



## Focused Reports

# Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Blacksburg, VA 24061

Charles W. Steger, President

[Steger@vt.edu](mailto:Steger@vt.edu)

(540) 231-6231

Daniel A. Wubah, Vice President and Dean for Undergraduate Education, and  
SACS Liaison

[Wubah@vt.edu](mailto:Wubah@vt.edu)

(540) 231-4167

Robin Panneton, VT-SACS Coordinator

[Panneton@vt.edu](mailto:Panneton@vt.edu)

(540) 231-9770

Onsite Review Visit: March 16 – 18, 2010

Prepared for the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools: Commission on Colleges



## Table of Contents

<b>Focused Report 2.5</b>	Institutional Effectiveness	03-07
<b>Focused Report 2.11.1</b>	Financial Resources	08
<b>Focused Report 3.2.1</b>	CEO Evaluation/Selection	09-10
<b>Focused Report 3.2.5</b>	Board Dismissal	11-12
<b>Focused Report 3.3.1.1</b>	Educational Programs	13-16
<b>Focused Report 3.3.1.2</b>	Administrative Support Services	17-20
<b>Focused Report 3.3.1.3</b>	Educational Support Services	21-22
<b>Focused Report 3.6.3</b>	Institutional Credits for Degree	23-24
<b>Focused Report 3.7.1</b>	Faculty Competence	25-27
<b>Focused Report 4.5</b>	Student Complaints	28-31

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



**2.5** The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that (1) incorporate a systematic review of institutional mission, goals, and outcomes; (2) result in continuing improvement in institutional quality; and (3) demonstrate the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

Virginia Tech is engaged in ongoing, integrated and institution-wide research-based planning that incorporates a systematic review of institutional mission, goals and outcomes; however, because assessment results were sparse, Virginia Tech did not satisfactorily evidence that its evaluation processes are institution-wide, ongoing, result in continuous improvement and demonstrate that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. Virginia Tech provided copies of its five-year strategic plans dating back to 1991. The campus community is engaged in the review and revision of mission, goals and objectives during the updating of the strategic plan. Virginia Tech uses a Scorecard with a set of performance indicators to assess its progress. The Scorecard consists of Institutional Performance Standards established by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) which all public institutions must report on, as well as some of Virginia Tech's own performance indicators. The narrative indicated that annual reports are used to identify accomplishments in the strategic plan domains of learning, discovery, engagement and foundations and that college deans are also encouraged by the Provost to include performance data on college-specific goals in the annual report. The Scorecard is reported annually to the Board of Visitors and published on the President's website for the campus community to view. A copy of the Provost's instructions for preparing the annual report was provided; however, no examples of the annual reports used to evidence accomplishments were included in the documentation provided.

### **VT Response:**

Virginia Tech engages in ongoing, integrated and institution-wide research-based planning that incorporates a systematic review of institutional mission, goals and outcomes. Evolving strategic plans (dating back to 1991) demonstrate that the institution incorporates a systematic review of institutional mission, goals and outcomes. The university recently completed a mid-term review of the

current University Strategic Plan [1]. This mid-term review is structured to provide information and insights at three levels:

- **Level I** provides a snap-shot of accomplishments associated with the general benchmarks identified under the 2012 Profile for each Scholarship Domain in the current strategic plan.
- **Level II** continues the review of progress through an assessment of the trajectories of the key indicator metrics that are collectively referred to as the University Scorecard. The scorecard is used as a mechanism by which the university can gauge its progress toward the goals it is established in the Strategic Plan.
- **Level III** provides a closer look at a select set of goals extracted from the three Scholarship Domains and the Foundation Strategies. This analysis focuses on goals for which mid-term adjustments or clearer documentation may be most relevant. Implicit in the Level III review is an evaluation of key issues that have arisen since the current plan was initiated.

