Online Strategy Task Force Final Recommendations

Sept. 2022

Online Strategy Taskforce Charge

- Develop strategy recommendations that will accelerate, scale and advance VCU's sustainable competitiveness in credit bearing courses and programs:
  - Ensure VCU offers **high quality online courses and programs**
  - Improve the **student experience** with online instruction at VCU
  - Improve the **faculty experience** with online course development and instruction
  - Increase and accelerate the development of **marketable online credentials** (i.e., degrees certificates, micro-credentials)
  - Expand online education to support **teaching, learning and innovation** in undergraduate and graduate courses
  - OST charge was later expanded to include **academic integrity in online exams**

VCU

Online Strategy Taskforce Organization

Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Innovation in Teaching and Learning

Recommendations

VCU should continue to build its internal capacity (and not outsource) to offer innovative teaching and learning opportunities in ways that are: (1) consistent with the institution's mission, (2) learner- and learning-focused, and (3) equitable and accessible.

1. Develop a **digital learning strategic plan** consistent with VCU's strategic plan and that adopts and adapts the best practices of leading institutions.
2. Go beyond traditional courses and credit-bearing programs and have **mechanisms to recognize dual enrollment, prior learning, and competency based pathways**.
3. Review of the **organizational structure and policy ecosystem** around online and digital learning and a **restructuring to best achieve overall organizational efficiency and to build internal capacity.**
4. Increase in online programming centers issues of **equity, inclusion, accessibility, affordability and the needs of our diverse learners**, particularly from marginalized populations.
5. Provide **comprehensive faculty support** for full- and part-time faculty **to develop and design high quality learning experiences in various modalities**.
6. Upgrading the **academic technology infrastructure** to provide greater support to the faculty and students.
7. Conducting a **gap analysis and designing a clear and transparent process for program adoption, and approval process**.
8. As VCU pursues innovation in teaching and learning and growth opportunities via distance education, it also **invests in** related **research and decision support services to support continuous improvement**.

VCU

High Quality Online Education

High Quality Workgroup Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Universally Endorsed Course Quality Rubric

- Adopt and implement the newly revised VCU Course Quality asynchronous and synchronous rubrics
  - Areas of Importance
    - Clear and organized
    - Engaging
    - Interactive
    - Collaborative
    - Timely, high-quality feedback
    - Timely evaluation to assess course success
    - Rapid response system to address course evaluation feedback

Recommendation 2: Accessibility in Online Courses

- A person or department on campus is identified to manage and support faculty with developing accessible materials that are ADA and WCAG compliant.

- Updates to the wording for the Student Code of Conduct policy are needed

Recommendation 3: Online Program Assessment

- Student assessment policies combined with the academic program review should continue to be applied to all courses

- Any additional course/program level rubrics developed by this workgroup should be integrated into the appropriate process.

Academic Integrity in Online Exams

Academic Integrity in Online Exams
Recommendations

A single solution does not exist, and can never exist to eliminate academic dishonesty in online exams

1. Provide the resources needed to obtain what would work best for each schools' programs and related assessment modalities.
2. Be upfront about the institution's commitment and intolerance towards academic dishonesty.
3. Require Student Honor Code Training/Acknowledgement
4. Provide training and resources for faculty to better understand and discuss academic integrity and honor code violations and consequences.
5. Increase support for faculty development regarding pedagogical strategies for assessments of learning that reduce the motivation to engage in academic dishonesty and make it more difficult to do so.
6. If a decision is made to use proctoring software to minimize academic dishonesty, the committee recommends several actions to ensure: student awareness, feedback, and training is considered in the process; maximization of existing resources, tools and platforms, and the "opportunity" factor for academic integrity issues is address with minimal privacy challenges.
7. Any new product be run on a trial basis for a full semester in conjunction with the current products before a final decision is made.
8. Investigate the possibility of proctoring reciprocity agreements with other universities and community colleges.

VCU

Marketable Credentials

Marketable Credentials

Recommendations

- Designate an office for oversight (i.e., Office of Micro-credentials)

- Graduate credit-inclusive micro-credentials should have a minimum of 6 credits and a maximum of 11 credits. The range for undergraduate credit-inclusive micro-credentials should be 1-8 credits.

- Develop a One-Stop Public Facing Website

- Faculty Support: Clear process and documentation for how faculty can create a micro-credential

- Infrastructure for University-Level Review and Approval of Micro-credentials
  - *Representative committee responsible for review and approval of new micro-credential proposals*
  - *Reviews completed within 1-2 months, including during the summer*
  - *Committee would also review existing micro-credentials to ensure non-duplication across the institution*

- Targeted Market-Based Programs
  - *Six detailed market considerations: (1) Develop comprehensive business plan, (2) Clearly articulate and inform public, (3) Targeted identification and reaching prospects, (4) Create recognition and nomenclature, (5) Embrace the student funnel, (6) Retention*

