Virginia's Community Colleges

Good morning, Chairman Jones and members of the Special Subcommittee:

My name is Ellen Davenport and I work for the Virginia Community College System. I am here this morning to thank you for supporting the Virginia Community College System and our ability to have delegated authority under Level II of the Higher Education Restructuring Act for Information Technology.

We received Level II authority for Information Technology in 2008. This authority provides us with the ability to better leverage the size of the Virginia Community College System and its 23 colleges, obtain higher education discounts, and reduce overall costs that may not be possible through state contracts.

The VCCS operates the largest single instance of the Blackboard Learning management system in the world, and the largest instance of Campus Solutions in the world. The coordination of these systems with our 23 colleges is made possible through the delegated authority provided by the Level II legislation. These systems are unique to higher education and our Level II authority provides us with the flexibility needed to support students and minimize increases in student tuition and fees. We also take advantage of discounts available only to higher education, and reduce the complexity of procuring technology unique to higher education.

The VCCS maintains a good working relationship with VITA and uses VITA contracts for IT procurements when it is the most economical and efficient way to proceed. Moreover, the VCCS must submit its Information Technology strategic plan to the State CIO at least 45 days prior to each fiscal year and submit a report on the previous year's IT expenditures to the State's CIO by October 1 of each year.

In short, procurement standards and guidelines for all of our technology purchases ensure that both the Commonwealth of Virginia procurement practices are being followed, higher education discounts are obtained, and the overall costs for all information technology procurements are reduced. In one category alone, we have estimated that maintaining Level II authority saves us at least $1.2 million annually.

Thank you again for supporting the Virginia Community College System with Level II authority for Information Technology, and we look forward to your continued support.