From this review, the senior vice president and provost extracted a summary list of recommendations and issues for further consideration during the spring semester—resulting in an action plan for the 2010-11 fiscal year [2]. Moreover, the provost divided the university strategic plan *scorecard* [3] into individual college level *scorecards* and annual outcomes that document year-to-year trends in each college on the key shared metrics of the strategic plan. This subdivision of the university scorecard has allowed each college to align its

goals, objectives, assessments, and action plans with those of the university as a whole. Not only has this promoted a culture of ongoing assessment, but the scorecard has provided a tangible platform for viewing both strengths and weaknesses in activities that are put into place to achieve goals, but may in fact require adjustment as the dynamics of real-time developments and challenges present themselves. College-level scorecards are available in the documentation [4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12].

In addition to scorecards, each college reports on actions and activities, including program adjustments, related to the shared performance data in their annual reports [13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26]. Senior administrators are encouraged to include additional area-specific measures that are used to measure activity against the unit's strategic plan goals. In addition, goals and objectives for the following year are articulated and provide the action plan for implementing continuous improvement. In response to the comments made by the offsite review panel, annual reports (from the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 cycles) are provided for 6 additional senior academic units in the documentation [27,28,29,30,31,32,33,34,35,36,37,38]. Such institutional effectiveness also extends to the divisions of Finance (presented in more detail below) and Administrative Services (documented in VT's focused report on Standard 3.3.1.2).

Virginia Tech's institutional effectiveness and commitment to continuous improvement are further evidenced through the 2008-09 annual report for all units within the finance division [39,40]. Each unit's mission is identified, an

organizational chart is supplied, and a summary of accomplishments in support of the University Strategic Plan is included. Each unit addressed its objectives, linking them to the University Strategic Plan. The current status of each objective is reported, relative to accomplishing the stated goals, and, where appropriate, action items for the upcoming year. In conjunction with this document, each unit within the finance area developed goals and objectives based on the comparison of the previous year's goals with the accomplishments of the past year [41,42].

### **Supporting Documentation**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Link</b>
1	Mid-term Review of the 2006-2012 Strategic Plan	<a href="#">Strategic Plan mid_term_review_12_17_09</a>
2	Provost's Action Plan to Mid-Term Review	<a href="#">Action Plan provost_response_1_08_10</a>
3	University Strategic Plan Goals 2006-2012-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_VT</a>
4	College of Veterinary Medicine-Scorecard Response 2007/08	<a href="#">CVM Annual Report 2007-08 Scorecard Response</a>
5	College of Veterinary Medicine-Scorecard Response 2008/09	<a href="#">CVM Annual Report 2008-09 Scorecard Response</a>
6	College of Architecture and Urban Studies-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_CAUS</a>
7	College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_CLAHS</a>
8	College of Natural Resources-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_CNR</a>
9	College of Engineering-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_COE</a>
10	College of Science-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_COS</a>
11	Pamplin College of Business-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_PCOB</a>
12	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences-Scorecard	<a href="#">Scorecard_CALS</a>
13	College of Engineering-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">2007-08 Annual Report for the College of Engineering</a>
14	College of Engineering-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">2008-09 Annual Report for the College of Engineering</a>
15	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">College Agriculture Life Science Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
16	College of Agriculture and Life Sciences-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Col of Agriculture and Life Science Annual Report 2008-09</a>
17	College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences 2007-2008 Annual Report</a>
18	College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences annual 2008-2009</a>
19	College of Natural Resources-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">College of Natural Resources 2007-2008 Annual Report</a>

