

WHEREAS, according to the 2011 edition of US News Ultimate College Directory based on reports required to be filed by each university with the U.S. Dept. of Education, the public universities of Virginia report the following 4-year graduation rates:

Norfolk State 10% no reported change since 2004

Virginia State 10% improved to 25%

Old Dominion (ODU) 17% barely improved to 23%

Virginia Commonwealth (VCU) 19% barely improved to 25%

Christopher Newport (CNU) 12% improved to 39%

George Mason (GMU) 26% improved to 39%

Radford 34% improved to 40%

Longwood 39% improved to 49%;

WHEREAS, these graduation rates are far below the national average;

WHEREAS, Virginia has only four universities that have 4-year graduation rates above the national average: University of Virginia (84%), William & Mary (83%), Mary Washington (67%) & James Madison (64%);

WHEREAS, those four colleges do not have enough seats to accommodate the vast majority of the 10,000 Fairfax high school students who graduate each year that are more than qualified to handle the course load at one of those four schools;

WHEREAS, these high performing Fairfax students are left to pick among the eight underperforming state universities;

WHEREAS, students from Northern Virginia account for 50% of the student bodies of Old Dominion, VCU and Christopher Newport;

WHEREAS, students and instructors report that these low graduation rates are principally attributable to insufficient number of classrooms and instructors in the courses required to be completed to satisfy the "core" and/or major requirements;

WHEREAS, the families of these students are forced to pay tuition for six or more years to get a 4-year degree which amounts to a 50% tuition surcharge;

WHEREAS, our governmental leaders knew the need for increased college classrooms was coming at least 13 years ago when today's college first-year students were in kindergarten;

WHEREAS, Virginia's state government, instead of building classrooms and dormitories at colleges, undertook an aggressive prison building program which resulted in multiple prisons that today, thankfully, stand empty as in Grayson County, Brunswick County and James River Center and one in Tazewell that is half-full because its cells are rented out to other states;

WHEREAS, neighboring states with whom Virginia competes to attract well paying jobs have embarked on aggressive programs to expand and renovate their college campuses;

WHEREAS, the current administration has announced its intention to produce 100,000 additional college degrees;

WHEREAS, the Virginia Department of Education only tracks the 5-year college graduation rates.

THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Fairfax County Democratic Committee calls upon the General Assembly to authorize sufficient bonding and appropriations during the adoption of next biennium budget to increase the 4- year graduation rates in Virginia's public universities **system wide** to levels equal to or greater than the national average.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Fairfax County Democratic Committee calls upon the General Assembly enact legislation requiring the Virginia Department of Education to annually report to the General Assembly the 4-year graduation rates at all Virginia public universities.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Fairfax County Democratic Committee calls upon the General Assembly direct the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to conduct a study of the "core" requirements for graduation at Virginia's public universities, the changes to those requirements over the past decade, compare the same to other state university systems and determine the degree to which excessive "core" requirements prevent students at Virginia universities from graduating within 4-years.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Fairfax County Democratic Committee calls upon the General Assembly direct the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission to conduct a study of the majors' requirements for graduation at Virginia's public universities, the changes to those requirements over the past decade, compare the same to other state university systems and determine the degree to which excessive major requirements prevent students at Virginia universities from graduating within 4-years.