



VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

AGENDA ITEM

Agenda Item: F

Date: April 11, 2024

Title: First and Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from George Mason University

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

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Purpose of Presentation

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for George Mason University Accelerated College and Employability Skills (ACCESS) Academy, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration among George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College, and Loudoun County Public Schools.

Executive Summary

The laboratory school application entitled GMU ACCESS Academy (“GMU Application”) was received from George Mason University (“Applicants”) on February 29, 2024. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the GMU application was reviewed for completion and compliance by the Application Review Technical Expert Committee, a team of Virginia Department of Education Subject Matter Experts (“VDOE SME”). The goal of the Application Review Technical Expert Committee is to document the needed technical expertise and provide counseling to the Applicants to identify and correct any potential deficiencies in the planning and implementation of the proposed College Partnership Laboratory School, determine compliance with state law or regulation, highlight potential problems or red flags with information contained in the IMTA application, and to identify aspects of the proposal that are especially exciting or unique.

Dr. Andy Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent of Strategic Innovation, coordinated the efforts of the VDOE SME team who reviewed the GMU Application for completeness and compliance.

The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the GMU application was comprised of the following VDOE staff:

- Dr. Andrew Armstrong, Assistant Superintendent
- Claire Bremner, Coordinator of Innovation
- Shawna LeBlond (Office of Licensure and School Leadership)
- Jason Ellis (Office of Accountability)
- Rebecca Askew (Office of Policy)
- Edward Lanza (Office of Budgeting)
- Erin Madden (Office of Policy)
- Melissa Velasquez (Department of Policy and Communications)
- Dr. Samantha Hollins (Department of Special Education and Student Services)
- Dr. Dave Myers (Office of Data, Research and Technology)

Each VDOE SME was provided with the Laboratory School Criteria Checklist Worksheet. Areas of expertise were assigned to various staff subject to their education expertise at the VDOE. A compilation of these comments is included in the Excel spreadsheet entitled VDOE Completeness and Compliance Report (Attachment 2).

VDOE staff provided technical assistance to the GMU team during the development stage prior to submission of their application and following submission in preparation for Standing Committee review. Following submission of the application, the first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of March 13, 2024. A technical assistance call was held on March 21, 2024, to discuss the SME feedback with the GMU applicant team. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on March 25, 2024, and an additional technical assistance call was held on March 26, 2024. A revised application, budget, and sustainability addendum were provided to the VDOE on March 27, 2024 for completion of this report to the College Partnership Laboratory School Standing Committee (“Standing Committee”). Follow-up feedback has been provided to the Applicants.

The Virginia Laboratory School Initiative is in alignment with [Board of Education Goals from the 2018-2023 Comprehensive Plan](#).

Action Requested

The Standing Committee’s goal for this meeting is First Review of the GMU Application and recommendations on the ability for the GMU Application to be presented/recommended to the Virginia Board of Education at the next scheduled meeting. In addition, the Standing Committee

can also provide recommendations for additional Subject Matter Experts or coaching to satisfy Laboratory School statutory requirements for the GMU application.

VDOE Recommendation

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with local school divisions to support the transition of at-risk learners into college and high-demand careers, with a preliminary focus on Information Technology by George Mason University is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears the ACCESS Academy functions more as a program than a standalone Lab School. This is an acceptable approach to meeting the intent of the lab school concept.

The Applicants responded very well to initial feedback and coaching provided by the VDOE SME team, and provided the additional information requested. The Applicants have options for students including dual enrollment options with a sustainable governance structure, including a sustainable financial model for the operation of the lab school program.

Overall, the VDOE recommends the George Mason University ACCESS Academy is operational and ready to implement.

Previous Review or Action

No previous review or action by the Standing Committee.

Background Information and Statutory Authority:

Subsection A of § [22.1-349.6](#) of the Code of Virginia states, in part, that “[t]he Board shall 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. . . . The Board’s review procedures shall establish a review committee that may include experts with the operation of similar schools located in other states.”