidates and teaching candidates of color.

Key Resources

- **The Long-Run Impacts of Same-Race Teachers** is a paper developed by the National Bureau of Economic Research highlighting the impact having a same-race teacher has on a student's long-term educational outcomes.
- **Developing a Representative and Inclusive Vision for Education - Issue Brief** discusses the landscape of educator diversity in North Carolina, makes the case for why educator diversity matters, shows barriers to recruiting, preparing, and retaining educators of color, and provides steps to improve the pipeline for educators of color.
- **Report from the Task Force on Diversifying Virginia's Educator Pipeline** discusses barriers to recruiting, preparing, and retaining teachers of color, as well as providing recommendations on how to diversify the Commonwealth's educator pipeline.

Early Childhood Systems Unification: Next Steps

Introductory Remarks

- **Pamela Northam**, First Lady, Commonwealth of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Jenna Conway**, Chief School Readiness Officer, Virginia Department of Education
- **Lisa Howard**, President and CEO, E3: Elevate Early Education and The New E3 School

Key Takeaways

- HB1012 and SB578, both passed during the 2020 Virginia General Assembly, call for the transfer of Virginia's systems of child care and early childhood education from the Virginia Department of Social Services to the Virginia Department of Education. This work is moving at full-speed, despite the obstacles presented by the pandemic. As state leadership conducts this work, they are thinking about what quality child care looks like, how to support the early childhood workforce in carrying out that vision, and how to center equity.
- Child care centers, which often operate on razor-thin profit margins, have felt the severe weight of the pandemic. Despite this hardship, over 2,000 child care centers remain open throughout the Commonwealth.
- Using virtual platforms opens more opportunities for stakeholder listening sessions, as state leaders are conducting more listening sessions than they would have in-person, especially due to in-person meetings requiring travel.
- Now and after the pandemic, school readiness and achievement gaps will widen.
- The recovery of the child care sector cannot begin until the pandemic passes. Until individuals feel safe to convene in-person, the recovery process can only go so far.

Policy Considerations

- Develop a separate funding stream in the legislature for child care and early childhood education. A critical step in the recovery, maintenance, and strengthening of the Commonwealth's systems of child care and early childhood education would be the development of a dedicated funding stream from the legislature. This funding stream could be helpful in the increase of the number of child care slots, Virginia Preschool Initiative slots, and providing two-year access to pre-kindergarten for all children in the Commonwealth.

- Work with localities to provide the personal protective equipment necessary for child care centers to operate in-person and safely.

Key Resources

- **Power to the Profession** is a national collaboration to define the early childhood profession by establishing a unifying framework for career pathways, knowledge, and competencies, qualifications, standards, and compensation.
- **The Virginia Early Childhood Foundation's 2020 Annual Report** sheds light on the Foundation's Back to Work Virginia: A Child Care Recovery and Renaissance Task Force and the Foundation's push to prioritize equity in its work.
- **The 2020 Early Childhood Policy Agenda Talking Points** shares Voices for Virginia's Children's policy priorities in the early childhood space for the Commownealth.
- **COVID-19 and P-3** is a page developed by the National P-3 Center for policymakers and stakeholders to gather information and recommendations regarding distance learning for early childhood during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Financing K-12 Education

Introductory Remarks

- **Delegate Lamont Bagby**, District 74, Virginia House of Delegates

Resource Experts

- **David DeSchryver**, Senior Vice President and Co-Director of Research, Whiteboard Advisors
- **Dr. Olwen Herron**, District Superintendent, Williamsburg-James City County Public Schools

Key Takeaways

- The COVID-19 pandemic is putting states either in or on the edge of fiscal crises, and states are responding in accordance with where they are in their budget cycles. Luckily, the doomsday budget scenarios developed by economists in the spring never came to pass.
- Though the pandemic has had a significant impact on state budgets, the most significant impact has been on local economies and local government budgets. All areas of local economies, including education, hospitality, and housing, have been adversely impacted by the recession accompanying the pandemic.
- Though economists have debated the kind of recovery the United States will see following the pandemic, a "K-shaped recovery" is emerging as the most likely type of recovery.
  a. Through a K-shaped recovery, the economy recovers in such a way where high-income Americans see their sectors recover and grow, while low- and middle-income workers continue to be negatively affected by the current economic crisis.
  b. A K-shaped recovery will have a significant impact on school districts, as districts with stronger property tax bases will see a much stronger recovery than school districts more reliant on state funding.
- School districts throughout the Commonwealth and nation, including Williamsburg-James City County, were faced with significant uncertainty in the early days of the pandemic about how their budgets would look at the end of the year. Williamsburg-James City County also found the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act to be a blessing and a key in helping the district survive.
- The Great Recession revealed that across-the-board cuts should not be an approach taken again. State legislatures must focus on how to ensure that budget cuts, while almost inevitable in an economic recession, do not disproportionately impact at-risk students.