20	College of Natural Resources-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">College of Natural Resources Annual Report 2008-2009</a>
21	College of Science-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">College of Science Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
22	College of Science-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">College Of Science Annual Report 2008-09</a>
23	Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">College Vet Med Annual Report 2007-08</a>
24	Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">College Vet Med Annual Report 2008-09</a>
25	Pamplin College of Business-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Pamplin College of Business Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
26	Pamplin College of Business-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Pamplin College Bus Annual Report 08-09</a>
27	Outreach and International Affairs-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Outreach and International Affairs Annual Report 2007-08</a>
28	Outreach and International Affairs-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Outreach and International Affairs Annual Report 2008-09</a>
29	National Capital Region Office-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">National Capital Region annual report for 2007-08</a>
30	National Capital Region Office-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">National Capital Region annual report 2008-2009</a>
31	Graduate Education-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Graduate School Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
32	Graduate Education-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Graduate School Annual Report 2008-2009</a>
33	Undergraduate Education-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Undergraduate Education Annual Report 2008-2009</a>
34	VP and Dean for Undergraduate Education-Goals 2009/10	<a href="#">UG Education Wubah_goals for 2009-10</a>
35	Division of Student Affairs-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Division of Student Affairs Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
36	Division of Student Affairs-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Division of Student Affairs Annual Report 2008-2009</a>
37	Office of VP for Research-Annual Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Office of Vice Pres Research Annual Report 2007-2008</a>
38	Office of VP for Research-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Office Vice Pres Research Annual Report 2008-2009</a>
39	Division of Finance-Final Report 2007/08	<a href="#">Division of Finance Final Report 2007-2008</a>
40	Division of Finance-Annual Report 2008/09	<a href="#">Finance Division Annual Report 2008-09</a>
41	Division of Finance-Goals and Objectives 2009/10	<a href="#">Division of Finance Goals Objectives 2009-10</a>
42	VP for Finance-Progression of Goals	<a href="#">VP for Finance - Sample Progression of Goals</a>

# Virginia Tech Focused Report



**3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the periodic evaluation of the chief executive officer. **(CEO evaluation/selection)**

## **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

The Board of Visitors is responsible for the selection and evaluation of the president of the University. The Board has a process for the evaluation of the president. However, the Committee was not able to find documentation of the periodic evaluation of the president.

### **VT Response:**

The current president obtained tenure in Virginia Tech's College of Architecture and Urban Studies in 1981 and continues to hold tenure. However, he has no contract for his presidential appointment and in that role serves at the pleasure of the Board and is subject to annual review and reappointment. The basis for the Board's annual reappointment decision, as demonstrated in the attached evaluation letters [1, 2], includes the president's annual report, which describes activities and accomplishments for the year and progress towards goals and objectives, and articulates goals for the coming year. The Board also considers the overall state of the university, which is based in large part on the status of goals enumerated in the university's strategic plan, as reported annually to the Board. In addition, President Steger participated in a periodic review that involved a formal 360-degree feedback process and was carried out by the Center for Creative Leadership in February 2007 [3].

### **Supporting Documentation**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Link</b>
1	Virginia Tech BOV Evaluation Letter of President Steger	Pres Eval Letter - Dec2009

	2009	
2	Virginia Tech BOV Evaluation Letter of President Steger 2007	Pres eval letter – Dec 2007
3	Administrative Assessment Schedule	<a href="#">doc 19 under 3.2.10</a>

# Virginia Tech Focused Report



**2.11.1** The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (1) an institutional audit (or *Standard Review Report* issued in accordance with *Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services* issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (or *Standard Review Report*) guide; (2) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and (3) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board. **(Financial Resources)**

### **Committee’s Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

The institution has not provided audited financial statements for its most recent fiscal year. Audited financial statements were provided for the fiscal year ended June 2008 and the institution indicates that it will provide audited financials to the SACS Commission upon completion of those statements by the Auditor of Public Accounts of the Commonwealth of Virginia. A review of the institution’s financial statements and trends in its financial ratios indicate a sound financial base and the financial stability required to support the institutional mission. Additionally, Moody’s Investor Services upgraded the university’s debt rating to Aa2 from Aa3.

### **VT Response:**

Virginia Tech demonstrates a sound financial base and ongoing fiscal stability in support of the institutional mission. The most current audited financial report for the 2008-2009 fiscal year is attached [1].

