**2023 SIX-YEAR PLAN NARRATIVE (Part II)**

**INSTITUTION:**  **Virginia State University**

**Cooperative Extension and Agriculture Research Services (234)**

**OVERVIEW**

The six-year plan should describe the institution’s goals as they relate to the Commonwealth’s goals as articulated in the *Pathways to Opportunity: The Virginia Plan for Higher Education*; the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2011 (TJ21); the Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act of 2005; and the Governor’s objectives to prepare every graduate for success in life. Please use this opportunity to outline your institution’s plans and objectives, especially as they relate to the Commonwealth’s goals.

The instructions within the institutional mission and priorities section below ask for specific strategies related to affordability and access to quality postsecondary education that prepare students for success in life. Other sections offer institutions the opportunity to describe additional strategies to advance institutional goals and Commonwealth needs.

***Please be comprehensive but as concise as possible with responses; you are encouraged to use bullet points vs. prose. Consider this a starting point for the dialogue with OpSix; you will have the opportunity to further elaborate on the narrative in your review sessions later this summer.***

***Please save this narrative document with your institution’s name added to the file name.***

**SECTION A: MISSION & PRIORITIES**

***Key question: What are your institution’s unique strengths and how do those inform your strategic priorities?***

|  |
| --- |
| **A1. What is your institutional mission? Please share any plans you have to change your mission over the six-year period.** |
| **Mission**: Virginia State University, a public, comprehensive 1890 Land Grant institution and Historically Black College/University, is committed to the preparation of a diverse population of men and women through the advancement of academic programs and services that integrate instruction, research, extension, and outreach. The University endeavors to meet the educational needs of students, graduating lifelong learners who are well equipped to serve their communities as informed citizens, globally competitive leaders, and highly effective, ethical professionals. **Mission Review**: The University periodically reviews the mission as part of the strategic planning process. VSU Leadership reviewed the University’s mission during the development of the 2020-2025 Strategic Plan; however, VSU made no changes to the Mission Statement. While there are no plans to change the University’s Mission Statement over the next the six years, leadership will review the mission as part of the 2026-2031 strategic planning process. |

|  |
| --- |
| **A2. What are your institution’s greatest strengths and areas of distinctiveness that it should continue to invest in? What are your institution’s greatest opportunities for improvement?** |
| Virginia State University (VSU) is the leader in college access and affordability in the Commonwealth of Virginia and among the nation's leaders in the upward mobility of our graduates. As an HBCU, VSU is committed to preparing a diverse population of men and women; and provides a quality education and transformative experience to students from a wide range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Providing access and support is paramount to our mission as an opportunity university. VSU is a leading access institution, with the majority (approximately 70%) of our students being Pell-eligible; thus, financial hardship is one of the primary barriers to retention, persistence, and graduation. In addition, the learning loss over the last three years, the increased need for appropriate programs and services to support the large population of students entering the university academically under-prepared, and the mental health challenges students face have presented a unique challenge for continued student matriculation. The VSU six-year plan focuses on strategic, programmatic, financial, and process refinement solutions to mitigate financial fragility, enhance social mobility, and bolster our students' well-being and academic success. |

