



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** G

**Date:** November 15, 2023

**Title:** First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School  
Application from University of Mary Washington

**Presenter:** Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation

### **Purpose of Presentation**

Action required by state or federal law or regulation (i.e., a change in law requires a change in program requirements; this is part of a regulatory action).

### **Executive Summary**

On August 7, 2023, University of Mary Washington (“UMW”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school”) application for UMW’s Academy of Technology and Innovation (“ATI”) for consideration by the Board of Education (“Board”). In accordance with the Board’s [Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools](#) and [the process](#) established by the Board’s College Partnership Laboratory Schools Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”), the application was reviewed by a subject-matter expert group (“SME group”) composed of staff of the Virginia Department of Education (“VDOE”).

The VDOE SME group generated a completeness and compliance review (“compliance review”), which was submitted to the Standing Committee for review at its meeting on October 3, 2023. The Standing Committee received the application and completeness and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from UMW after a detailed presentation from Dr. Rebecca Towrey, Executive Director of UMW’s ATI and Dean Peter Kelly, UMW College of Education. The Standing Committee approved First Review of the ATI application and VDOE staff posted the ATI application for the 10-day public comment period on October 12 and it remained available until October 27. No comment was received.

On November 6, 2023, the ATI application returned to the Standing Committee for final review. Dr. Andy Armstrong provided the Standing Committee with an overview of the objectives of the UMW ATI lab school, the VDOE Expert team completion and compliance process, as well as

their compliance coaching and review of additional application materials received from UMW after first review. The UMW applicants were present at the meeting and answered questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. The Standing Committee unanimously voted to endorse the UMW ATI lab school application and refer to the Board for approval.

The application proposes for UMW to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with Stafford County Public Schools as the fiscal agent and hiring agent, as well as the four other school divisions in Superintendent's Region 3: Caroline County, Fredericksburg City, King George County, and Spotsylvania County.

The ATI program will adopt project-based learning, where field experiences will be leveraged whenever possible to ensure students engage in authentic learning, real world problem solving. This approach will ensure students are able to witness and experience the application of computer science, data science, and broader technology across content areas and economic industries through work-based learning experiences. As part of this approach, intentionality will be given towards the provision of externships and internships to build the durable skills necessary for entering the workforce. The lab school would address multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and regional schools with hiring needs, including the following:

- Co-teaching program: ATI plans to leverage co-teaching approaches via have professors on-site at the lab school, and College of Education students will be assigned to the lab school as one of their rotations.
- Interdisciplinary Approaches: ATI will intentionally leverage opportunities to work across content areas for educators to collaborate and create authentic, project-based learning experiences to creatively build, propose, and defend solutions to real world problems.
- Project-based Learning: Leveraged with interdisciplinary approaches, providing students with project-based learning opportunities will enable students to apply their content knowledge, develop their durable skills, and build their resumes with authentic projects that can help them with future employability.
- Expeditionary Learning: ATI will have opportunities for student internships and externships outside the classroom to apply their learning through various types of fieldwork.
- Student Agency: ATI students will have to have an understanding of how to own components of the process, set goals, and be a part of productive communities of practice, experiencing learning environments that mimic the workplace.

An on-site visit was scheduled to provide technical assistance in preparation for final application submission responsive to SME feedback and to better assess the true facility needs

of ATI. This visit took place at the UMW Stafford campus on Tuesday, September 19, 2023 with Ms. Wodiska, Dr. Armstrong, and Dr. Towery of UMW/ATI.

The Lab School statutes favor control by the institute of Higher Education. The governance structure of the ATI lab school meets those criteria. VDOE SME team will continue to advise UMW on meeting statutory compliance within the Applicant’s constitution, governance, and bylaws.

The approval of lab schools aligns with Priority 1 of the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan 2018–2023*: provide high-quality, effective learning environments for all students.

**Action Requested**

First and final review: Action requested at this meeting.

**Superintendent’s Recommendation**

On the basis of the recommendations from the Standing Committee, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (“Superintendent”) recommends that the Board of Education waive first review and approve the UMW lab school application for a three-year period with annual reviews.

The Superintendent further recommends that the Board delegate to the President of the Board and the Superintendent final negotiation of the college partnership laboratory school contract with UMW, including awarding start-up funds and up to \$6 million in per-pupil funding from the College Partnership Laboratory School Fund in accordance with the Board’s [Guidelines and Criteria for the Award and Distribution of Lab School Start-Up and Per-Pupil Operating Funding Grants for Approved Lab Schools](#).