Policy Considerations

- Prioritize providing aid for basic funding, and protect at-risk students while making budget cuts.

- Since a federal economic stimulus package is likely to arrive in the coming months, have discussions with legislative colleagues, the Governor's Office, state agencies, and school districts on how that money will fit into the current deliverance of services.
- Increase funding, if possible, for the deliverance of virtual services, and increase funding for personal protective equipment for educators and staff to use when working with students in the classroom.

Additional Resources

- **$23 Billion** is a report and resource developed by EdBuild covering disparities in school funding in the Commonwealth and country.
- **School District Funding in Virginia** is a report developed by The Urban Institute providing a significant overview of Virginia's school funding formula, focusing on the structure of the formula, equity under the formula, and the effects of potential changes to the formula.
- **Pandemic's Impact on State Revenues Less Than Earlier Expected but Still Severe** is a short report developed by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities discussing where state budgets stand amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying economic recession.

An Armchair Discussion with Higher Education Leaders: Reopening Campuses

Introductory Remarks

- **Delegate David Bulova**, District 37, Virginia House of Delegates

Moderator

- **Frances C. Bradford**, Deputy Secretary of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Dr. Irma Becerra**, President, Marymount University
- **Jonathan Alger**, President, James Madison University
- **Dr. Quentin Johnson**, President, Southside Virginia Community College

Key Takeaways

- Colleges and universities in the Commonwealth have had a variety of responses to the pandemic, reponses which varied largely based on the student populations being served, location, and existing resources.
  - At Southside Virginia Community College, college leadership assembled a COVID-19 team to create a plan to reach out to students lacking broadband, food, and housing. Leadership and faculty identified students who were not active in their courses, and faculty would develop individualized education plans (IEPs) for those students. Additionally, the college has worked with eighty businesses and localities in their service areas to offer free Wi-Fi, expanding this offering over the past several months. Lack of both broadband access and a robust transportation infrastructure continue be among the greatest challenges facing the college.
  - At Marymount University, leadership surveyed students on their thoughts regarding in-person vs. virtual instruction, finding that most students would prefer in-person instruction, but were prepared to move to a virtual setting if needed. Marymount has prioritized delivering in-person instruction in as safe and effective manner as possible, working with the Virginia Department of Health to develop a testing regime capable of conducting rapid testing and screening. Marymount University also developed a COVID-19 Information and Resources section on the website.
  - At James Madison University (JMU), leadership has been working closely with the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County to coordinate reponses to the public health and economic challenges brought on by the pandemic. Additionally, JMU has increased its investments in technology, isolation spaces, and personal protective equipment.

- State investment in higher education programs, including the G3 program, will be critical as institutions of higher education (IHEs) serve their students during and after the pandemic.
    - In the areas served by Southside Community College, there is a need for state funding for both broadband expansion and the re-training of unemployed and/or underemployed individuals served in that area.

Policy Considerations

- Continue funding critical programs for IHEs as they serve current, incoming, and prospective students. Also provide funding for the expansion of broadband and transportation services for IHEs to use to support students.
- Work with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), the Governor's Office, and IHEs in the development of continuing guidance as IHEs work to best serve students during the pandemic.

