

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS SERVICES

2015 ANNUAL REPORT

TO

GOVERNOR TERENCE R. MCAULIFFE

AND

THE VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

ON THE

**VIRGINIA MILITARY SURVIVORS
AND DEPENDENTS EDUCATION PROGRAM**

November 1, 2015



Serving those¹ who served

**Department of Veterans Services
2014 Annual Report on the
Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program**

Background

Under the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program (VMSDEP), tuition and required fees are waived at Virginia public colleges and universities for the qualified survivors and dependents of certain military service members. Through the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund (VMSDEF), a stipend is provided to offset the costs of room, board, books, and supplies. The amount of the stipend is determined by the Virginia General Assembly, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), and the availability of Commonwealth general funds.

A qualified survivor and dependent is defined as the spouse, or child between the ages of 16 and 29, of a military service member who, while serving as an active duty member in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or Virginia National Guard Reserve, during military operations against terrorism, on a peacekeeping mission, as a result of a terrorist act, or in any armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941, was killed or is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or of a veteran who, due to such service, has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90 percent disabled, and has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. Domiciliary or physical presence requirements also apply and are detailed in the Code of Virginia.

The Code of Virginia requires the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services (DVS) to report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly on the agency's policies and strategies relating to dissemination of information about the Program. The report must also include the number of current beneficiaries, the educational institutions attended by beneficiaries, and the completion rate of the beneficiaries.

Information Dissemination

Information about the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program is disseminated through multiple communications channels, including:

- DVS website;
- SCHEV website;
- State Approving Agency for Veterans Education and Training eVeterin listserve;
- Virginia public college and university websites and catalogues;

- Information is published in “*Opportunities: Preparing for College Guide and Workbook.*” SCHEV partners with ECMC (Educational Credit Management Corporation) to produce and update this publication annually. Printed copies are distributed to students and guidance counselors free of charge through public and private high schools in Virginia. An electronic version of the guide is also posted on the SCHEV website;
- Meetings with college and university officials. DVS provides information and training annually on military and veteran education benefits, including VMSDEP;
- DVS-developed VMSDEP informational brochure, distributed through a variety of channels (colleges and universities, high school career fairs, veterans conferences, online, etc.); and
- Direct outreach to veterans whose disability rating and period of service would potentially make their dependents eligible for VMSDEP benefits:
 - These veterans are identified through a review of all new rating decisions for Virginia veterans promulgated by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Roanoke Regional Office;
 - In Fiscal Year 2015, approximately 756 Veterans were identified whose period of service and level of disability met VMSDEP requirements, making their spouse and qualifying children potentially eligible for VMSDEP benefits;
 - DVS notified these veterans directly about the VMSDEP and offered assistance with the VMSDEP application process.

NEW INITIATIVE: VMSDEP ONLINE APPLICATION

In March 2014, DVS launched the VMSDEP online application. The online application moved the administration of VMSDEP from a manual to an automated process. The portal allows applicants to submit and edit an application, review application status and upload requested documents related to the application. The automated workflow allows for email notification to be sent to the applicant during the entire process.

The below upgrades will allow the VMSDEP online portal to be a one stop location for tracking and maintaining all records and correspondence regarding VMSDEP operations. After approximately two years of usage, the following upgrades are essential to maintain protection and security of the applicant personal identifying information (PII), plus cost-effective and prompt processing of the applications.

- Upgrading VMSDEP Online Application
 - Ability to Send Automated Correspondence
 - Enables VMSDEP to contact school officials and current and prospective students significantly quicker and to track all correspondence
 - Ability to Track Notes by Date and Type of Correspondence
 - Allows VMSDEP staff to view all correspondence via mail, email, fax, phone, and office visits regarding actions on each applicant
 - Notifications/Alerts of when additional documents are submitted for processing

- Permits VMSDEP staff to immediately identify when applicants uploaded supporting documents for processing and adjudicate the applications in a timely manner
- o Automated Calculation of Benefits Used and Remaining
- o Gives VMSDEP the ability to accurately and quickly process authorization letter requests for transfers and summer semesters
- o Buttons to Identify Supporting Documents Needed
 - Will enable VMSDEP staff to promptly contact applicants regarding supporting documents needed

The upgrades will significantly increase DVS capability in providing satisfactory customer service to Veterans and their dependents by producing quicker turn-around on eligibility determinations, generating authorization letters, and addressing general inquiries regarding the benefits.