### **Supporting Documentation**

Ref	Title	Link
1	Virginia Tech’s 2008-2009 Financial Report	<a href="#">VT FY2009 financial report final</a>

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



**3.2.5** The governing board has a policy whereby members can be dismissed only for appropriate reasons and by a fair process. **(Board dismissal)**

### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

There is a policy regarding dismissal of the Board. The institution has not, however, demonstrated whether it has implemented this policy.

#### **VT Response:**

To date, there has never been cause to pursue dismissal of a member of the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors. The attached membership spreadsheets demonstrate that with the exception of two Board members who voluntarily resigned from the Board, all Board members completed their four-year term from 2006 to 2009 [1]. In 2002, Mr. Tom Rust resigned upon his election to the state legislature. In 2003, Mr. Bruce Smith resigned in anticipation that he would not be able to fulfill attendance requirements due to his professional obligations in the National Football League.

One of the provisions of the Board's policy provides for a Board member to be dismissed if he or she fails to perform his/her duties as a Board member for one year without good cause. Attached is a copy of a report entitled "Board Profile" that the institution is required to submit annually to the Secretary of the Commonwealth, which is the secretariat that manages appointments to the Virginia Tech Board of Visitors, among many others, for the Governor. This Board Profile requires a report of attendance for each Board member. The attached Profile provides evidence of the Virginia Tech Board members' stellar attendance record [2].

### Supporting Documentation

Ref	Title	Link
1	BOV Membership Terms	<a href="#">BOV Membership Charts</a>
2	Confidential Governors Working Papers Board Profile - December 2009	<a href="#">BOV Profile</a>

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



\* **3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):

3.3.1.1 educational programs, to include student learning outcomes

### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

Virginia Tech offers 65 bachelor's degree programs and 145 master's and doctoral degree programs, however student learning outcomes data was provided for only eight degree programs. The committee examined all eight degree programs; all had identified student learning outcomes and measures, but assessment data and changes planned as a result of assessment findings was sparse. In many instances, data for the 2008-09 academic year was not available on WEAVEOnline. The narrative states that "Virginia Tech's size and breadth of programs have represented a challenge in implementing the online assessment process" and "levels of success in developing meaningful measures and operationalizing among departments." The documentation provided did not evidence that all of Virginia Tech's educational programs are assessed and that improvements are made on the basis of assessment findings.

### **VT Response:**

All degree programs at Virginia Tech have developed assessment processes to improve student learning. These continuous improvement processes consist of identifying student learning outcomes, identifying/developing measures of those outcomes, measuring the outcomes, using the results to identify areas of change, making appropriate changes, and continuing the process by measuring student learning again. The process has developed differently depending on the nature of the program or unit. The majority of degree programs have collected data to measure their outcomes and to inform change. However, some programs have used the process initially to make explicit changes in focus and direction and have spent more time re-

writing outcomes, developing measurement instruments, and, in several cases, rewriting their curriculum to map onto more explicitly developed outcomes.

Though many assessment processes were ongoing in programs, changes in the leadership of the Office of Academic Assessment and additions of staff in 2006-2007 energized the process across campus. As a result, degree programs started receiving specific guidance in the development of their assessment efforts in the form of campus-wide and department-tailored workshops. All programs are currently provided with tasks and timelines, and they are asked to view their assessment process as one of continuous improvement intended to enhance teaching and learning.

In addition to staff changes in the Office of Academic Assessment, the acquisition of the WEAVEonline® software in late 2006 provided a tool to document assessment efforts as they changed and evolved from year to year. This tool provides a repository for the detailed activities related to assessment in each of the degree programs. The following documents, drawn from WEAVE, illustrate the assessment process at Virginia Tech:

1. Attached reports from bachelor-, master-, and doctoral-level programs show the richness and breadth of the assessment effort that can be documented in WEAVE. Each report shows detailed student learning outcomes, measures, findings, and action plans reported by programs. The institution's goal is for this level of reporting to become a routine part of our culture of assessment as demonstrated by the sample documents below [1,2,3].
2. Attached is a comprehensive report that provides an all-encompassing view of the breadth of the assessment effort on our campus, summarizing program

changes made in the last three years as a result of assessment activities for every degree program [4].

