

VHEAD
VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION
ADVOCACY DAY
2010

2010-2012
Biennial Budget

REPRESENTING VIRGINIA COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTY

HIGHER EDUCATION: PROTECT THE INVESTMENT

Virginia's legislators and higher education leaders will continue to confront enormous challenges to maintain access to quality educational programs in the coming biennium. The negative impact on the Commonwealth's revenue caused by the global economic recession has already led to 9% budget cuts in FY 2009-2010, and the Governor's budget bill for the next biennium proposes further cuts that could amount to nearly 30% total reductions in state support compared to the general fund appropriations approved just two years ago. In his December 18, 2009, message to the budget committees, the Governor termed higher education "the single most important element in Virginia's economic future," and noted the Commonwealth is cutting spending when support is most needed.

These cuts are just the deepest in what has been a two-decade decline in state support. SCHEV's September, 2009 report, "The Erosion of State Funding for Virginia's Public Higher Education Institutions" shows that in 1992-1993, higher education received 14% of the state's general fund budget, and state support accounted for 65% of the total funding/FTE student. By 2009-2010, higher education received just 11% of the state's general fund budget and state support per FTE student had declined 18%, while education costs grew. In this academic year, SCHEV's report shows that state support accounts for just 39% of total funding/FTE student. In dollar terms, Virginia now ranks 40th in the nation in state and local funding/FTE student. Unsurprisingly, tuition increased across the system by an average 5.2% from 2008-2009 to 2009-2010, and will likely increase more dramatically as federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding disappears by FY 2012.

We believe it is imperative that Virginia preserve a system of public higher education that assures high-quality education programs that produce citizens with the skills necessary for the 21st century economy and society. The trend towards privatization of erstwhile "public" higher education is unhealthy for the Commonwealth and will undermine the state's still-enviable competitive position globally. We urge our representatives to seek creative solutions to preserve public funding for our institutions of higher education. The impact of budget cuts must weigh as little as possible on the backs of students and families, and must not be used to seek seemingly easy solutions that harm quality, such as requiring larger class sizes, relying on adjunct and contingent faculty, or increasing teaching loads.