Current Beneficiaries and Institutions Attended

A total of 1,143 unique students were awarded a VMSDEP stipend during the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters. This represents a 4.3 percent decrease over the number of unique students receiving a VMSDEP stipend in Fall 2013 and Spring 2014.

Of the 1,143 students, 55 percent (or 635 students) attended a four-year institution, while 46 percent (526 students) attended a two-year college or community college.

Tidewater Community College led all schools with 174 students. Northern Virginia Community College was second among community colleges with 71 students.

Old Dominion University had the highest participation (145 students) among four-year institutions, followed by Virginia Commonwealth University with 90 students.

Detailed information for 2014-15 is presented in Appendix A, while comparison of participants from 2012-15 is presented in Appendix B.

Completion Rates

72.7% who entered in Fall of 2008 in to a four year institution and who used VMSDEP stipends graduated within six years (i.e., by the end of the 2013-14 school year). Information is presented in Appendix C showing the degree completion rates by additional types of institutions.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) tracks graduation rates for Virginia colleges and universities. Information presented in Appendix C may be found on the SCHEV website at <http://research.schev.edu/gradrates/subcohorts.asp> by selecting the following options:

Please select the desired institution:

Select a sub-cohort of students

Select a type of Degree Completion

Please select an entering student year

Select a Gender

Select a student group

The 2007-2008 school year was the first full year in which graduation rates for VMSDEP students were tracked as a separate category.

Code of Virginia and Appropriations Act Authority

Code of Virginia and Appropriations Act authority related to the VMSDEP is presented in Appendix D.

