



Operations and Performance of the Virginia Community College System

Study mandate

- JLARC reviewed the operations and performance of VCCS (June 2016 to June 2017)
- Focused on
 - success and affordability of academic programs;
 - dual enrollment and transfer programs;
 - system office support for colleges; and
 - spending of funds

House Joint Resolution 157 (2016)

High-level review of VCCS workforce programs

- Update of a more detailed JLARC review of workforce development programs in 2014*
- Included a review of the implementation of the New Economy Workforce Credentials Grant

**Virginia's Workforce Development Programs (Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission, 2014)*

In brief

Overall, labor market data indicates that all colleges offer programs in career fields with the greatest statewide demand. However, there are a limited number of high-demand career fields for which local colleges do not offer courses.

Workforce Credentials Grant program was created, in part, to address worker shortages for high-demand occupations. Program has funded a wide variety of VCCS courses and workforce credentials, but criteria for receiving funds are too broad to prioritize programs that would address shortages.

Meeting employer demands remains a challenge for some colleges

- 2014 JLARC study found some colleges could not offer programs to meet employer needs
- In 2017, programs were not available in some regions for fields with many job openings
 - Finance
 - Maintenance, repair, and installation
 - Health care
 - Pipefitting and welding

Workforce Credentials Grant (WCG) created to increase labor supply in high-demand fields

- Financial assistance for non-credit workforce credentials
- Intended for programs that would address shortages of workers in high-demand fields
- General Assembly appropriated \$12.5M (FY17-FY18)
- WCG courses available at all 23 community colleges

Grant funding process did not evaluate whether employer demands are unmet

- Board for Workforce Development charged with creating list of high-demand occupations
 - List used to determine VCCS program eligibility
- Board for Workforce Development did not consider evidence of worker shortages in creating list

Grant funding process did not evaluate whether employer demands are unmet (cont'd.)

- VCCS charged with determining which specific college programs receive WCG funds
- VCCS did not evaluate whether demand for workers was unmet
- Staff indicated that evidence of employer demand was sufficient to qualify for funding
- Courses for high-demand credentials with insufficient enrollment/student interest were not prioritized

Strategy needed for prioritizing occupations for WCG funding

- Given limited funding, non-credit programs for high-demand occupations with worker shortages should be prioritized over others
- Maximize economic impact and assistance to employers

Recommendations

The General Assembly may wish to consider amending the Code of Virginia to clarify that WCG funds *first* be prioritized for credentials with unmet employer demand.

The Virginia Board for Workforce Development should develop a methodology that can be used by community colleges to

- identify employer demand for occupations at the regional level and
- distinguish between demand that is sufficiently met by the existing workforce and demand that is not.

JLARC staff for this report

Tracey Smith, Associate Director

Jamie Bitz, Project Leader

Erik Beecroft, Chief Methodologist

Nicole Gaffen, Senior Legislative Analyst

Bridget Marcek, Senior Associate Legislative Analyst

Jordan Paschal, Associate Legislative Analyst

Nichelle Williams, Senior Associate Legislative Analyst