|  |
| --- |
| **A3. What are the top 3-5 strategic priorities you are currently pursuing or planning to pursue in the next six years? Please explain how each strategy relates to the strengths and/or opportunities for improvement mentioned above and will ultimately drive better outcomes for students.** |
| **Required State Match Shortfall –** As a federally designated 1890 Land-Grant Institution, Virginia State University receives Federal funding to support its efforts in Research and Extension activities. A requirement to receiving these funds is a 100% match from the State. The General Funding available consist of specific amounts required for programs in addition to the required state match for formula funding. To cover the current shortfall for the State match FY 2025 we are requesting **$997,648.00** ($886,559.00 + $111,049.00 – shortfall). Based on recent increases in federal awards, the additional increases received for State match, in FY 2023 and FY 2024, will achieve a 100% match.**Enhance the Land Grant Mission of Virginia State University.** STATE GOAL 3: Transformative: Expand Prosperity (S8: Support, S9: Improve, S10: Cultivate)1. **Urban Agriculture Certificate Program** - To help meet the demand for academically trained urban agriculture professionals, VSU’s College of Agriculture began offering an Urban Agriculture Certificate Program in 2017. Designed for anyone charged with starting or managing an urban farm or anyone who wants to increase their marketability to do so, the course provides a curriculum rich in the science-based knowledge needed to successfully and safely grow produce in an urban environment. Courses include: plant propagation and nursery management, plant disease and pest management, sustainable soil management, greenhouse production (hydroponic and aquaponic), animal husbandry (chickens and rabbits), and more. All courses will be taught by Virginia State University (VSU) and Virginia Tech professors. Each of the 10 sessions include classroom work, plus hands-on lab and field work at VSU’s Randolph Farm and the VSU Summerseat Urban garden project. Small class sizes allow for personalized attention for each student to master the foundational principles to plan, manage and profit from an urban farm business. The course is suitable even for those who have had gardening training before, such as Master Gardeners, as it will contribute to their continuing education credits. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate off participant cost recovery per registration fees.
2. **Harding Street Indoor Urban Agriculture Outreach and Engagement Center -** Virginia State University is working to bring fresh food to Petersburg residents through the Harding Street Community Center. The indoor urban farm opened in summer 2015, and is currently using indoor growing techniques to provide produce and fish to city residents who will then be given the skills to start their own gardens. Harding Street continues to undergo renovations and expansion and now offers healthy food preparation and nutrition education courses on-site. Also, outdoor gardens have provided a mechanism to produce food for community residents. Harding Street has phased to serve as an incubator space for indoor agriculture production. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
3. **Specialty Crop Research -** The Agricultural Research Station (ARS) Plant Science Program and the Cooperative Extension Program strive to evaluate and promote new alternative and specialty crops that will provide a greater return on investment for farmers. Consumers are demanding food that enhances their health and protects them from chronic diseases. Specialty crops that can be grown in small areas but are profitable and market oriented toward the consumers demand. In their various efforts, faculty strive to find new uses for plant products that increase the income of small farmers. The ARS has well-established research programs in the following areas: vegetable soybean/edamame, flax, turmeric, sorghum, black bean and navy bean. Cooperative Extension has well-established research programs in berry production, ginger, and intensive vegetable production. All are explored as potential alternative cash crops for former tobacco farmers in Virginia. Both ARS and Cooperative Extension continue to research and educate Virginia residents about new ways to produce and earn money from viable, marketable specialty crop production. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
4. **Hops Research to support Virginia Agribusiness Development** – In response to a growing craft beer industry and an increase in consumer demand for local products, ARS scientists are currently researching the growth of hops (*Humulus lupulus* L.) for use in locally brewed beer. Cultivar trials and associated research on hops at Randolph Farm has been going on since 2017. The potential of non-cone biomass, a by-product, as animal food has been examined. An evaluation of low trellis hop production conducted as part of an effort to identify cheaper production methods suited to limited resource stakeholders is underway at VSU. It is of primary interest as to its potential relative to hops production in Virginia and the eastern United States. Other areas of investigation on hops include postharvest handling and processing techniques, quality and insect pest and disease interactions. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