APPENDIX A

2014-15 Number of Recipients and Amount Awarded as of May 12, 2015

	<u>Fall 2014</u>		<u>Spring 2015</u>		<u>Total</u>	
	Number	Dollars	Number	Dollars	Unique #	Dollars
Four-Year Publics						
Christopher Newport University	20	17,981.00	17	14,979.00	20	32,960.00
College of William and Mary	5	4,500.00	5	4,500.00	5	9,000.00
George Mason University	48	41,625.00	48	40,275.00	51	81,900.00
James Madison University	34	29,925.00	31	27,900.00	35	57,825.00
Longwood University	15	13,500.00	17	15,300.00	17	28,800.00
Norfolk State University	57	48,150.00	52	44,775.00	60	92,925.00
Old Dominion University	145	121,050.00	125	103,050.00	156	224,100.00
Radford University	39	34,810.00	39	34,810.00	43	69,620.00
University of Mary Washington	18	13,950.00	17	12,825.00	18	26,775.00
University of Virginia	21	16,650.00	19	15,975.00	23	32,625.00
University of Virginia's College at Wise	13	11,700.00	12	10,800.00	13	22,500.00
Virginia Commonwealth University	90	76,950.00	84	72,675.00	99	149,625.00
Virginia Military Institute	5	4,500.00	5	4,500.00	5	9,000.00
Virginia State University	48	42,750.00	41	36,450.00	49	79,200.00
Virginia Tech	39	34,650.00	39	34,650.00	41	69,300.00
Four-Year Public total	597	512,691.00	551	473,464.00	633	986,155.00
Two-Year Publics						
Richard Bland College	5	4,500.00	5	4,500.00	7	9,000.00
Two-Year Public total	5	4,500.00	5	4,500.00	7	9,000.00
Community Colleges						
Blue Ridge Community College	8	5,850.00	7	5,400.00	8	11,250.00
Central Virginia Community College	3	2,025.00	1	900.00	3	2,925.00
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College	3	2,700.00	2	1,350.00	3	4,050.00
Danville Community College	2	1,800.00	1	675.00	2	2,475.00
Eastern Shore Community College	1	900.00	1	900.00	1	1,800.00
Germanna Community College	39	29,250.00	32	24,525.00	42	53,775.00
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College	18	12,825.00	16	13,050.00	22	25,875.00
John Tyler Community College	43	29,925.00	28	19,800.00	47	49,725.00
Lord Fairfax Community College	3	2,475.00	2	1,800.00	4	4,275.00
Mountain Empire Community College	16	13,050.00	12	10,125.00	17	23,175.00
New River Community College	9	7,425.00	10	8,550.00	12	15,975.00
Northern Virginia Community College	71	53,100.00	57	41,850.00	81	94,950.00
Patrick Henry Community College	4	3,600.00	4	3,600.00	4	7,200.00
Paul D. Camp Community College	3	2,250.00	3	1,350.00	3	3,600.00
Piedmont Virginia Community College	5	3,375.00	5	4,050.00	6	7,425.00
Rappahannock Community College	8	6,750.00	6	4,725.00	8	11,475.00
Southside Virginia Community College	2	1,800.00	2	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Southwest Virginia Community College	14	11,925.00	15	13,500.00	17	25,425.00
Thomas Nelson Community College	1	28,350.00	1	23,175.00	1	51,525.00
Tidewater Community College	174	128,250.00	144	107,775.00	199	236,025.00
Virginia Highlands Community College	8	5,850.00	8	5,625.00	11	11,475.00
Virginia Western Community College	23	18,000.00	19	14,175.00	26	32,175.00
Wytheville Community College	2	1,800.00	2	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Community College total	460	373,275.00	378	310,500.00	519	683,775.00
Other Publics						
Eastern Virginia Medical School	2	1,800.00	2	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Other Public total	2	1,800.00	2	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Total all institutions	1,064	\$892,266	935	\$790,264	1,143	\$1,682,530

Source: SCHEV May 2015 Report to the General Assembly

**Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program
2014-15 Term Stipend Award Amounts**

Term award amounts	
Full-time enrollment	\$900
¾-time enrollment	\$675
Half-time enrollment	\$450
Less than Half-time enrollment	\$225

