

## Virginia Virtual University (V<sup>2</sup>U) Proposal

The mission of the V<sup>2</sup>U is to broker learning. Offering no classes of its own, the V<sup>2</sup>U is a hybrid model that helps students bring together online and site-based classes, independent studies, mentoring, learning teams, and experiential learning from many providers in different modes of delivery into a cohesive whole. The V<sup>2</sup>U is built on the principles of knowledge management, driving its design of customized academic plans and calendars and an educational process that focuses on “knowledge chunks” instead of lock-step courses. Assessment is central to the V<sup>2</sup>U design, which uses electronic portfolios, evaluations, testing, and capstone experiences to document general education and core competencies in ways that ensure both personalized learning and accountability.

The V<sup>2</sup>U questions traditional assumptions about higher education, unbundling faculty roles and challenging the need for residency in credentialing. Why should students have to take more credits than they need just to document time in residence at one institution? While still credit-based, the V<sup>2</sup>U uses this only as a starting point in a pragmatic approach to individualized lifelong learning and workforce development.

This new paradigm of learning is based on a streamlined structure that effectively leverages inexpensive web technology, doing away with much of the infrastructure associated with universities. Student services, human resources, library access, and financial aid are outsourced to Virginia’s public and private institutions and vendors. The V<sup>2</sup>U does not compete for state funding, instead taking an entrepreneurial approach. Like a business start-up, it grows only as enrollments permit, relying on public/private partnerships and a variety of revenue streams. Tuition and fees are disaggregated, with students paying only for what they want and get in services, cutting out hidden subsidies. Also, under this umbrella institution, students who engage in learning in different ways at the same time may qualify as full-time at V<sup>2</sup>U, making them eligible for federal and state financial aid.

As a public institution, the V<sup>2</sup>U works to preserve the same values of academic quality and integrity and governance as do other schools, but in 21<sup>st</sup> century ways. The V<sup>2</sup>U is a statewide, not a school-centered, initiative; thereby promoting collaboration - not competition. Rather, all institutions stand to benefit through increased enrollments generated by V<sup>2</sup>U students. For schools that are landlocked in enrollment, with no room to grow except through additional budget or tuition increases, the V<sup>2</sup>U provides a way to efficiently bridge scarce resources across the Commonwealth. It will do what no one school or collaboration has been able to do, in part because of rivalry and issues of resource allocation.

Many new virtual university efforts fail because they try to do too much. Cost studies show that the economy of scale needed for building online programs is very high. The V<sup>2</sup>U has a limited but critical mission and will increase revenues and decrease costs per student FTE at other institutions through partnerships and outsourcing that promote best practices. With the unmet demand of enrollment projections, the need for continuous training in a knowledge economy, increasing numbers of non-traditional students, the problems of underserved populations, and the overcrowding of bricks and mortar facilities, Virginia needs a new paradigm for learning – the Virginia Virtual University.

## Comparison of Virtual University Initiatives

Feature	Virginia Virtual University	Electronic Campus of Virginia	Univ of Maryland University College	Convert an existing college
Mission	Degree-granting, hybrid model that brokers personalized learning	Cooperative initiative w/ online database of existing DL courses. May offer brokering	University model w/ range of disciplinary degree programs, many of them online	Substantive change to accreditation in order to expand w/ online programs
Knowledge Management	Driven by KM w/ customization to user needs & use of "knowledge chunks"	Helps promotes e-learning as a KM strategy for students	Helps promotes e-learning as a KM strategy for students	Helps promotes e-learning as a KM strategy for students
Infrastructure	Streamlined & minimal. Outsources everything w/ partnerships except brokering	Minimal staffing. Primarily a software solution	Same complexity as a university	Same complexity as a college/university
Faculty roles	Unbundled. Uses faculty generalists for advising, planning, & assessment	Faculty housed within institutions, w/ no change in roles	Faculty roles focus on teaching & developing online & campus-based courses	Faculty roles remain the same, w/ some new assignments for online programs
Assessment	Central to design w/ electronic portfolios, testing, & evaluations	Assessment methods remain same, tied to institutional providers	Strong focus on assessment	Assessment methods remain same as existing college
General education & core competencies	New model allows much more flexibility in documentation	Course-based requirements remain the same at school providers	Course-based requirements remain the same	Course-based requirements remain the same
Residency	Does not require long residency for credentialing	Residency required per transfer policy of each school & program	Residency required per transfer policy of each program	Residency required per transfer policy of each program
Best practices	Outsources services to identified providers of best practices	Promotes dialogue about best practices	Must identify & build best practices in-house	Must identify & build best practices in-house
Competition	All schools & vendors benefit w/ new types of public/private partnerships	Does not address issues of competition between schools	Competes w/ other schools for students & funding	Competes w/ other schools for students & funding
Duplication of effort	Efficiently brokers existing resources w/ no duplication	Publicizes duplicate online courses offered in VA & SREB states	Duplicates online programs & courses offered elsewhere	Duplicates online programs & courses offered elsewhere
Economy of scale	Lean administration. Grows only w/ enrollments per faculty workload ratios	Degree & course listings grow w/ new offerings by institutions	Model requires large number of online programs & courses to leverage resources	Model requires large number of online programs & courses to leverage resources
Price	Students pay only for what they want & get in services; paying no hidden subsidies	Standard tuition & fees charges set by participating institutions	Standard tuition & fees charges set by Institution	Standard tuition & fees charges set by institution
Financial aid	Students w/ mixed modes of study may qualify as eligible for financial aid	Standard financial aid policy of participating institutions, requires full course load	Standard financial aid policy, requires full course load	Standard financial aid policy, requires full course load
Funding	Entrepreneurial, business start-up w/ a variety of revenue streams. Minimal seed funding	Most costs born by institutional memberships. Some funding sought from the state for initiatives	Requires significant state appropriations & tuition & fees revenue, w/ lots of development costs	Requires significant state appropriations & tuition & fees revenue, w/ lots of development costs
Reform/ Change Strategy	New paradigm for learning, faculty roles, residency, price, partnerships, & funding streams	Continues same level of cooperation among participating public and private schools, some new initiatives	Successful new institution w/ online & campus-based education for adults	Addition of new online programs to campus model

