The Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Severe Disabilities is funded through a grant from the Virginia Department of Education to George Mason University, Virginia Commonwealth University, the University of Virginia, Radford University, and Norfolk State University. The purpose of the program is to increase the number of teachers in the state of Virginia with endorsement in severe disabilities (SD) through a statewide distance education based program.

Currently nearly 75% of the SD teachers in Virginia are not fully licensed. The Consortium integrates the use of distance education technologies, including videoconferencing and other supporting technologies in the delivery of all course instruction. The Consortium's approach to providing distance-learning opportunities for their students stresses the importance of hands-on experiences in order to provide a quality program of study. Additionally, it simultaneously encourages the use of multiple technologies with human interactions. The consortium utilizes video conferencing equipment to establish real-time, interactive, multipoint conference instruction among the 5 universities for each class taught. Through video conferencing, students at all five universities see and communicate with the professor and the other university students in real time. Furthermore, students at all classroom sites view multimedia presentations, including video and PowerPoint slides, through the video-conferencing equipment, also in real-time. A Blackboard online course delivery system also provides 24/7 asynchronous access to students, professors, and course materials. Use of a video-streaming server allows for individual access of the curriculum for students more than two hours away from any of the participating universities while also serving as a course archive system.

The majority of individuals who have thus far enrolled in the program are special education teachers working with students with severe disabilities. Though not a requirement, most have not been fully licensed and as a result have decided to enroll in the SD Consortium. Applicants may apply to earn their endorsement in severe disabilities or to earn a master's degree plus endorsement in severe disabilities. Participation may
be on a part-time or full-time basis. The application process involves two levels of application: a) to the closest participating university and b) to the Virginia Consortium for Teacher Preparation in Severe Disabilities. When applying to the university for admission to the school of education, candidates either apply for professional development status (endorsement only) or for master degree status.

Every semester, the Consortium awards a limited number of tuition waivers to applicants who meet the requirements. These waivers are awarded at the beginning of each semester but only for those courses that apply to endorsement in severe disabilities. Students must maintain grades of "B" or better to retain funding. Students are required to purchase all books and supplies for the courses. Courses taken through the Consortium program can be applied for re-certification points, with approval from the student's school division. Students accepted into the program are required to use email communication, maintain regular class attendance, communicate with course instructors about individual needs, prepare papers that conform to APA style, and engage in class discussions as active participants. Prior to beginning coursework, participants attend an orientation session on the use of distance education technology at their respective university site. In order to be considered for this program, an applicant must either teach students with severe disabilities or have access to students with severe disabilities in an educational setting. First preference is given to school personnel currently working with students with severe disabilities in all geographic areas of Virginia. Other applicants will also be considered.

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