

TOMORROW'S UNIVERSITY

Draft: as of 10.17.2011

It should be said that we are pursuing these topics through discussion as a way to sort out the issues that need to be addressed regardless of the structure of the university. The content of this document is a "work-in-progress". Other voices, in the context of improvement, are welcome. This document does not, at present, propose a position as to how the university shall proceed.

Key Idea, Concept, or Objective:

Efficiently and effectively apply VT's existing physical, financial, personnel, information technology and research core resources, and secure additional resources, to better meet the varying demographics and needs of students as well as to raise the national and international profile of VT and enable the university to pursue innovations and seize opportunities that may arise.

Strategy #1- Trimester:

Develop, promote and support a trimester operation across the university for those academic programs and student support units that would benefit from this model.

Strategy #2- Governance and Operations:

Continuously examine the structure and schedule of the existing governance system and overall university operations to identify where change is needed to expedite specific types of decisions and to improve the quality and efficiency of the institution.

Strategy #3- Multi-Disciplinary and Collaborative:

Promote and support creation of a Strategic Initiatives and Development Team (SIDT) to assist existing academic and support units across campus to assess, plan, and evaluate prospective multi-disciplinary collaborative degrees, partnership programs and other types of initiatives.

Strategy #4 – Global Experiences:

In addition to maintaining the quality and diversity of our current international academic, research and development initiatives, proactively and consistently improve the quality, diversity, and effectiveness of undergraduate international experiences with a goal of significantly increasing the number of VT undergraduates gaining such an international experience. Ensure that every student graduates with the skills and competencies (language, cultural, business, etc.) necessary to live and work in a truly global marketplace.

Rationale:

By improving the existing infrastructure, garnering additional resources, and using existing resources in a more cost-conscious and effective manner, the faculty, students, and staff will thrive and excel, and thereby enhance VT's stature in higher education and better serve its constituencies while positioning itself in the global perspective.

Rationale Strategy #1-Trimester:

Innovative, flexible models of operation are needed to meet and exceed the diverse needs of our undergraduate and graduate students in the most efficient, cost-conscious manner. The opportunity for trimester operation by interested academic units could create a greater diversity in the timing and content of courses; increase the flexibility of students to study abroad, obtain internships and co-ops year-round; better meet the needs of non-traditional students; enable undergraduates to graduate in less than four years, if desired; and relieve certain challenges related to physical space limitations, in particular in the STEM-H fields. By

increasing flexibility to offer courses across the year, yet maintaining the typical 9-month contract, a trimester system would allow faculty to design their course schedules and departments to design their curricular delivery to allow faculty flexibility in research time outside of the traditional summer period. A trimester operation could facilitate more timely decisions by enabling the governance processes to continue uninterrupted through the summer and allow additional schedule flexibility for students to engage in global experiences.

Rationale Strategy #2- Governance and Operations:

Higher education is under increasing scrutiny by the public and their policy makers. Tuition has risen in excess of inflation over the last three decades. Recent state disinvestments have compounded the unsustainable annual tuition increases. Even at the best universities, about 25 percent of incoming students do not graduate in six years. Accountability is again a watchword. Universities, particularly the public institutions, must continuously search for new methods of efficiency to generate internal resources to fund priority or initiate new programs. As the social and economic environment in which the university operates seems to move and change ever more quickly, so too the university community must be agile and able to respond quickly to the needs of citizens and society. Becoming more agile and responsive in how we make decisions on both the traditional governance and the operational aspects of the university is critical.

Rationale Strategy #3- Multi- Disciplinary and Collaborative:

Commentary: Multi-disciplinary efforts are successfully in action across the university, however, these are primarily research-based. There are emerging initiatives for paths of study that would be academic-based, i.e. degrees and strategic initiatives, and these are the realms that we intend to address in this strategy, no pure research initiatives.

Our existing university governance and operations structures do not always allow for the flexibility that is necessary to meet in a timely and objective manner the emerging opportunities and needs of the university and society. The formation of a Strategic Initiatives and Development Team as a facilitator for new majors and degrees, strategic initiatives, and institutional partnerships will provide a neutral partner for the analysis of proposals, development of business plans when appropriate, and assignment to appropriate 'home' college, institute or other entity for implementation. Ideas may originate within academic or support units, from the administration, or be proposed by external sources; and this office would work with those units to develop, plan, analyze, and facilitate implementation of new degree programs and initiatives in the appropriate academic or support unit. Transitioning select programs and operations to a trimester system, or implementing more, effective programs to engage our students in global experiences will require multi-disciplinary collaboration and are examples of how this team may better assist development of strategic initiatives.