### **Supporting Documentation**

<b>Ref</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Link</b>
1	2008-2009 Mechanical Engineering, B.S. Assessment Report	<a href="#">BS-Mechanical Engineering-WEAVEreport</a>
2	2008-2009 English, M.A. Assessment Report	<a href="#">English-MA-WEAVEreport</a>
3	2008-2009 Chemistry, PH.D. Assessment Report	<a href="#">Chemistry-PhD-WEAVEreport</a>
4	Comprehensive Table of Program Changes resulting from Assessment Outcomes (2008-2009)	<a href="#">Program-Changes-WEAVEreport</a>

[Some documentation removed for confidentiality]



## Virginia Tech Focused Report



\* **3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):

### 3.3.1.2 administrative support services

#### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

Assessment plans were submitted for a sample (14) of administrative support units within the Division of Academic Affairs. The assessment results presented were from 2007-08. Most plans contained partial assessment data, for only 1 or 2 of the objectives listed. Sample assessments and outcomes data, mostly from 2005-06 were provided for the Division of Student Affairs; however, no assessment data linked to strategic plans were provided for the other divisions of Virginia Tech. The documentation provided does not evidence that Virginia Tech has identified expected outcomes for all of its administrative support offices, assessed the extent to which it has achieved those outcomes and provided evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results.

#### **VT Response:**

Virginia Tech identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in the area of administrative support services. The initial response for this narrative focused on areas within the administrative structure of the office of the senior vice president and provost and included unit assessment reports for 2006-07 and 2007-08. We are now able to provide the 2008-09 assessment process for those 14 administrative units [1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10,11,12,13,14,15]. The most recent reports provide evidence that the scope of continuous assessment and improvement has increased significantly in the last year. Additionally, several units that report to the vice president for student affairs are considered administrative support service units.

Reports of their continuous improvement for the 2008-2009 academic year are included in the documentation for this focused report [16,17,18,19,20,21,22].

The vice president for administrative services (VPAS) also prepares and submits an annual report to the university president [23]. The annual report begins with an overarching summary in which performance and progress is compared against goals and objectives of the unit that support the University Strategic Plan’s Foundation Strategies (i.e., space, land and energy resources; health, safety, and security operations; organizational development) and contribute to the institution effectively accomplishing its mission. This report identifies some of the plans and ongoing initiatives for the division, and demonstrates commitment to continuous improvement. VPAS has also provided evidence of institutional effectiveness for each of its 13 service units. Examples of the institutional effectiveness process are drawn from these unit reports in the accompanying documentation [24].

Finally, institutional effectiveness is ensured throughout the units reporting to the vice president for finance, as described and documented in Focus Report 2.5 (above).

### Supporting Documentation

Ref	Title	Link
1	2008-2009 Academic Assessment Assessment Report	<a href="#">Academic Assessment.pdf</a>
2	2008-2009 Academic Enrichment & Excellence Assessment Report	<a href="#">Academic Enrichment and Excellence.pdf</a>
3	Office of University Scholarships & Financial Aid Assessment Plan 2008-2009	<a href="#">USFA Assessment Plan</a>
4	Office of University Scholarships & Financial Aid Assessment Report 2008-2009	<a href="#">USFA Assessment Report</a>
5	2008-2009 Inst for Distance & Distributed Learning Report	<a href="#">Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning.pdf</a>
6	2008-2009 Institutional Research Assessment Report	<a href="#">Institutional Research.pdf</a>