Additional Resources

- **Certified Campus Reopening Plans** is a page developed by the SCHEV showing the plans developed by Virginia's IHEs to offer in-person instruction for the 2020-2021 academic year. This page includes reopening plans developed by the IHEs represented in the *Armchair Discussion with Higher Education Leaders Section*: Southside Virginia Community College, Marymount University, and James Madison University.
- **Shield Testing Data** is a program developed by the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign to track test results, the seven-day case positivity rate, and the number of unique new cases per week. The university gained much national attention in September for developing one of the most aggressive testing regimes of all IHEs in the country, conducting nearly 20 percent of the state's tests.
- **Future pandemic preparation by James Madison University and other colleges and universities** is a response to the session discussion on how IHEs will prepare for the pandemic and its effects in the Spring of 2021 and beyond.
- *Post-Pandemic Learning and Innovation* is a pending book chapter discussing lessons learned from the pandemic and how James Madison University is thinking about its pandemic response going forward.
- **G3 - FAQ** discusses the framework of the G3 program, which is designed to provide affordable community college education for low- and middle-income students.
- **G3: Business Case** provides an overview of the economic benefits and need for making community college affordable for low- and middle-income families.
- **Resolution from the State Board of the Virginia Community College System** makes the case for why the Virginia General Assembly should support the G3 Initiative.
- **G3 Student Examples** provides an overview of examples on how students in the Commonwealth can benefit from the G3 Program.

Financing Higher Education

Introductory Remarks

- **Senator Jennifer McClellan**, District 9, Senate of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Marge Connelly**, Chair, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- **Dr. Danette Howard**, Senior Vice President and Chief Policy Officer, Lumina Foundation

Key Takeaways

- Between fiscal year 2020 and fiscal year 2022, state budget shortfalls nationwide are expected to top $550 billion, but state budget cuts have not been as bad as previously predicted, much of which can be attributed to federal aid coming from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Stimulus (CARES) Act.
- The Commonwealth is among the most educated states in the nation, but has among the deepest inequities in postsecondary attainment rates by subgroup.

- Though the Commonwealth has had issues regarding higher education affordability, there have been small or no year-to-year increases in tuition in recent years. The Commonwealth currently has the sixth most affordable higher education system in the country.
  - The Commonwealth's tuition levels rank 15th in the country. Forty-seven percent of disposable income is spent on higher education, compared to the national average of 42 percent.

Policy Considerations

- Reject across-the-board budget cuts and focus on prioritizing the most vulnerable institutions and community colleges. Additionally, prioritize the creation of new funding streams to aid IHEs serving the most at-risk students; community college and minority-serving insitutions serve higher proportions of minority and/or low-income students.
- Expand need-based financial aid and commit to meeting the full cost of attendance for students in need, even if that means tapping into a different fund.
- Advance strategies that help students complete their postsecondary degrees and/or credentials.

Additional Resources

- **States Continue to Face Large Shortfalls Due to COVID-19 Effects** is a paper developed by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in July discussing budget shortfall projections, as well as how those projections compared to the budget shortfalls witnessed during previous economic crises, including the 2008 Recession.
- **2020-21 Tuition and Fees at Virginia State-Supported Colleges and Universities** is an annual report developed by SCHEV covering the state of higher education costs and financing in the Commonwealth.

Postsecondary Transitions

Introductory Remarks

- **Senator Steve Newman**, District 23, Senate of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Peter Blake**, Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
- **Eloy Oakley**, Chancellor, California Community Colleges

Key Takeaways

- The term "pathways" describes the opportunities for students to obtain degrees and/or credentials. Students in the Commonwealth have a variety of options, and pathways have a great deal of support because they are affordable, give students options they may not have had otherwise, and are effective.
- Community college systems throughout the country, including California, have seen challenges regarding food and housing insecurity, as well as lack of access to broadband and technological resources.
- States throughout the country are prioritizing free or affordable community college through a variety of approaches:
  - In California, the California College Promise Grant permits enrollment fees to be waived. To receive assistance for the purchase of books and supplies, students must apply separately for that assistance. Applicants are eligible if:
    - i.   They have lived in California for at least one year;
    - ii. They have been determined a California resident homeless youth by the Financial Aid Office; or
    - iii. They are eligible for non-resident tuition as an AB 540 or AB 1899 student, or with a "T" or "U" visa.
  - In Virginia, the G3 program provides tuition-free community college to low- and middle-income students who pursue jobs in high-demand fields.