Source: SCHEV May 2015 Report to the General Assembly

APPENDIX B

Number of Recipients and Amount Awarded 2012-15

	2012-13 Total		2013-14 Total		2014-15 Total	
	Unique #	Dollars	Unique #	Dollars	Unique #	Dollars
Four-Year Publics						
Christopher Newport University	9	12,000	19	27,315.00	20	32,960.00
College of William and Mary	7	8,750	6	9,900.00	5	9,000.00
George Mason University	31	38,000	44	67,189.00	51	81,900.00
James Madison University	24	33,500	28	46,168.00	35	57,825.00
Longwood University	15	16,500	15	22,275.00	17	28,800.00
Norfolk State University	55	65,750	63	92,250.00	60	92,925.00
Old Dominion University	113	145,250	151	221,175.00	156	224,100.00
Radford University	33	45,151	47	70,690.00	43	69,620.00
University of Mary Washington	12	11,500	14	20,025.00	18	26,775.00
University of Virginia	12	14,500	20	29,475.00	23	32,625.00
University of Virginia's College at Wise	10	14,250	9	11,700.00	13	22,500.00
Virginia Commonwealth University	82	100,000	84	130,725.00	99	149,625.00
Virginia Military Institute	3	3,750	2	3,600.00	5	9,000.00
Virginia State University	43	56,750	49	76,275.00	49	79,200.00
Virginia Tech	36	49,250	41	67,500.00	41	69,300.00
Four-Year Public total	485	\$614,901	592	896,262.00	633	986,155.00
Two-Year Publics						
Richard Bland College	5	7,500	3	4,500.00	7	9,000.00
Two-Year Public total	5	\$7,500	3	4,500.00	7	9,000.00
Community Colleges						
Blue Ridge Community College	7	8,500	7	8,775.00	8	11,250.00
Central Virginia Community College	13	11,500	10	12,150.00	3	2,925.00
Dabney S. Lancaster Community College	1	1,250	3	5,400.00	3	4,050.00
Danville Community College	6	7,250	5	7,650.00	2	2,475.00
Eastern Shore Community College	1	750	1	1,800.00	1	1,800.00
Germanna Community College	23	23,750	33	34,425.00	42	53,775.00
J. Sargeant Reynolds Community College	29	24,500	27	28,125.00	22	25,875.00
John Tyler Community College	36	33,000	41	46,125.00	47	49,725.00
Lord Fairfax Community College	8	7,000	7	6,750.00	4	4,275.00
Mountain Empire Community College	26	27,500	34	45,450.00	17	23,175.00
New River Community College	11	11,500	10	14,400.00	12	15,975.00
Northern Virginia Community College	59	57,000	72	76,725.00	81	94,950.00
Patrick Henry Community College	10	10,000	4	4,950.00	4	7,200.00
Paul D. Camp Community College	3	2,000	3	4,050.00	3	3,600.00
Piedmont Virginia Community College	10	7,500	7	8,100.00	6	7,425.00
Rappahannock Community College	9	8,250	8	11,250.00	8	11,475.00

**Number of Recipients and Amount Awarded (continued)
2012-15**

	2012-13 Total		2013-14 Total		2014-15 Total	
	Unique #	Dollars	Unique #	Dollars	Unique #	Dollars
Southside Virginia Community College	5	4,750	5	4,950.00	2	3,600.00
Southwest Virginia Community College	17	18,500	14	20,475.00	17	25,425.00
Thomas Nelson Community College	59	57,750	48	57,600.00	1	51,525.00
Tidewater Community College	230	231,409	227	272,700.00	199	236,025.00
Virginia Highlands Community College	13	13,250	13	16,200.00	11	11,475.00
Virginia Western Community College	35	40,000	33	39,600.00	26	32,175.00
Wytheville Community College	7	8,250	2	2,025.00	2	3,600.00
Community College total	629	\$630,750	611	729,675.00	519	683,775.00
Other Publics						
Eastern Virginia Medical School	N/A	N/A	1	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Other Public total	N/A	N/A	1	1,800.00	2	3,600.00
Total	1,119	\$1,253,151	1,194	\$1,632,237	1,143	\$1,682,530

Source: SCHEV 2013, 2014, and 2015 Reports to the General Assembly

APPENDIX C

**COMPLETION RATES
STUDENTS ENTERING FALL 2008**

**First-Time in College (FTIC) with Military Survivor/Dependent Award
Completion Rates, entering institution in Fall 2008**

Degree Completion	W/in 6yrs
Total Public Four-year Institutions	72.7%
Total Public Two-Year Institutions	37.8%
Virginia Community College System	38.9%

Source: SCHEV <http://research.schev.edu/gradrates/subcohorts.asp>

APPENDIX D

CODE OF VIRGINIA AND APPROPRIATION ACT AUTHORITY

Code of Virginia, § [2.2-2004](#) Additional powers and duties of Commissioner

The Commissioner shall have the following powers and duties related to veterans services:

16. Certify eligibility for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program and perform other duties related to such Program as outlined in § [23-7.4:1](#);

Code of Virginia, § [23-7.4:1](#) Waiver of tuition and certain charges and fees for eligible children and spouses of certain military service members, eligible children and spouses of certain public safety personnel, and certain foreign students.

A. There is hereby established the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program. Qualified survivors and dependents of military service members, who have been admitted to any public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in the Commonwealth of Virginia, upon certification to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services of eligibility under this subsection, shall be admitted free of tuition and all required fees.

The Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program shall be implemented pursuant to the following:

1. For the purposes of this subsection, "qualified survivors and dependents" means the spouse or a child between the ages of 16 and 29 of a military service member who, while serving as an active duty member in the United States Armed Forces, United States Armed Forces Reserves, the Virginia National Guard, or Virginia National Guard Reserve, during military operations against terrorism, on a peacekeeping mission, as a result of a terrorist act, or in any armed conflict subsequent to December 6, 1941, was killed or is missing in action or is a prisoner of war, or of a veteran who, due to such service, has been rated by the United States Department of Veterans Affairs as totally and permanently disabled or at least 90% disabled, and has been discharged or released under conditions other than dishonorable. However, the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services may certify dependents above the age of 29 in those cases in which extenuating circumstances prevented the dependent child from using his benefits before the age of 30.

2. Such qualified survivors and dependents shall be eligible for the benefits conferred by this subsection if the military service member who was killed, is missing in action, is a prisoner of war, or is disabled (i) was a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia at the time of entering such active military service or called to active duty as a member of the Armed Forces Reserves or Virginia National Guard Reserve; (ii) is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to, or has had a physical presence in Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to, the date on which the admission application was submitted by or on behalf

of such qualified survivor or dependent for admission to such institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution; (iii) if deceased, was a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia on the date of his death and had been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to his death or had a physical presence in Virginia on the date of his death and has had a physical presence in Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to his death; (iv) in the case of a qualified child, is deceased and the surviving parent had been, at some time previous to marrying the deceased parent, a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years or is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to or has had a physical presence in Virginia for at least five years immediately prior to the date on which the admission application was submitted by or on behalf of such child; or (v) in the case of a qualified spouse, is deceased and the surviving spouse had been, at some time previous to marrying the deceased spouse, a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years or is and has been a bona fide domiciliary of Virginia for at least five years or has had a physical presence in Virginia for at least five years prior to the date on which the admission application was submitted by such qualified spouse.

3. From such funds as may be appropriated and from such gifts, bequests, and any gifts, grants, or donations from public or private sources, there is hereby established the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund for the sole purpose of providing financial assistance, in an amount (i) up to \$2,000 or (ii) as provided in the appropriation act, for board and room charges, books and supplies, and other expenses at any public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in the Commonwealth of Virginia for the use and benefit of qualified survivors and dependents. Each year, from the funds available in the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund, the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and its member institutions shall determine the amount and the manner in which financial assistance shall be made available to beneficiaries and shall make that information available to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services for distribution.

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall be responsible for disbursing to the institutions the funds appropriated or otherwise made available by the Commonwealth of Virginia to support the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents Education Fund and shall report to the Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services the beneficiaries' completion rate.

The maximum amount to be expended for each such survivor or dependent pursuant to this subsection shall not exceed, when combined with any other form of scholarship, grant, or waiver, the actual costs related to the survivor's or dependent's educational expenses allowed under this subsection.

4. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services shall designate a senior-level official who shall be responsible for developing and implementing the agency's strategy for disseminating information about the Military Survivors and Dependents Education Program to those spouses and dependents who may qualify. The Department of Veterans Services shall coordinate with the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to identify veterans and qualified survivors and dependents. The Commissioner of the Department of Veterans Services

shall report annually to the Governor and the General Assembly as to the agency's policies and strategies relating to dissemination of information about the Program. The report shall also include the number of current beneficiaries, the educational institutions attended by beneficiaries, and the completion rate of the beneficiaries.

