



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

---

# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** M

**Date:** April 25, 2024

**Title:** First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Old Dominion University (MEESA)

**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 February 2, 2024, Old Dominion University (“ODU”) submitted a college partnership laboratory school (“lab school” or “ODU’s lab school”) application for ODU’s Lab School (“ODU application”) for consideration by the Board of Education (“Board”). ODU’s Lab School is formally named Maritime Engineering and Environmental Studies Academy (“MEESA”). 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 April 11, 2024.

The Standing Committee received the ODU MEESA application and completeness and compliance report, and it also asked questions of representatives from ODU after a detailed presentation from the ODU MEESA applicants including Ms. Karen Sanzo, Director of ODU’s Brooks Crossing Innovation Lab, Dr. Michele Mitchell, Superintendent of Newport News Public Schools, Dr. Kipp Rogers, Chief Academic Officer at Newport News Public Schools, and Dr. Brian Payne, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs at Old Dominion University. Dr. Andy Armstrong, on

behalf of the VDOE, provided the Standing Committee with an overview of the objectives of the ODU MEESA lab school, the VDOE Expert team completion and compliance process, as well as their compliance coaching and review of additional application materials received from ODU MEESA since their initial submission in February of 2024. The ODU MEESA applicants were present at the meeting and answered questions posed by the Standing Committee at final review. The Standing Committee unanimously approved First and Final Review of the ODU MEESA application to be forwarded for consideration by the Virginia Board of Education contingent upon responsiveness by ODU MEESA to the provision of the following:

- Updated financial and sustainability information.

VDOE staff posted the ODU application for the 10-day public comment period on April 11, and it remained available until April 25. No comment was received.

Prior to the Standing Committee's First and Final Review on January 8, 2024, ODU and VDOE staff collaborated during the development stage prior to submission of their application and following submission in preparation for Standing Committee review. Prior to application submission, technical assistance calls were held between VDOE and the ODU MEESA team on October 11, 2023; November 8, 2023; December 4, 2023, and January 8, 2024. Following submission of the application, additional technical assistance calls were held on February 12, 2024, and March 14, 2024. The first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of March 19. A technical assistance call was held on March 21, 2024, to discuss budget and sustainability among the VDOE, ODU, and the Governor's Transformation Office.

The application proposes for ODU to begin a lab school in collaboration and partnership with Newport News Public Schools. The proposed lab school named "MEESA Lab School" 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 and participate in specialize courses in a half-day year-long academic program at the ODU Brooks Crossing Campus. MEESA Lab School will use experiential learning strategies to prepare students for traditional and emerging careers in the maritime industry. A focus will be given to preparing students for college programs designed to produce graduates ready for STEM careers in the maritime field and preparing students to promote innovation in coastal communities. 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.
- ODU’s MEESA Lab School 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 ODU Lab School meets those criteria. VDOE SME team will continue to advise ODU 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 ODU MEESA lab school application for a five-year contract 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 ODU, including awarding start-up funds and up to \$2,205,000 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](#).

**Rationale for Action**

The ODU lab school proposal partners with Newport News Public Schools to provide specialty maritime and environmental programming for 11th and 12th graders at ODU’s Brooks Crossing Innovation and Opportunity Center. Additionally, the proposal has undergone a thorough

review process by the Standing Committee. Approval at the April 25, 2024, meeting of the Board is critical to allowing the lab school to open for the 2025-2026 school year.

### **Previous Review or Action**

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

**Date:** April 11, 2024

**Action:** First and Final Review of College Partnership Laboratory School Application from Old Dominion University.

### **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 four in 2024. After each meeting, the Standing Committee has provided a report on progress to the Board. In its meetings, the Standing Committee has set up 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 ODU lab school application on February 2, 2024, 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
- Ms. Shawna LeBlond, Director, Office of Teacher Licensure
- Mr. Edward Lanza, Director of Budgeting
- Mr. Jason Ellis, Office of Student Performance and Support
- Ms. Rebecca Askew, Director of Policy
- Ms. Claire Bremner, Coordinator of Innovation
- Ms. Erin Madden, Office of Policy

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 April 11, 2024.

At review, the ODU 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 recruitment of students to the ODU MEESA lab school. The ODU applicants responded to all questions, and the Standing Committee approved first and final review and cleared the ODU application for the 10-day public comment posting period. The Standing Committee recommended the ODU application to advance to Board consideration for approval at the April 25, 2024, Board meeting.

At the Standing Committee meeting in April, Dr. Andy Armstrong stated ODU's MEESA Lab School is compliant and ready to implement and recommended to the Committee that ODU's MEESA Lab School be forwarded to the Virginia Board of Education for their consideration for approval at the April 25, 2024, meeting. The ODU applicants were present at the meeting to answer any questions posed by the Standing Committee at standing committee review. Satisfied with all ODU 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 ODU 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 #2024-15](#).

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

Dr. Augustine Agho, Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs, Old Dominion University  
Dr. Michele Mitchell, Superintendent, Newport News Public Schools  
Ms. Lisa Surlles-Law, Chair, Newport News School Board  
Mr. Joseph Kosteczko, Chair, American Society of Naval Engineers  
Mr. Alan Archer, City Manager, City of Newport News  
Mr. Rob Gies, Associate Technical Fellow, Newport News Shipbuilding  
Ms. Cathie J. Vick, Chief Development and Public Affairs Officer, The Port of Virginia  
Mr. Nathan Sandel, Director of Education and Community Engagement, Nauticus  
Ms. Florence Kingston, Secretary, Newport News Department of Development  
Mr. Jacob Raymond, Executive Director, Youth Sailing Virginia  
Mr. David White, Executive Director, Virginia Maritime Association  
Mr. Mark Whitney, Executive Director, Virginia Digital Maritime Center  
Ms. Sabrina Jones, Director of Strategic Partnerships, The Mariner's Museum  
Mr. Bill Crow, President, Virginia Ship Repair Association  
Dr. Brian Payne, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, Old Dominion University

### **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 ODU 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, Old Dominion University, and participating school divisions.

### **Impact on Fiscal and Human Resources**

This item will not impact resources at VDOE.