5	2008-2009 Inst for Distance & Distributed Learning Report	<a href="#">Institute for Distance and Distributed Learning.pdf</a>
6	2008-2009 Institutional Research Assessment Report	<a href="#">Institutional Research.pdf</a>
7	2008-2009 Liberal Education Assessment Report	<a href="#">Liberal Education.pdf</a>
8	2008-2009 Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program Assessment Report	<a href="#">Multicultural Academic Opportunities Program.pdf</a>
9	2008-2009 Office of the Provost Assessment Report	<a href="#">Office of the Provost.pdf</a>
10	2008-2009 University Registrar Assessment Report	<a href="#">University Registrar.pdf</a>
11	2008-2009 Student Athlete Academic Support Services Assessment Report	<a href="#">Student Athlete Academic Support Svcs.pdf</a>
12	2008-2009 Center for Survey Research Assessment Report	<a href="#">Center for Survey Research.pdf</a>
13	2008-2009 Undergraduate Admissions Assessment Report	<a href="#">UG Admissions.pdf</a>
14	2008-2009 University Honors Program Assessment Report	<a href="#">University Honors.pdf</a>
15	Womens Services: Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">Womens Center.pdf</a>
16	Career Services : Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Career Services</a>
17	Cranwell International Services : Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Cranwell Intl Center</a>
18	Dining Services : Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Dining Services</a>
19	2008-2009 Military Affairs , Corps of Cadets Assessment Report	<a href="#">AP0809 Military Affairs Corps of Cadets</a>
20	Shiffert Health Center : Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Schiffert Health Center</a>
21	Services for Students with Disabilities: Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Services for Students with Disabilities</a>
22	Judicial Affairs : Assessment Report for 2008-2009	<a href="#">AP0809 Judicial Affairs</a>
23	vice president for administrative services 2008-2009 Annual Report	<a href="#">Final Report on 2007-2008.pdf</a>

24	vice president for administrative services 2008-2009: Examples of How Institutional Effectiveness is Assessed and Improved at the Unit Level	<a href="#">IE examples VPAS.xlsx</a>
----	--	---------------------------------------

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



\* **3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas (Institutional Effectiveness):

### **3.3.1.3 educational support services**

#### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

Virginia Tech provided assessment plans and assessment results for only 4 educational support services : Career Services, Center for Academic Excellence, University Academic Advising Center and the Office of Distance Learning and Summer Sessions. The documentation provided did not evidence that all of Virginia Tech's educational support services are assessed and that improvements are made on the basis of assessment findings.

#### **VT Response:**

The current offices of educational support services at Virginia Tech [1] support the students' academic and non-academic goals for college success. All educational support programs at Virginia Tech have begun to develop assessment processes to improve their ability to serve the academic needs of our students. These assessment processes consist of identifying program outcomes, identifying/developing measures of those outcomes, measuring the outcomes, using the results to identify areas of possible change, making appropriate changes, and continuing the process by measuring program effectiveness again. Such assessments have involved a variety of practices and tools, tailored to the specific needs of the programs. Of the 31 educational support offices currently in existence at Virginia Tech, 69% have implemented this full assessment cycle such that tangible improvements to their educational services are documented [2].

## Supporting Documentation

Ref	Title	Link
1	Educational Support Services at Virginia Tech (January 2010)	<a href="#">Summary list of services</a>
2	Continuous improvement for educational support services	<a href="#">Summary table</a>

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



**3.6.3** The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits through instruction offered by the participating institutions. **(Institutional credits for a degree)**

### Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance

Virginia Tech's published policy No. 194 allows a graduate student, upon approval, to transfer up to 50% of credits towards a graduate degree. The policy is as follows:

"Individual master's degree programs may, on approval of the Graduate School, be granted permission to allow up to 50% of the courses on the plan of study to be transferred from other institutions for programmatic reasons. Requests for such permission must be submitted in writing by the program to the Dean of the Graduate School, justifying the program's need for an extended allowance of transfer credit and suggesting what guidelines and limits would be appropriate. Requests are not made to grant exceptions for individual students. Requests will be reviewed by the Graduate Curriculum Committee, which will advise the Graduate School regarding action on such requests."