Policy Considerations

- Work with business and higher education leaders to strengthen the alignment between workforce needs and degree and credential programs. One method is exploring the use of stackable credentials, which allow students to obtain industry-recognized credentials while working towards a degree.
- Work with K-12 districts and IHEs in the development of guided pathways frameworks.
  - Oftentimes, community colleges operate on a "cafeteria" model, allowing students to choose from an abundance of disconnected programs, courses, and support services. These large sets of disconnected options, programs, and support services can make it difficult to decide which path to take in one's degree and/or certificate program.
- When constructing pathway programs, policymakers and stakeholders should focus on the IHEs that have the most transfer students.
  - In the Commonwealth, Old Dominion University, Virginia Commonwealth University, and George Mason University have the most transfer students. Focus on the IHEs that are already in the business of transitioning high numbers of students.

Additional Resources

1. **What We Know About Guided Pathways** is a paper developed by the Community College Research Center at Columbia University which discusses reforms in community colleges to help more students persist and complete their degrees and/or credentials.
2. **Three Educational Pathways to Good Jobs** is a paper developed by the Georgetown Center on Education and the Workforce showing how, depending on educational attainment achieved, individuals can secure good jobs in a rapidly-changing economy.
3. **Re-Employing Virginians - REV it up!** is a paper developed by the Commonwealth's Economic Crisis Strike Force. The paper provides recommendations on how to get the Commonwealth through the current economic crisis, how to lay the foundations for economic prosperity following the pandemic, and the role creating strong postsecondary pathways can play in that work.

Remote Learning and Access: An Update on the 2020-2021 Academic Year

Introductory Remarks

- **Senator Siobhan Dunnavant**, District 12, Senate of Virginia

Resource Experts

- **Dr. John B. Gordon, III**, District Superintendent, Suffolk Public Schools
- **Kathryn de Wit**, Manager, Broadband Research Initiative, The Pew Charitable Trusts

Closing Reflection

- **Delegate Jay Leftwich**, District 78, Virginia House of Delegates

Key Takeaways

- State-led initiatives in broadband expansion must be unique to the state. States must be conscious of the digital divide, what their stakeholders need, and what the economy needs.
- States are playing increasingly significant roles in bridging the digital divide, particularly over the past decade. Since 2017, states are allocating an increasing amount of money to broadband-related efforts; there was also a significant uptick in legislative activity relating to broadband in this time frame.
- State broadband programs do four key activities:
  - Engage a diverse set of stakeholders;

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Key Takeaways

- o Lead data management;
  - o Lead statewide, regional, and local planning; and
  - o Administer grant programs.
- Inequities in broadband access have been felt throughout the Commonwealth, especially in school districts. In Suffolk City Public Schools, two of seven burroughs have poor internet access. The district began to form agreements with telecommunications firms, including T-Mobile, to purchase and distribute Wi-Fi devices to students lacking internet access.

Policy Considerations

- Explore how other state legislatures are approaching broadband expansion. Efforts being seen throughout the country are being carefully documented in the Pew Charitable Trusts's **State Broadband Policy Explorer**.
- Continue to explore different types of funding models for broadband expansion.
  - Virginia, through its **Middle Mile Program**, has taken a flexible approach to its middle mile connectivity.
  - Should Virginia utilize public-private partnerships as part of its broadband expansion efforts, consider the following components that contribute to success in these partnerships:
    - i. All parties in the partnership have skin in the game, meaning that all must be willing to incur the risk by being involved in achieving the goal.
    - ii. All parties involved prioritize the engagement of communities, stressing the need to go to those communities and assess what their needs and demands are.
    - iii. Raise awareness about the importance of connections: This is important in terms of making the business case for expansion and increasing subscription rates high enough so that providers can make money back on those connections.
    - iv. Put accountability measures in place: Are all partners involved agreeing that whoever receives public funding will agree to providing the desired level of service and reporting out on progress made on a regular basis?

Key Resources

- **How States Are Expanding Broadband Access** is a report developed by the Pew Charitable Trusts covering how state broadband programs nationwide are connecting unserved communities.
- **Key Elements of State Broadband Programs** is a brief covering the similarities and differences among state broadband programs seen throughout the country.
- **State Snapshot: How Virginia Schools are Reopening** tracks how divisions across the Commonwealth are approaching reopening for the 2020-2021 academic year.
- **Connect Illinois** provides a list of initiatives being led by the State of Illinois to expand broadband, which include the Illinois Broadband Grant Program, Illinois Century Network, and Illinois K-12 Broadband Initiative.