5. **Industrial Hemp Research to support Virginia Agribusiness Development** - Virginia State University (VSU) has been involved in industrial hemp research since the imple­mentation of a pilot research program in Virginia in 2015. Since then, there is a growing interest in industrial hemp production by growers and processors in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The num­ber of growers/processors and acreage of industrial hemp is increasing in Virginia. In spite of the demand and interest, there are several challenges associated with industrial hemp production in Virginia. The most important challenge is the availability of seed for planting because there are no public varieties available in the United States. Virginia State University has established a long-term public hemp-breeding pro­gram to produce industrial hemp varieties for growers in Virginia and the United States. Research has been initiated as well to investigate the potentials of industrial hemp seed as a source of plant protein. Industrial hemp seed protein represents an alternative plant protein source because of its desirable nutritional quality. Hemp seed protein is characterized by unique essential amino acids profile and excellent digestibility. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
6. **Small Farm Outreach to Small and Limited Resource Farmers** - The Virginia State University’s Small Farm Outreach Program (SFOP) provides outreach, training, and technical assistance to more than 2,000 small, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers to improve the profitability and sustainability of farming enterprises. SFOP demonstration projects have helped farmers and students learn about the production of high value products through cost-efficient and environmentally friendly techniques to maximize profits. Demand for SFOP assistance, across Virginia, has outpaced program resources, personnel and operating dollars. State appropriations utilized to support this program currently stand at $394,000 annually. To expand the highly successful program’s operational footprint within the Commonwealth, additional funds are needed to maximize the training and technical assistance offered to Virginia’s small, minority, limited-resource, socioeconomically disadvantaged and military veteran farmers and ranchers, as well as, ensure the sustainability and profitability of their farm businesses. Agency 234 is requesting funds for: five Regional Small Farm Agents - $411,000 ($60K + fringe benefits (37%) = $82,200 x 5); five vehicles (pick-up trucks) - $150,000; and computers/printers/cell phones = $22,500. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan.
7. **STEM Education through AgDiscovery and 4-H STEAM Programs** - The Agricultural Research Station and Cooperative Extension collaborate with hosting the AgDiscovery Summer Enrichment Program. AgDiscovery is a USDA-APHIS-funded program for teens who are interested in agriculture and related sciences, and VSU is one of seventeen universities across the U.S. to host the AgDiscovery program. VSU’s AgDiscovery program focuses on the animal, veterinary and food sciences. Each year teens, ages 14 to 17, work closely with VSU faculty and staff, both on campus and at Randolph Farm, and participate in hands-on activities with our Aquaculture, Small Ruminant, and Food Science researchers. Cooperative Extension conducts extensive 4-H STEAM program throughout Virginia. A collaboration with Virginia Tech produced a “Mission to Mars Base Camp” curriculum that has been picked up by National 4-H. An expansion of this curriculum into complimentary areas is currently underway. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
8. **Providing Experiential Learning Opportunities to Virginia State University Students** – Agricultural Research Station (ARS) provides valuable experiential learning opportunities in food science, animal science, biotechnology, agronomy, and soil science for VSU undergraduate and graduate students. Student workers gain vital hands-on training preparing them for graduate studies or to enter the job market. ARS faculty serve as undergraduate major advisors and as committee members for graduate student thesis. Cooperative Extension is working to build an internship program to further support this initiative. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
9. **Small Ruminant Research and Outreach Program –** The growth and expansion of the goat meat industry is challenged by a number of animal health issues. Parasitic and other enteric diseases in young growing animals are at the top health issues impacting the industry. Farmers in Virginia also face a shortage of affordable quality forages for their meat goats. To assist farmers in overcoming this problem, VSU researchers are investigating the usage of plant by-products as an affordable and readily available feed source for goats. In addition, research and extension faculty collaborate to increase producer knowledge and awareness on best management practices in meat goat production (kid management, disease prevention, understanding and prevention of zoonotic diseases) by hosting workshops and field days. Cooperative Extension at VSU, has designed and built a mobile slaughter processing unit to educate and enhance profitability of Virginia’s small ruminant industry. The unit is complete, and a certification course in partnership with Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services is under development for small-scale producers. This strategy is a continuation from the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
10. **Community, Food Access, Health & Nutrition Program –** CooperativeExtension is redesigning and refocusing program efforts relative to health, nutrition and food access. Programming will take on a more integrated approach to issues that span across nutrition, health, and food access throughout the communities across Virginia. Pre-existing programs and collaboration with Virginia Tech will provide a strong foundation.This strategy is new to the previous Six-Year Plan and will operate per existing program dollars and grant funds.
 |

