

VIRGINIA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

MINUTES NO. 12
LOCAL ADVISORY BOARD

February 5, 1968

The Local Advisory Board met on February 5, 1968 at 3:30 p. m. in the board room of the Shenandoah Life Insurance Company. This meeting was called to review the FACT SHEET which was distributed to the board members at the February 1 meeting (Dr. Hamel's presentation as a part of the Local-State Articulation Advisory Committee).

Board members in attendance were: Mrs. Hunter M. Painter, Messrs. Barton Morris, Jr., S. Colston Snead, Jr., Henry E. Thomas, Paul R. Thomson, W. D. Vinyard, and W. Basil Watkins. College administrators present included Dr. McKenzie, Dean Scrafford, Messrs. Crockett, Denison, McCabe, and Race.

Mr. Henry E. Thomas, Vice Chairman, presided.

The college administrators were present at the Board's request in order that they might present their views on certain aspects of the relationships now under discussion and to answer any questions the Board might wish to direct to them regarding problems which the college faces with the State Board for Community Colleges and the State Department of Community Colleges. This was action taken in order to more effectively meet with the Working Subcommittee of the Local-State Articulation Committee. College administrators, including Dr. McKenzie, Secretary of the Board, were dismissed; and the board discussed the merits of any possible action which it might take relative to the relationships among the local advisory board, college president, and the State Department and State Board. A copy of this letter is recorded here:

February 13, 1968

Mr. Eugene B. Sydnor
Chairman, State Board for Community Colleges
Department of Community Colleges
Commonwealth of Virginia
10th Floor, 911 East Broad Street
Richmond, Virginia

Dear Mr. Sydnor:

The Local Advisory Board for Virginia Western Community College wishes to express its appreciation to you, Dr. Hamel and his staff for the presentation made to us on Thursday, February 1. All of us found it to be enlightening and were impressed with the

remarkable achievements that have been made in so brief a time.

We particularly welcome the promise that greater autonomy is to be given those colleges which have by their performance proved that they are ready for it. We feel strongly that Virginia Western is now prepared to assume day-to-day control over its operation.

In fact, we believe Virginia's plan for a statewide system of community colleges cannot fulfill its great promise if it does not move in this direction.

At the same time, we are fully aware that a strong guiding hand was needed as the system began to develop and that a continuing role of leadership by the State Board and the State Department of Community Colleges is required.

It is our view that the goals of the State Board, the Department and our own Local Advisory Board are the same and that the task before us now is to find a working arrangement under which these goals may best be realized.

You have asked us for suggestions and it is in the most constructive spirit that the suggestions which follow are made. We are eager to discuss these in greater detail with members of the Articulation Committee, of course, but in advance of such discussion we wanted you to know something of our feelings and concerns.

We are particularly concerned about the following matters:

ACCREDITATION: One of our foremost objectives is to earn full accreditation by the State Department of Education and by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. In granting provisional accreditation to the college for the 1966-67 session, the State Board of Education adopted a report from its Visitation Committee which made accreditation subject to seven conditions. One of these, significantly, says this:

"(a) Greater freedom of action should be permitted college officials in local matters, i.e. planning, development, and purchasing."

The Southern Association has accepted Virginia Western as a candidate for accreditation, an important milestone along the way to full accreditation.

The Local Advisory Board fears that unless greater control over the operation of Virginia Western is vested in its president and the local board, the school may not get full accreditation by the state board and almost certainly will not get it from the Southern Association.

EMPLOYMENT OF FACULTY: Difficulty has been encountered in employing qualified persons for the faculty because of the necessity of getting approval of each prospect from the State Department. The fact that an iron-clad contract cannot be offered by the local administration has on occasion proven a serious deterrent. The Local Advisory Board strongly recommends that the President of Virginia Western be authorized to fill existing vacancies on the faculty, subject to the qualifications and salary ranges established by the State Board and subject to the approval of the Local Advisory Board. This recommendation is in line with your indications of greater decentralization.

CURRICULUM: There are two important considerations in this area. One involves the conflict between the courses prescribed by the state for an associate degree and requirements of a number of four-year institutions for transfer students. In many cases students wishing to transfer to a four-year institution at the end of two years in Virginia Western have found it impossible to complete the senior institution's requirements and at the same time receive their associate degree. Hence, if they fail for any reason to earn their bachelor's degree, they have nothing outwardly to show for their college education.