**Rationale for Action**

ATI is being designed in partnership with superintendents and/or designees from each of the participating school divisions. UMW will leverage all three of its colleges to support the efforts of the lab school, providing content experts from the College of Arts and Sciences and the College of Business to consult on the development of curricular resources and field experiences in partnership with the College of Education and Stafford Schools. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the November 15, 2023, meeting of the Board is critical to allowing the lab school to open for the 2024–2025 school year.

**Previous Review or Action**

The UMW application has undergone two reviews by the Board’s Standing Committee:

**Date:** October 3, 2023

**Action:** First Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from University of Mary Washington

**Date:** November 6, 2023

**Action:** Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from University of Mary Washington

### **Background Information and Statutory Authority**

[Chapter 19.1](#) of Title 22.1 of the *Code of Virginia* sets the statutory requirements for lab schools and the process for approving such schools.

Section [22.1-349.6](#) requires the Board to “establish procedures for receiving, reviewing, and ruling upon applications and shall make a copy of any such procedures available to all interested parties upon request. If the Board finds that the application is incomplete, the Board shall request the necessary additional information from the applicant. The Board's review procedures shall establish a review committee that may include experts with the operation of similar schools located in other states.”

In accordance with § [22.1-349.6](#), the Board has set the [Guidelines for the Approval of College Partnership Laboratory Schools](#). Moreover, in preparation for receiving applications, the Board re-formed the Standing Committee. The Standing Committee met from 2010–2013 and had new members appointed by the Board President in December 2022. The Standing Committee comprises five members: Joan Wodiska (Chair), Dr. Pam Moran (Vice-Chair), and John Bailey, as well as Board members Bill Hansen and Andy Rotherham.

The Standing Committee has had eight public meetings in 2023. After each meeting, the Standing Committee has provided a report on progress to the Board. In its meetings, the Standing Committee has setup a process for reviewing applications, including a SME review by VDOE staff; standardized process documents, such as application rubrics, compliance reports, and reports to the Board; revised the lab school application; reviewed applications from two applicants; and received public comment.

Upon receiving the UMW lab school application on August 7, 2023, Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation of the VDOE, convened a SME group in accordance with the process established by the Standing Committee. The SME group was composed of the following individuals:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation
- Dr. Samantha Hollins, Assistant Superintendent of Special Education and Student Services

- Ms. Melissa Velazquez, Assistant Superintendent of Policy and Communications
- Mr. Jim Chapman, Director of Board Relations
- Mr. Robert Gilstrap, Assistant Superintendent for Education Preparation
- Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
- Ms. Amy Siepka, Director of Accountability
- Ms. Rebecca Askew, Director of Policy
- Dr. Dave Myers, Deputy Superintendent, Data, Research and Technology

The application was reviewed by members of the SME group reviewed the lab school application for completeness and compliance according to their areas of expertise. The compliance report was then provided to the Standing Committee when the application was received for first review on October 3, 2023.

At first review, the UMW applicants presented detailed information and insight to the Standing Committee on their plan for their lab school model. The Standing Committee queried the applicants on various portions of the application, with emphasis on transportation from the school districts to the UMW facility, financial/budgeting, interaction/agreements with the Local Education Agencies (LEA), and partnerships with local industries. The UMW applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first review, and cleared the UMW application for the 10-day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the UMW application to advance to second review at the November 6, 2023, Standing Committee meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in November, Dr. Andy Armstrong stated the University of Mary Washington Academy of Technology and Innovation Lab School is compliant and ready to implement and recommended to the Committee that the Academy of Technology and Innovation be approved on second review to be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration for approval at the November 15, 2023, meeting. The UMW applicants were present at the meeting to answer any questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. Satisfied with all UMW applicant responses to their inquiries, the Standing Committee endorsed the application and recommended the application be presented to the Board at its next meeting.

### **Stakeholder Engagement**

The Standing Committee has provided opportunity for public comment on agenda items, including the UMW application, at each of the meetings where the application was reviewed. Additionally, the application was posted for a 10-day public comment period in accordance with the Standing Committee's process. On October 12, 2023, VDOE staff opened a public comment forum on the Application through [Virginia Education Update #2023-15](#).

The UMW lab school application has received letters of support from numerous stakeholders, which have been included in the materials for this item, including the following:

**Implementation and Communication**

Upon approval by the Board, VDOE staff will coordinate with the Office of the Attorney General to execute a contract between the Board and UMW to establish the lab school within 90 days, in accordance with § [22.1-349.5](#) of the *Code of Virginia*, as well as §§ [22.1-349.3\(C\)](#) and [22.1-349.4](#).

The approval of the lab school will be publicized through the VDOE, UMW, and participating school divisions.

**Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:**

This item will not impact resources at the VDOE.