Rationale Strategy #4- Global Experiences:

Commentary: The university scorecard report at the link below indicates that 1159 or 20.6% of graduating undergraduates participated in a study abroad experiences during their tenure at VT. The goal from the current strategic plan was to double the 2005 level and we have consistently exceeded that goal. Our committee engaged in discussion about wanting to proactively and consistently increase that number even further. One barrier is cost. Another is value-added engagement (meaningful to the discipline of study). Moreover, we have not looked to our international students as a resource; no forum exists in which they can educate the university community about the societies from which they come.

http://www.ir.vt.edu/VT_Stats/IR%20Customers%202/Strategic/BOV%20Scorecard%20Scholarship%20Domains-November%202010.pdf

To attract resources, students, and partnerships from outside the United States, we must also raise the university's profile worldwide. It is no longer sufficient to be concerned with how the university compares with other universities in the nation; we must begin to evaluate how our programs compare with the best programs around the world. Concurrently, as borders come down and business in all disciplines becomes increasingly international, graduating students in ALL fields must have opportunity for international engagement and experiences, particularly study abroad, as a component of their undergraduate experience. Our students also serve as effective representatives of the quality and impact of Virginia Tech when they are living, working and studying in other parts of the world. The world also comes to VT and as part of, but not the sole means, of a plan to increase global experiences, we must not only send our students abroad, but also engage the local-global connections (resident international students) in Blacksburg and other regional campuses of the institution.

BENEFITS

Strategy #1- Trimester:

- Undergraduate students able to double major, add minors without extending the years needed to complete those degrees.
- Students able to more broadly participate in internships, co-op jobs and other off-campus opportunities year-round.
- Opportunities for study abroad and international experiences for undergraduate and graduate students improved.
- Greater frequency and diversity of course offerings for interested academic units.
- Non-traditional undergraduate and graduate students will be better able to assimilate and achieve diverse objectives, (*e.g. 'non-traditional' undergraduate students might finish in less than 4 years; 'non-traditional' graduate students may also have more flexible schedule.*)
- Enables the university to be more responsive to varying goals of the students, (*e.g. this strategy might meet the needs of those that want to expedite graduation and those that want even more research/study abroad/co-op experiences outside of the summer months.*)
- 'Potentially' accommodate more students IF the faculty, staff, and facility resources can be increased to meet this demand.
- Gives faculty more flexibility with their 9-month contract, (*e.g. summer- fall assignment versus typical, fall-spring assignment.*)
- Greater utilization of physical facilities across the year; especially lab spaces needed for STEM-H fields.

Strategy #2- Governance and Operations:

- Curricular additions and changes would be expedited.
- Look for more ways to link resource allocation to data-driven, real-time information.
- Improve the management and allocation of space to improve efficiency and quality through the implementation of an automated space inventory system.
- Enable timelier student-life, faculty and operational policies.
- Evaluate opportunities to enhance operational efficiencies through the autonomy gained in 2005 Management Agreement with the Commonwealth of Virginia under the Higher Education Restructuring Act, as well as continue to work with the state and other Level 3 institutions on gaining additional autonomy in specified areas.

- Create a university-wide cost conscious mindset in the development, implementation, and management of all programs and services in order to remain competitive and advance market position. *(The efforts to increase and strategically allocate revenues are critical to the future of the University. At the same time, the university's pace to increase those revenues is likely to be controlled and constrained by various political, market, demographic, and management forces. To remain competitive and advance market position in an environment of steady but slow revenue growth, significant efforts at cost control for delivery of services and products will be essential. The university should actively explore innovative means and methods for quality delivery of all academic and administrative functions.)*
- Analyze support service functions to decide whether we need them, and what is the right structure for them. *(If we need it, what is the best way to provide these support services—through modification of current models, further utilization of our related corporations, or privatization of select functions?)*
- Utilize better managed, and new, resources to rebuild and retain university personnel, (e.g. tenure-track faculty, instructors, professors of practice, research faculty, gta/gra's, and staff) through competitive compensation, new hires, and other incentives.
- Make more informed decisions going forward by knowing the true costs and benefits of programs in real-time.

Strategy#3-- Multi- Disciplinary and Collaborative

- Guided and timely discussions and decisions.
- Weigh costs and benefits in a neutral, consistent way.
- Resources effectively and efficiently directed towards dealing with the big questions for our university and society *(Questions arose pertaining to what resources would take to add 1000 graduate students? Or what about new overarching and multi-disciplinary degrees focused on water or the environment?)*
- Incubator of ideas, business plans, etc.

Strategy #4- Global Experiences:

- Raising the profile will not happen by accident, we need to be creative in allocating resources to existing and new research, teaching, and development actions.
- Assists in attracting and retaining the best students, staff, and faculty.
- Assists in development activities (e.g. the next fundraising campaign)
- Our students will benefit now and in the future job market by participating in a high quality international experience.
- May interface well with current students' interests in language lab, furthering language instruction at VT through creative pedagogical methods.

