



# VIRGINIA BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# AGENDA ITEM

**Agenda Item:** D

**Date:** May 6, 2024

**Title:** George Mason University's (GMU) Shenandoah Valley Rural Regional College Partnership Laboratory School for Data Science Computing and Applications (DCSA) VDOE Documentation of Complete and Compliant Application

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

## **Purpose of Presentation**

Review of documentation of complete and compliant Laboratory School Application for GMU's DCSA, a laboratory school proposal from a collaboration between George Mason University and the school divisions of Clarke County, Fauquier County, Frederick County, Page County, Shenandoah County, Warren County, and Winchester City, the Mountain Vista Governor's School and Laurel Ridge Community College.

## **Executive Summary**

The laboratory school application entitled **George Mason University's (GMU) Shenandoah Valley Rural Regional College Partnership Laboratory School for Data Science Computing and Applications (DCSA)** ("GMU DCSA Application") was received from George Mason University ("Applicants") on April 2, 2024. In accordance with the Laboratory School Application Process, the GMU DCSA 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 GMU DCSA 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 DCSA Application for completeness and compliance. The VDOE SME team responsible for reviewing the GMU DCSA 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 DCSA team 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 GMU DCSA team on August 17, 2023, November 2, 2023, November 14, 2023, and March 18, 2023. Following submission of the application, additional technical assistance was provided and the first round of counseling from VDOE SME review was provided to the Applicants the week of April 16. A revised application was submitted to the VDOE on April 18, 2024. An additional application responsive to OAG and VDOE review was provided to the VDOE on April 25, 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 and Final Review of the GMU DCSA Application and recommendations on the ability for the GMU DCSA 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 DCSA application.

**VDOE Recommendation**

The concept of a lab school designed collaboratively with local school divisions with a strong emphasis on advancing data science, computing and applications across the Shenandoah Valley and the Commonwealth for students and teachers through innovative research, education and community engagement through project-based learning and hands-on approaches to cultivate computational thinking, problem-solving, critical thinking abilities, and other essential skills crucial for success in computer science coursework by George Mason University is an innovative and desirable laboratory school program. With the students remaining enrolled in their local school divisions, it appears GMU DCSA 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 that **GMU's DCSA Lab School** 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.”