|  |
| --- |
| **A4. What support can OpSix provide to help you achieve those strategies? Please include both budget and policy requests and reference Part I of your submission where appropriate.**  |
| N/A |

**SECTION B: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – ENROLLMENT VOLUME & COMPOSITION**

***Key question: How is your institution managing enrollment in light of state and national trends, and what are the financial implications?***

|  |
| --- |
| **B1. What do you see as the primary drivers of recent enrollment trends for your institution? Please reference any specific academic programs that have had a significant (positive or negative) effect on enrollment, if relevant.** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **B2. Please summarize your enrollment management strategy moving forward and the specific actions (if any) you are taking to implement that strategy.** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **B3. How ambitious/realistic/conservative are the enrollment projections you most recently submitted to SCHEV? What are the greatest unknowns or risks that could lead enrollment to differ significantly from your projections? Please reference national and statewide enrollment trends/projections and cite any other data (e.g. regional trends, performance of prior enrollment strategies) that informed your projections.** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **B4. Explain the implications of your enrollment strategy on your institution’s financials. Please consider impacts on both revenues (e.g., discounting, financial aid, net tuition revenue) and expenditures (e.g., costs to implement enrollment management strategies, costs of enrolling more students or students with different needs, cost-per-student impact of flat/decreased enrollment).** |
| **N/A** |

**SECTION C: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – PROGRAM ALIGNMENT & PERFORMANCE**

**COMPLETION OUTCOMES**

***Key question: How is your institution supporting all students to succeed in completing their degree in a timely manner?***

|  |
| --- |
| **C1. What are your highest-priority completion outcomes targets, both overall and for particular student segments? Please include aspirational targets, realistic expectations, and qualitative targets and specify by when you are aiming to meet those targets (e.g., X% 6-year graduation rate for Pell students by 2030).** |
| **N/A** |

|  |
| --- |
| **C2. What specific strategies/actions are you planning to take to achieve those goals? How will you draw on successes/challenges from your prior completion outcome improvement strategies?** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **C3. How will you use existing/recently provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please state the request and rationale and explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template.** |
| N/A |

**POST-COMPLETION OUTCOMES**

***Key question: How is your institution preparing all students for success beyond completion (e.g., career preparation)?***

|  |
| --- |
| **C4. Please explain how you monitor post-completion outcomes (e.g., employment rates, wage attainment, debt load, upward mobility). What data do you collect? What metrics are you monitoring most closely? What do the data reveal about your institution’s greatest strengths and areas for improvement with respect to post-completion outcomes? Please include any relevant data/reports in the appendix or as a separate attachment, including any data that captures outcomes by school/department/program.** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **C5. What specific strategies/actions, including potential changes to your program portfolio or curriculum, are you planning to take to maximize the career readiness and job attainment of all students across programs of study, including increasing early career exposure for students (e.g., internships) during their time at your institution? How will you draw on successes/challenges from prior initiatives?** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **C6. How do you intend to use existing/provided resources to execute those strategies? Will you be requesting incremental state resources? Please explicitly tie to Part I of your planning template.** |
| N/A |

**WORKFORCE ALIGNMENT**

***Key question: How are your institution’s programs of study and degree conferrals aligned with the evolving talent needs of the Commonwealth?***

|  |
| --- |
| **C7. For which specific workforce needs is your institution best positioned to supply talent, based on regional, industry, or occupation alignment?** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **C8. What specific strategies/actions is your institution planning to take to better align your program offerings or degree conferrals to current and projected workforce needs? Please provide a list of specific programs you intend to sunset or grow in the next 6 years to increase alignment, partnerships/initiatives you intend to launch or deepen, etc. If you intend to launch any new programs, please explain why your institution is particularly well-suited to succeed in that area.** |
| N/A |

**SECTION D: STRATEGIC DEEP DIVE – FINANCIAL EFFECTIVENESS & SUSTAINABILITY**

**AFFORDABILITY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES**

***Key question: How is your institution accounting for and improving affordability for students and families?***

|  |
| --- |
| **D1. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to improve affordability moving forward across your overall student body and priority subpopulations, and what is the expected impact? Please account for a broad range of factors including the full cost of attendance, net price, time to degree, debt load, etc.** |
| **N/A** |

**REVENUE**

***Key question: How is your institution approaching pricing and revenue management? What are the implications on long-term top-line financial health?***

|  |
| --- |
| **D2. Please explain the rationale behind your full pricing (i.e. published tuition & fees, including mandatory non-E&G fees) and financial aid award strategy (i.e. net tuition revenue projections). What data informed your assessment of T&F increase feasibility (e.g., market comparisons, student capacity to pay) and estimates of discounts/ waivers/unfunded scholarships? What informed your strategy around financial aid awards, merit and need-based, particularly for various student segments by income level and academic preparation?** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **D3. What do you expect to be the impact of your pricing/discounting approach on enrollment numbers/mix (if any) and net tuition revenue moving forward and why?** |
| N/A |

