



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: H

Date: January 25, 2024

Title: First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from James Madison University

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 22, 2023, James Madison University (“JMU”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school”) application for JMU’s Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration (“JMU application”) 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 January 8, 2024. The Standing Committee received the JMU application and completeness and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from JMU after a detailed presentation from the JMU applicants including Dr. Bryan Zugelder, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and Partnerships for James Madison University, and Dr. Larry Shiflett, Superintendent of Rockingham County Public Schools. The Standing Committee approved First and Final Review of the JMU application and VDOE staff posted the JMU application for the 10-day public comment period on January 11 and it remained available until January 25. No comment was received.

On January 8, 2024, Dr. Andy Armstrong provided the Standing Committee with an overview of the objectives of the JMU lab school, the VDOE Expert team completion and compliance process, as well as their compliance coaching and review of additional application materials received from JMU since their initial submission in August of 2023. The JMU 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 JMU lab school application and refer to the Board for approval.

Prior to the Standing Committee's First and Final Review on January 8, 2024, JMU and VDOE staff collaborated in a technical assistance call during the week of August 29, 2023, an on-site technical assistance visit on October 19, 2023, and another round of Subject Matter Expert feedback during the week of November 29, 2023, prior to JMU's submission of a revised application on December 15, 2023.

The application proposes for JMU to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with Blue Ridge Community College and Rockingham County Public Schools. The proposed lab school named "JMU Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration" is an innovative interdisciplinary lab school model that focuses on providing career exposure to students through real-world problem solving in collaboration with higher education professionals, pre-service college students, and industry experts. Students remain enrolled in their home school division (Rockingham County Public Schools) while being provided with several options to engage in career exploration, including dual enrollment opportunities at Blue Ridge Community College, on-site coursework on campus at JMU, or Massanutten Technical Center. "Community problems of practice" will guide the direction of curriculum, which will likely include education, health professions, social services, aviation maintenance, and public administration. Instruction will be administered in a hands-on environment and include simultaneous teaching by RCPS staff, JMU faculty and pre-service students, BRCC faculty, and industry experts. The lab school would address multiple desirable outcomes for students, future teachers, and regional schools with hiring needs, including the following:

- Students will engage in high-level application of real-world problem solving while working closely with a team of experts from both industry and the higher education partners.
- The JMU Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration will provide a space for innovation where educators, industry, and pre-service professionals can explore best practices in teaching and learning.
- Students will engage in coursework aligned with personal interest and regional market demand industry and business, streamlining the pipeline for high-wage, high-skill, high-demand employment in the region served by the Lab School.

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

The approval of lab schools aligns with Priority 4 of the Board’s *Comprehensive Plan 2024–2029*: to create innovative pathways for every learner.

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 JMU lab school application for a five-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 JMU, including awarding start-up funds and up to \$11,344,000 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](#). James Madison University’s Lab School proposes an eventual enrollment projection of 600 students by the end of the grant term, representing the largest lab school in the current pipeline.

Rationale for Action

The JMU lab school proposal partners with Blue Ridge Community College, a partner to Rockingham County Public Schools through an existing dual enrollment agreement. The underlying school model is proven and operational as a dual enrollment program. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the January 25, 2024, meeting of the Board is critical to allowing the lab school to open for the 2024–2025 school year.

Previous Review or Action

The JMU application has undergone review by the Board’s Standing Committee:

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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 and one in 2024. 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 multiple applicants; and received public comment.

Upon receiving the JMU lab school application on August 22, 2023, Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation for the Virginia Department of Education, 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. John Hendron, Professional Development

The lab school application was reviewed by members of the SME group for completeness and compliance according to their areas of expertise. The compliance report was then provided to the Standing Committee for first and final review on January 8, 2024.

At review, the JMU 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 assisting students with navigating the multiple options within the lab school, staffing capacity of JMU at the lab school, on and off ramps to student interests during the lab school experience, clarification related to college credit earning potential through the dual enrollment partnership, transportation processes among the student home school locations and lab school sites (JMU campus, BRCC, and Massanutten Technical Center), performance and competency assessment at the lab school, and consideration of outcome monitoring for the lab schools, both at the JMU lab school and universally across all approved lab schools. The JMU applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first and final review and cleared the JMU application for the 10-day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the JMU application to advance to Board consideration for approval at the January 25, 2024, Board meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in January, Dr. Andy Armstrong stated the James Madison University Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration is compliant and ready to implement and recommended to the Committee that the Lab School for Innovation and Career Exploration be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration for approval at the January 25, 2024, meeting. The JMU applicants were present at the meeting to answer any questions posed by the Standing Committee at standing committee review. Satisfied with all JMU 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 JMU 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. The public comment was announced through the [Virginia Education Update #2024-02](#).

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

- Ms. Maribeth Herod, Rector, James Madison University Board of Visitors
- Ms. Jackie Lohr, Chair, Rockingham County School Board
- Dr. John Downey, President, Blue Ridge Community College
- Dr. Larry Shifflett, Superintendent, Rockingham County Public Schools

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 JMU 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, James Madison University, Blue Ridge Community College, and participating school divisions.

Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources:

This item will not impact resources at the VDOE.