B. The surviving spouse and any child between the ages of 16 and 25 whose parent or whose spouse has been killed in the line of duty while employed or serving as a law-enforcement officer, including as a campus police officer appointed under Chapter 17 (§ 23-232 et seq.), sworn law-enforcement officer, firefighter, special forest warden pursuant to § 10.1-1135, member of a rescue squad, special agent of the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, state correctional, regional or local jail officer, regional jail or jail farm superintendent, sheriff, or deputy sheriff, member of the Virginia National Guard while serving on official state duty or federal duty under Title 32 of the United States Code, or member of the Virginia Defense Force while serving on official state duty, and any person whose spouse was killed in the line of duty while employed or serving in any of such occupations, shall be entitled to free undergraduate tuition and the payment of required fees at any public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in Virginia under the following conditions:

1. The chief administrative officer of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board, emergency medical services agency, law-enforcement agency, or other appropriate agency or the Superintendent of State Police certifies that the deceased parent or spouse was employed or serving as a law-enforcement officer, sworn law-enforcement officer, firefighter, special forest warden pursuant to § 10.1-1135, or member of a rescue squad or in any other capacity as specified in this section and was killed in the line of duty while serving or living in the Commonwealth; and

2. The child or spouse shall have been offered admission to such public institution of higher education or other public accredited postsecondary institution. Any child or spouse who believes he is eligible shall apply to the public institution of higher education or other accredited postsecondary institution to which he has been admitted for the benefits provided by this subsection. The institution shall determine the eligibility of the applicant for these benefits and shall also ascertain that the recipients are in attendance and are making satisfactory progress. The amounts payable for tuition, institutional charges and required fees, and books and supplies for the applicants shall be waived by the institution accepting the students.

C. For the purposes of subsection B, user fees, such as room and board charges, shall not be included in this authorization to waive tuition and fees. However, all required educational and auxiliary fees shall be waived along with tuition.

D. Tuition and required fees may be waived for a student from a foreign country enrolled in a public institution of higher education through a student exchange program approved by such institution, provided the number of foreign students does not exceed the number of students paying full tuition and required fees to the institution under the provisions of the exchange program for a given three-year period.

E. Each public institution of higher education and other public accredited postsecondary institution granting a degree, diploma, or certificate in Virginia shall include in its catalogue or equivalent publication a statement describing the benefits provided by subsections A and B.

(1996, cc. [931](#), [981](#); 1998, c. [377](#); 2001, c. [330](#); 2003, cc. [657](#), [670](#); 2005, cc. [773](#), [783](#); 2006, c. [793](#); 2007, cc. [116](#), [161](#), [717](#); 2011, cc. [572](#), [586](#); 2012, c. [776](#); 2013, c. [719](#); 2014, cc. [184](#), [657](#).)

Chapter 2, 2014 Acts of Assembly Special Session I, Item 142

F.1. Out of this appropriation, \$1,915,000 the first year and \$1,930,000 the second year from the general fund is designated for the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependents program, § 23-7.4:1, Code of Virginia, to provide up to a \$1,800 annual stipend to offset the costs of room, board, books and supplies for qualified survivors and dependents of military service members.

2. The amount of the stipend is an estimate depending on the number of students eligible under § 23-7.4:1, Code of Virginia. Changes that increase or decrease the grant amount shall be determined by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia.

3. The Director, State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, shall allocate these funds to public institutions of higher education on behalf of students qualifying under this provision.

4. Each institution of higher education shall report the number of recipients for this program to the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia by April 1 of each year. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall report this information to the Chairmen of the House Appropriations and Senate Finance Committees by May 15 of each year.

5. The Department of Veterans Services shall consult with the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia prior to the dissemination of any information related to the financial benefits provided under this program.

Chapter 2, 2014 Acts of Assembly Special Session I, Item 461

A. Notwithstanding § 23-7.4:1, Code of Virginia, the department shall provide the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia the information these schools need to administer the Virginia Military Survivors and Dependent Education Program. The department shall retain the responsibility to certify the eligibility of those who apply for financial aid under this program.

B. No child may receive the education benefits provided by § 23-7.4:1, Code of Virginia, and funded by this or similar state appropriations, for more than four years or its equivalent.