

Virginia Conference of the
American Association of
University Professors and the
Faculty Senate of Virginia

Competitiveness

HIRING AND RETAINING TOP FACULTY

Virginia's colleges and universities are some of the best in the country, and indeed the world. If the Commonwealth is to continue to attract top faculty members to teach and conduct research, and if it is to retain these faculty members, it must offer attractive benefits at institutions that can look optimistically towards the future.

The FSVA and the AAUP support three legislative measures to enhance competitiveness. **HJ 642** requests SCHEV to study Virginia's competitiveness in attracting and retaining faculty for public institutions of higher education. This study shall review, analyze, and compare data from each public institution of higher education regarding current salary levels, retirement options and benefits, and health coverage plans with national salaries and benefits. The bill also directs SCHEV to identify best practices in recruiting and retaining high quality faculty and to recommend appropriate policies to enhance our universities and colleges' ability to attract and retain high quality faculty. It has been over a decade since the last such study was conducted.

SCHEV is preparing to revise the peer groups against which the Commonwealth's universities and colleges are compared. A **Budget Amendment** offered by Delegate Crockett-Stark will permit each university or college to offer data in support of a recommendation to include up to five institutions in the peer group that reflect the Virginia institution's aspirations for improvement. We aspire for our universities and colleges to be even better than they already are. It is better to compare ourselves not just against the institutions that are already similar, but also with those who are among the very best in their categories.

SB 982 will create a 50% tuition waiver for the dependent children of Virginia's university and college faculty. Many private institutions, with whom public institutions compete to attract faculty, offer over 50% tuition waivers, indeed many offer a 100% waiver. Public institutions that offer at least a 50% benefit include the University System of Maryland, the University of Alabama, the University of Pittsburgh, the University of Cincinnati, the University of Maine System, the University of New Mexico, and seven of the eleven schools in the Big 10 Conference. Old Dominion University has a waiver program limited to six credit-hours per term and to staff with incomes below \$75,000.

These three steps will markedly improve our ability to compete in the world's best system of higher education.