Potential Obstacles

Strategy #1- Trimester:

- Difficult to change curriculum for all majors; need to determine which changes would be most advantageous for select programs with an interest in trimester operation.
- Tracking people and resources.
- Rescheduling maintenance on facilities, coordinating smoothly with existing camps and orientation, *(maybe not a problem in the beginning.)*
- Culture shift needed *(Faculty appointments would likely remain 9-months. Issues would arise around which two semesters to teach. Staggered but overlapping appointments would occur.)*
- The two summer sessions combined are not equal in length to spring or fall semester. *(Currently, summer =12 weeks, traditional semester =16 weeks. New, 14.6 weeks per semester.)*

- Because of U.S. cultural history, many college students work over summer break. Stimulating summer enrollment could be difficult initially.
- What would be the financial model?
- Extending the academic year with no corresponding extension or expansion of financial aid (both federal and institutional) will require students to increase borrowing, or more creatively allocate current borrowing, to support year-round attendance.
- Can institutional financial aid be administered on a flexible schedule, not to exceed 8 trimesters in total for undergraduate study?
- Exact mode of implementation should be explored; may range from a true trimester where each trimester is about 14 weeks with financial operation similar to fall and spring to the transition of summer session to a self-funded enterprise with alternative tuition and fee rates and resource allocation methods.
- How many graduation dates would we need? One for each trimester, or just one per year?
- Increased financial support for faculty if the net result is to increase our classroom offerings as opposed to simply distributing them in a different way.

Strategy #2- Governance and Operations:

- Carefully retaining shared intent of the current governance system.
- Current system has to approve the new system.
- Apathy.
- Would enough faculty and staff be available during summer to serve on committees, (*even if some are 12-months, could there be reassignment of job duties?*)
- Exact model needs to be explored; slight modifications of current system (e.g. holding University Council in January, skipping September) might be a step in the right direction, but is it enough?

Strategy #3- Multi- Disciplinary and Collaborative:

- Perception of increased bureaucracy.
- Perception of delayed decision-making.

Strategy #4- Global Experiences:

- Trying to determine what matters for these rankings when they are relatively new.
- Trying to seek a greater global profile while remaining faithful to our land-grant mission in the Commonwealth.

Unresolved Issues

Strategy #1- Trimester:

Commentary: Please note that our committee is attempting to focus on this issue of the trimester as a possible new approach to your academic curriculum delivery, not simply a fix to problems with the summer school model. Without a doubt, there would need to be an infusion and rearrangement of existing resources to truly implement a trimester without sacrificing the quality and diversity of our curricular offerings in Fall and Spring.

- Financial model for summer operations and enrollment that would not impact resources available for fall and spring operations.
- What would be the optimal goal for summer enrollment, how would this change over 6 years?
- The need to schedule space maintenance and renewal in a year-round operational mode.

Strategy #2- Governance and Operations:

- Apathy towards governance—how do we overcome perception of ‘top down’ and ‘bottom up’ barriers to involvement in governance?
- Better training and responsibility by chairs in formulating agendas and sharing minutes.
- Collective and broad communication needed.

Strategy #3- Multi- Disciplinary and Collaborative:

- Strategic Initiatives and Development Team obstacles: funding, personnel, logistics, and retention of personnel.

Strategy #4- Global Experience:

- What steps should we take to raise the global profile? *(One idea is to enter (and win) international competitions, such as the International Solar Decathlon and RoboCup. Another idea is that we need to become even more selective in choosing the foreign universities with which we partner. It is not sufficient merely to enter into international collaborations, but to enter into collaborations with the most distinguished programs and universities around the world. When a faculty member considers entering into an MOU with a foreign university (the university enters into more than a hundred MOUs each year), it may be difficult for an individual faculty member to ascertain the foreign school’s standing among other schools in that nation. It would be helpful to have some mechanism for evaluating the foreign school before VT enters into an MOU with the foreign school.)*
- What process should we implement to vet MOUs and international partnerships for quality, not just quantity?
- Need to provide language instruction for students who do not wish to major or minor in a foreign language, but who need to be sufficiently conversant to participate more fully in study abroad experiences and to have language competency upon graduation to enable him/her to work in a truly global marketplace. Language offerings must be expanded meet growing demand for instruction in languages of emerging global powers such as mandarin, Arabic, etc. Should delivery of such service courses be the responsibility of the Foreign Language Department or another unit? Our intent here is to explore options for helping our students develop conversational language skills. We recognize that immersion is still the best, or perhaps only viable, approach if one is seeking to develop language skills at a technical level.