These changes being effective for students enrolling for the first time in or after the Spring semester of 2000; moreover, for existing programs which can document a history of regular, legitimate use of the 50% transfer allowance from Virginia Schools, the Graduate School may, at its discretion, accept the program's history in lieu of a written request. The Graduate School and the Commission on Graduate Studies.  
Degree requirements

Up to 50% by definition means 50% of course work can be transferred. If approval is granted to allow a student to transfer 50% of the degree requirements from another institution, mathematically it is impossible for that student to earn a majority of credits toward the degree through instruction offered by Virginia Tech. This policy renders Virginia Tech out of compliance with Comprehensive Standard 3.6.3.

### VT Response:

According to Virginia Tech's Policy Memorandum 194, the number of graduate transfer credits allowed refers to 50% of the required *graded* coursework in the Virginia

Tech degree program. Graded coursework means those courses for which students receive a grade of A-F (not pass-fail, EQ, etc.), which automatically excludes transferability of research credits and any other credits not evaluated on the A-F scale. By way of example, a thesis-based master's degree requires a minimum number of 30 total credits, with a minimum number of 20 *graded* credits. Therefore, a student could transfer a maximum of 10 *graded* course credits (under 50% of the total degree requirements). In the case of a non-thesis master's degree, the minimum number of total credits is again 30, and the minimum number of *graded* credits is 24, so a student could transfer a maximum of 12 *graded* course credits (again, under 50% of the total degree requirements). Therefore, the majority of credits toward the Virginia Tech degree are earned through instruction offered by the institution, rendering Virginia Tech in compliance with Standard 3.6.3. Non-graded credits (e.g., research) are not transferable across institutions.

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



**3.7.1** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty. **(Faculty competence)**

### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

Review of the Faculty Online Credential System indicates that the institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. A very high percentage of the tenured faculty holds the terminal degree in the teaching discipline. Adjunct, graduate teaching assistants and other part-time instructors typically hold master's degrees in the teaching discipline or a "closely-related" discipline. The Faculty Online Credential System displays information relevant to departmental justifications where appropriate, allowing for justifications of teaching to be matched to specific courses. The institution documented criteria for justification using criteria such as teaching competence and effectiveness (as evaluated by students and peers), related work experiences, professional licensures and certifications, honors and awards, as well as publications and presentations in the field. However, in a few cases especially related to part-time or adjunct faculty, insufficient documentation of teaching credentials or justifications was provided.

For each of the faculty members listed below, the committee either found the qualification of the faculty member to be unacceptable or the institution did not adequately justify and document the faculty member's qualifications to teach the course(s) identified in the second column. For each case, the committee checked the column appropriate to its findings.

The institution is requested to submit additional justification and documentation on the qualifications of each of the faculty listed. When responding, the institution should use the Commission's "Faculty Roster Form: Qualifications of Full-Time

*Resources, click onto Institutional.)* Read the instructions carefully and pay close attention to the section “Providing Information that Establishes Qualifications.” The completed form, or similar document, should be included as part of the institution’s formal response to the Commission.

(confidential)

**VT Response:**

Virginia Tech employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. Additional evidence for sufficient qualification is provided for those seven employees listed in the table above [1]. Additional summaries for each faculty member are also included [2,3,4,5,6,7,8].

**Supporting Documentation**

(confidential)

## Virginia Tech Focused Report



**\*4.5** The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints. (Student complaints; Requirement/Standard #4.5)

### **Committee Evaluation and Comments: Non-Compliance**

While the report lists many policies for response to student complaints as related to student behavior, academic grievance, or harassment, **the committee did not find examples indicating how these policies have been followed to address such matters.**

### **VT Response:**

Virginia Tech has extensive policies for responding to student complaints as related to student behavior, academic grievance, and/or harassment. The following examples are case studies of situations involving student complaints, from their receipt to their resolution. The first example was handled by the dean of students Office. The next two examples were handled by the Graduate School.