**COST EFFECTIVENESS**

***Key question: How has your institution maintained bottom-line financial health and focused investment on the levers that will drive improvements in student outcomes?***

|  |
| --- |
| **D4. Reflect on the categories/subcategories of cost that have recently experienced the most significant increases on an absolute or per-student basis. What have been the primary drivers of those increases? Please be specific and include supporting data.** |
| **N/A** |

|  |
| --- |
| **D5. What specific strategies/actions do you plan to take to contain/reduce key costs and improve fiscal health going forward while improving student outcomes? What are your objectives and what have been your results to date of any already-launched initiatives? What is the expected impact and timeframe of these strategies? Include any short-term costs that would need to be incurred to implement the strategies.** |
| N/A |

|  |
| --- |
| **D6. Provide information about your institution’s highest-priority E&G capital projects and requests (including new construction as well as renovations) over the six-year plan period and how they align to your enrollment trajectory, student outcomes improvement plans, or other strategic priorities. Please also reflect on your current E&G facilities utilization (especially classrooms, labs and student service areas), particularly in light of any recent trends that might impact space needs (e.g., enrollment trends, shifting learning modalities). How has square footage per student changed over time and why? What efforts have you made to reassess and further optimize the use of your existing facilities, and what has been the impact of those efforts to date? What do you intend to do in the next six years to increase utilization?** |
| N/A |

**SECTION E: BUDGET REQUESTS**

|  |
| --- |
| **E1. Provide additional information for any budget requests in Part I of your planning template that are not described elsewhere in your narrative.** |
| N/A |

**SECTION F: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANNUAL REPORT**

|  |
| --- |
| **F1. Provide a link to any report your institution has produced about its economic development contributions. You may also share it in the appendix or as an attachment** |
| N/A |

**SECTION G: FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND INQUIRY, FREE SPEECH, ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND DIVERSITY OF THOUGHT**

|  |
| --- |
| **G1. Provide a copy of any policy or reports your institution has produced and provide information about annual training or orientation related to this topic.** |
| **N/A** |

**SECTION H: NEW SCHOOLS, SITES, AND MERGERS**

|  |
| --- |
| **H1. Provide information on any new instructional sites, schools, or mergers supported by all types of funding that your institution is considering or planning to undertake during the six-year period.** |
| **N/A** |

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION I: RESEARCH**

|  |
| --- |
| **I1. [OPTIONAL] Highlight any strategic research priorities, programs, or key areas of investment (e.g., hiring plans, critical research agendas, interdisciplinary centers, business partnerships, commercialization efforts) and IP dissemination and commercialization priorities you intend to pursue over the next 6 years that have not already been mentioned in this narrative. What are the anticipated benefits to your faculty attraction/retention strategy, student value proposition, and the economic competitiveness of the Commonwealth?** |
| **N/A** |

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION J: COLLABORATION**

|  |
| --- |
| **J1. [OPTIONAL] Outline any existing or potential initiatives you have not already highlighted in this narrative that feature collaboration across public higher education institutions (and other state agencies as appropriate) in furthering the goals outlined in sections B-D. What is the expected impact and in what timeframe? What is the timeline for the initiative and how far along is it? What (if anything) would be required from a budget or policy perspective to facilitate the success of the initiative?** |
| **N/A** |

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION K: STATE POLICY**

|  |
| --- |
| **K1. [OPTIONAL] Use this section to outline any state policy changes you have not already mentioned in this narrative that would enhance your ability to achieve greater success on the topics, strategies, and initiatives referenced in this narrative. What existing policies, if any, are hindering your ability to maximize outcomes and value for students? What new policies might create conditions that are more conducive to achieving those goals? What strategies or initiatives would these policy changes enable your institution to do or try that you are not yet able to do today? Please be as specific as possible.** |
| **N/A** |

**[OPTIONAL] SECTION L: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

|  |
| --- |
| **L1. [OPTIONAL] Use this final section to provide any additional context and/or supporting materials you feel should be incorporated into the six-year planning process.** |
| N/A |