The second consideration involves the role of the Local Advisory Board in shaping a curriculum which will best serve the local community. While this is a stated responsibility of the Local Advisory Board, it has not worked out this way in practice. Misunderstanding and confusion exists as to the criteria governing the establishment of new courses, for example. Our board realizes that there must be coordination at the state level and that financial considerations must be reckoned with but suggests that more authority to establish courses to meet specific local needs be granted local officers.

EXPENDITURES: The Local Board recognizes that state law on purchasing, letting contracts through bids, etc. must be followed but recommends that the community college presidents be permitted to make normal expenditures up to a reasonable level without the express approval of the State Department but subject to review of the Local Advisory Board. This is not merely a matter of removing a minor irritation but of creating a more easily administered policy. Surely, the college presidents can be trusted to make wise expenditures up to a reasonable level at which point prior approval can and should be required.

ADMISSIONS POLICY: The Local Advisory Board of Virginia Western believes strongly in the modified open door admissions policy adopted by the state. It fears the repercussions which undoubtedly will be heard next fall when we will be forced to turn away qualified students. The advice of the State Board as to how we should deal with the problem which will confront us when admission is denied is earnestly requested.

COMMUNICATIONS: We would hope that requests for decisions from the local college administration to the State Department might in the future be handled more expeditiously. Unreasonable delays have serious effects on local planning and operations. We also recommend that at least twice a year the State Board make it a practice to invite the local presidents to appear before it and make a progress report. In this way each college president would feel closer to the State Board and the Board itself would be more familiar with the scope and variety of local problems.

The Local Board would also like to know at what point its problems should be taken directly to the State Board. Currently, for example, the Local Board is presented with conflicting reports on the cost and wisdom of undertaking a temporary classroom project aimed at permitting us to accept additional students. Is this a matter which we should bring to the attention of the State Board and what is our role generally in advising the State Board of local problems?

NOMENCLATURE: We feel that the elimination of the word "Advisory" in the title of the local board for Virginia Western Community College would be salutary. We note that the 1966 Act (Sec. 23-220) makes reference to a "Local Community College Board." Nowhere is the word "advisory" used. Elimination of the word "advisory" would better reflect the proper role of the board and enhance its prestige in the community. The latter factor may become very important at such time as an effort to raise local funds to assist the college is undertaken.

Generally, we are in accord with the recommendations made by the Higher Education Study Commission to the Governor and the General Assembly in December, 1965. You will recall that with respect to the State Board, the commission said this:

"The major function of the proposed State Board for Community Colleges should be: To determine the need for two-year post-high school institutions; to develop a state-wide plan for their location and a time schedule for their establishments; to formulate policies pertaining to their establishment and operation; to have general oversight of their operation; to determine financial needs and to prepare budget requests; and to perform such other functions as may be necessary to assure educational services of a high quality and effective and economical institutional operation. The Board should allow each institution a maximum degree of local autonomy in its operations consistent with the effective coordination of all institutions under its jurisdiction."

We have underscored what seem to us to be two key phrases.

With regard to the function of the local board, this was the commission's recommendation:

"This local board should assist in identifying the local educational needs, should enlist the support of the community and should exercise general operational control over its community college. The local community college board should select and employ the administrative, teaching, and other staff members of the community college, subject to rules and regulations of the State Board for Community Colleges concerning necessary qualifications, and should perform such other services as may properly fall within its sphere of activities."

Again, we have underscored significant phrases.

It is our feeling that the spirit of these recommendations has not been carried out, perhaps for good and sufficient reasons, and that the time has come, certainly in Virginia Western's case, when it should be implemented.

We regret having found it necessary to write you at such length, but hope this letter will serve as a springboard for discussions which will lead to the realization of the goals we share.

FOR THE LOCAL ADVISORY BOARD
VIRGINIA WESTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

State Relations Committee

Paul R. Thomson
Basil Watkins
Barton W. Morris, Jr., Chr.

BWMjr/fb

cc: Dr. Dana Hamel
Dr. Travis McKenzie

No further business was discussed at this meeting.

Travis M. McKenzie, Secretary

Minutes approved - Date

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