

Call to Order

The meeting of the Virginia Board of Veterinary Medicine, Veterinarian Shortage Study Workgroup, Financial Resources subgroup was called to order on July 8, 2024, at 10:44 a.m. at the Department of Health Professions (DHP), Perimeter Center, 9960 Mayland Drive, 2nd Floor, Board Room 3, Henrico, Virginia 23233.

Chair

Kelli G. Moss, Executive Director

Workgroup Participants Present

Charles Broaddus, DVM, PhD, Dip. ACT, VA Dept. of Agriculture and Consumer Services
Thomas B. Massie, Jr., DVM, Board of Veterinary Medicine
William T. Swecker, DVM, PhD, DACVN, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine
Daniel Givens, DVM, PhD, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine
Martha Moore, Virginia Farm Bureau
Melinda McCall, DVM, Virginia Academy of Food Animal Practitioners
Stephen Versen, Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission
Jane Naramore, LVT, Virginia Association of Licensed Veterinary Technicians
Cliff Williamson, Virginia Agribusiness Council

Staff Present

Laura Jackson, MSHSA, Board Administrator
Laura D. Paasch, Senior Licensing & Operations Specialist

Public Present

Jake Tabor, Virginia Farm Bureau

Public Attending Electronically

Nicole Riley, Virginia Economic Development Partnership
Elizabeth Hooper, Lobbyist for Virginia Tech

Call to Order

The participants were welcomed and introductions were made.

Ordering of Agenda

Ms. Moss opened the floor to any edits or corrections regarding the agenda. Hearing none, the agenda was accepted as presented.

Public Comment

No public comment was provided.

Discussion

Review of Loan Repayment Programs:

Federal Repayment Programs: Dr. McCall reported on the terms of federal loans available to veterinarians and the current approval process for federal loan applicants, who are ranked according to critical and high-priority needs. The subgroup discussed the statistical data available regarding federal loans to Virginia-based veterinarians and the need to ensure continued federal funding. Dr. Broaddus reported he has data identifying the nominated areas of shortage.

State Repayment Programs: Dean Givens reported that federal loan dollars for veterinary education are taxed, unlike student loans for human medical education, and that due to associated costs the average student debt is much more than enrollment expenses. The subgroup discussed statistical data, candidate qualifications and compliance with reporting requirements for state loan repayment programs.

Other States' Repayment Programs: The subgroup discussed state repayment programs in Kansas and Iowa and discussed Virginia developing a similar program. Iowa's loan program does not allow students to also access federal funds, and the Workgroup may need to consider whether any program in Virginia would have similar requirements. Another consideration is the sustainability, which factors in continued program participation and retention and the percentage of loans that are fully repaid.

Grant Programs: The group discussed the Veterinary Services Grant Program's Rural Practice Enhancement grant for underserved areas, which is an underfunded program. VSGP currently allows the purchase of mobile equipment only; the subgroup discussed the opportunity for this program to serve more communities if it included stationary establishment equipment. The subgroup discussed the Tobacco Commission using parameters from this program to develop a state grant.

North Carolina's large animal veterinarian grant program was discussed, and the subgroup considered its requirement for applicants to practice at least 30% large animal in a lower populated region. They discussed whether similar parameters could apply to a potential program in Virginia.

Dean Givens discussed the criteria for student tuition assistance at VMCVM offered to 50 students from each are of Virginia and discussed the allocations for Virginia residents. He did not have data regarding programmatic costs.

The subgroup considered the difficulty students have applying for student loans and discussed the possibility of veterinary school staff assisting student applicants, as well as the need for more veterinarians to mentor students. They discussed the allocation of funds and identified that students need to receive funds directly for them to be most beneficial.

Retention and Continued Engagement: The subgroup reviewed additional factors affecting retention of large animal veterinarians in rural areas and discussed ways establish earlier connections between students and a community that can support a student. One idea put forth is for a community to set up a component that may be approved for brief internships, to work on connecting students to rural communities by increasing participation in them. Ms. Moore stated that agricultural economic development offices and the Virginia Tobacco Region Revitalization Commission as well as county Farm Bureaus and local extension offices could assist with community connections.

The subgroup identified lack of infrastructure as one of the reasons students leave rural food animal medicine programs and discussed programs that incentivized student investment by requiring demonstrated interest in the program. Leveraging mentorships from other healthcare or childcare providers would also be useful to younger veterinarians in a rural community. The subgroup discussed larger-scale supportive models such as the Peace Corps dedicating staff to a community for engagement and leadership growth, and the Department of Defense's support of military personnel.

The subgroup discussed business ownership resources for rural veterinarians to access, i.e. extension offices, Farm Bureau board; and programs such as FFA for high school students to develop interest, provide a pathway, fund education and engage in a community. Mr. Versen offered to provide ideas for program creation focusing on keeping existing large animal veterinarians in practice, and the feasibility of including unique features in the grant, such as business support.

The following Action Items were developed:

ACTION ITEM: Dr. Broaddus will share data identifying shortage areas in Virginia where few or no veterinarians are currently practicing, and a need exists for veterinary services.

ACTION ITEM: Dean Givens will reach out to Kansas and Iowa to obtain more data about each program.

ACTION ITEM: Mr. Versen will provide grant program options and features to the subgroup.

Next Steps:

The subgroup agreed to meet again in early September to review the additional information gathered to present a comprehensive data overview to the Workgroup during its next meeting projected for early October.

New Business

There was no new business to report.

Next Meeting

The next subgroup meeting date is to be determined by Ms. Moss after polling subgroup participants.

Adjournment

With no objection, Ms. Moss adjourned the meeting at 12:30 p.m.

Kelli G. Moss, Executive Director
Chair