- *Other Considerations*

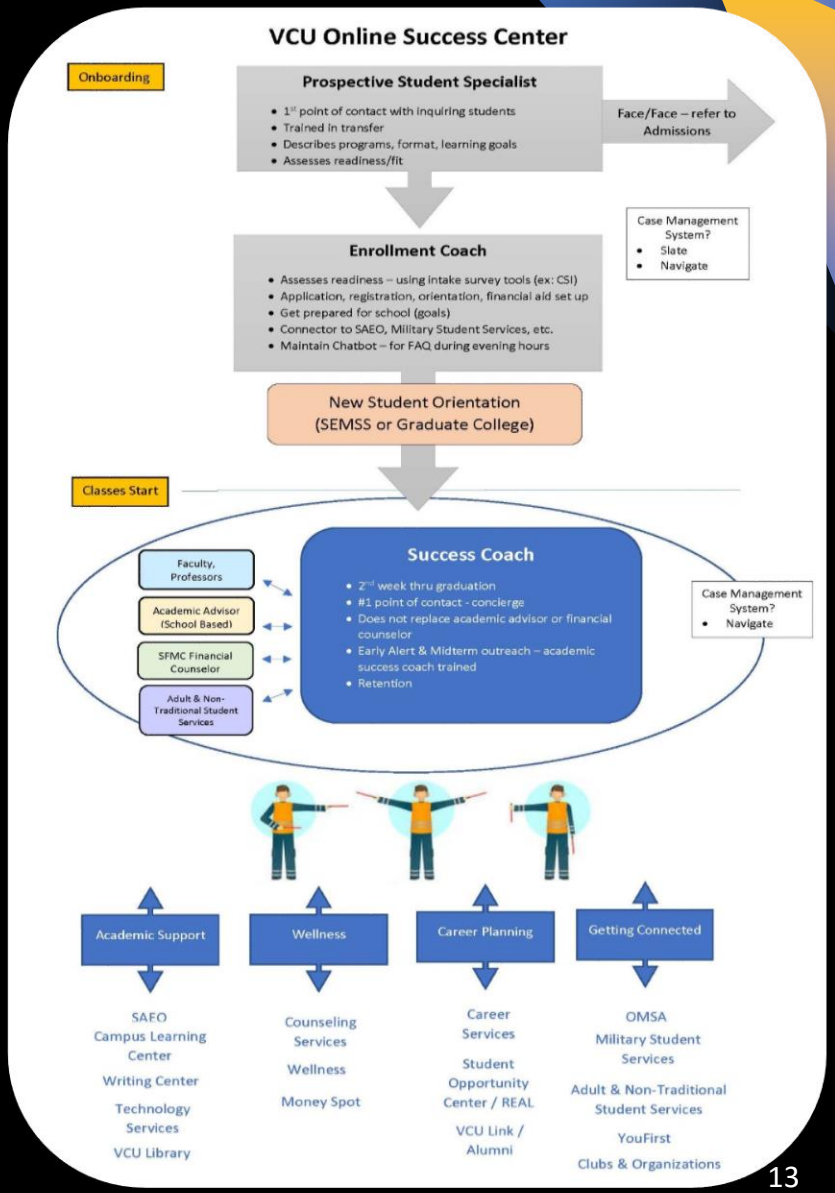
VCU

Student and Faculty Experience

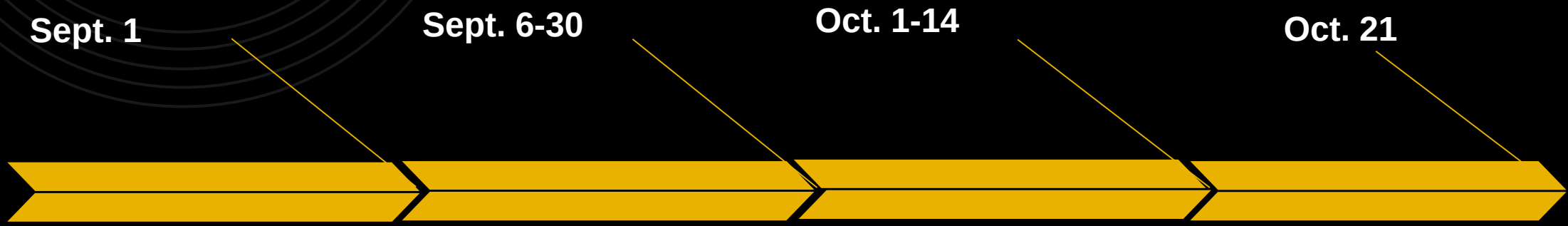
Student and Faculty Experience

Recommendations

1. Centralization of faculty support resources for online instruction
2. Standardize Online faculty onboarding and training
3. Develop an intentional, comprehensive, and ongoing process to collect and evaluate student and faculty experience data to ensure a Culture of Care
4. One Stop Student Success Center (see diagram)
5. Create a “Culture of Care” (Student Experience)
6. Dedicated Infrastructure & Resources
    - Human Capital Investment
    - Dedicated Marketing, Multimedia & Communications Resources
    - Dedicated IT team
    - Personnel expansion remains proportionate to student expansion
7. Consistent University Policies and Guidelines
8. Establish a skills assessment option that accepted students can opt into as a way to determine their readiness for online learning program.



Next Steps



Sept. 1

Website Update

Announcement of Recommendations available for campus review

Sept. 6-30

Feedback Opportunities

Through survey and targeted meetings, the OST Steering Committee and Workgroup Chairs will collect feedback from deans, faculty, staff and student shared governance groups.

Oct. 1-14

Analyze Feedback & Refine Recommendations

Workgroups will review and make modifications to recommendations based on feedback.

Oct. 21

Taskforce Work Ends

Final report submitted to Provost. Provost and Senior leadership will prioritize recommendations and appoint implementation teams.