

LEGISLATIVE REPORT #2
AAUP/FSVA/VCU FACULTY SENATE
FEBRUARY 15, 2021

Dear colleagues,

This strange legislative session was set to adjourn on February 11, but Governor Northam called a special session to allow the General Assembly to finish its work. Adjournment is now set for February 27. The most important issue before the General Assembly is the budget.

Fortunately, the state's revenue forecasts continue to improve, so the legislators have more money to direct towards the important new investments approved in the 2020 session that were postponed due to the pandemic. The federal CARES Act provided \$210.3 million for public institutions, \$72.6 million for private non-profit institutions, \$138.3 million specifically for coronavirus relief, and Virginia received an additional \$378.2 million from the December relief act (CRRSAA).

Both the House and the Senate approved their budget bills on Friday, February 12. Each chamber will appoint members to a conference committee to negotiate the differences between the two bills. Key differences are:

- The House proposes a 3.5% salary increase for state employees, include adjunct faculty. The Senate restores the 3.0% increase approved in 2020.
- Both chambers increase Tuition Assistance Grants to in-state students attending private non-profit institutions from \$3,400 to \$4,000 per grant. The House however removed the prohibition on TAG awards going to students who study entirely in online programs and provides an award of \$2,000 per grant. The prohibition was adopted in the 2020 session, and was sharply criticized by officials at Liberty University, which runs a very large online program.

OTHER HIGHER EDUCATION LEGISLATION
2020 SESSION

BILLS WE SUPPORT

HB 1848 Delegate Sickles (D) adds discrimination on the basis of disability as an unlawful employment practice under the Virginia Human Rights Act. This bill has already **passed** the House and the Senate committee without opposition, and is before the full Senate.

HB 2120 Delegate Keam (D) to require the Board of Visitors to solicit input from the Faculty Senate or its equivalent twice yearly, and when conducting presidential searches. The bill **passed** without opposition in the House and is currently before the Higher Education subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Health.

HB 2204 Delegate Filler-Corn (D) and **SB 1405** Senator Saslaw (D) to create the Get Skilled, Get a Job, Give Back (G3) Fund and directs the VCCS to establish the G3 Program to provide financial assistance from the fund. This fund would be an addition to monies appropriated from the state's General Fund. Both of these bills were **passed** with little opposition in each chamber and are now working their way through the committee process in the other house..

BILLS OF INTEREST (we will track these but likely not take a position)

HB 1755 Delegate Carter (D). Repeals “right-to-work.” This bill was destined to die in the Labor and Commerce Committee without a hearing, so Delegate Carter motioned on the floor of the House to have the bill discharged from committee and debated by the full House. That motion was **defeated** on a vote of 87-13.

HB 1870 Delegate Batten (R). This bill would provide in-state tuition for non-Virginia student currently present in the Commonwealth who is a victim of human trafficking. The Post-Secondary and Higher Education subcommittee **failed to recommend reporting** the bill on a 4-4 vote.

HB 1930 Delegate Aird. This bill would prohibit asking about criminal history or using information about criminal history in admissions decision processes. The bill **passed** the House 58-42 and is now before the Higher Education subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Health.

HB 1975 Delegate Rush (R). This bill would waive tuition and fees for students who are survivors of criminal sexual assault and certain other sex crimes committed when the student was under 18. The bill was **reported** from both the Education Committee and the Appropriations Committee but was referred back to Appropriations from the House floor. The bill was **left (died)** in Appropriations.

HB 1980 Delegate Reid (D). Establishes the Enslaved Ancestors College Access Scholarship Program, requiring Longwood, UVA, VCU, VMI, and William & Mary to provide at least one full scholarship each year to someone who meets the bill’s qualifications with the institutions own, non-tuition money. The bill **passed** the House 61-39 and is now before the Higher Education subcommittee of the Senate Committee on Education and Health.

BILLS OF CONCERN (We will track these and express concerns as appropriate)

HB 1772 Delegate Freitas (R). This bill would extend per-student enrollment-based funding for non-credit workforce training programs. The Post-Secondary and Higher Education subcommittee **failed to recommend reporting** on 3-5 vote and was **left** in the Committee on Education.

HB 1794 Delegate Davis (R). This would exclude from collective bargaining negotiation matters dealing with hiring, firing or disciplinary actions of a local employee. Collective bargaining may be permitted by local school boards after May 1, 2021. Efforts to limit negotiation of the representation function of the union would further weaken Virginia’s already weak step towards public sector unions. The bill was **left** in the House Committee on Labor and Commerce.

HB 2145 Delegate Miyares (R). Prohibits the governing board of any public institution of higher education from fixing tuition at a rate that exceeds \$2,500 per semester or its equivalent in any case in which instruction is provided solely in a virtual format and from a remote location. This bill **laid on the table (defeated)** on a vote of 2-5 in the Post-Secondary and Higher Education subcommittee and was **left in** the House Education Committee.