

Virginia state senators visit VIMS

(July 25, 2012) Members of the Education Subcommittee of the Virginia Senate Finance Committee enjoyed a waterfront tour of the Virginia Institute of Marine Science on July 24 in conjunction with their public meeting at VIMS.

During the tour and a subsequent luncheon discussion, the 6 members of the Education Subcommittee heard first-hand about VIMS, the College of William and Mary's graduate School of Marine Science at VIMS, and the Institute's efforts in public education and outreach.

The 8 members of the subcommittee are Thomas K. Norment, Jr. (3rd District, Chair), Charles J. Colgan (29th District), Emmett W. Hanger, Jr. (14th District), Henry L. Marsh III (16th District), Stephen D. Newman (23rd District), Frank M. Ruff, Jr. (15th District), Richard L. Saslaw (35th District), and John C. Watkins (10th District). Senators Colgan, Newman, and Saslaw were unable to attend.

VIMS Dean and Director John Wells, who led the tour of VIMS' Gloucester Point campus aboard the research vessel *Pelican*, says he was "delighted to help our esteemed guests learn more about VIMS and how our services benefit the citizens of the Commonwealth."

"VIMS is unique in its integration of research, education, and advisory service," says Wells. "We were glad for the opportunity to share with the committee members the value that comes from involving graduate students in research, and in providing citizens and policymakers with the science-based knowledge needed to effectively address the challenges and opportunities facing Chesapeake Bay and its marine resources."

Joining Wells aboard the RV *Pelican* was VIMS Master's student Kelsey Fall, who described her study of the erosion and accumulation of muddy sediments in lower Chesapeake Bay. When suspended in the water, muddy sediments degrade water quality and block sunlight from seagrass beds; when on the seafloor they tend to accumulate high levels of nutrients and other aquatic contaminants.

Following their tour of the VIMS campus, the subcommittee members



Aboard the RV Pelican: Members of the Senate Finance Education Subcommittee enjoyed a waterfront tour in conjunction with their public meeting at VIMS. From L: VIMS Chief Financial & Administrative Officer Jennifer Latour; Senate staffer Clyde Cristman; senators Marsh, Ruff, Watkins, Hanger, and Norment; VIMS Dean and Director John Wells, and Senate staffers Sarah Herzog and April Kees. Photo by Susan Stein.

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held a public meeting in the atrium of Chesapeake Bay Hall. During the meeting, they received updates on higher education tuition from Peter Blake of the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia (SCHEV), and on charter schools and Virginia's No Child Left Behind waiver from Linda Wallinger of the Virginia Department of Education. They subsequently traveled across the York River for a tour of the York River Academy Charter School and an update on technology initiatives and budget issues in York County Public Schools.

The Finance Committee of the Virginia State Senate is a 15-member standing body responsible for matters relating to taxation and other revenue measures in the Commonwealth. In addition to Education, the Finance Committee's other subcommittees are Capital Outlay, Claims, Economic Development/Natural Resources, General Government/Technology, Health and Human Resources, Public Safety, and Transportation.

VIMS is a leading marine science center and an independent state agency whose research empowers Virginians to protect and restore Chesapeake Bay and the coastal ocean. The School of Marine Science at VIMS is a graduate school of the College of William and Mary.



SCHEV director Peter Blake addresses members of the Education Subcommittee of the Virginia Senate Finance Committee during their public meeting at VIMS. From L at table: senators Marsh, Norment, Hanger, Watkins, and Ruff. Photo by Susan Stein.