**Example 1:** A female undergraduate student grieved that she was uncomfortable in one of her science classes where an undergraduate male peer served as a recitation leader. She alleged that he was harassing her in the classroom. She became uncomfortable attending classes with him and rebuffed his advances. She approached the dean of students staff for assistance in resolving the matter. Specifically, she was wondering what her options were, and needed to feel comfortable in the classroom

setting again. The desired outcome from the young woman was not to get the male student “in trouble”, but instead to create a positive classroom climate for herself.

The dean of students staff worked with this student to explore university resources, establish initial appointments and provide follow-up support as needed. They assisted her with facilitating this process. First, the staff arranged a meeting between the young woman and the Virginia Tech Police (VTPD) to explore if there were grounds for filing charges. Next, the dean of students staff arranged a meeting with the Virginia Tech Women’s Center so she could meet with a counselor to address her personal and/or emotional stressors resulting from the situation. Then, with assistance from her academic dean’s office, the staff facilitated a class change for the young woman. This student chose to change classes and was able to find another section of the class that fitted her academic schedule. Finally, the dean of students staff informed faculty of the outcome and the student was relieved of his classroom leadership responsibilities (at the faculty member’s discretion). Subsequently, the dean of students staff did a follow-up with the female undergraduate student in the semester to see how she was adjusting to her new schedule and to enquire whether she had additional concerns. Since none were noted, the situation was considered resolved by staff.

**Example 2:** A graduate student submitted a grade appeal on November 4, 2009. The dean of the Graduate School notified the student on November 13 regarding the process and the convening of the Graduate Appeals Committee (a standing committee of the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies - CGSP). The appeals committee, consisting of four members of CGSP (3 faculty and 1 student), met on November 23 to review the materials submitted by the student in support of the appeal and other

information made available by the department. The appeals committee chair then sent a letter to the dean of the Graduate School on December 10, including their findings and recommendations. The committee found (1) the course requirements to be ambiguous, (2) the communication to the student regarding standing in the course was insufficient, and (3) the grading policies were unclear. Thus, the committee was unable to determine the appropriate final grade from the available information, and from acceptable measures of performance. The committee recommended that the student switch to audit.

The dean of the Graduate School accepted the committee's recommendations and in a letter dated December 17, 2009, notified the student about the final decision. According to Graduate School records, the student accepted the final determination, and changed from graded to audit for the class in question.

**Example 3:** A graduate student received notification from the Graduate Honor System about a guilty verdict for an honor code violation, and a resulting penalty on September 23, 2008. As required by the GHS constitution, the student submitted an appeal to the dean of the Graduate School within 5 business days. The appeal was based on the severity of the penalty. The dean of the Graduate School then convened an appeals committee that included a student and a faculty member from the Commission on Graduate Studies and Policies, and a student and a faculty member at large. The committee was chaired by the dean.

Next, the appeals committee met on November 18, 2008. The honor system was represented by the chief justice, the GHS advisor, and two members (one faculty and one student), who served on the judicial panel that made the original decision about the

student's case. The student participated in the meeting via phone. All parties presented evidence and arguments in front of the appeals committee. After the presentations were completed, the committee went into closed deliberations. The committee agreed that the penalty of Suspension in Abeyance with "F for violation of the Graduate Honor System" for the course was too severe. The Appeal Board reviewed lesser penalties and recommended Graduate Honor System probation, parts a, b, c and e.

As a result, the dean of the Graduate School concurred with the committee's finding and reduced the original penalty to GHS probation, Part 1, parts a, b, c, and e. The student was notified of the outcome of the appeal in a letter on November 21, 2008.